Trends in Research on Communication and Media in Indonesia: The Micro Meta-Analysis on Perspective, Theory, and Methodology

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Abstract

The political reformation in Indonesia is a determinant factor of the change in political communications and the roles of media. Currently, the political elites need media support, since it contextually has a significant role. Whoever has a good relationship with the media, will be loved by the public.

On the other hand, the media also have a vested interest in the elite in running businesses and building the power of industry. Policies and capital pose a challenge to maintaining the continuity of the media. Independence and control of media are at stake, when the interests of the media and the elite collaborate with each other and then build a benefit on both sides.

Meanwhile, the role of social media also cannot be neglected. The Indonesian political communication system is characterized by the presence of social media in a pseudo-relationship between the elite and the public.

This paper tries to explain the growing trends of research in the academic environment and the research trends in political practice in Indonesia after the occurrence of post-reformation era in legislative and executive elections. The method used is the meta-

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analysis of research outcomes of university (dissertations) and secondary data sources. Data processing is done by meta-analysis of secondary data.

The results of meta-analysis research indicate that, the objective conditions, in Indonesia, especially the political conditions, stimulate new spaces in communication research. The study of political communication becomes dominant in the academic environment. In addition, communication research is also characterized by a shift from the linear perspective (positivistic paradigm) to the interactive perspective (naturalistic paradigm). On the other hand, the development of politic and governance situations in Indonesia has prompted the establishment of polling agencies that help citizens understand the maps of political power and candidates in general elections and regional head elections.

Background

Indonesian society is an interesting social research laboratory to be investigated under the theory of communication and media. This is caused by its large population and a high level of diversity in terms of ethnicity, language, belief system/religion, and culture of the society. Furthermore, as a democratic country, Indonesia is characterized by a large population, unlike many other countries.

The diversity of conditions and dimensions leads to the uniqueness and complexity of the social system and democratic life, which encourages the formation of dynamic communications. However, it may enable the emergence of conflict caused by friction between groups, religions, and ethnicities which is characterized by the emergence of horizontal conflicts due to various factors. However, some conflicts can be resolved with distinctive communication models initiated by the group itself.

On the other hand, the high diversity of society and the dynamics of the democratic system of government lead to the need for communication channels, such as mass media, in order to voice the interests of the groups. This can be seen in the growth in licenses and the implementation of media management, the growth of local media/regions, and the presence of media-based ethnic needs. For example, in Indonesia it is common that each district or city has at least one local TV station, a local newspaper, and two or three private radio stations, in addition to local government radio and national media. Networked TV and the growth of pay-tv also add more to the list of media populations in Indonesia.

From the results of data processing from many sources (i.e., Center Bureau of Statistics (BPS), 2016; Directorate of Politics and Communication, National Development Planning Agency (Ditpolkom Bappenas), 2017; Klikbekasi, The Ministry of Communications (Kominfo), 2015; and Isamas45), it can be concluded that Indonesia has 800 radio stations,

394 TV stations, 349 daily newspapers, 240 weekly newspapers, 188 tabloids, 250 magazines, 50 bulletins, and 31 community media.
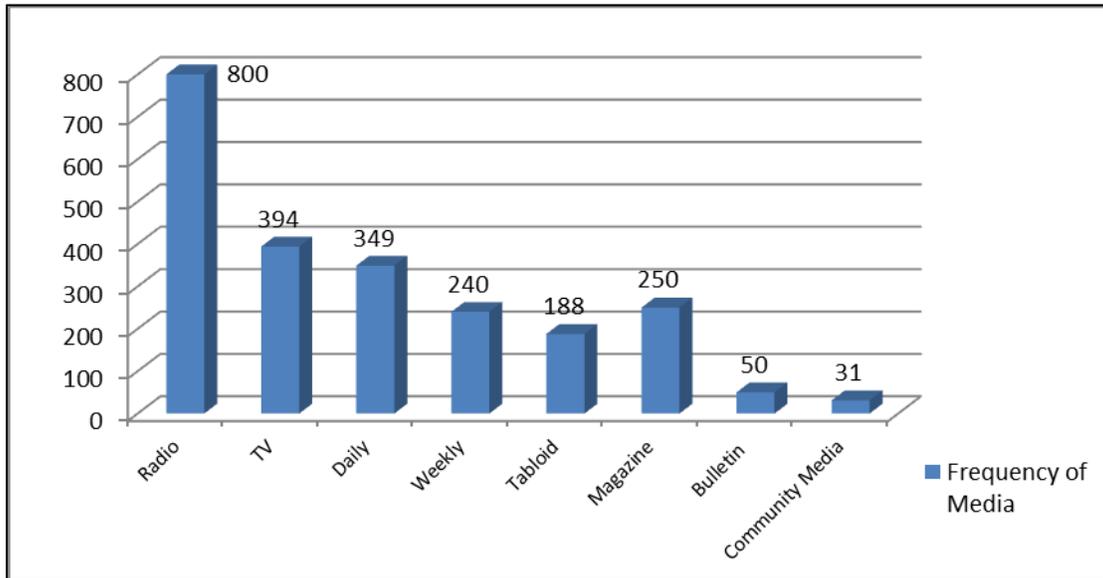

Figure 1 Population of Mass Media in Indonesia

The era of reformation and democratic life has opened the policies that encourage the growth of media in Indonesia. Since this reformation era, the numbers of permission requests for TV and radio broadcasting and newspaper publication have increased rapidly. The ownership or the management of media has become a new lucrative business for both incumbents and new entrants, who have not had experience in media business management. However, in reality, business calculations are inaccurate and encourage conspiracy with political elites, which unfortunately lead the media to not have an independent character.

Most of the media have not established control over the mechanisms of the political elite and government administrators. Their conspiracy creates a mutually beneficial relationship. Media need the capital from the elite and political authority to be used for operating licenses, while the supply of capital from entrepreneurs is used to build a conspiracy with the ruling elite. At the same time, the political elite and the state also

require a "renewal communication" to build the capacity of their political image or to attack their political opponents through their media or media partner.

The conspiracy is seen from its ownership. The media is owned by party leaders, so the political relationship will emphasize certain issues. Moreover, its control is done through third parties to manage its obligations for the network television license. One of the conspiracy examples can be seen below as cited by Suseno (2015):

> *Their influence on the dynamics of politics through the media mouthpiece is very influential. Moreover, they are not ashamed to show the passion of politics: Surya Paloh, the owner of Media Group and owner Nasdem Party, Bakrie, the owner of Viva news, TVOne, ANTV, who once the ruled Golkar Party, and MNC group owned by HaryTanoe, who was the former leader of Nasdem, now joining with Hanura Party made by Wiranto.*

This issue is inseparable from freedom of media that leads to the capitalization of media without control (freedom). As Agus Sudibyo affirms, cited by Hasan and Satria (2009), that:

> *This issue cannot be separated from the mindset of liberal-secular, that freedom is the ideal value that must be realized in a society. The media industry such as television in Indonesia is only owned by several investors (the capitalists), who clearly support the freedom value. Bhakti Investama became the capital owner of some television stations, such as RCTI, Global TV, Metro TV, and TPI.*

Generally, these conditions would encourage maps and models of political communication or communications, that are unlike from the academic concept. Media and communication systems are require communication studies from the Indonesian perspective, because it is unlike the political media and political communication in other countries.

The communication system in Indonesia is supported by new media (i.e., the Internet). Blogs, websites, and other various social media show new nuances in the life of political communication, government, entertainment, and others. The bustles of the presidential, legislative, and local elections have been the subject of conversation on social media.

The social media accounts of political parties and their supporters build the image of political parties or public figures using various strategies. Social media is becoming an integral part of the forum of political communication in Indonesia through quarrelling posts and the management of political language. The trends show that the numbers of social media users are increasing every year and ranked among the highest countries in the world.

Figure 2 Digital Media in Indonesia

Source: Noviandari in *Statistik Pengguna Internet dan Media Sosial Terbaru (The Statistic of the Latest Internet and Social Media Users)*, 2015.

The data cited from Noviandari (2015) states that the population of Indonesia is 255.5 million. Indonesians use digital communications actively: 88.1 million uses the internet, 79.0 million are active on social media, 318.5 million smartphone connections are active, and about 67 million use social media on mobile media. The most popular social media platform in Indonesia is Facebook, followed by WhatsApp and Twitter.

In addition to being a form of digital communication, social media is also used as a way to collect large and in-depth data for research fast and easily. For example, in obtaining the exact population data in Indonesia, people can use social media to see the data and communicate with the responsible person about the data. Besides that, the ever-changing data map of Indonesia affects the speed and accuracy of research, particularly in media and communication research. In addition, social media participates in developing and disseminating information uniquely about politics, economics, population (amount and growth), health development, media, and communication systems.
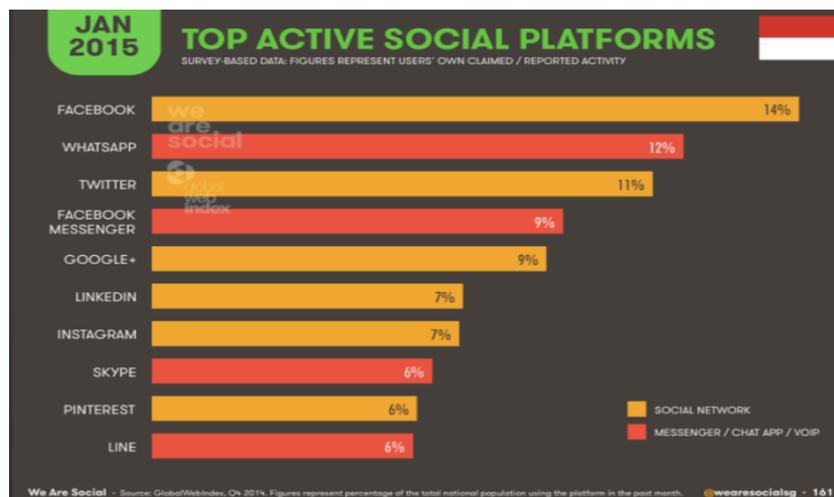

Figure 3 Social Media Platform in Indonesia

Source: Noviandari in *Statistik Pengguna Internet dan Media Sosial Terbaru (The Statistic of the Latest Internet and Social Media Users)*, 2015.

Trends in Communication Studies: Shifting Perspective and Methodology

Changes in the media (structure of content and media relations) and communications have generated various kinds, substance, and forms of communication research or research into trends in the last decade. Levine (2013), through meta-research entitled "Quantitative Communication Research: Review, Trends and Critique, "has mapped communication

research tendencies, 1988-1991 and 2008-2011. The analysis shows that there has been a shift in the trend of communication research during both time spans. There are five research topics that are popular in both time ranges, that is, interpersonal-group communication, organization, media, health communication, and Internet/social media.

In 1988-1991, research on interpersonal-group communication, across the various dimensions of the topic, was the most popular topic with 46% of papers devoted to it, followed by media research at 38%, research organizations at 13%, and health communication at 4%. Communication technology became unpopular topic.

On the other hand, from 2008 to 2011, the situation changed. Research on communication technology and new media ranked the second most popular at 25%, then 21% for health communication, while research on interpersonal-group communication and media went down, although they still are in the highest position, their shares decreased to 29% and 25% respectively.

The use of communication technology through the Internet, smartphones, and social media applications has changed the habits, patterns, and the structure of social relations. According to Wimmer and Dominic (2006), Internet and social media have entered various aspects of community life. Specifically:

- Public policy,
- The use and perception of the Internet,
- Economic, advertising and marketing,
- Politics, democracy and development,
- Cultural and social,
- Educational and instructional applications, and
- Evaluation of websites.

Based on the perspective and methodological aspects, Datta (1994, cited Yin, 2011) and Richard and Rallis, (1994, cited Yin, 2011) assert that the social research paradigm has various scientific truths. A variety of this perception about the definition of scientific truth

created a debate in a number of researches which then led to a discussion of the different methods in the research. The methods are quantitative research and qualitative research.

The paradigm battle in the differences of research methodology approach has never ended. It depends on the assumptions built by both approaches in the process of scientific thinking. For example, Gudykunst and Kim in their book *Intercultural and International Communication,* exemplify the extreme differences in cultural approaches that are grouped into emic and etic approaches. The former is the subjectivist-naturalistic term of qualitative research, while the latter is the objectivist-positivistic is term of quantitative research.

The shift has led communication research to use qualitative research, since it explains the unique event of human communication behavior. Qualitative research has begun to grow in the field of communication in line with the shift in trend terms (Bajari, 2012). Such trends include:

- Shift theories to the effect of interactive theories (ontology communications);
- Approach and research strategy, from positivism to naturalism (epistemology);
- The object of research, using research in micro and cultural approaches (groups of the unique sub culture);
- Research of information and communication technology (ICT), such as online media, social networking, and virtual media that form images more directly, spontaneously, simultaneously, and personally.

The battle of methodology eventually leads to a contemplation that is used for this method: each has its advantages and disadvantages. Methodological-pragmatic scholars consider both types of methodology to be complementary. In practice, they can be used together for the best results. In this context, we see the idea of combined methods (mixed methods).

Cresswel, (2009), Greene (2008), Johnson (2006), Tashakkori and Teddlie (2009), (all cited by Yin, 2011), agree that mixed method shows a pragmatic alternative. Mixed method offers a selection of methods that take advantage of similarities and differences in

qualitative and quantitative methods. This is a pragmatic alternative that allows the research to be continued without the potential for conflict in perspectives. As a result, cohorts of contemporary research (mixed method) have been making their best effort to define, document, and classify types of the research.

The desire to develop a combined method can be seen from the assumptions described by Yin (2011), as follows:

1. Many earlier studies in anthropology and sociology combined some type of field work with the use of quantitative data taken from surveys or from psychological tests administered to participants.

2. In the evaluation field, mixed methods research has been practiced for a long time.

Micro Analysis Research on Institutions of Higher Education: Case Study in the Doctoral Program of Communication Sciences

The tradition of scientific research is developed in universities. Communication science, as one of the disciplines offered at the university, cited from National Accreditation Board of Higher Education (BAN-PT), is now managed by almost 272 departments in both public and private universities in Indonesia (Ban PT Universitas Terbaik, 2015).
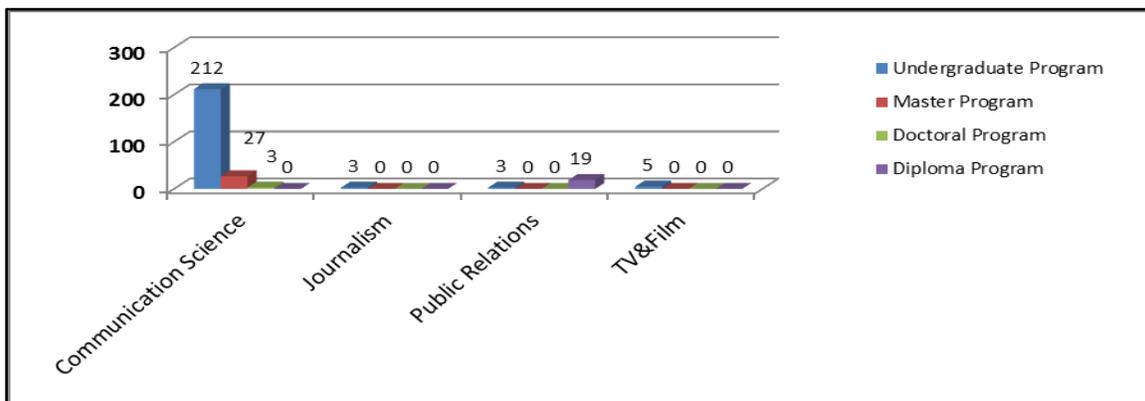

Figure 3 Department of Communication Studies at Universities in Indonesia
Source: Ban-PT Universitas Terbaik, 2015.

Each college or university has a tradition of scientific research. Qualitative and quantitative research are being developed well in all higher education providers of science communication. Under the science communication domain are science journalism, public relations, communication management, marketing communications, broadcasting, and advertising. The research tradition that has been developing in each of these sciences also has the same perspective as science communication in general.

Bajari and Karlinah (2015) conducted a meta-study of dissertations of doctoral candidates from the year 2008 to 2016. The study aimed to draw a map of research communications at the Communication Faculty of Padjajaran University. It was conducted using case study research, involving about a hundred dissertations as the source. The method used is meta-research with the meta-analysis technique. Researchers set categories, collected the data, validated data sources, reduced the data, sorted the data, interpreted data, and created a report.

Some preliminary information from the aforementioned research mentioned that there are seven research scopes. However, it does not mean that the entire island became the object of research. Analysis of specific districts, sub-districts, and Java Island were preferred by most doctoral candidates. This can be understood, because most of the doctoral candidates came from universities and companies or government offices located in Java.

Another argument reveals that the dynamics of communication and media industry is concentrated in Java. The big cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Semarang, and Surabaya have become the center of the development of the communication/media industry, the mass media and companies that employ communication graduates. Nearly 60% of the workforces who have degrees in communication prefer to work in Java.

Based on the above research example, it appears that the research required valid and in-depth data to find convincing findings for a research. Judging from this matter,

methodology aspect becomes a consideration in doing this research because the selection of appropriate methodologies can easily answer research questions. Hence, in its process, it appears that the research: 1. is being conducted within the framework of a series of philosophies (approaches); 2. uses procedures, methods, and techniques that have been tested for validity and reliability; 3. is designed to be unbiased and objective.

Early in the development of communication science, as well as in the Communication Science Faculty of Padjajaran University, most of the students chose quantitative research methods to do their research papers, theses, and dissertations. Quantitative research such as explanatory surveys, correlational research, factorial analysis, experimentation, or quasi-experimentation were widely used. Therefore, the use of quantitative analysis with statistical tests was very popular among under graduate, masters, and doctoral students.

Over time, sociological and anthropological approaches affected the perspective of research at the postgraduate level in communications. Students begin to recognize the research tradition that emphasizes the micro-analysis and participation. Qualitative research began to influence faculty and students in developing research communication. In the end, there was a shift towards qualitative research methods from quantitative research at all levels of study programs and the fields of science itself.

Analysis of the dissertations compiled from 2008 to 2016, showed that 98.64% used qualitative methods. The rest, only 1.36%, were using quantitative methods. A quantitative method was rarely used in doctoral dissertations.

The analysis showed there were at least 12 variants of qualitative research methods used by the doctoral candidates. However, the use of particular research methods is caused by what is currently popular. The candidates often use a particular research method because it is always used by majority without thinking more about the substance of the research.
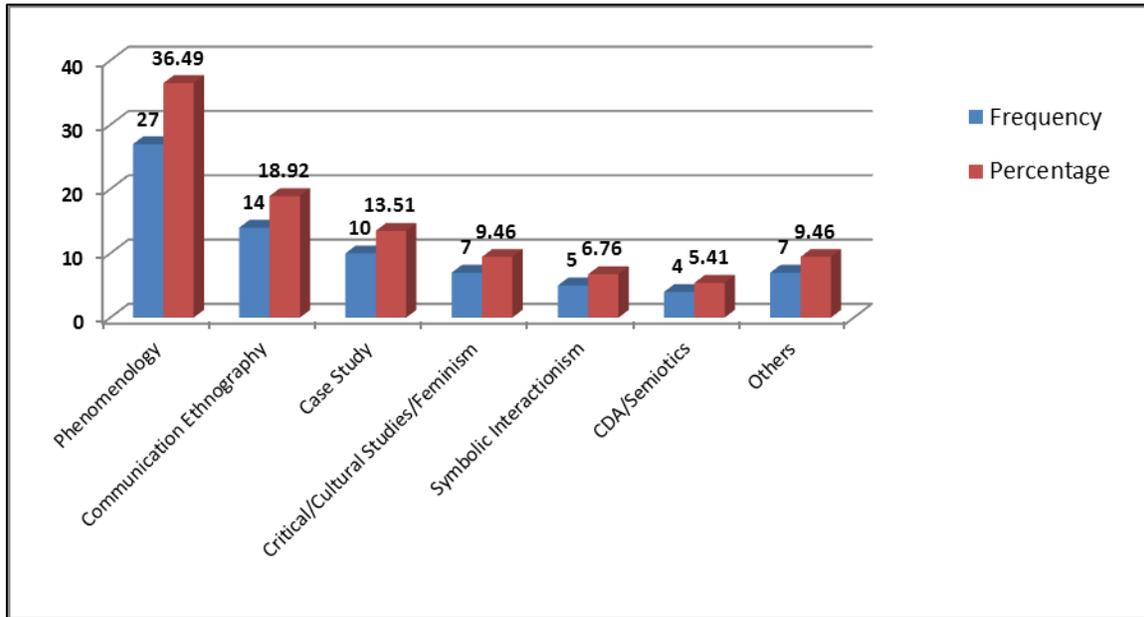
Figure 4 The Diversity using Qualitative Research Methods

The most popular research method in the time period, 2010-2014, was phenomenology. The percentages of the research methods used were Phenomenology (36.49%), followed by Communications Ethnography and Critical research methods (18.92%), and Case Studies (13.51%). The data indicate that communication research shifted sharply into the micro-research context, in order to understand the small perspective of an individual or group based on everyday communication behaviors.

Most research topics are about gender, deviance (LGBT, lesbian, and homosexual), pop-culture (Korean culture and Japanese culture), conversion of religion, as well as urban communities as a reflection their lifestyle. Along with the rise of social media, these communities come to the surface and reflect themselves openly. Text analysis and the impact of media impressions become interesting subjects for qualitative research.

Research in the field of communications at Universitas Padjadjaran, especially in the doctoral program, focused more on the areas of interpersonal communication and groups or communities that are unique and different from the contemporary traditions. Included

are such themes as religious conversion, membership in a group, deviant behavior of street children, beggars, homosexuals, nightlife and prostitutes, use of psychotropic substances, etc.

Based on the assumption of group uniqueness, each group will have a communication behavior, language or symbols, and an understanding of how to make sense of themselves and their environment differently. The doctoral candidates present empirical data using sociological-anthropological and behavioral psychology perspectives with a strong Freudian perspective.

Utilization of interpretive perspective theories is dominant and used to conduct the research. For example, the symbolic interaction proposed by Herbert Mead, Charless H. Cooley, and Howard Becker is often used a reference, as well as, the Social Action Theory proposed by Max Weber and Social Interpretation proposed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann.

Thus, the perspective greatly promotes humans as the object that is considered creative and intuitive. Hence, the research promotes the idea that research is an action to construct understanding human behavior, without researcher modification. Researchers are only entitled to report and describe, not to make generalizations.

There are a lot of new research examples conducted by the doctoral candidates. In the 1990s, most research examined the influence and role of the mass media in the tradition of behaviorism, while nowadays the trend is very different. Along with the rapid increase and openness of information sources, the students' research offers many new contexts and new themes through naturalistic and critical inquiries. Figure 5 presents the various contexts and fields of research.

There are 25 communication contexts that are chosen as research topics in doctoral student research. The study of political communication and health communication are the most widely chosen fields. Furthermore, mass communication and family communication are also chosen by quite a lot of doctoral candidates.

Political communication is used to improve politicians' public image or make them more popular. This is because democratic reformation in Indonesia has not yet been completed. The political situation in the country remains "warm" with political events. Much political communication research discussed the communication behavior of board members (legislative), political campaign figures, the communication styles of government officials, the role of gender in elections, and the political communication behavior of women board members.

The next field is health communication. A wide variety of theme areas of health communication were developed in student research, including, communication between doctor and patient, phenomenology of patients with rare diseases, health communication systems, and therapeutic communication strategies.
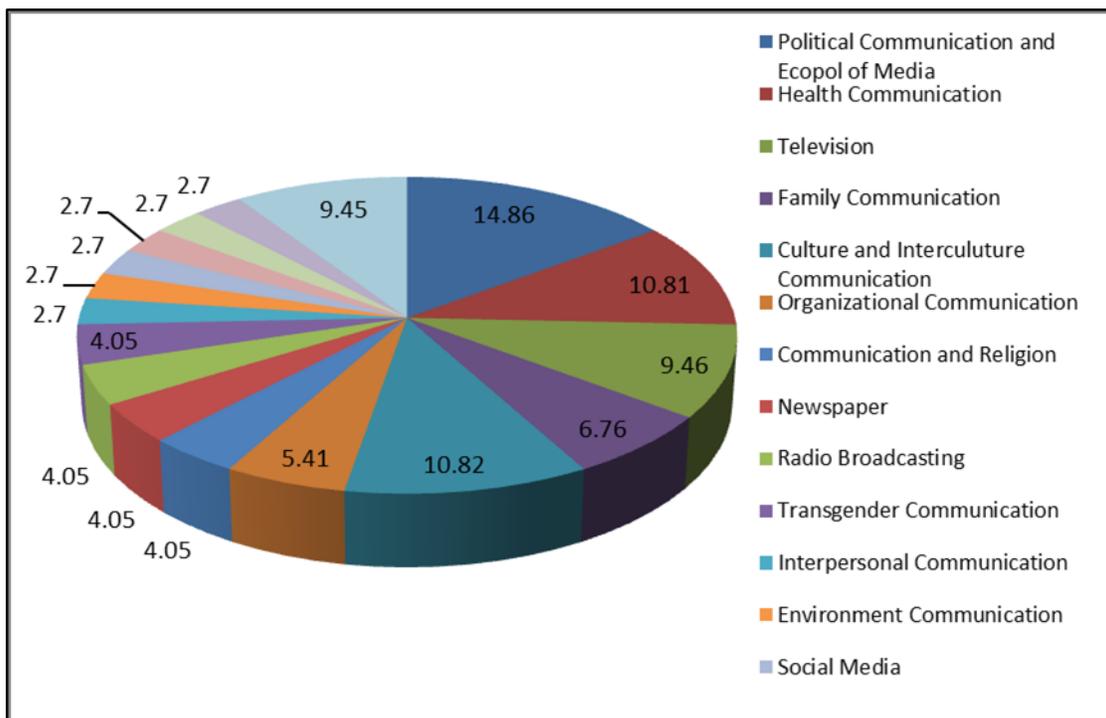

Figure 5 The Percentage of Contexts and Fields of the Communications Research,

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Another topic that is often investigated is mass media. Research on critical paradigms, political economy of media, and semiotics products of messaging media have become the choice of the students. Most of their writing was "influenced" by the critical paradigm and the political economy of the media in explaining the behavior of the economic and political mass media conspiracies.

The next field began to develop a behavior typical of a communication group: communication through social media with virtual ethnography approach. Examples include sport (soccer) fanaticism, Korean Pop (K-Pop), Japanese Pop (J-Pop), and Cinema Electronic of India (drama), conversational style of homosexuals, and openness of communication in religious conversion.

Public Opinion Research: the New Trends of the Post-Political

Reformation Era in Indonesia

In post-reformation era, the governance system in Indonesia changed to be presidential from parliamentary system. The political system also changed after the amendment of 1945 Constitution. As the consequence, president and regional heads (governor and bupati) should be directly elected by the citizens. This is in contrast to the government during the new order era in which the president and regional heads were elected by MPs as parliamentary representatives. Citizens were not entitled to elect a president directly, or in other words, citizens had no authority in electing the president at that time.

These conditions have encouraged the emergence of public opinion research institutions to predict the probability of the election of candidates. The polling agencies have played a strategic role and brought a dynamic atmosphere to the climate presidential and regional elections. There are two reasons for opinion polling research on elections developing in the post-reformation era. First, the activity in measuring public opinion, especially in relation to political issues, is increasingly important to measure the

electability of legislative candidates (party power) and the president, whereas, it was very taboo to be done during the new order era (before the reformation) because it was considered an attempt to overthrow the government or to become subversive. Second, giving confidence to prospective voters about the popularity of candidates influences the formation of opinion and voter's behavior on Election Day.

Nevertheless, public opinion research in Indonesia has a long history (LSI, 2004). In 1972, a survey agency named SUBURI was formed with the support of Sjarif Thajib, an Indonesian Ambassador to the United States. Sjarif Thajib was fascinated by the development of the public opinion polling institution in America. A Manila-based Asia Research Organization (ARO) offered to enter and run a research business in Indonesia. In the next stage, SUBURI got various research projects from the government to capture public opinion about area, environment, and other empowerment programs.

However, the political conditions under the New Order government at the time were hostile to political surveys, especially when it comes to measuring public opinion in evaluating government. At that moment SUBURI conducted research with the question, "Who has a good leadership in running the wheels of government?" With that question, the government offended and dissolved SUBURI by revoking its operational license and expelling Director John M. Digregorio from Indonesia, (LSI, 2004).

Political opinion polling research developed very rapidly after the 1999 elections, especially in the run up to the 2004 elections. While in the 1999 election there were only five opinion polling research institutes, in the 2004 elections, there were at least 7 institutions that conducted polls about the elections. These institutions are LP3ES, IFES, the Agency of Research and Development PDI-P (Balitbang PDIP), DRI (Danareksa Research Institute), IRI (International Republican Institute), Survey Indonesia Institute (LSI), and Soegeng Sarjadi Syndicated.

The remarkable achievement of the early development of the opinion polling survey agency was that, in the 1999 elections, the Indonesian Democratic Party won. The success

has helped build the trust in political institutions and the public on the importance of the survey institutes.

However, along with the development of the electoral changes in Indonesia and the behavior of political parties, the results of the opinion polling have not been regarded as a reliable measuring instrument to measure public opinion. Both citizens and academics disbelieve the polls. The reason for the public lack of confidence in opinion polls for local or presidential elections is that some survey results are not independent. They attach a great importance to the needs of the funder that, when traced, is related to a particular party. It is exemplified in the results of some polls leading up to the 2014 election. There were two candidates for president of Indonesia, Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto. Several survey institutions funded by the party supporting each of these candidates always reported that their candidate would win. The survey agencies at the time of the election reported the victory of their favored candidates. Prabawa (2014) cited that:

> *Recently, on the contrary, the presence of survey institutions has increasingly made people unconvinced of the credibility of survey institutions. Although in the Constitutional Court's consideration it is not proven, the public concerns over survey results and quick counts cannot be considered non-existent.*

The shifting of the democracy map and democracy system in Indonesia has built a growing number of public opinion survey agencies. If they are classified based on their origins, they are established by independent consulting agencies, foreign agencies investing in Indonesia, media, universities, NGOs, and others. Currently, based on the latest data from 2014, the number of survey agencies in Indonesia has reached 56 survey polling agencies.

Conclusion

Socio-political changes and the global order of information and communication technologies affect the role of the media and communication system in Indonesia. These

factors encourage the students, lecturers, and researchers to think about shifts in communication studies. Some issues to think about, in the closing part of this article are:

1. Changes in the role of media, media transformation, media competition, and media management are institutionally needed as an approach for studying the political economy of media. However, when the interaction of the interest between politics and media changes, it becomes a cause of shifting scientific assumptions that always put the power of the mass media in political issues.

2. Social media shape interaction and interests differentially. Social media created an artificial relationship between the publics/users, because of not being able to transform the interests between the two sides. This context is called pseudo-relational.

3. Shifting patterns of communication require a change in the scientific tradition, which was strongly influenced by the perspective of psychology, sociology, and interpretive anthropology, economics-critical, and linguistics. It will enrich the whole perspective of communication studies.

4. The reform era that has changed the democratic system in Indonesia encourages the growth of public opinion survey agencies to measure the candidates and political parties' electability. Survey agencies have become an important part of the development of democracy in Indonesia.

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