

Navigating Challenges and Transforming Radio Journalism in Indonesia: from New Order Control to Reform Opportunities

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Abstract

Introduction: The evolution of radio journalism in Indonesia provides critical insights into its historical, technological, cultural, and political significance. As a medium, radio has been a cornerstone of public discourse and democratization, particularly during transformative periods such as the Reform Era. This study examines the evolution and contemporary challenges of radio journalism, with a specific focus on the operational realities of private radio stations in Indonesia.

Methods: This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining in-depth interviews with radio managers and surveys targeting radio station managers. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the sustainability, quality, and adaptability of radio journalism.

Findings: The findings indicate that increased press freedom has facilitated more diverse and independent journalistic practices. However, the sector faces significant challenges in adapting to the demands of a rapidly evolving media ecosystem. Digital disruption has created an urgent need for multi-platform strategies, yet many stations lack the technical expertise and resources required for full adaptation. Additionally, the scarcity of trained journalists and editorial teams limits the production of high-quality, independent journalism, undermining public trust in radio as a credible medium.

Originality: This study presents a groundbreaking exploration of the evolution of radio journalism in Indonesia, offering a comprehensive perspective that seamlessly intertwines its historical roots with the pressing challenges of the modern media era. By examining the sector's regulatory and economic pressures, it sheds light on the structural and operational hurdles faced by radio journalism while uncovering innovative strategies for navigating the disruptive forces of digital transformation.

Keywords: Digital Disruption, Media Sustainability, Press Freedom, Radio Journalism, Indonesia.

Introduction

Radio has long been a significant medium, shaping societal connections and influencing public discourse through its adaptability and real-time reach (Jauert et al., 2017). Since its inception by Guglielmo Marconi, milestones like the inaugural Radio Vatican broadcast in 1931 (Raboy, 2016; Raviart & Watkins, 2024) have cemented radio's role as a bridge between society and social realities. Figures such as David Sarnoff and John Reith (Moe, 2009) emphasized broadcasting's role in educating, informing, and fostering public engagement, framing journalism as a democratic practice. Radio journalism remains central to this mission, offering high-quality, accurate, and

independent information that underpins democratic principles (Schudson, 2008). By acting as a watchdog of power and amplifying marginalized voices, radio journalism fosters accountability and inclusive discourse, affirming its enduring significance in shaping informed public opinion.

In Indonesia, radio has been both a driver and a mirror of societal change, playing a pivotal role during historic moments such as the nation's fight for independence and the Reform Era of 1998. Its adaptability and immediacy have made radio a unique platform for fostering public discourse and supporting democratic engagement, even amid the rise of new media platforms (Siregar, 2001; Hill & Sen, 2005; Kitley, 2000). Radio journalism remains central to its significance, amplifying critical voices, documenting societal transformations, and sustaining informed dialogue (Jonathans, 2006). However, challenges such as historical legacies, regulatory constraints, technological disruptions, and economic pressures continue to shape the medium's trajectory, impacting its ability to meet modern demands and future expectations.

Indonesian radio journalism stands at a critical juncture, facing challenges from regulatory constraints, technological disruptions, resource limitations, and shifting audience preferences. Once pivotal in fostering public discourse and shaping national identity--particularly during the independence struggle and the Reform Era--radio's role has diminished with the rise of digital media (Hill & Sen, 2005; Kitley, 2000). To sustain its relevance as a credible medium for public engagement and cultural expression, concerted efforts are needed to foster innovation, strengthen institutional support, and align academic and professional practices with the demands of Indonesia's evolving media landscape.

Government policies and regulations further complicate the landscape for radio journalism. Strict regulatory frameworks, particularly under the New Order regime, stifled editorial independence by mandating rebroadcasts of state--controlled Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) content and limiting private stations' ability to produce original news (Sen & Hill, 2000). Although the Broadcasting Law of 2002 brought greater press freedom and diversity, the legacy of state control continues to influence radio journalism, creating operational challenges for stations attempting to balance independence with compliance (Kitley, 2000; Sen & Hill, 2000; Jurriëns, 2009). These regulations also impact content diversity and ownership structures, often steering public discourse in favor of specific political narratives.

Technological disruption poses another critical issue. With the rise of digital media, radio has struggled to maintain its relevance as a primary source of news. The shift to multi-platform broadcasting has widened audience reach but has also diluted the diversity of content and created a reliance on less resource-intensive formats, such as entertainment, over investigative or critical journalism. As Lawrence K. Grossman (1998) pointed out, the decline of radio journalism's dominance is part of a broader media transformation, raising concerns about whether radio can sustain its role in an increasingly competitive and digitally fragmented market.

Maintaining high-quality journalism is a persistent challenge. Radio's potential to document pivotal events and engage listeners relies on skilled storytelling and credible reporting. However, many stations lack the resources or expertise to meet these standards, particularly in regions where financial constraints and human resource shortages are acute. The dependency on external content, limited newsroom capacities, and a scarcity of trained journalists impede the production of in-depth, impactful news, leaving radio journalism vulnerable to losing its credibility and influence (Jonathans, 2006).

This study explores the transformation of radio journalism in Indonesia, tracing its evolution from the New Order era to the Reform Era and examining the impacts of increased press freedom and shifting broadcasting policies. It focuses on the operational realities faced by private radio stations, highlighting critical challenges such as digital disruption, limited human resources, and financial constraints. By analyzing the perspectives of station managers and owners, the research aims to uncover key factors influencing the sustainability, quality, and adaptability of radio journalism in Indonesia's rapidly changing media landscape.

The study situates the evolution of radio journalism within a broader historical, technological, cultural, and political-economic context. Radio has played a transformative role in Indonesia's sociopolitical development, particularly during pivotal periods like the Reform Era, where it emerged as a crucial medium for public discourse and democratization. This marked a departure from earlier periods when radio was utilized as a tool for autocratic propaganda, including during the Japanese occupation and the New Order. The historical role of radio mirrors the influence of the early 20th-century Indonesian press, which fostered national awakening and cultural resistance against European colonial dominance. Together, these historical trajectories underscore radio's foundational role in shaping national identity and driving societal change (Masduki, 2023; Sukmayadi, 2024).

The historical development of radio journalism in Indonesia reveals a dynamic interplay between media and governance. During the colonial era, radio served as a medium of cultural resistance and a tool for fostering national identity, rallying support for independence movements (Lindsay, 1997). This transformative role persisted through the New Order period, albeit under significant constraints. The government's centralized control over private radio broadcasting stifled editorial freedom, requiring stations to rebroadcast content from the state-controlled Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI). These regulatory measures reduced radio journalism's capacity to serve as an independent platform for public discourse, highlighting the enduring tension between state interests and media autonomy.

The advent of digital technology has significantly reshaped traditional radio journalism, necessitating rapid adaptation to maintain relevance. The integration of multi-platform broadcasting has extended radio's reach but has also sparked debates about content diversity, challenging the foundational principles of Indonesian broadcasting law. Furthermore, the increasing prominence of sports broadcasting highlights the intersection of education, entertainment, and symbolic nationalism in public service radio, illustrating how technological advancements have expanded radio's societal functions while redefining audience engagement (Singarimbun et al., 2023; Masduki, 2017).

Cultural and societal factors also play a crucial role in shaping Indonesia's radio journalism. Post-Reformasi radio has adopted dialogical approaches, emphasizing audience participation and breaking free from the monologic traditions of the New Order's authoritarian culture. Additionally, local cultural values, such as those derived from Javanese traditions, continue to influence journalistic practices, creating unique blends of global journalism standards and local sociocultural norms. These factors underscore the cultural depth and societal relevance of Indonesian radio journalism, making it a rich subject for scholarly exploration (Jurriëns, 2006; Syamsiyah Lestari Sjafiie et al., 2022).

Economic and political dynamics further enrich the study of radio journalism in Indonesia. The expansion of business-oriented radio networks reflects the capitalist

underpinnings of media governance, while oligarchic media ownership and party cartelization systematically shape political content. These structural factors highlight the interplay between economic power and political influence in shaping the governance and editorial independence of radio journalism. By examining these interconnected dimensions, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of the challenges and strategies that define the evolution of radio journalism in Indonesia, offering valuable insights into its enduring significance in the nation's media ecosystem (Masduki, 2022; Ahmad, 2020).

The economic and political dimensions of radio journalism further enrich its complexity. The proliferation of business-oriented radio networks reflects the capitalist underpinnings of media governance, while oligarchic media ownership and party cartelization shape political news production and editorial independence. Regulatory frameworks, including the Broadcasting Law of 2002, have provided opportunities for greater autonomy but have also imposed structural constraints that complicate efforts to produce independent journalism. These dynamics highlight the interplay between economic power, political influence, and media governance in defining radio journalism's trajectory (Masduki, 2022; Ahmad, 2020). By examining these interconnected dimensions, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of the challenges and strategies that define the evolution of radio journalism in Indonesia, offering valuable insights into its enduring significance in the nation's media ecosystem.

This study explores the transformation of radio journalism in Indonesia, focusing on its evolution from the restrictive New Order era to the more liberal Reform Era. It examines the influence of press freedom and broadcasting policy changes on journalistic practices (Sen & Hill, 2000; Masduki, 2001) while identifying challenges such as digital disruption, human resource limitations, and financial constraints. By tracing the historical development of radio journalism and evaluating the impact of regulatory frameworks and technological advancements, the research aims to understand how these factors have shaped editorial independence, operational dynamics, and audience engagement.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive exploration of radio journalism in Indonesia, bridging historical and contemporary perspectives to address the sector's challenges and opportunities. Unlike previous studies that focus narrowly on specific aspects such as the adoption of Western journalism practices (Mughtar & Hanitzsch, 2013), digital disruption (Muslikhin et al., 2023), data-driven journalism (Hidayat & Hidayat, 2020) podcast news (Snoussi et al., 2024), and the quality of radio journalism (Spurk & Katunzi, 2024), this research provides a holistic analysis by examining the historical evolution of radio journalism, the impact of regulatory and economic pressures, and the industry's adaptation to technological advancements.

This study fills a critical gap in understanding the evolution and challenges faced by radio journalism in Indonesia, a medium that has historically played a transformative role in public discourse and democratic engagement. From its instrumental role in the nation's independence struggle to its influence during the Reform Era of 1998, radio journalism has been central to public communication. However, the rise of digital platforms and changing audience habits now threaten its relevance and sustainability, making it essential to examine how the medium has adapted to these shifts to ensure its continued impact.

Methods

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies to provide a holistic understanding of the evolution and challenges of radio journalism in Indonesia. The choice of mixed methods is driven by the need to capture both the nuanced, context-specific insights offered by qualitative research and the broader patterns and measurable trends facilitated by quantitative analysis (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative insights are gathered through in-depth interviews with radio managers and media observers, capturing detailed, context-specific perspectives on historical, regulatory, and cultural dimensions. Quantitative data is collected via structured surveys involving 38 private radio station managers or owners across Indonesia.

The selection of 38 private radio station owners and managers across Indonesia as participants is scientifically justified by their strategic roles in overseeing operational, managerial, and content-related decisions within the industry. These individuals possess firsthand insights into the challenges and opportunities unique to private radio stations, including regulatory compliance, content production, audience engagement, and financial sustainability--key areas directly relevant to the research objectives. The chosen sample reflects a geographically diverse representation, capturing variations across regional market dynamics and audience preferences, which are critical for understanding the broader landscape of radio journalism in Indonesia. Moreover, focusing on private stations emphasizes the competitive pressures and adaptive strategies characteristic of this sector, complementing the study's aim to explore the evolving role of radio journalism.

Results

During the New Order era in Indonesia, the landscape of radio journalism experienced significant control and transformation under an authoritarian regime that aimed to use media as a tool for government propaganda and public mobilization. The early 1960s saw the rise of '*radio amatir*' or amateur radio stations, often driven by young activists and students who sought an alternative to the limited and censored content provided by the state-run Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI). These stations offered alternative sources of information and popular Western music, which were otherwise prohibited (Hill & Sen, 2005). Emerging amid political turbulence, particularly during the student movement in 1966, these amateur radio stations became voices of dissent against the Sukarno government and later channels of influence in the early years of Suharto's rule (Lindsay, 1997).

In the wake of Suharto's rise to power, the burgeoning private radio industry drew government scrutiny, and by 1970, regulations were introduced to curb its influence. Government Regulation No. 55/1970 strictly controlled non-government radio broadcasting, requiring content to serve educational, informational, and entertainment purposes without engaging in political activities. This policy change was part of the New Order's broader media strategy to stifle criticism and maintain a tight grip on public discourse. By requiring private stations to register as commercial entities, the government effectively eliminated '*radio amatir*' and replaced it with '*radio swasta*' (private radio), a term that distanced the industry from its grassroots roots and established a framework for state oversight (Armando, 2011).

As Suharto's regime consolidated power, the government tightened its hold on private radio broadcasting through additional regulations. In 1978, the Minister of Information issued Decree No. 24/Kep/Menpen, mandating private radio stations to relay

RRI news broadcasts and forbidding them from producing independent news content. The decree required private stations to broadcast RRI's news almost hourly, ensuring that state-controlled narratives dominated the airwaves. These stringent policies led many private stations to focus on 'soft' content or entertainment, which was less politically sensitive and complied with government restrictions. Consequently, radio journalism was marginalized, as private stations faced significant barriers to producing their own news content (Arifin B. H & Emka, 2010).

Under Indonesia's New Order regime, radio journalism was tightly controlled through government surveillance and censorship. Radio stations faced strict monitoring, with officials summoning station representatives for perceived violations and warning them against broadcasting political content or dissenting voices. For example, stations like CDBS FM in Bali and Smart Radio in Makassar were restricted in their programming, with limits on discussing political issues or including opposition perspectives. In Padang, stations such as Arbes and Dikara Bawana were subjected to additional scrutiny under the SARA Doctrine, which prohibited sensitive discussions on ethnicity, religion, race, and group issues. These examples reflect the extensive repression radio journalism faced, as the government used censorship and intimidation to suppress any content that could challenge the regime, stifling freedom of expression in the media landscape (Gazali, 2004).

Despite these constraints, some private radio stations managed to innovate within the confines of New Order policies. Notably, Radio Sonora and Radio Suara Surabaya adopted strategies to provide information under the guise of '*informasi*' rather than '*berita*' (news), subtly circumventing the state's restrictions on independent journalism. According to Viliny Lesmana (interview, 9/11/2023), established in 1972, Radio Sonora pioneered this approach by offering brief updates on local and international events, initially sourcing content from local newspapers and later from international news agencies like Reuters and AFP, thus becoming the first Indonesian private radio station to subscribe to foreign news sources. This innovation allowed Sonora to deliver prompt news updates, even providing live coverage of significant events such as the 1991 Gulf War--an achievement made possible by its access to global news feeds through the Kompas Gramedia Group.

Radio Suara Surabaya, founded in 1983, took a similar approach but placed a unique emphasis on community-driven journalism. It encouraged listeners to participate by sharing information, effectively laying the groundwork for early citizen journalism. This model allowed Radio Suara Surabaya to address local issues and provide a platform for public concerns, distinguishing it from other stations focused primarily on entertainment. This engagement with listeners fostered a participatory news culture that navigated the New Order's restrictions creatively, providing valuable information without directly contravening government policies (Hadi, 2012; Lesmana, 2020).

The formation of the Private Radio Broadcasters Association of Indonesia (PRSSNI) in 1974 further institutionalized the industry, albeit under government oversight. Initially intended to support private radio stations, PRSSNI later became a tool for the regime to consolidate control over the industry, especially after President Suharto's daughter, Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana, assumed leadership of the organization in the late 1980s (Sudibyoy & Patria, 2013). This shift exemplified the New Order's strategy of co-opting influential institutions to reinforce its authority, thereby further limiting the independence of private radio.

Under these restrictive conditions, radio journalism in Indonesia stagnated, as news content was reduced to routine announcements of official activities and scripted political messages. This lack of diversity and critical analysis in broadcast content led many Indonesians to seek objective and independent news from international sources like the BBC, ABC, and Radio Nederland. The New Order's policies, which prioritized state propaganda and national development goals over journalistic integrity, relegated radio to a secondary role in the broader media landscape, trailing behind other forms of journalism in its ability to deliver critical and timely information (Darmanto, interview 6/11/2023).

The New Order era was a period of heavy-handed regulation and centralized control that stifled the growth of independent radio journalism in Indonesia. However, the resilience and adaptability of certain private stations, such as Radio Sonora and Radio Suara Surabaya, demonstrate that innovative approaches were still possible within these constraints. These stations' creative responses to censorship laid the foundation for more dynamic and community-oriented forms of radio journalism that would later emerge in the Reform Era. Their legacy underscores the enduring potential of radio as a medium for public engagement and information dissemination, even under restrictive political regimes. The Reform Era, ushered in by the resignation of President Suharto in 1998, marked a transformative period for radio journalism in Indonesia. The liberalization of media laws, exemplified by Minister Muhammad Yunus Yosfiah's Circular Letter No. 134/SK/MENPEN 1998, reduced mandatory relays of state broadcasts and empowered private radio stations to produce independent news content (Masduki, 2001). This shift was further solidified by the Broadcasting Law No. 32 of 2002, granting radio stations greater editorial freedom and enabling a more dynamic and participatory culture of radio journalism. Private stations leveraged their immediacy and accessibility to cover political and social developments during the Reform Movement, fostering audience engagement through call-ins, talk shows, and interactive programming (Jonathans, 2006).

State-owned Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) underwent significant reforms during this period, transitioning from a government mouthpiece to a public broadcasting institution following the dissolution of the Department of Information in 1999. RRI expanded its regional programming and sought to reach remote areas through initiatives like the 'information security belt,' aimed at uniting Indonesia's diverse society (Jurriëns, 2009). Meanwhile, private networks such as KBR68H, established in 1999, embraced satellite technology to distribute news to partner stations nationwide, fostering a culture of high-quality, collaborative journalism (Santoso, 2006; Jurriëns & Kloet, 2007). Similarly, outlets like Elshinta innovated with 24-hour news formats, integrating citizen journalism through platforms like *'Info Dari Anda'* (Kurniawan & Loo, 2007; Hapsari, 2019).

However, the legacy of the New Order's restrictive policies continued to challenge private radio stations. Decades of reliance on RRI's relays left many stations ill-equipped to develop in-house journalistic capacities, creating persistent dependency on external content providers (Darmanto, interview 6/11/2023). Limited human resources, outdated infrastructure, and insufficient editorial governance further hindered the sector's ability to fully embrace its newfound freedoms. While private radio expanded its reach and programming diversity, it struggled to establish traditions of investigative journalism, leaving it less influential than print or television media in shaping public discourse or policy. Economic pressures compounded these challenges, as advertising revenue increasingly favored entertainment over news programming, undermining journalistic independence. Political and corporate influences occasionally skewed editorial content,

raising concerns about the objectivity of private radio. Even RRI, despite its reformation, faced criticism for residual biases and struggles to modernize its reporting styles (Kurniawan et al., 2022).

The Reform Era redefined radio journalism in Indonesia, shifting it from a tool of state propaganda to a platform for public engagement and democratization. Yet, the sector's potential remains underdeveloped, particularly in investigative reporting and its capacity to drive public discourse. To sustain its relevance, Indonesian radio must invest in training, technology, and infrastructure, while fostering a culture of independent and critical journalism. Strategic efforts are necessary to overcome the legacy of the New Order and ensure radio journalism thrives in Indonesia's dynamic media landscape.

The evolution of journalistic practices in Indonesia's radio industry reflects a broader cultural shift from the New Order's restrictive 'monologism,' which aimed to suppress audience engagement, toward a Bakhtinian concept of 'dialogism.' Dialogism, in this context, extends beyond basic dialogue to encompass the ideological transformation of participants, manifesting in interactive programming and the development of journalistic concepts, genres, and structures that enhance media literacy and public ideological awareness (Jurriëns, 2009). This transformation has redefined the relationship between media and society, fostering a participatory and critically engaged audience. The post-authoritarian era has been marked by significant growth and diversification in radio journalism. However, the industry continues to grapple with challenges stemming from the legacy of the New Order. Policies that required private radio stations to relay government-approved content from Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) fostered a culture of dependency on external sources, discouraging the development of in-house journalistic capabilities (Darmanto, interview 6/11/2023). Despite the liberalization of media laws during the Reform Era, which opened avenues for content diversification and editorial independence, many private stations remain unprepared to fully leverage these freedoms due to deficits in human resources, technology, and governance. Additionally, the lack of investment in investigative journalism has limited radio's influence compared to print and television. Investigative reporting, which has driven public discourse and policy changes in other media forms, remains underdeveloped in radio. This absence underscores the industry's struggle to establish itself as a platform for in-depth, impactful narratives.

As the media landscape evolves with advancements in digital technology and shifting audience expectations, radio journalism in Indonesia faces a pivotal moment. Strategic investment in training, technology, and infrastructure is essential to enhance in-house journalistic expertise and foster critical reporting. Addressing these structural and cultural challenges will enable radio to harness its potential as a credible and influential medium, reinforcing its role in democratic engagement and public discourse. With concerted efforts, radio journalism can overcome its historical constraints and adapt to meet the demands of modern audiences, ensuring its continued relevance in Indonesia's media ecosystem.

The survey of 38 private radio station owners and managers reveals key trends in news dissemination, newsroom structures, content formats, and digital convergence, providing a critical assessment of radio journalism in Indonesia. Among the surveyed stations, 45% primarily identified as News Radios, while 55% focused on alternative programming. Although 66% of stations provide news or informational content, 34% prioritize entertainment and lifestyle formats, highlighting a dual role for private radio.

This duality reflects the tension between upholding journalistic value and catering to audience demands for diverse, profit-driven programming.

Table 1. Type of news content of Radio Journalism Program in Indonesia

No.	Type of News Content	%
1.	News Bulletins	15
2.	Live Reporting	23
3.	Content from News Agencies or News Portals	25
4.	Relay or Rebroadcast Content	29
5.	Other Forms of News Programming	8
	Total	100

Note: The dominance of rebroadcasts and outsourced content in Indonesian radio journalism underscores a shift away from original reporting, with live reporting and news bulletins struggling to maintain prominence in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

Data on news content production underscores a significant reliance on external sources. Only 15% of news content is produced as in-house bulletins and 23% through live reporting. A substantial 54% comes from third-party providers, including 25% from news agencies or portals and 29% from relay or rebroadcast material. This dependency points to critical gaps in human resources and infrastructure, limiting the ability of stations to produce original, high-quality journalism. As a result, many stations function more as distributors of external content than as creators of independent reporting. Such reliance has implications for editorial independence, as content often mirrors the priorities of external providers rather than addressing local audience needs. This trend diminishes content diversity and constrains radio’s potential as an autonomous and credible news medium.

Table 2. Resource gaps and staffing limitations in Indonesian Radio Journalism

No.	Aspect	%	Implications
1.	Stations with Dedicated Newsrooms/Editorial Teams	54	Enables structured news production and improves reporting quality.
2.	Stations without Dedicated Newsrooms/Editorial Teams	46	Limits capacity for in-depth, high-quality reporting, impacting journalistic integrity.
	Total	100	

Note: The near-equal split between stations with and without dedicated newsrooms exposes a critical resource gap, underscoring a systemic challenge in upholding consistent journalistic standards across Indonesia's radio industry.

As shown in Table 2, the findings highlight a substantial resource gap within Indonesia’s radio journalism landscape, where only 54% of radio stations have dedicated newsrooms or editorial teams. This lack of structured editorial support in nearly half (46%) of the stations limits their capacity to produce in-depth, high-quality reporting, as editorial teams play a critical role in maintaining content accuracy, coherence, and relevance. Without these structures, the remaining stations may struggle to offer consistently reliable news, potentially compromising the journalistic integrity essential to their public service role.

Additionally, staffing constraints underscore the challenges facing radio journalism in Indonesia. Although 60% of stations employ journalists or reporters, a significant portion--40%--rely on non-journalistic staff to manage news segments--as shown in Table 3. This reliance on staff without formal journalistic training can weaken the credibility and quality of news output. Journalists bring essential skills in news gathering, source

verification, ethical standards, and analysis, which are pivotal for producing credible content. Staff without these competencies may inadvertently perpetuate misinformation or fail to provide the critical, in-depth reporting that audiences expect.

Table 3. Resource gaps and staffing limitations in Indonesian Radio Journalism

No.	Aspect	%	Implications
1.	Stations Employing Radio Journalists/Reporters	60	Supports credible news output with trained personnel in news gathering and analysis.
2.	Stations without Dedicated Journalistic Personnel	40	Relies on non-journalist staff, which may affect news quality and credibility.
Total		100	

Note: The stark divide between stations with trained journalists and those relying on non-journalist staff exposes a critical challenge to maintaining news credibility and quality in Indonesia's radio journalism landscape.

This scarcity of trained personnel also has implications for audience trust and engagement. Stations without professional journalists may be perceived as less credible or reliable, leading audiences to seek alternative, more reputable sources for their news. Furthermore, without the journalistic expertise required to address complex or sensitive topics, these stations might avoid investigative reporting or other challenging news formats, thereby limiting the diversity of content available to the public. The findings reveal a pressing need for investment in journalistic staffing and editorial structures across Indonesia's radio stations. Ensuring that more stations have access to dedicated newsrooms and trained journalists is essential for upholding journalistic standards, improving content quality, and fostering public trust. Addressing these gaps can strengthen the role of radio as a credible source of information, better positioning it to compete within the evolving media landscape.

The report also sheds light on digital convergence within the radio industry, with 70% of stations maintaining websites and engaging with audiences via social media, while 48% have expanded into podcasting and 35% have launched dedicated mobile applications. These findings highlight a proactive adaptation to digital consumption trends, where radio stations are diversifying their platforms to remain relevant in an increasingly digital media landscape. This shift toward digital platforms is essential for radio's survival and growth, as audiences increasingly consume content online and on-demand. The high level of digital engagement among these stations reflects an awareness of the need for multi-platform strategies to capture and retain audiences.

Table 4 highlights the primary challenges facing the radio industry today, with each category representing a percentage of respondents who identified it as a significant concern. Human resources emerged as the most pressing issue, with 39% of respondents highlighting difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled professionals capable of sustaining high-quality radio journalism. This shortage is compounded by the rapid rise of internet and social media disruption, identified by 32% of respondents, which shifts audience expectations toward more interactive and on-demand content, creating additional competition for traditional radio.

Table 4. The challenges of Radio Journalism in Indonesia

No.	Challenges	%
1.	Digital Disruption	32
2.	Human Resources Limitation	39

3.	The Quality of Journalism	10
4.	Economic Constrain	8
5.	Others	11
	Total	100

Note: The dominance of human resource shortages and digital disruption as key challenges exposes the urgent need for Indonesian radio journalism to adapt and innovate in the face of mounting pressures on its workforce and technological landscape.

Concerns over journalistic quality were cited by 10% of respondents, reflecting challenges in maintaining standards of integrity, professionalism, and content reliability in a fast-evolving media landscape. Financial challenges, specifically high operational costs coupled with low income, were noted by 8% of respondents. This economic strain particularly affects smaller stations, limiting their ability to invest in quality journalism. Finally, 11% of respondents cited various other challenges, including regulatory hurdles and technological limitations, adding further complexity to the sustainability and growth of radio as a relevant media format in today's digital environment.

The development of radio journalism in Indonesia, while historically vital to the country's media landscape, is currently facing significant challenges in adapting to modern media demands, with human resources being the most pressing issue. Nearly 40% of radio station managers surveyed reported difficulties in attracting and developing skilled talent capable of meeting the evolving needs of radio journalism. This shortage restricts stations' capacity for consistent, high-quality news production, as limited career advancement, low financial incentives, and a lack of appeal to younger generations lead many new entrants to leave the field early. Consequently, the future of the industry's workforce is at risk, highlighting an urgent need for strategies to present radio journalism as a relevant and attractive career path for young professionals (Gazali, 2004).

This talent gap is further aggravated by the broader trends within the Indonesian media landscape, where demand for digital and journalistic expertise has surged, making skilled personnel increasingly difficult to recruit and retain. Younger professionals, particularly those with digital skills, show a declining interest in traditional radio journalism, resulting in a limited talent pool for the industry. As a result, radio stations often struggle to uphold journalistic standards, with their existing staff lacking the training needed to adapt to both traditional broadcasting and the requirements of new media.

Gazali (2004) emphasizes that the development of human resources in radio journalism requires a combination of formal education and hands-on experience. However, many radio stations--particularly those in regional areas--face a stark gap between the current workforce's skills and the practical demands of radio journalism. This skills gap highlights the necessity for enhanced training programs, especially in areas like news management, live reporting, and conducting interviews, which are critical for sustaining high-quality news coverage. A lack of structured training further contributes to hesitation and low confidence among new journalists, impairing the reliability of news reporting. Moreover, loyalty and retention have become crucial in an industry constrained by a limited workforce. Building a supportive environment that offers professional growth opportunities can help maintain a committed workforce, which is essential for overcoming the challenges in regional and local contexts of Indonesian radio journalism.

Digital disruption has become a critical challenge for the Indonesian radio industry, with 31.6% of radio station managers identifying the rise of social media and online platforms as a significant obstacle. The rapid expansion of the internet has fundamentally

transformed audience expectations, with listeners now seeking instant, interactive, and visually engaging content. For radio, a traditionally auditory and one-directional medium, this shift necessitates a complete reimagining of audience engagement strategies. While multi-platform approaches integrating social media, podcasts, and streaming services are essential, resource limitations and a lack of digital expertise--particularly at regional stations--hinder these adaptations (Gazali, 2004).

The transition to a digital-first model demands more than technological upgrades; it requires a paradigm shift in organizational mindset. Historically, radio stations operated as isolated broadcasters focused on analogue formats, which now leave them ill-prepared to capture the attention of younger, digitally savvy audiences. Generation Z, for instance, prefers mobile-accessible platforms offering instant and visual content, pushing radio to innovate or risk obsolescence. However, outdated approaches and inadequate investments in digital training have left many stations struggling to adapt to evolving consumption habits (Hermida, 2010). Digital disruption also impacts radio's revenue streams, as advertisers increasingly favor social media for its precision targeting and cost efficiency. This shift places traditional radio at a disadvantage, further eroding its financial capacity to sustain high-quality journalism. The reduction in government-sponsored agendas and audiences' migration to alternative media exacerbate this decline in relevance (Moe, 2009).

To remain competitive, radio stations must adopt holistic digital strategies, leveraging digital tools and reimagining their roles as content providers. This includes embracing interactive formats, real-time analytics, and streaming services. However, entrenched mindsets and resource gaps continue to slow this transition. As Darmanto (interview 6/11/2023) notes, radio's survival hinges on its ability to pivot toward digital engagement while investing in digital journalism roles and training infrastructure. Without these efforts, the medium risks losing its position in Indonesia's rapidly evolving media landscape. Concerns over journalistic quality are pressing within Indonesia's radio industry, as noted by 10.5% of survey respondents who identified challenges in maintaining integrity, professionalism, and news accuracy. A shortage of skilled journalists capable of conducting in-depth interviews, live reporting, and effective news management weakens radio's role in delivering credible public service journalism. This issue is particularly pronounced in regional stations, where limited access to structured training programs and mentorship leaves new journalists without the necessary support to develop professional expertise. The disparity between the high demands of radio journalism and the current skill levels of personnel highlights broader issues within Indonesia's media sector, where traditional broadcasting methods often lag behind the standards required for modern, high-quality journalism.

The need for journalistic integrity and reliability is especially crucial in today's information landscape, where misinformation and sensationalism are rampant. Radio, a traditionally trusted medium, must maintain its reputation by upholding quality standards and offering content that stands out as credible. However, economic pressures and a limited pool of trained journalists often result in stations relying on non-journalistic staff or minimal editorial oversight, which can lead to superficial, inaccurate, or biased reporting. The increasing focus on entertainment programming, driven by profitability needs, often overshadows the production of quality news, diminishing radio's status as a reliable news source.

High-quality journalism in radio requires a commitment to accuracy, integrity, and journalistic ethics in the fast-paced environment of news broadcasting. Radio's unique

role as a conduit for information--from the government to the public and vice versa--places significant emphasis on transparency and the responsible handling of information. Ensuring the accuracy of content and adhering to ethical standards in both reporting and editing are critical aspects of radio journalism. To sustain its relevance, radio journalism must prioritize a check-and-recheck approach within the bounds of journalistic ethics, ensuring that listeners receive well-verified information.

Maintaining neutrality and transparency in radio journalism is another major challenge. As Vice Director of KG Radio Network, Viliny Lesmana (interview 9/11/2023) points out, running a news-oriented station incurs significant costs, particularly in salaries for a large team of reporters needed to cover diverse regions, especially if the station operates 18 to 24 hours per day. In contrast, entertainment-focused stations are often more economically viable, leading many to avoid the higher costs of news production. Radio Sonora, for example, employs five field reporters and seven newsroom staff to manage news, traffic updates, and other information. This structure underscores the need for managers with a deep understanding of media concepts and journalistic ethics, yet many stations lack this vision, viewing radio solely as an entertainment medium rather than a platform for news dissemination.

Financial challenges present a significant obstacle to the sustainability and quality of radio journalism in Indonesia. High operational costs and declining advertising revenues, cited by 7.9% of respondents, force many radio stations to reduce or eliminate news programming, shifting their focus to cheaper entertainment content to remain operational. This issue is particularly acute for small and regional stations, which lack the financial resilience and advertising support enjoyed by larger, urban-based networks. The financial strain has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which severely disrupted budgets and advertising revenues, with some stations experiencing declines of up to 70% (Viliny Lesmana, interview, 9/11/2023). Many stations, particularly smaller and independent ones, have been left with limited funds for essential functions such as personnel training and equipment maintenance. Declining radio listenership, estimated at around 19 million in 2018 by the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS), further compounds this issue, reducing advertising revenue and making it increasingly difficult for stations to sustain high-quality news content (Nielsen et al., 2020; Lotz, 2021).

Only a few stations, such as government-funded outlets, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI), and networked stations like KBR68H, have managed to navigate these challenges through diversified revenue streams or government support. Larger media networks such as Radio Suara Surabaya and the Sonora Group thrive due to strong affiliations and shared resources, but smaller stations face significant financial burdens. Broadcasting ten news reports daily, for example, can cost up to 1 million IDR, a financial strain that many cannot sustain (Darmanto, interview 6/11/2023).

Some stations have resorted to unconventional revenue strategies, such as selling traditional herbal remedies, to generate income. However, these measures highlight the need for more adaptable and sustainable business models. Many station owners prioritize profitability by focusing on music or entertainment formats, which are less costly and generate higher returns, often at the expense of news programming. This trend underscores the tension between financial viability and maintaining journalistic integrity, a balance that is critical to ensuring the survival of radio journalism in Indonesia (Darmanto, interview 9/11/2023). Economic recovery for the industry remains slow, with off-air events, a previously reliable source of income, still limited. Station closures, layoffs, and operational restructuring have become common, further challenging the

sector's ability to uphold journalistic standards. To address these financial constraints, the development of innovative business models is essential. Diversified revenue streams, partnerships, and government support can provide a lifeline for smaller stations while allowing them to balance profitability with their public service mission.

Discussion

Radio journalism in Indonesia faces a complex array of constraints and challenges that hinder its development and sustainability in an increasingly dynamic media landscape. As traditional broadcasting grapples with the rise of digital platforms, shifting audience preferences, and economic pressures, radio stations must navigate critical tensions between their public service roles and market-driven imperatives. We explore nine key issues that encapsulate these constraints and challenges, offering a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the future of radio journalism in Indonesia. From the dual role of private stations and dependency on external content to the need for strategic transformation, each issue underscores the urgency for targeted interventions to address the sector's vulnerabilities and unlock its potential as a vital medium for public information and engagement.

The dual focus of private radio stations in Indonesia--balancing news production with entertainment programming--represents a critical tension within the industry. On the one hand, 66% of private stations continue to produce news content, playing a vital role in informing the public and fostering democratic discourse. On the other hand, 34% prioritize entertainment formats, driven largely by their economic appeal. Entertainment programming attracts broader audiences and generates higher advertising revenue, which remains a key financial resource for private radio stations (Gazali, 2004).

The economic implications of this dual focus are significant. Declining advertising revenues and the trend of industry consolidation have reduced the number of stations devoted to all-news or talk formats, limiting opportunities for in-depth public discourse. Ownership structures, whether independent or part of larger conglomerates, have had minimal impact on preserving local programming as profitability pressures often dictate content decisions (Wu, 2017). Regulatory changes enabling the centralization of news production into 'hubs' have further compounded this issue. While these hubs are designed to achieve economies of scale, they often diminish the local relevance of news content, undermining the ability of radio stations to serve as platforms for diverse and community-specific voices (McDonald & Starkey, 2016).

Audience preferences also play a crucial role in shaping programming decisions. A growing demand for political talk shows and interactive formats reflects a segment of listeners who value discourse-driven content (Berry & Sobieraj, 2011). Simultaneously, technological advancements have empowered audiences with greater control over their media consumption, prompting many stations to adopt nationally syndicated shows or hybrid formats to cater to these shifting behaviours. This trend highlights the need for private radio stations to remain responsive to audience demands while maintaining a balance between entertainment and journalistic content. To navigate these challenges, innovative business models are necessary. Integrating sponsorships or partnerships with organizations such as NGOs, government agencies, or educational institutions can provide financial support for high-quality news programming. These collaborations can mitigate financial constraints while enhancing credibility and audience trust (McCombs, 2014). Hybrid content models that blend entertainment with news also offer a viable solution. For instance, incorporating news segments into popular entertainment formats,

such as music programs or talk shows, can expose broader audiences to journalistic content without sacrificing financial performance (Newman, 2009).

Preserving journalistic integrity amidst economic pressures requires substantial investment in editorial independence and the development of journalistic capacity. Ensuring that news teams have the resources, training, and autonomy to produce high-quality, independent reporting is critical for maintaining credibility and public trust. This is especially important in Indonesia, where radio remains a vital medium for reaching underserved or marginalized communities with information that may otherwise be inaccessible (Darmanto, interview 6/11/2023). The reliance of Indonesian radio stations on third-party content providers, comprising 54% of their total news content, highlights significant limitations in their in-house production capacities. While external sources such as news agencies and portals offer cost-efficiency, they raise critical concerns about editorial independence and content diversity. Stations that rebroadcast or adapt external content often reflect the priorities of these providers, side-lining the specific needs of local audiences and undermining their autonomy as credible, independent voices within communities. This dependency is particularly concerning in Indonesia, where radio serves as a vital medium for disseminating critical information to underserved populations (Gazali, 2004).

The lack of internal production capacity also underscores systemic challenges within the industry, including inadequate human resources, infrastructure, and editorial support. Many stations lack dedicated editorial teams or trained journalists, limiting their ability to engage in investigative reporting or provide nuanced coverage of complex issues. This over-reliance risks reducing stations to mere distributors of generalized information, eroding public trust and diminishing their role as authentic news sources. Strategic investments in newsroom development and journalist training are essential to address these challenges. Establishing dedicated editorial teams and equipping them with resources to produce original content can safeguard editorial independence and enhance credibility. Collaborative initiatives with academic institutions, such as internships and tailored training programs, can help build in-house capacities while addressing specific challenges faced by regional and local stations.

Adopting hybrid content models is a promising strategy to balance cost-efficiency with local relevance. Supplementing externally sourced material with locally produced segments, such as interviews, community updates, and culturally specific programming, can enrich content diversity and deepen audience connections (Wu, 2017; Crider, 2012). Additionally, leveraging digital platforms, including social media and streaming services, can amplify locally produced content and expand audience reach. However, these efforts require investments in digital infrastructure and targeted skills training. The broader implications of over-reliance on external content extend to reduced content diversity, particularly for minority and community-focused programming. Research suggests that rural stations with more locally produced content offer greater diversity but often face economic pressures driving them toward commercialization (Nieckarz & Hickey, 2023). Addressing these structural challenges necessitates policy advocacy to support independent production and mitigate financial constraints limiting content diversity (Casado Del Río et al., 2016).

Human resource limitations significantly challenge the sustainability and quality of radio journalism in Indonesia. Nearly 46% of radio stations lack dedicated editorial teams, often relying on non-journalist staff for news production. This reliance compromises the accuracy, depth, and reliability of news content, undermining public trust in radio as a

credible medium. Additionally, the absence of skilled journalists limits stations' ability to conduct investigative reporting or address complex issues, reducing their role to superficial information dissemination.

Attracting and retaining skilled journalists has become increasingly difficult, particularly as younger generations gravitate toward digital media, perceiving traditional radio as outdated. Low salaries, limited career advancement opportunities, and high workloads further exacerbate the problem, leading to high turnover rates and a reduced talent pool. Economic pressures also push newsrooms toward 'desk' journalism and reliance on user-generated content (UGC) as cost-cutting measures, which dilute journalistic rigor and editorial oversight, ultimately degrading news quality (Connolly, 2023; Bonin, 2016). Constrained resources in many newsrooms force existing staff to balance immediacy with accuracy, often compromising both (Van Leuven et al., 2021).

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Competitive salaries, clear career advancement opportunities, and structured mentorship programs can make radio journalism more attractive to young professionals. Collaboration with universities and training institutions is crucial for bridging skill gaps. Tailored programs focusing on news gathering, live reporting, and digital content production can prepare emerging journalists for professional roles while addressing immediate staffing gaps. Partnerships between academic institutions and radio stations can create experiential learning opportunities, such as internships and co-designed training modules (Henderson, 2021). Dedicated training programs are essential for developing specialized skills in investigative reporting, ethical standards, and multimedia storytelling. These initiatives should be supported by both government and private sectors to bolster the industry's ability to attract and retain talent. Retention strategies must extend beyond financial incentives. Fostering a supportive work environment that values journalistic integrity and innovation can improve job satisfaction, reduce turnover, and ensure a stable workforce. Research highlights that balancing strategic human resource management with editorial autonomy enhances newsroom performance and journalistic quality (North & Dearman, 2010; Vulpius, 2023).

Digital disruption has significantly reshaped the media landscape, creating both challenges and opportunities for traditional radio stations. As audiences increasingly turn to on-demand and interactive platforms, radio stations face mounting pressure to adapt their operations and content strategies to remain competitive. This shift is particularly evident among younger generations, who prefer personalized, mobile-accessible content over traditional, one-way broadcasting. While 70% of Indonesian radio stations report some form of digital engagement, such as using social media, podcasts, or streaming services, gaps in technical expertise, resource allocation, and strategic planning impede their ability to fully capitalize on digital opportunities. Adapting to digital disruption requires more than adopting new technologies; it demands a fundamental rethinking of content strategies. Multi-platform approaches that integrate social media for real-time updates, podcasts for niche on-demand content, and live streaming for interactive engagement are critical for connecting with diverse audience segments. However, many radio stations lack the infrastructure or expertise to produce high-quality digital content, making them vulnerable to declining relevance in an increasingly crowded media environment. Research underscores that digital disruption has transformed audience behaviour, shifting consumers from passive receivers to active participants who control how and when they engage with content (Balsebre-Torroja et al., 2022; Lunga & Musvipwa, 2024).

A significant barrier to digital adaptation lies in the digital literacy gap among journalists and production teams. Many traditional radio personnel lack the training needed to produce compelling digital content that aligns with evolving audience expectations. Poorly executed digital strategies often fail to engage listeners or adequately reflect a station's brand identity. Addressing these challenges requires targeted training programs focused on skills such as digital storytelling, social media management, and audience analytics. Collaborative efforts between radio stations and academic institutions could bridge these gaps by incorporating digital media training into journalism curricula.

Digital transformation also necessitates a shift from traditional broadcasting models to dynamic content creation and active audience engagement. Historically, radio has operated as a one-way medium delivering pre-packaged content to a passive audience. Today's listeners expect interactivity, customization, and multi-platform access. Stations must embrace their role as agile content providers, creating shareable and compelling material that aligns with the habits of digitally savvy audiences. Innovative content formats, such as integrating visual elements with auditory content or leveraging real-time audience feedback, can further enhance engagement and expand reach (Balsebre-Torroja et al., 2022).

The economic implications of digital disruption further complicate adaptation efforts. As advertisers shift their budgets toward digital platforms offering precise targeting and analytics, radio stations must demonstrate their value in this competitive environment. Integrating digital analytics into operations can provide stations with insights to optimize content strategies and appeal to advertisers, while also strengthening audience loyalty. Additionally, redefining audience engagement through tailored content and strategic use of digital tools can bolster both revenue and listenership (Fernández-Sande & Rodríguez-Pallares, 2022). Structural and regulatory challenges also hinder the digital transition for traditional radio. Insufficient regulatory engagement, the prioritization of larger broadcasters over smaller community stations, and jurisdiction-specific approaches to digital migration have stalled progress in adopting digital radio technologies (Anderson, 2013; Hallett & Hintz, 2010). Addressing these issues will require coordinated efforts to modernize policies and provide equitable support for stations navigating digital disruption.

Financial constraints significantly challenge the sustainability and quality of radio journalism in Indonesia, particularly for smaller stations. Declining advertising revenues and high operational costs for quality news production have forced many stations to reduce or eliminate news programming, prioritizing more profitable entertainment content. The rise of digital platforms exacerbates this issue, as advertisers increasingly allocate budgets to online channels offering precise targeting and measurable engagement. These financial pressures disproportionately impact regional and smaller stations that lack the financial resilience and access to lucrative urban advertising markets enjoyed by larger networks (Wu, 2017).

The financial instability of smaller stations reduces their ability to maintain journalistic standards, invest in investigative programming, and pay competitive salaries to journalists. Operational costs for staff, equipment, and production further strain budgets, leaving many stations struggling to sustain operations. This economic vulnerability threatens not only the quality of news content but also the very existence of these stations, especially those serving underserved or rural communities. To address these challenges, radio stations must explore alternative revenue models to reduce dependency on traditional advertising. Community sponsorships offer a promising

solution, fostering closer ties with local businesses while providing stable funding for specific programs. Similarly, branded content--if implemented transparently and ethically--can balance profitability with editorial integrity. Government support through direct subsidies or grants for public interest programming can also provide critical assistance, particularly for smaller stations. Such public funding models, proven successful in community radio sectors globally, could be adapted to Indonesia's diverse media landscape (Fisher, 2019). Improving operational efficiency is another critical step. Strategies such as resource-sharing among stations, investing in digital tools, and training for audience monetization can help maximize impact without sacrificing content quality. Smaller stations could also implement rigorous marketing strategies to attract advertisers or secure support from local governments within their broadcast influence (Bonin-Labelle & Demers, 2019).

Despite the constraints, financial pressures can drive innovation. Diversifying revenue streams, adopting cost-effective technologies, and collaborating with community stakeholders can help stations navigate economic challenges while preserving their journalistic mission. Examples from community radio stations in Argentina highlight how diversified funding sources contribute to sustainability and the maintenance of journalistic standards (Fisher, 2019). By adopting similar strategies, Indonesian radio stations can balance economic pressures with their commitment to providing high-quality journalism, ensuring their relevance in an increasingly competitive media environment.

Concerns over the quality of journalism in Indonesia's radio industry highlight systemic issues that undermine the production of credible and impactful reporting. A significant challenge is the reliance on non-journalist staff for content creation, particularly in stations with limited resources or without dedicated editorial teams. This reliance compromises the reliability and depth of news content, as non-specialized staff often lack the necessary skills in source verification, ethical reporting, and investigative journalism. As a result, the quality of reporting diminishes, eroding public trust in radio as a credible medium and reducing its role as a vital source of information.

Systemic factors also exacerbate these challenges. The adoption of Western journalism practices has been hindered by differing cultural values, limited resources, and inadequate funding within Indonesian radio stations (Muchtart & Hanitzsch, 2013). Additionally, the liberalization of the media market, while introducing opportunities for diversity, has failed to establish a strong position for community radio, leaving many networks financially unstable and dependent on partnerships with public institutions for survival (Hollander et al., 2008; Masduki, 2023a). Weak broadcasting regulations and limited support for local cultural content further hinder the ability of stations to create programming that resonates with their audiences and meets high journalistic standards (Rachmiatie et al., 2020).

The reliance on non-journalist staff has normalized practices that blur editorial and business interests, undermining journalistic independence and values (Hollander et al., 2008). In resource-constrained environments, the convenience of using secondary or borrowed media texts has replaced the pursuit of original reporting, further diluting the quality and credibility of radio journalism. Moreover, rapid digitalization and the pressure to produce more content for online platforms have compounded these challenges, forcing stations to prioritize quantity over quality in their programming (Masduki, 2019). Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Strengthening partnerships between the radio industry and academia can help bridge skills gaps and improve the quality of journalism. Collaborative initiatives, such as internships, campus radio

projects, and co-designed training programs, can provide practical experience and ensure that new journalists enter the workforce with strong foundations in ethical reporting, investigative techniques, and source verification. Academic curricula should emphasize these competencies while fostering a deeper understanding of the societal role of journalism in countering misinformation and bias.

Additionally, structured training programs for existing staff are essential to equip journalists with the skills needed to adapt to both traditional and digital media environments. These programs should focus on investigative reporting, multimedia storytelling, and ethical standards to enhance the quality of news content. Promoting a 'check-and-recheck' approach to content production can further safeguard the accuracy and credibility of radio journalism, particularly in an era of rapid information dissemination. Fostering a newsroom culture that prioritizes journalistic excellence is equally critical. Creating an environment where journalists feel supported and valued, with access to mentorship and opportunities for professional growth, can reduce turnover and improve the overall quality of reporting. Moreover, consistent regulatory arrangements that balance commercial and editorial interests can strengthen local identity and culture through broadcast programming, providing audiences with relevant and high-quality content (Rachmiate et al., 2020).

The rapid evolution of the media landscape has highlighted the urgent need for Indonesian radio stations to undergo a strategic transformation to remain relevant and impactful. Traditional radio must redefine its role in a digital-first world by embracing its potential as a multi-platform content provider. This transformation requires a multifaceted approach centred on editorial independence, digital innovation, and workforce development, enabling stations to leverage their unique strengths--such as immediacy, accessibility, and community reach--while adapting to the demands of a competitive, digitally-driven media ecosystem.

Preserving editorial independence is a cornerstone of this transformation. Increasing reliance on external content providers and financially driven programming decisions risks compromising stations' ability to produce autonomous, audience-centered content. Strengthening internal production capacities, fostering independent newsroom structures, and cultivating a culture of journalistic integrity are essential for maintaining credibility and public trust. Editorial autonomy enables stations to align their content with local priorities and audience needs, positioning them as reliable sources of information amidst a fragmented media landscape (Balsebre-Torroja et al., 2022).

Digital innovation is equally crucial. Modern tools and platforms such as podcasts, social media, and streaming services must be embraced to engage with contemporary audiences effectively. This requires not only technological investments but also a shift in mindset, repositioning stations as agile content creators. Interactive storytelling, real-time audience feedback integration, and visual-audio hybrids can differentiate radio from competitors and attract younger, digitally savvy listeners. Navigating convergence across platforms allows stations to expand their reach, diversify revenue streams, and sustain operations in an increasingly competitive market (Gallego, 2022; Lunga & Musvipwa, 2024).

Workforce development is pivotal to implementing transformative strategies. Equipping journalists with skills in digital content creation, multimedia storytelling, and audience analytics is essential for producing high-quality, multi-platform content. Training programs tailored to the demands of modern media production, along with collaborations with academic institutions and industry stakeholders, can foster a

workforce prepared to navigate hybrid media environments. Such initiatives ensure that the next generation of professionals is equipped to balance traditional journalistic values with the demands of digital innovation (Fernández-Sande & Rodríguez-Pallares, 2022).

Strategic partnerships can further support this transformation. Collaborations with technology providers, government bodies, and non-governmental organizations can provide resources, funding, and expertise necessary for implementing innovative strategies. For instance, partnerships with tech companies could enable the adoption of artificial intelligence tools for personalized content delivery or automated news production, enhancing operational efficiency and audience retention. Similarly, utilizing big data analytics can help stations understand consumer behaviour and optimize their content strategies, ensuring relevance and competitiveness (McEwan, 2017; Vartanova et al., 2013).

The urgency for transformation is underscored by the pressures of digital platforms, changing listener behaviours, and competition from online media. Younger audiences increasingly gravitate toward personalized, on-demand content, leaving traditional radio stations struggling to retain relevance. Without significant adaptation, radio risks being perceived as obsolete in an ecosystem prioritizing interactivity and multi-platform accessibility. However, by leveraging inherent strengths such as hyperlocal relevance and real-time reporting, radio can secure its position as a dynamic and trusted medium in the evolving media landscape (Anderson, 2013). Indonesian radio stations stand at a crossroads, grappling with the dual pressures of digital transformation and evolving audience demands in an era dominated by online competition. To remain relevant, these stations must undergo a strategic metamorphosis--championing editorial independence, embracing digital innovation, and prioritizing workforce development. By redefining themselves as dynamic, multi-platform content providers and fostering strategic partnerships, they can not only adapt to the shifting media landscape but also secure their place as vital players in the digital age.

This study, while offering valuable insights, is not without its limitations. The relatively small sample of 38 private radio station owners and managers, though informative, may not fully reflect the diverse realities of Indonesia's private radio industry. By focusing exclusively on owners and managers, the study misses critical perspectives from other key stakeholders, such as journalists and producers, while the exclusion of public and community radio narrows the scope to a limited segment of the media ecosystem. Furthermore, the potential for urban bias and the reliance on self-reported data raise questions about the reliability and representativeness of the findings. The absence of audience perspectives, coupled with challenges in blending qualitative and quantitative data, further constrains the study's ability to fully unravel the complexities of Indonesia's dynamic radio journalism landscape.

Conclusion

This study examines the transformation of radio journalism in Indonesia, from its controlled role during the New Order era to its more autonomous function in the Reform Era, shaped by increased press freedom and shifting broadcasting policies. Drawing on insights from private radio station managers and owners, it identifies critical challenges facing the industry, including digital disruption, human resource limitations, and financial constraints. These factors significantly impact the sustainability, quality, and adaptability of radio journalism in Indonesia's dynamic media environment. While expanded press freedom has enabled more diverse and independent journalistic practices, operational

realities continue to pose significant barriers. Digital disruption, driven by the rise of on-demand and interactive platforms, demands that radio stations adopt multi-platform strategies to remain relevant, yet gaps in digital expertise and resource allocation hinder progress. Additionally, a shortage of skilled journalists and editorial teams limits the capacity to produce high-quality, independent content, undermining credibility and public trust. Addressing these challenges requires a strategic approach, including workforce development through targeted training programs and partnerships with academic institutions, innovative financial models such as community sponsorships and diversified revenue streams, and leveraging hyperlocal content. Embracing digital innovation and enhancing editorial independence are essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability and relevance of radio journalism. The study underscores the need for collaborative efforts to navigate the complexities of a rapidly evolving media landscape and secure radio's role as a vital platform for public information and democratic engagement.

Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organization related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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