

# The Practice of Indonesia's Environmental Reporters: Competence and Challenges

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## Abstract

Indonesia's environmental reporting has been dynamically developed as it has been influenced by the interlinked factors of freedom of the press, media conglomeration, and the emergence of online technology. Regarding to those factors, how are the competence of the Indonesia's environmental reporters? How do Indonesia's environmental reporters perceive challenges?

This research conducts survey and interviews to Indonesia's environmental reporters who are also the members of the Society of Indonesia's Environmental Journalist (SIEJ).

*Keywords:* Journalism practices, environmental journalism

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## 1. Introduction

Indonesia environmental reporting started to develop only in 1980's together with the initiation of PPLH (The Developing and Environment Controller) (Iswari, 1992). The experience of Indonesia's environmental journalists are generally different from their colleagues in the Western countries. As many other Asian countries, Indonesia's environmental reporting has been developed in the discourse of development since the 1980's (Shresta, 1994). This is due to the development of environmental journalism in Asia had begun in the context of country's eagerness to boost economic development in short term period which took aside environmental issues in development program (Friedman & Friedman, 1982; Iswari, 1994). Especially in Indonesia, the roles of environmental reporters during the New Order were mainly to support development and educate the publics (Iswari, 1992, Basorie, 1992). In USA, environmental journalism has been categorized in science, risk, and advocative reporting and has become a specialty field (Palen, 1999; Rademakers, 2004;

Detjen, 1995). At one hand Indonesia environmental reporting is expected to control environmental occurrences (Iswari, 1992) but in the other hand it was less critical to environmental damages caused by big industries as criticism would harm the development program. Environmental reporting of Indonesia's media was ought to be in line with the developmental policy of Indonesia's government (Friedman & Friedman, 1982; Iswari, 1994, Basorie, 1992, Masduki, 2009).

What happen to contemporary IEJ is not different from journalism practices in general. The liberalization of the press has been followed by stronger market competition. Indonesian journalism cannot avoid the hardening competitions leading to media conglomeration during the *Reformasi* (reformation) (Heryanto & Adi, 2002; Tapsell, 2012a; Heryanto, 2003). Unlikely opposing the state as what happened in New Order, Indonesian press in *Reformasi* nowadays must dealing with the concentration of press media ownerships (Haryanto, 2010, Nugroho, Putri, & Laksmi, 2012; Kristiawan, 2013). The oligarchy of Indonesian media structure has harmed the

pluralism and diversity of opinions (PR2Media, 2014). While the freedom of the press has been hijacked into liberating media industry into more concentrated ownerships and low pluralism, Internet technology which came to Indonesia at the early of phase of the political crisis in the 1990's has provided Indonesian corporates, journalists and citizens the unlimited frontier to spread any information. The number and topic range of Indonesian news sites have outnumbered and diversified (Ambardi, *et.al.* 2014). The cyberspace has become the alternative media bolstering civil society in its resistance to state and corporate domination (Lim, 2013).

The transformation produces some challenges. As happen to journalists in general, the political transformation of Indonesia does not factually give more protection to the practices of environmental journalists. The Press Law has not been followed up with proper and sufficient law enforcement (IFJ, 2015; IFEX, 2015; RSF, 2016), especially in protecting environmental journalists (Pulitzer Center, 2015). According to Reporter sans Frontier (RSF), Indonesia has contributed to the numbers of environmental journalists murdered since 2010-2015 (RSF, 2015) and many other examples<sup>1</sup>. Instead of diminishing, intimidations toward journalists are swayed from the state to the private, from national level to the local level (Loo, 2013).

Though there are some empirical factors contributing to environmental journalism, the research under the topic of Indonesian environmental journalism is limited (Masduki, 2009). The limitation of research on environmental journalism of Indonesia includes the lack of the basic information about the landscape of and competence of Indonesia's environmental journalists and the challenges faced by them. This research inquires some aspects of competence such as transfer, technical and expertise competences as coined by Hanitzsch (2001). In accordance to the

development of online journalism, the concepts of Pavlik (2001) and Deuze (1999) on online journalism skills are also integrated to the research.

### *1.1. The Definition of Environmental Journalism*

The definition of environmental journalism has varied. The issues have changed from "traditional, preservation ones to more modern, pollution-related ones, can range from those linked to the natural environment of the earth, or those linked to environmental threats to the health of living things" (Rademakers, 2004:14-15). Basically, environmental journalism involves journalistic process, values, gatekeepers, and reports. It is about collecting, verifying, producing, distributing, and performing information related to environmental and human-environmental interaction occurrences and issues.

The understanding and practice of environmental journalism itself have been diverse. In USA, environmental journalism has stemmed from science, risk, and advocacy reporting and has become a specialty field or distinctive beat (Palen, 1999; Rademakers, 2004; McCluskey, 2008). The ongoing debate on environmental journalism has been focused on whether environmental journalism should be objective or advocative to environment (Howarth, 2012; Dornelles, 2008). In Asia, especially in 1980's and 1990's, environmental journalism was more about journalistic reports informing and educating the publics about environmental issues in order to support the nation building (Friedman & Friedman, 1982; Iswari, 1994). The concern arisen in the discourse has been around how environmental journalism can support the state in educating the publics about environmental issues but also how it can be productive for development in the country.

Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) has firmly defined environmental

journalists must be a working journalists “who produce published environmental work available to general audiences and who are not paid to engage in lobbying or public relations activities on environmental issues nor for work in organizations that are so engaged” (Palen,1999: 169). SEJ acknowledges journalists who also the advocates of environmental movement to become its members as long as the journalists do not receive payment anywhere else other than the media companies hiring them (Palen, 1999). SEJ's definition of environmental journalists informs that three points make journalists eligible to be named as environmental journalists: still actively working, publishing articles on environmental issues, and only receiving payment from media companies. A beat reporter who writes and publishes work in environmental issues and does not receive money other than the media company is environmental journalist.

### *1.2. The Competence of Environmental Journalists*

Concerns toward the competence of environmental reporters have been rising academically and practically especially in USA since the 1990's. Friedman (1994) conducted research on environmental journalism education in USA as he noticed that professionalization of environmental reporting was urgently needed. He wrote that environmental journalists coming from various education backgrounds are not equipped with environmental journalism courses (or any journalism courses) (1994:15). He enlisted some problems in environmental reporting such as narrow choice of information sources, avoidance of scientific and technical information, lack in-depth reporting and follow-up, insufficient background and context for potential risks and unexposed scientific factors. Those problems raise issue on how to educate

future journalists in order to meet the criteria of professional environmental journalists.

In the context of Indonesia, the study of competence in Indonesia's journalism has mirrored through the study of Hanitzsch (2001). Hanitzsch (2001) researched the education system of journalism of Indonesia in general. He mapped several factors contributing to the low quality of Indonesia's journalists competency: the journalism education is concentrated in highly populated Java island; the journalism curricula is still blocked with national curricula and irrelevant subjects; educational law does not stimulate journalism students to expand their views in other subjects they like; there is no interaction between media industry and higher education; the shortage of money limits the technological and other supporting facilities to journalism education; and last, the education does not allow students to autonomously reflect the role of journalism in mass media systems (Hanitzsch, 2001:95-96).

Hanitzsch (2001:94) generally underlines four elements of competence of journalism: professionalism, transfer, technical, and expertise. Professional competence is about “basic skills and professional knowledge in mass communications” leading to awareness of the journalists of their positions in communication industries. Transfer competence refers to “the ability to deliver mass media messages to the audience.” Technical competence includes “fundamental computer skills as well as handling the Internet and electronic databases.” For environmental journalists, technical competence may include ability to use not only word processing software, but also statistical software, 360 degrees camera, etc. Expertise competence covers “the specific knowledge of covered issue.” Clearly expertise competence is highly required for the environmental reporters. Environmental reporters should be able to comprehend issues in science, technology, public policy, economy, etc in order to make themselves prepared to provide background for

every stories they will cover. This paper focuses only on transfer, technical and expertise competence<sup>2</sup>.

In the context of technical competence, the emergence of online technology also requires environmental reporters to adapt themselves into this new landscape. Pavlik (2000) points out three impacted areas because of online technology: the nature of news content, structure and organization of the newsroom and the news industry, and the nature

of the relationships between and among news organizations and their publics. Deuze (1999) enlists several skills that online journalists should be able to master which includes skills to write news for online formats, be interactive to readers, and employ website feature that extends readers' experiences in reading news. The collaboration of Pavlik (2000) and Deuze (1999) is seen on the Table 2 below:

**Table 1. The Aspects of Internet Impact on Journalism Practices**

No.	Aspects	Dimensions	Types
1	News Narrative	Use of Language	Formal/Informal
		Story Structure	Linearity/Non-linearity
		Multi-mediality	Single/Multi-platforms
2	Organizational structure	Economic	Editorial/Advertorial
		Hierarchy of newsroom	Hierarchial/Non-hierarchial
		Newsroom management	Single/Online only/Combined
3	Relationships: News organizations-public	Way of communication	Open/closed
		Equality	Unequal/Equal

The news narrative of online news does not follow the traditional rules which are formal, linear and single-platform. To increase the readability, online news frequently uses informal language. The story structure is also non-linear means users can read the story starting from any chunk of news. The multi-mediality expands the options to present news and also the experience of reading by its multi-platforms. Online technology also gives impact on organizational structure. In the economic dimension, online journalist may be not only employed to produce news but also support the promotional aspect of the media for example writing advertisement-editorial or sharing news content on social media. To cut down the long process of online news production, the hierarchy of the

newsroom is frequently squeezed. Journalists may upload news online without any editing from senior editor. Newsroom management of online media may also be combined, or online only, or single but has legacy media 'older brother.' Other aspect is relationships between news organizations and their publics. Online media is expected to be more transparent, accountable and interactive. The way of communication is preferably open and the relationships between newsroom and users are equal. In that way, users can give inputs to the editorial and editorial feels obliged to responsibly serve its publics.

1.3. *The Challenges of Environmental Journalists*

The kind of challenges faced by environmental journalists really depend on the social and political context of where the journalism is practiced. Friedman & Friedman (1989) mentioned some similar constraints faced by environmental journalists in Asia also in Western countries. Journalists in both countries experience uncertainty of scientific information and disagreement among experts (Friedman & Friedman, *ibid.*). Media companies are also lacking of specialized of environmental reporters. However, in Asia environmental journalists also must struggle with government censorship, high-level private interference, lack of space, editorial bias, lack of training in journalism and environmental science, and the difficulty in locating sources (Friedman & Friedman, 1989).

During the New Order Indonesia, reporting environmental problems faced internal and external burdens. Internally, the newsroom frequently took aside the environmental issues from the page one and the journalists

themselves did not have sufficient knowledge about the issues (Aristiarini, 1992:49). Externally, governmental bodies did not openly share their information to publics and they were suspicious with the interest groups and mass media who intended to expose the environmental problems (Aristiarini, 1992:5).

In the *Reformasi* journalism, the freedom of the press has stretched journalism into two poles: a freedom to report anything that attracting advertisers and to conduct professional journalism upholding objectivity, accuracy, verification and so forth. Both tendencies –pleasing advertisers and being professional—are not productive to environmental journalism as environmental theme stems from civic militancy (Dornelles, 2008) not political party nor industrial militancy. Masduki (2009) noted sensationalizing tendency of the mainstream media toward environmental issues has left the publics with questions like how to deal with the problems.

The systematization of environmental journalists' challenges is below.

**Table 2. The Types of Challenges Faced by Environmental Journalists**

Type	Aspects
Individual Challenge	The knowledge, competence and skills of the journalists
Substantial Challenge	The complexity of environmental issues
	The character of environmental issue
Internal Challenge	Intervention of Owners
	Newsroom Management Policy
	Editorial Policy
	Capacity Composition of the Editorial Members
External Challenge	Access to Sources/Data: Government, NGO, Industry, Community, Experts
	Quality of Sources/Data: Government, NGO, Industry, Community, Experts
	Cooperation with Environmental Protection NGO
	Censorships & Threatening
	Press Law & Law Enforcement
	The Role of Environmental Journalist Association
	Public Attraction to News

Individual challenge is barrier coming from the personal abilities of the journalists. Substantial challenge refers to the difficulties led by the essence of the topic and values or

ideology embedded in the “environmental journalism.” Internal challenge is the burdens that are sourced from the internal organization of the media which encompasses intervention of

owner, newsroom management policy, editorial policy, and capacity composition of the editorial members. External challenge is about the external socio-political factors that are potentially negatively influencing the process of the news making.

## 2. Method

This research employs survey to the members of the Society of Indonesia's Environmental Journalist (SIEJ). The members of SIEJ as claimed by the former chief of SIEJ IGG Maha Adi are more than 400 peoples from all around Indonesia. With margin of error 5% and confidence level of 95%, the sample size should be 140 respondents.

The questionnaires were distributed online through *surveymonkey.org* and offline to the members of SIEJ who attended the annual meeting of SIEJ on 6-7 September 2016 in Bogor. The process of questionnaires distribution took two weeks from 1- 12 September 2016. There were 19 completed questionnaires used in the discussion. While this paper is written, the questionnaires distribution remain not finished yet.

To give depth to the research, online interviews were also conducted to several environmental journalists such as IGG Maha Adi (*Ekuatorial.com* and former chief of SIEJ), Marwan Azis (*founder of beritalingkungan.com*), Agung Riyadi (*founder of villagerspost.com*) and Ryan Dagur (*UCANews.com/ winner of Environmental Journalism Awards 2015*). The interviews are especially focused on the challenges and online practices of environmental journalists.

## 3. Result and discussion

The respondents of the survey are the active members of the Society of Indonesia Environmental Journalists (SIEJ). They attended the national meeting of SIEJ in Bogor in early September 2016. As they are active members of SIEJ, they more intensely exchange ideas and information between themselves about the issues in environmental journalism in Indonesia compared to others who are not ones.

Having based on the temporary survey results, there are at least three bold facts: the environmental journalists mostly master journalism through training and self-education; they are sufficiently competence in transfer, technical, and expertise; and challenges in environmental journalism are mostly coming from internal and external organizations, not the journalists themselves.

### 3.1. The Profiles: Environmental Journalists Mostly Not Studying Journalism in Higher Education but Got Trainings from Many Institutions.

The educational background of surveyed environmental journalists might reflect the general fact of Indonesia's journalists. Although they are mostly graduated from higher education institution, most environmental journalists did not take journalism as their major. They have mastered their journalistic skills through self-taught (reading foreign sources), joining trainings conducted by national and international journalists association or other external institutions (see Table 3). The survey also shows not all environmental journalists ever got trainings from their media. This might be caused by several probabilities: the media does not conduct the training, they did not join the training in the meant time, nor they did not follow the training in recent media but in former media.

**Table 3. The Education and Training Background of Environmental Journalists** (sample: 20)

No	Statements of Education and Training	Yes	No
1	Graduated from higher education institution.	89,5%	10,5%
2	Studying journalism in higher education institution.	26,3%	73,7%
3	Reading foreign references in order to extend my knowledge in Journalism.	68,4%	31,6%
4	Mastering my journalistic skills by joining training conducted by external institutions.	94,7%	5,3%
5	Got journalism training from the media institution that employs me.	52,6%	47,4%
6	Got journalism training from the national association of environmental journalists.	94,7%	5,3%
7	Got journalism training from the international association of environmental journalists.	42,1%	57,9%

Most of the surveyed environmental journalists are familiar with online platform of environmental news as their media organizations might have online and traditional platforms or online-only platform. It is almost impossible for

the journalists not to report for online platform as seen on the Table 4. There are no environmental journalists nowadays report only for electronic or print platforms.

**Table 4. Media Institution Types of the Survey Sample** (sample: 20)

Answer Options	Response Percent
Only online part of media corp.	31,6%
Print and Online	42,1%
Only electronic	0,0%
Electronic and online	0,0%
Only in online-only new sites	26,3%
National indexing news sites	0,0%
International indexing sites	0,0%
Online discussion forum	0,0%

The environmental issues covered by Indonesia environmental journalists are various. The topics received high attentions by the surveyed environmental journalists are ranging from forestry resources, biodiversity, water

resources exploitation, flood controlling and anticipation, until illegal animal trading (see Table 4). The journalists frequently reported other issues such as mangrove conservation, community health until irrigation system.

**Table 5. Topics Covered by the Environmental Journalists** (sample: 20)

Answer Options	Response Percent
Forestry resources	94,7%
Biodiversity	84,2%
Water resources exploitation	78,9%
Flood Controlling and Anticipation	78,9%
Climate Change	78,9%
Air/Soil/Water Pollution	73,7%
Illegal Animal Trading	73,7%
Mangrove Conservation	63,2%
Community Health	63,2%
Water Management and Conservation	57,9%
Community Lifestyle	52,6%
Seashore Management	52,6%
Irrigation System	36,8%

The former chief of SIEJ Maha Adi claimed that the variety of environmental topics in local media is not different from issues shared in global arena since local journalists are able to advance their knowledge through browsing the information online<sup>3</sup>.

### 3.2. The Competence: Highly transfer, technical, and expertise competency of the environmental journalists

The transfer competence of environmental journalists cover language skills, news format skills (in-depth, straight, and feature) and delivery skills. The data in Table 6 shows that environmental journalists claim they pose mostly high and some average in all transfer competence skills (Table 6).

**Table 6. Transfer Competence of Environmental Journalists** (sample: 20)

No	Statements of Transfer Competence	Responses of Values				
		None	Low	Average	High	Very High
1	My ability in the structure of Indonesian language.	0%	0%	11,8%	82,4%	5,9%
2	My skills in using Indonesian words variously.	0%	0%	11,8%	76,5%	5,9%
3	My skills in using the rhetoric in Indonesian.	0%	5,9%	17,6%	70,6%	5,9%
4	My skills in composing straight news.	0 %	5,9%	11,8%	82,4%	0,0%
5	My skills in composing in-depth news.	0 %	5,9%	11,8%	82,4%	0,0%
6	My skills in composing features.	0 %	0,0%	11,8%	88,2%	0,0%
7	My skills in adapting stories into the profiles of the readers.	0 %	6,3%	18,8%	75,0%	0%

Technical competence consists of the ability of using software and hardware technology. The software is word processing, number processing, Power Point software, and statistical software, content management system (CMS) of blog or website, and editorial management system. The hardware is photo and video camera technologies. Having based on the data in Table 7, environmental journalists are totally familiar with word processing software. They are also mostly engaged with video camera. More than half of surveyed journalists claim they are able to use number processing software and Power Point Software, and

pictorial processing software. This facts indicate that environmental journalist have mastered basic technical competence required in their works. However, despite the emergence of online world which has become the home for viral videos, not all of the surveyed environmental journalists seem mastering video camera and also video processing software. This might be caused by the job division in editorial room which generally journalists do not record and edit video for reports. The unfamiliarity of online technology is also showed by less than half of population understands content management system of blog/website.

**Table 7. Technical Competence of Environmental Journalists** (sample: 20)

Answer Options	Response Percent
MS Word/ Word Processing Software	100,0%
MS Excel/Number Processsing Software	63,2%
Power Point Software	78,9%
Content Management System of Blog/Website	42,1%
Editorial Management System Software	10,5%
Statistical Software (i.e.SPSS)	0,0%
Pictorial Processing Software	57,9%
Video Processing Software	42,1%
Photo Camera	94,7%
Video Camera	42,1%

Adding to the technical competence of environmental journalists, much of online technological competence is related to the requirements needed to accomplish journalistic tasks whether need the online technological competence or no. The practices of environmental journalists depend on the editorial policy and online technological application of the media. If the editorial policy does need the environmental journalists to interact with the users and provide the platforms, the media will require the journalists to reply comments, answer incoming emails, and actively involved in online or offline discussions. However, according to Ryan Dagur, not every

media provides platform for the journalists to interact with the users<sup>4</sup>. For example, his media *UCANews.com* provides navigational interaction such as next to, back to top, one page reading. The navigational interactivity expands the reading experience of the users. But, *UCANews.com* does not provide functional interactivity for instance direct mail to editor, direct mail to writer, and bulletin board system. Those facts mean that the media does not support the journalists to actively interact with the users. In spite of that, the media where Ryan Dagur is working for do collect comments and feedbacks from the users and use them in the editorial meeting. This shows a small -but

important- step taken by the media in involving users in the news making. The policy also sends signal to the journalists to mind feedbacks and comments coming from the users.

3.2.1. Expertise Competence

Marwan Azis (*Beritalingkungan.com*) admits that environmental issues are very complicated<sup>5</sup>. One environmental incident can give huge impact to many environmental aspects

that need to be explained scientifically. He also stated environmental journalists need to understand public policy related to environmental, health, and indigenous knowledge. However, indeed, the quality of journalists' competency in those areas, he said, has to be improved. SIEJ, IGG Maha Adi added, exists to support the improvement of expertise competency of environmental journalists through trainings and reporting grants<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 8. Expertise Competence of Environmental Journalists** (sample: 20)

Statements of Expertise Competence	Responses of Values				
	None	Low	Average	High	Very High
Journalist knowledge in environmental sciences.	0,0%	0,0%	42,1%	57,9%	0,0%
Journalist knowledge in social sciences.	0,0%	0,0%	42,1%	57,9%	0,0%
Journalist knowledge on local culture.	0,0%	0,0%	42,1%	57,9%	0,0%
Journalist knowledge on health.	5,3%	10,5%	52,6%	31,6%	0,0%
Journalist knowledge on scientific method.	0,0%	10,5%	47,4%	42,1%	0,0%
Journalist knowledge on relevant sources.	0,0%	0,0%	26,3%	73,7%	0,0%

Despite of the recommendation from Marwan Azis, some of the surveyed environmental journalists claim that their expertise competence in environmental science, social science, local culture and relevant sources are high. Their expertise competence in average levels are only knowledge on health and scientific sciences.

The last competence is related to the online technology. The online technology also affects the practices of environmental journalists in several aspects of competence such as news narrative, organizational structure, and relationships of newsroom and its publics. This survey reports the 'practiced competence' of the environmental journalists (Table 9). According to the Table 9, the practiced competence is not consistently migrating to fully online possible characters. Some dimensions such as linearity,

multimediality, way of communication and equality have shown that mostly or ore than 50 % of the environmental journalists practice online characters. They are used to write layered reports (linearity) and always use visual elements and internal and external hyperlinks (multimediality). The journalists claimed the way of communication has tended to be interactive between the journalists especially in answering email and comments on news from the users. However it remains questionable how the users can get the email address of the journalists as less than 20% of the journalists show their email address on the news they produced. More than 50% of environmental journalists claimed that they motivate users to write environmental articles and they themselves consider the proposed environmental coverings of the users.

**Table 9. The Impact of Online Technology to the Practices of Environmental Journalists (sample: 20)**

ASPECT	DIMENSIONS	STATEMENTS	Never	Rarely	Often	Always
<b>News Narrative</b>	<b>Use of language</b>	I create title for online news with a question tag.	33,3%	58,3%	8,3%	0,00%
	<b>Linearity</b>	I create long report in layers/chunks of environmental news.	8,3%	41,7%	8,3%	41,7%
	<b>Multi-mediality</b>	I add photo/ other visual element in my online environmental report.	0,00%	8,3%	8,3%	83,3%
		I use hyperlink to connect my online environmental report to internal article related to my news.	16,7%	16,7%	16,7%	50,0%
		I use hyperlink to connect my online environmental report to external article related to my news.	25,0%	25,0%	8,3%	41,7%
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	<b>Economic</b>	I produce 'advertorial' (advertisement-editorial).	66,7%	25,0%	0,00%	8,3%
		I produce online environmental news by considering the most used words online.	66,7%	16,7%	8,3%	8,3%
	<b>Hierarchy</b>	I upload my environmental report without the editing from the editor.	66,7%	8,3%	8,3%	16,7%
	<b>Newsroom Management</b>	I only produce environmental report for online format.	41,7%	33,3%	8,3%	16,7%
<b>Relationships of News organizations-public</b>	<b>Way of communication</b>	I show my email address on the environmental news I produced.	66,7%	16,7%	0,00%	16,7%
		I answer emails coming from users.	33,3%	16,7%	0,00%	50,0%
		I reply comments of the users in my produced environmental news.	16,7%	8,3%	16,7%	58,3%
	<b>Equality</b>	I motivate users to write article on environment.	25,0%	16,7%	8,3%	50,0%
		I consider news reporting proposals from online users on environmental topics.	16,7%	16,7%	50,0%	16,7%

While the practices of environmental journalists representing the news narrative and the relationships between news organizations and their publics may have adapted to online culture, the practices of environmental journalism representing the organizational structure may have not shown any significant

changes. The environmental journalist claimed to follow traditional pathway in economic aspect of online media which is preventing journalists from becoming the marketing of news content, for example writing advertorial or considering the most used words in online word in producing environmental reporting. The

journalists also retained the hierarchical news organization in which the editor's roles remain crucial in editing news. Much of surveyed journalists are also assigned to report not only to report for online but also for other platforms.

### *3.3. The Challenges: Intertwined Individual, Substantial, External and Internal Factors*

The challenges of environmental journalists seem mostly come from many directions such as individual, substantial, external and internal challenges. There are some perceptions coming from the surveyed journalists that need to be underlined. Mostly the environmental journalists agree that the skills of Indonesia's environmental journalists are low. In the same time, they also perceive that environmental news is complex. The combination of both challenges of course makes the journalistic work look more complicated. IGG Maha Adi (*Equatorial.com*) admitted that without sufficient skills, environmental issues which are inherently complex will become more challenging for the journalists<sup>7</sup>. Different from some emerging academic opinion about objectivity cannot be applied to environmental journalism, the all the surveyed journalists think that objectivity should be grasped in environmental journalism (Table 10).

External challenges investigated consists of governmental bodies, Non-Governmental Organization, industry, community/society, and expert groups. Generally, the surveyed journalists agree that industrial sectors more contributing to the numbers of challenges, such as the industry do not open to the journalists to access the data of environmental impact. The journalists also count that reluctance of industry to give access for journalists to its impacted location as

another challenge. Industry is also perceived by the journalists has chance to threaten the media about the content of its report. The mutual relationships between the media and the industry also become the challenge for the journalists. Although there is a firewall between editorial and advertisement in media institution, in fact, the criticisms of media towards industry cannot be taken easy by the industry according to IGG Maha Adi<sup>8</sup>.

In the other hand, expert group, governmental bodies, non-governmental organization and are perceived by the journalists more cooperative in sharing information than the industry. However, it also comes with some notes. Half of the surveyed journalists think that the numbers of experts on environmental issues are limited. On this issue, Marwan Azis stated that there are actually many local academics and researchers that are available to give the statements to the journalists<sup>9</sup>. However, the journalists do not always spend more time to trace the existing expert in universities or research bodies. The NGO is perceived as giving more open access to its data for the journalists. This seems understandable since NGO in environmental protection needs journalists to communicate their messages. As there is close mutual needs between NGO and environmental journalists, it seems very logical and natural for the journalists to ask the NGO to engage the journalists in their environmental communication planning. The former chief of SIEJ IGG Maha Adi mentioned the idea in the interview. He said that NGOs should involve them in their environmental communication planning as the cooperation can serve the mission of the NGOs better than without it<sup>10</sup>. Although governmental body might have not become challenge, surveyed environmental journalists are mostly agree that the law enforcement and regulation are still weak.

**Table 10. Challenges of Environmental Journalists**

No	Aspects of Challenges	Questions	Responses				
			VNA	NA	Ntl	A	VA
1	Individual	The skill of Indonesia's environmental journalists is low.	0%	21%	16%	53%	11%
2	Substantial	The complexity of environmental news is high.	0%	0%	0%	84%	16%
3	Substantial	Objectivity is not for environmental journalism.	11%	47%	5%	37%	0%
4	External: Access to Expert Information	Scientific information on environmental problems is not available in Indonesia.	5%	37%	26%	32%	0%
5		The numbers of experts on environmental issues are limited.	5%	26%	16%	53%	0%
6	External: Quality of Expert Sources	The experts/academics provide contradictive evidence to each other on environmental issues.	0%	16%	42%	42%	0%
7	External: Access to NGO Information	Non-governmental organization do not share environmental data they have.	0%	58%	16%	26%	0%
8	External: Cooperation with Environmental NGO	Non-governmental organization do not engage journalists in planning its environmental communication.	0%	26%	26%	47%	0%
9	External: Access to governmental information	Governmental bodies do not open access to their environmental information.	11%	21%	63%	5%	0%
10	External: Access to industrial information	Industries do not open access to the data of the impact of their activities to the environment.	0%	11%	11%	58%	21%
11		Industrial source does not give journalist opportunity to observe a definite location.	0%	16%	0%	68%	16%
12	External: Access to societal information	Societal source does not give information.	5%	68%	16%	11%	0%
13		Societal source does not give journalist opportunity to observe a definite location.	5%	58%	26%	11%	0%
14	External: Censorships by governmental body	Governmental official conducts censor to the content of environmental news before the news is published/broadcast/uploaded.	5%	58%	32%	5%	0%
15	External: Support from NGO	Support coming from environmental journalist association in Indonesia to develop journalism quality remains weak.	0%	37%	32%	26%	5%
16	External: Censorship and threatening by industry	Some industrial peoples threaten media not to publish environmental news in certain issues.	0%	37%	21%	37%	5%
17		The close proximity of media management with the industries burden the publishing of environmental news.	0%	16%	16%	63%	5%
18		Some industrial peoples want media to clarify certain environmental news.	5%	16%	11%	58%	11%
19		Some groups conduct physical abuse to environmental journalists of Indonesia.	16%	32%	26%	16%	11%
20	External: Regulation & Law Enforcement	The law enforcement to protect the safety of environmental journalists of Indonesia is still weak.	0%	0%	11%	63%	26%
21		Article 310 (1) of KUHP on "libel" threaten the freedom of the press of environmental journalists.	5%	16%	5%	53%	21%
22		Article 27 (3) of UU ITE on "insult content" threaten the freedom of the press of environmental journalists.	5%	16%	16%	47%	16%

No	Aspects of Challenges	Questions	Responses				
			VNA	NA	Ntl	A	VA
23	External: Public Attraction	Environmental news is not attracting advertisements.	5%	16%	42%	26%	11%
24		Audience is not attracted to environmental news.	0%	37%	26%	37%	0%
25		Environmental news produced by citizen journalists in online media reduce the interests of audience to access environmental news produced by professional journalists.	5%	47%	37%	5%	5%
26	Internal: Editorial Management	My media does not give a special training for journalists to cover environmental issues.	0%	16%	21%	47%	16%
27		My media does not support journalist to investigate environmental issues.	0%	47%	21%	21%	11%
28		My media does not develop journalists specializing in environmental issues.	0%	32%	26%	37%	5%
29	Internal: Editorial Policy	The space available in my media for publishing environmental news is insufficient.	0%	21%	16%	47%	16%
30		The available time to cover environmental issues is not sufficient.	0%	0%	11%	74%	16%
31		Editorial policy wants environmental report started with actual environmental disaster.	5%	32%	26%	26%	11%
32	Internal: Censorships by media owner	Media owner conducts censor to the content of environmental news before the news is published/broadcast/uploaded.	0%	58%	26%	16%	0%
33		Media owner threatens the journalist after the environmental news published/broadcast/uploaded.	5%	53%	32%	11%	0%

The very not a real barrier in environmental journalism is the online media focusing on environmental issues. Online citizen media covering the news is not considered as the problem for legacy environmental journalism (Table 10).

Online platform becomes the new hope for the professional journalists to cover environmental issues. It becomes a new frontier in several ways. First, it can be a space for the professional journalists to post their environmental reports that are not welcome in mainstream media<sup>11</sup>. Admitted by Marwan Azis, the mutual relationships between industry and mainstream legacy media have indirectly caused psychological barrier for the journalists to cover environmental issues caused by the industry. By being online, journalists can cover issues that can attract niche interests on environment and the business model of online media can be

arranged into the way that does not rely on big corporations as what Marwan Azis has conducted in *beritalingkungan.com*. *Mongabay.co.id* has also become the important source for Indonesians who want to access alternative information and news on environment<sup>12</sup>. Second, online platform provide alternative space for the journalists to connect with the citizens and develop the same field of interests for example as conducted by Agung Riyadi, *Villagerspost.com* journalist who also initiated *Villagerpost.com*. Third, the online platform gives space for the citizen journalists to channel their local voices globally for example *Alamsulawesi.net*.

The most agreed in internal challenges are the insufficiency of reporting time, the lack of publishing spaces, and the absence of media in conducting special training for the journalists

and developing journalists specializing in environmental issues (Table 10). Marwan Azis testified that mainstream media does not invest in journalists skills and capacities in environmental reporting as this issue is not constantly attracting public discourses in Indonesian context<sup>13</sup>. It highly depends on the major occurrences happening in Indonesia. This way of thinking, added IGG Maha Adi, is not correct as environmental journalism can also present the upcoming threat and crises<sup>14</sup>. In addition, assigning a special journalists for long time of period will harm the editorial process as there will only be limited numbers of journalists who master issues in environment<sup>15</sup>.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The media conglomeration, freedom of the press, and emerging online technology have shaped and challenged Indonesia's environmental journalists in certain ways. This research does not show the direct influence amongst the factors to the practices of Indonesia's environmental journalists. It shows the contemporary practices especially the online practices, the competence of environmental journalists and the challenges faced by them. Related to the media conglomeration, many of the surveyed journalists produce news for different platforms. Freedom of the press, although the regulation has guaranteed it, there are some other regulations perceived by the environmental journalists as threatening the environmental reporting. Law enforcement is also considered weak and thus threaten the practices of environmental journalism. The online technology may limitedly affect the practices of environmental reporters. It may affect environmental reporters at the aspects of narrative structure and relationships between news organization and the publics. Meanwhile, the environmental reporters testified that organizational structures remain hierarchical,

support journalists to create multi platforms products, and retain firewall between the business and editorial divisions.

The challenges of environmental journalism have changed. During the New Order, the challenge came from governmental and societal sectors. Nowadays, the challenges are mostly coming from industrial sector. Industrial challenge takes example in several forms such as threatening journalists through using some articles in regulation that anti freedom of the press, preventing journalists accessing internal data and observe industrial sites, and maintaining mutual relationships between industry and the business aspect of legacy media. The online platform, however, has provided alternative space for regular and citizen journalists to cover environmental issues although the business model still needs to be designed well.

The limitation of the research is since there are very limited numbers of completed questionnaires, this survey report might not sufficiently represent the general perceptions of the populations towards the statements. However, the all respondents who completed the questionnaires are the active managers and members of SIEJ who are intensely engaged in SIEJ activities and also environmental reporting. Therefore, their answers might represent the general views of SIEJ members.

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## NOTES:

1. A French journalist has been banned to visit Indonesia after his report on West Papua broadcast in late 2015 although the government has allowed any foreign journalists to visit West Papua since months earlier in the same year (*Tempo*, 2016; *Vice News*, 2015; HRW, 2015). *Koran Tempo* who reported illegal logging by a major company was hauled into court and forced to pay USD 24.000 fine for defamation charges (Simon, 2009).
2. Professionalism competence is discussed in other paper which is entitled "Indonesia's Environmental Journalists Online: Shifting Roles and Practices" presented in Asian Media and Communication Congress in UMY, 27-29 October 2016.
3. Based on interview at SIEJ head office in Jakarta on Wednesday, August 10, 2016.
4. According email interview to Ryan Dagur on August 2016.
5. Based on interview at SIEJ office in Jakarta, on Wednesday, 10 August 2016.
6. Based on interview at SIEJ office in Jakarta, on Wednesday, 10 August 2016.
7. Based on interview at SIEJ office in Jakarta, on Wednesday, 10 August 2016.
8. Based on interview at SIEJ office in Jakarta, on Wednesday, 10 August 2016.
9. Based on interview at SIEJ office in Jakarta, on Wednesday, 10 August 2016.
10. Based on interview at SIEJ office in Jakarta, on Wednesday, 10 August 2016.
11. Interview at the SIEJ office in Jakarta, Wednesday, August 10, 2016.
12. Interview at the SIEJ office in Jakarta, Wednesday, August 10, 2016.
13. Interview at the SIEJ office in Jakarta, Wednesday, August 10, 2016.
14. Interview at the SIEJ office in Jakarta, Wednesday, August 10, 2016.
15. Interview at the SIEJ office in Jakarta, Wednesday, August 10, 2016.

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