Press Law as Social Engineering in Improving the Literacy of Sailor Tribe Communities in Maumere Bay Who are Vulnerable to Hoax News and Hate Speech

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Abstract: This research raises the urgency of the importance of press law as a social engineering tool in improving the literacy of the Sailor Tribe community in Maumere Bay, Flores, NTT, which is vulnerable to hoax news and hate speech. The complex social context and problems increasingly troubling the community require a holistic approach involving legal, social, and educational aspects. The main objectives of this research were to identify the role of press law in improving the literacy of the Sailor Tribe community in Maumere Bay and reducing the negative impact of the spread of hoax news and hate speech. The research method used was a combination of normative and empirical including descriptive analysis, qualitative, interviews, media content analysis, and educational program development. Through this approach, an effective strategy was found to utilize press law as an instrument of positive social engineering. This research had not only academic relevance but also important practical implications to increase public understanding of correct and responsible information and reduce the negative impact of spreading hoax news and hate speech.

Keyword: Press Law; Social Engineering; Literacy; Hoax; Hate Speech.

INTRODUCTION

This research is based on the social and cultural conditions of the sailor tribe community in Maumere, East Nusa Tenggara Province. The coastal area of Maumere, especially in the sailor tribe community villages, has unique characteristics with an integrated life between land and sea. Settlements on the water (houses on stilts) are a characteristic feature that illustrates the close relationship between the community and its natural environment. (1)

This research was closely related to the existence of the sailor tribe in Maumere, NTT, in understanding the social, cultural, and environmental context in which they live. Spatial phenomena in the formation of their settlements reflect the complex interaction between physical, social, and cultural factors that have become the strong identity of the community. However, there is a serious challenge faced by these sailor tribe communities, namely their

vulnerability to hoaxes and hate speech. With easier access to social media and information, people are vulnerable to being exposed to invalid or even misleading information (2). This can lead to social conflict and instability in the region. Their vulnerability to hoaxes and hate speeches are the result of the digital age and easy access to social media (3,4). For example, the presence of misleading content can trigger tension between individuals and affect the social harmony that has been well maintained by the sailor tribe community.

This research was also driven by a concern for the role of press law in this context. Press law was not only a regulatory framework for journalistic activity but could also be a powerful social engineering tool (5,6). By understanding how press law can be effectively used to improve public literacy, identify, and address hoax news and hate speech, this research could provide important insights for the protection of public information rights and fulfillment of the need for accurate information.

The problem formulations that will be examined in this research include:

1. How can press law be applied as social engineering to improve the literacy and awareness of the sailor tribe community in Maumere towards valid information?
2. What is the impact of being vulnerable to hoax news and hate speech on the social and cultural stability of the sailor tribe community in Maumere?
3. What is the distribution pattern of hoax news and hate speech among the sailor tribe community in Maumere, and how does it impact social and cultural cohesion?

This research had a high urgency as it will provide a deeper understanding of the literacy and information challenges faced by sailor tribe communities. By revealing the relationship between press law, literacy, and vulnerability to false information, this research was expected to make a significant contribution and to improve social stability, harmony between individuals, and the growth of awareness and information literacy of the sailor tribe community in Maumere.

METHOD

The method used in this research was a type of combined empirical and normative research method. The approaches that used in this field study research were:

1. Preparation and Field Survey

In this stage, the researchers prepared a set of questions that were used in interviewing respondents. The lists of questions were associated with Law No.40 of 1999 concerning the press and issues related to the understanding of the sailor tribe community towards hoax news and hate speech.

2. Discussions and FGDs with the sailor tribe community in Maumere, the Sikka Regency Journalists Association and Press Law Practitioners:

At this stage, researchers conducted discussions with the sailor tribe community in Maumere, the Sikka Regency Journalists' Association and press law practitioners on the implementation of the law in daily journalistic practice, control of news production, freedom of expression, as well as challenges and obstacles faced in journalistic practice.

3. Policy Formulation and Literature Study

At this stage, the researchers compiled a series of agendas based on the results of field studies of respondents and discussions with press law practitioners and journalists, as well as preparation for the obstacles faced in the research process.

The types of approaches that used in this Normative Legal research were:

1. Statute Approach

This approach was carried out by examining all laws and regulations that were related to the problem (legal issue) that was being faced. This statutory approach, for example, was carried out by studying the consistency/conformity between the Constitution and the Law, or between one Law and another Law.

2.Conceptual Approach

This approach departs from the views and doctrines that have developed in legal science. This approach was important because an understanding of the views/doctrines that develop in legal science can be a reference for building legal arguments when resolving the legal issues that were being faced. Views/doctrines could clarify ideas by providing legal notions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Legal Theory of the Press

The role of press law as social engineering and an instrument for increasing public literacy has been regulated in the legislation of the Republic of Indonesia, namely, Article 3 Paragraph 1 of Law Number 40 of 1999 concerning the Press stated that 'The National Press has a Function as a Medium of Information, Education, Entertainment, and Social Control'. This regulation is a legal product derived from various academic and historical perspectives that are considered to have relevance and important contributions to the role of press law in the social context. Starting from the Freedom of the Press Theory proposed by Jhon Milton and John Stuart Mill. This theory emphasized the essence of freedom of the press as a means of delivering information that was independent and free from pressure or intervention from any party. This privilege allowed the media to become an educational channel that disseminates valid information, without fabrication, or carrying certain interests. In the context of social engineering, freedom of the press protected by law means that the media only produces credible, analytical, and educational content that helps the public to distinguish facts from disinformation. In the same way, John Milton and John Stuart Mill, with John Locke, introduced the Libertarian Theory where the press was considered a tool of free speech and a means to know the truth while keeping in mind that it was not an unlimited freedom. Press law serves to set limits on the spread of false information and hate speech, while still protecting the public's right to obtain relevant and truthful information, especially amid today's social media.

More to the role of press law as a means of public literacy, there was the Legal Determinism Theory. Through this theory, Roscoe Pound assumed that law is a tool to regulate and direct social change. Therefore, press law serves as a mechanism to direct the media in influencing people's mindset and behavior by promoting constructive information, combating disinformation, and creating collective awareness about the negative impact of hoaxes and hate speech. Similarly, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality Theory in the Social Construction of Reality (1966) argued that the media shapes the way people view the world through the information presented. In the context of press law, regulations that encourage the dissemination of accurate information contribute to the formation of a healthier and more inclusive social reality. Another theory that underlines the same assumption is Emile Durkheim's Functionalist Theory of Law. This theory viewed law as a mechanism to maintain social order by creating norms that support societal harmony. Press law can serve as an instrument to build collective awareness about the importance of verifying information and avoiding hate speech, thus strengthening social cohesion. Of the many theories from the disciplines of law and communication, the role of press law comes back to a theory that is quite popular in the field of social science, namely the Social Responsibility Theory. Developed by Robert M. Hutchins, this theory stated that the right to freedom of the press must be balanced with the obligation of media social responsibility where the media is obliged to present information that is true, fair, and relevant to the public interest. Press law also adopts this theory in its application so that it can be a tool to monitor the spread of false information and hate speech while issuing sanctions for indications of violations.

Results of Research Implementation

The importance of press law as a social engineering tool in improving the literacy of the sailor tribe community in Maumere who were vulnerable to hoax news and hate speech required real follow-up. The complex social context and increasingly troubling problems required a holistic approach involving legal, social, and educational aspects. As the first step, direct research was conducted in the coastal area of Nangahure Lembah Beach, Wuring Urban Village in Sikka Regency. The research was conducted on June 29-September 21, 2024 with the study of press law as social engineering to improve the literacy of the sailor tribe community in Maumere which was vulnerable to hoax news and hate speech so the research team conducted this research that it could be known whether the existence of press law could improve the literacy of the sailor tribe community in Maumere in Maumere, Sikka Regency.

This research process began with a search for the sailor tribe in the coastal area of Nangahure Lembah, Wuring Urban Village in Sikka Regency. After finding a location that follows the research topic, namely in Wuring Urban Village, the research team submitted a request for permission to the local governments to be able to collect data by distributing questionnaires (10 respondents) and FGDs with the Nangahure Lembah Community of Wuring Urban Village. The FGD activities were done well and the team managed to collect data on the answers of the 10 respondents who answered the three problem formulations above. Broadly speaking, the respondents' data collected showed the importance of strengthening press legal regulations and media literacy education to maintain the social and cultural stability of the sailor tribe community in Maumere. The following were the results of the analysis between the problem formulation and the interview data.

How can press law be applied as social engineering to increase the literacy and awareness of the sailor tribe community in Maumere towards valid information?

Based on the questionnaire answers, most respondents admitted to using cell phones for communication and accessing information through social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok. Some were immediately consumed by the news without trying to verify the accuracy of the information received. However, some respondents mentioned doubts so they tried to find the truth of the information obtained by verifying it through other sources of information. Based on these results, press law can be applied to improve literacy by requiring the media to present accurate information, promoting a culture of fact-checking, and educating the public through media literacy programs (for example, literacy campaigns) to strengthen people's ability to recognize facts and hoaxes, and integrating press law with digital technology (for example, cooperation with social media platforms) to quickly mark the hoax news and provide clarification in online communities that were often accessed by the sailor community.

What is the impact of being vulnerable to hoaxes and hate speech on the social and cultural stability of the sailor tribe community in Maumere?

From the data obtained, respondents indicated that hoaxes and hate speech can lead to social and emotional conflict. Some respondents mentioned that the impact of hate speech included discrimination, mental disorders, and divisions in social relationships. Respondents also mentioned that people became confused and lost trust in information. Hoaxes containing provocative information can trigger tension between community groups. Hate speech that attacks identity or tradition can also undermine cultural values of tolerance, while those that attack the personal can have a direct impact on individual mental health.

What is the pattern of hoax news distribution and hate speech among the sailor tribe community in Maumere and how does it affect social and cultural cohesion?

Based on interviews and FGDs, the pattern of hoax news distribution was dominated by the use of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok. The lack of awareness and habit of checking facts tended to make individuals or groups rashly forward information without checking. Respondents also mentioned that hoaxes often utilize sensitive issues such as social conflict, tradition, or identity. This certainly hurt social and cultural cohesion where there will be an increase in suspicion or prejudice between groups, reducing the level of solidarity between communities that were very dependent and work together, and the long-term effect was to erode local cultural values related to the tradition of mutual trust in the foundation of social relations in seafaring communities.

CONCLUSION

Press law could play a strategic role as a social engineering tool in improving the literacy of the sailor tribe community in Maumere towards valid information. The theory of legal determinism (Roscoe Pound) and the theory of social responsibility (Hutchins Commission) supported the need for press regulation that not only protected the right to freedom of speech but also gave responsibility. The results of filling out questionnaires by the 10 respondents at the research location showed that the sailor community in Maumere relied on social media as the main source of information but had limitations in distinguishing valid information from hoaxes. The existence of doubts about the news received, recognition of the negative impact of hoaxes, and hate speech opened the way for press law to take the initiative to educate the public to become smart consumers of information. The answer to the problem showed that media literacy and information clarification were key steps to overcome this challenge.

The correlation between theory, answers to problem formulations, and interview data leads to one important conclusion the need for synergy between press law regulation, media literacy education, and strengthening local communities. Press law as social engineering can be realized through improving media literacy to help the sailor tribe community in the coastal area of Nangahure Lembah Beach, Wuring UrbanVillage in Sikka Regency recognize hoaxes and hate speech. Several recommendations, such as strengthening media regulations, improving access to valid information through local media, and organizing community-based digital literacy training can be considered as relevant solutions. Commitment and consistency in the implementation of these measures in the process were expected to maintain socio-cultural stability and cohesion as well as better understanding and communication for the sailor tribe community in the coastal area of Nangahure Lembah Beach, Wuring Urban Village in Sikka Regency.

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