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Balancing Government Influence and Editorial Independence: TVRI's Role in Shaping Media Agendas

Razie Razak[1], Pawito[2], Prahastiwi Utari[3], Ismi Dwi Astuti Nurhaeni[4]

[1,2,3,4] Department of Doctoral Communication Science, Faculty of Social Science and Politic, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

Correspondence: Razie Razak, Department of Doctoral Communication Science, Faculty of Social Science and Politic, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia. E-mail: razakrazie@gmail.com

Abstract

Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI), as Indonesia's public broadcaster, plays a crucial role in setting media agendas at both national and regional levels. This study examines how the TVRI balances government influence, editorial independence, and regional priorities. Using a qualitative case study approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders at the TVRI Central Jakarta and regional stations. These findings indicate that TVRI's national agenda aligns with government policies when presidential staff and government ministries heavily influence editorial decisions. While regional TVRI stations hold some autonomy in shaping local narratives, they remain guided by Central Jakarta's national agenda. The relationship between central and regional stations is marked by harmonization, reflecting Indonesia's collectivist culture, yet limiting regional editorial independence. TVRI's agenda setting is shaped by cultural, political, economic, and technological factors, with government priorities often prevailing. This study highlights the challenges that public broadcasters face in maintaining journalistic integrity while adapting to regional contexts.

Keywords: Agenda Setting, Public Broadcaster, Government Influence, Editorial Independence, Regional Priorities, National Agenda, Media Landscape

1. Introduction

The evolution of agenda-setting in television broadcasts has intrigued scholars for decades. It reflects the interaction between media, public, and political agendas, with varying influences across politics, culture, health, economy, crisis communication, and ideology. In politics, strategic efforts by political actors shape the public agenda through issue selection and media relations (Esmark & Mayerhöffer, 2013), indicating that media priorities can influence political priorities (Bahador et al., 2019). In culture and economy, the political economy of the media suggests that content is shaped by economic interests and power structures, with media capitalizing on culture for profit (Imsar, 2022), consistent with the critical political economy approach (Budianto et al., 2023). In health, media coverage of healthcare reform campaigns influences public opinion (Perloff, 2008). In crisis communication, media portrayals of crises shape public perception and responses. Evidence suggests that while

ideology interacts with economic growth, it does not significantly affect economic development or policy choices (Kotzian, 2013).

Recent research has highlighted how politics and economics dominate the media agenda-setting process. Television agenda-setting studies reveal a complex interdependence between media, public, and political agendas, where strategic communication by political actors shapes the public discourse. Economic interests and power structures influence media content, particularly in cultural and ideological contexts. However, the impact of ideology on economic development and policy has been limited (Bahador et al., 2019; Budianto et al., 2023; Esmark & Mayerhöffer, 2013; Imsar, 2022; Kotzian, 2013; Perloff, 2008).

Beyond politics and economics, media agenda-setting extends to public health, where governments and public broadcasters play a crucial role in disseminating information. This was evident during the crisis when public broadcasters helped the public acquire essential health-related knowledge (Shah et al., 2012). Consequently, along with public broadcasting entities, the government must inform the public of national health policy. The government's role in shaping public health discourse goes beyond the mere dissemination of information (Njelesani, 2025). Government involvement in public health communication often intersects broader media policies, leading to varying degrees of media intervention and control.

The government is responsible for communicating public health issues such as COVID-19. Recommended communication strategies for the pandemic include crisis communication for public engagement, two-way communication between the public and government, cooperative approaches, fostering public trust, and promoting transparency and citizen involvement for sustainable behaviour (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). The relationship between the government as a policymaker and the media industry indicates cooptation in which government intervention in the media is expected. Policy transformations that lead to domination threaten journalism's institutional changes. The media frequently maintain harmony with the government, often through telephone communication that conveys governmental "pressure" to balance media agendas (Pawito, 2002). This harmonization forms the foundation for public broadcasting in government-media relations. This alignment between the government and media also extends to managing information crises, such as infodemics during the COVID-19 pandemic, where controlling misinformation becomes a strategic necessity.

Infodemic management has posed a major challenge in government-media relations during COVID-19, as disinformation undermines public trust and policy effectiveness. During the COVID-19 pandemic, media agencies have focused on the infodemic, often perceived as disinformation, posing risks if accepted by the public. Disinformation in infodemics reflects systemic issues within the media infrastructure, requiring decentralization and stricter regulations (Bechmann, 2020). Social media exacerbates disinformation through algorithms, human factors, and political incentives (Saurwein & Spencer-Smith, 2020). Public broadcasters must validate information through editorial gatekeeping to ensure transparency and combat misinformation. In light of these obstacles, public broadcasters need to improve their methods to provide the public with accurate and understandable health information, in addition to combating misinformation.

To address these concerns, media outlets have adapted their health communication strategies to ensure that public health narratives remain informative and credible during crises. Health information disseminated by the media through news stories and narratives aids public comprehension of health crises, such as pandemics (Davis et al., 2020). Germany's public broadcasting programs are unique because of institutional factors and the economic robustness of organizations (Meier, 2003). Public broadcasting is shaped by public information needs and television market demand; the public's need for health information is notably high, leading news media to transform messages into persuasive narratives. The 2009 pandemic news exemplifies a prompt response to public health issues (Davis & Lohm, 2020). The pandemic necessitated adjustments to program production, emotional content, and remote journalism technology (Túñez-López et al., 2020). However, despite adapting their health communication strategies, media outlets were also influenced by political and institutional agendas in shaping public perception during the pandemic.

Media framing and reporting align with the agendas of the government and the media to handle issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. To maintain control, those in power often adjust media narratives subtly (Masduki, 2021). Consequently, the media conveys public messages that align with governmental agendas, reinforcing a balanced relationship between government, media, and society. In this context, television broadcasts are crucial for shaping public opinion and perceptions of national and global issues. Its agenda-setting function is evident in prioritizing specific topics and influencing public views on what is essential. The impact of this role depends on the nature of the media coverage and the issues being reported. The cumulative media portrayal of public awareness and the stereotypical representation of issues further highlights the agenda-setting effects of television (Tran & Diep, 2024). This manipulation of media narratives further highlights the power of television in shaping public discourse, making it imperative to examine how agenda-setting in public broadcasters influences societal perception and policy direction.

Previous research has shown that television broadcasts can significantly affect the public's perception of important issues and events. Television broadcasts have a significant impact on shaping public perception of various topics and events. Existing knowledge indicates that television plays a crucial role as a medium in informing the public and influencing their views (Weissmann & Tyrrell, 2025). Examining media agenda-setting in public broadcasters is essential for shaping national discourse, guiding public perceptions, and influencing policy decisions (Happer & Philo, 2013). The role of public media, such as TVRI, becomes even more critical during crises, when the balance between independent journalism and government influence determines the quality of public information. Given the significant influence of public broadcasters in shaping national discourse, it is essential to examine how TVRI, Indonesia's state-owned television network, navigated different political eras while maintaining its role in media agenda-setting. However, as a public broadcaster, TVRI faces ongoing challenges in balancing its national mandate with regional diversity, which affects its ability to implement agenda-setting strategies effectively.

Building upon this discussion, TVRI must navigate the challenge of balancing national and regional broadcasting while addressing linguistic and cultural diversity in development communication. As a public broadcaster, TVRI serves both national and regional audiences, using Indonesian and local languages for development communication (Sen, 2003). The public television broadcasting institution of the Republic of Indonesia (TVRI) provides service information, entertainment, and social control, and preserves the nation's culture (Janah & Mayesti, 2020). Despite expectations of reform, little progress has been made in TVRI management. Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) experienced heavy broadcast management during an authoritarian regime that inhibited internal bureaucracy (Pradhana et al., 2024). Thus, researchers aim to examine TVRI's media agenda across multiple cases, focusing on the agenda-setting role of public television broadcasting at the national and regional levels.

Understanding these challenges requires an examination of TVRI's historical role and how its institutional structure evolved over time. This study explores TVRI's evolving role in media agenda-setting and its historical adherence to developmental ideology (Hollander et al., 2009). In Indonesia, TVRI has a long history as a public broadcasting institution that has evolved under various political systems. Since its establishment in 1962, TVRI has transformed from a state propaganda tool to a government-owned enterprise with the status of a public broadcaster (Kitley, 2003). Despite its transformation, TVRI continues to face challenges in maintaining editorial independence, while balancing national and regional interests.

While many studies have examined media agenda-setting, limited research has explored how TVRI balances national and regional agendas in Indonesia's public broadcasting system. Thus, this study aims to analyze TVRI's role in agenda-setting and how it accommodates both the government and public interests in shaping national and regional discourse. Building on this research gap, this study sought to address the following key questions:
(1) How does TVRI navigate its agenda-setting function in Indonesia's public media landscape?
(2) To what extent does the TVRI reconcile national and regional priorities in public broadcasting?

2. Method

2.1. Study Design

This study employs an explanatory qualitative case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2015; Yin, 2014) to examine how TVRI, as a public broadcaster, sets the media agenda at both national and regional levels. TVRI was selected as the research subject because of its strategic role as Indonesia's public broadcaster and mandated to serve both national and regional audiences, making it a crucial case for understanding agenda-setting dynamics in public media institutions.

This study investigated two distinct levels within TVRI broadcasting systems:
1. National Level: Media agenda-setting process at TVRI Central Jakarta.
2. Regional Level: The agenda-setting strategies of the TVRI Regional Stations.

To explore these cases, data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at TVRI Central Jakarta, TVRI Regional West Java, TVRI Regional Central Java, and TVRI Regional North Sumatra. A literature review of media agenda-setting in public broadcasting institutions was also conducted to provide a theoretical framework for this research.

2.2. Participant

A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that informants had direct experience in setting the media agenda at TVRI. The interviews aimed to gain insights into the decision-making process in setting the media agenda. Only participants directly involved in agenda-setting were included in this study. The key informants for this study are listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: List of Informant

Key Informant	TVRI Station Location	Position Title
Informant-1	TVRI Central Jakarta	Director of News
Informant-2	TVRI Central Jakarta	Editor-in-Chief
Informant-3	TVRI Central Jakarta	News Coverage Coordinator
Informant-4	TVRI Regional Central Java	Regional News Director
Informant-5	TVRI Regional West Java	Regional News Director
Informant-6	TVRI Regional North Sumatra	Regional News Director

Interviews were guided by an unstructured questionnaire to provide flexibility while ensuring that key editorial decisions and agenda-setting strategies were thoroughly explored. The interview questions were designed to uncover the rationale behind content selections, prioritization, and the broader impact of these choices on public perception.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

Data collection for this study was conducted through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at TVRI Central Jakarta, TVRI Regional West Java, TVRI Regional Central Java, and TVRI Regional North Sumatra. The interviews were designed to explore agenda-setting strategies and decision-making processes in TVRI's national and regional media. Additionally, a literature review on media agenda-setting in public broadcasting institutions was conducted to establish a theoretical framework.

The collected interview data were analyzed using a qualitative approach to examine how TVRI sets agendas related to media, policy agendas, and public discourse. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022) was applied to identify key themes in the agenda-setting process, following these six structured phases:

1. Familiarization with data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Data triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility of the research. It involves cross-verifying the interview findings with other sources, such as internal documents, broadcast content, and external media coverage. The triangulation process helped to confirm the consistency and accuracy of the themes identified. No statistical analysis was performed in this research.

The appropriate ethics committee approved the research. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for qualitative research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting the interviews. The confidentially of the respondents was maintained by anonymizing their identities in published findings. The research followed the institution's ethical standards and relevant regulatory bodies.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses was assured. They were also told that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be anonymous.

3. Results and Discussion

TVRI, as a public broadcasting institution, sets agendas at both national and regional levels. The findings are categorized into three main themes: TVRI's National Agenda, TVRI's Regional Agenda, and the Dynamics of National-Regional Harmonization.

This study explores how TVRI aligns its national agenda with government policies, the degree of autonomy held by regional TVRI stations in shaping local media narratives, and the negotiation process between national and regional levels to maintain harmonization in public broadcasting. By analyzing these dimensions, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how TVRI balances centralized control with regional adaptations in its media agenda-setting practices.

To begin with, this section examines TVRI's role in setting the national media agenda, focusing on how government institutions influence TVRI's editorial priorities and content strategies.

3.1. TVRI agenda-setting at National Levels

TVRI integrates media agencies from the government ministries and presidential institutions. The presidential staff determines the social, economic, cultural, health, and security policies that shape TVRI's media agenda. During the COVID-19 pandemic, presidential staff played a key role in managing public health communications, ensuring that TVRI actively disseminated government messages.

When the government introduced the COVID-19 vaccine, the TVRI was instrumental in amplifying its role in vaccine procurement, distribution, and public engagement. This top-down agenda-setting process originates from presidential staff directives, extends to TVRI's editorial leadership, and is executed through 30 regional stations. The integration of vaccination campaigns into the TVRI's media agenda is an example of how government institutions influence public broadcasting in Indonesia. This reflects a broader pattern of government intervention in shaping the media landscape, particularly in times of crises. Regarding the media agenda on handling the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly vaccine dissemination, the presidential staff exercised a significant influence over TVRI's coverage, ensuring the promotion of vaccination programs. This represents a form of government

intervention in media operations that affects how community organizations and stakeholders respond to policy adoption requests (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021).

Government-led media interventions during crises are not unique to Indonesia. Similar patterns have been observed in Canada, Australia, and England, where public broadcasters have played a key role in supporting governmental health campaigns (Meese, 2021). However, publishers of public television are generally advised to maintain editorial independence and resist political interference (Meier, 2003). In Indonesia, such resistance is rare, as government involvement in the media is perceived as essential for ensuring the dissemination of verified information and countering misinformation (Bechmann, 2020). Media narratives and storytelling serve as powerful tools for shaping public support for government action (Davis et al., 2020; Davis & Lohm, 2020). Thus, TVRI's alignment of TVRI with government directives in vaccine communication illustrates how public broadcasting functions within a media ecosystem that is shaped by state influence.

However, the government's strong influence on TVRI does not necessarily translate into balanced media coverage, particularly in scientific reporting. Despite the low representation of scientific sources in the media, the government leveraged TVRI's media agenda to garner public support for its health policies. This contrasts with Western media, in which health-related media agendas influence health policies (Tong et al., 2008). Media agendas that focus on health topics can deter harmful behaviors (Webb et al., 2021). The success of public television in promoting health issues relies on both government and societal support (Shah et al. 2012). Health-related media agendas significantly impact community engagement in healthy behaviors (Koivula et al., 2023). Thus, Indonesia's television media strategy reflects a global agenda adapted at the national level, with western media influence evident on Asian television (Shrikhande, 1999, 2001, 2004).

Since the government plays a significant role in shaping the TVRI's media agenda, the selection of news sources is also heavily influenced by state priorities. The primary sources include the President, Presidential Spokesperson, Ministers, Governors, and Mayors. Government sources are essential for clarifying National and Regional matters and preventing disinformation. Concerns arise when sources are observers or legislators. Thus, Central TVRI aligns with the government agenda by including it in the Agenda of TVRI Jakarta and regional stations.

" Public agendas and issues must be managed through media agendas. Therefore, government sources become a place to clarify national and regional issues", Informant *3.*

This statement highlights the critical role of government sources not only in shaping news narratives but also in structuring internal editorial decisions within TVRI. The reliance on government sources extends beyond mere reporting; it directly influences how media agendas are developed, discussed, and implemented across the TVRI's national and regional networks. Supported by 30 regional stations, Central TVRI effectively manages the media agenda under close supervision. Every Friday, a meeting is convened in which 30 regional station heads discuss and set a media agenda for the upcoming week. Regional TVRIs align with the Central TVRI to adjust and harmonize their editorial priorities (although not necessarily through direct intervention). This collaborative process ensures a unified media agenda while allowing for some degree of regional adaptation.

The impact of editorial coordination extends beyond agenda-setting meetings, shaping the structure and thematic focus of media production at the regional level. Central TVRI establishes a content framework that guides the production of feature news programs, which regional stations are required to produce monthly. These programs include various formats, such as straight news, investigative reports, and human-interest stories, aligned with Central TVRI's strategic vision. Although regional stations have the opportunity to propose their own news agendas, particularly in response to crises or local issues, the final editorial direction remains subject to approval by the national editorial board. The consultation process between Central and Regional TVRI emphasizes coordination and negotiation; however, in practice, regional autonomy remains constrained by the overarching national media agenda.

This structured alignment between the Central and Regional TVRI reflects a broader effort to maintain national coherence in public broadcasting, ensuring that regional stations contribute to a unified media narrative. However,

this process is not merely administrative but also cultural. The coordination between Regional TVRIs and Central TVRI for broadcasting involves adjusting and harmonizing content, often with minimal negotiation, to align it with Central TVRI's national media agenda. This cooperation reflects deeply ingrained sociocultural values in Indonesian media governance. The practice of harmonization within TVRI's editorial structure aligns with Javanese cultural ethics, particularly the principles of *sepi ing pamrih and rame ing gawe (Suseno, 1984)*, which emphasize collectivism, conflict avoidance, and mutual cooperation. These values shape editorial decision-making processes and reinforce the idea that regional editorial autonomy must be exercised within the boundaries of national unity.

While this editorial harmonization ensures national unity, it also imposes certain constraints on the autonomy of regional TVRI Stations. Consequently, the extent to which regional stations can develop independent programming remains limited under the directives of Central TVRI Jakarta. Regional TVRIs can broadcast regional information and entertainment, including local events, the arts, and cultural features. However, their policies are primarily guided by Central TVRI Jakarta's directives, allowing limited consultative involvement in setting media agendas at both central and regional levels.

"Well, for regional issues on routine broadcasts, I often hand them over to field heads in the regions. However, we ask for a national conditional alignment" (Informant 1, interview with the author).

This structured approach results in a clear division of roles between central and regional TVRI, where national and regional media agendas are distinctly managed under the overarching framework established by Central TVRI. The central TVRI sets the national agenda, whereas the Regional TVRI sets the regional agenda (agenda-setting autonomy). The regional media agenda emphasizes the daily activities of regional government heads. There appears to be a distinct division: Central TVRI focuses on the Head of State's agenda, and Regional TVRI on the Regional Head's agenda. Regional TVRI integrates cultural aspects based on local wisdom, such as Sundanese culture in West Java, by broadcasting features and documentaries on regional culture and wisdom.

While this structured division ensures coordination, it also raises concerns regarding the extent of editorial independence at both national and regional levels. The degree to which media agendas are influenced by external actors, such as government officials and corporate elites, is crucial for understanding the broader dynamics of agenda-setting. The agenda can be curtailed if sponsors, particularly elites, exert pressure to exclude specific issues (Vargo & Amazeen, 2021). However, researchers have identified central government officials, expert staff, and regional government officials as elites capable of influencing the media. Consequently, government officials often serve as primary sources of news.

This pattern of influence extends beyond Indonesia and is evident in global media practices where agenda-setting is often manipulated through agenda-cutting techniques to control public narratives. Agenda-cutting involves three stages: burying the issue, removing unfavorable topics, and ignoring the subject (Colistra, 2012). However, Colistra (2012) omitted the fourth stage, thus shifting the problem. This research complements it by adding a fourth step, namely shifting problems on the agenda-cutting. Agenda-cutting involves burying, solving, ignoring, and directing the issues. This practice is prevalent in global industrial media, such as the European media, promoting a halt in palm oil imports because of concerns about deforestation, wildlife threats, child labor exploitation, and environmental pollution (Enh et al., 2022). Global media often engage in agenda-cutting to safeguard global interest.

Similarly, in Indonesia, public broadcasting institutions, such as TVRI, play a crucial role in agenda-setting and are often influenced by cultural, political, economic, and technological factors. Table 2 summarizes the key elements influencing TVRI's agenda-setting process and their impact on national and regional media landscapes.

Table 2: TVRI Agenda Setting Influencing the Media Agenda at National and Regional Levels

Category	Aspect	Factors	Details
Influencing Media agenda	Cultural Influence	Javanese cultural values	particularly the hierarchical structure and authority of leader
	Political Influence	Government and elite agendas	Government and elites agendas shape the media agenda, especially through close relations with bureacrats and government officials.
	Economic influence	Economic Interest	Promoting national economic policies and products, influence media content
	Technological influence	Uses of technology	Communication and coordination

Source: Processing the result of interviews with the informants in Indonesia.

As a public broadcasting institution, TVRI's media agenda is shaped by multiple interrelated factors including cultural, political, economic, and technological influences. These factors not only determine the content and framing of news but also influence the extent to which TVRI maintains editorial independence while aligning with national and regional priorities. Table 1 summarizes the primary aspects that influence TVRI's agenda-setting process in the Indonesian media landscape. Among these factors, cultural influences, particularly Javanese hierarchical structures, play a fundamental role in shaping editorial decision-making within TVRI.

Cultural values play a crucial role in shaping editorial decision-making within the TVRI. The Javanese hierarchical structure significantly impacts how leadership within TVRI determines and disseminates media content. In Javanese culture, obedience and respect for authority are embedded in governance structures (Suseno 1984). These cultural norms translate into a centralized media agenda, where regional stations defer Central TVRI in determining editorial priorities. This cultural framework influences not only organizational decision-making but also how TVRI navigates media-government relations, ensuring that harmonization is prioritized over editorial autonomy.

This hierarchical structure also align with the broader political framework in wich TVRI operates, where state control plays a central role in shaping its media agenda. Given that TVRI operates as a state-owned entity, government priorities often influence its editorial policies. Bureaucratic structures and political elites maintain strong oversight of TVRI's content, particularly concerning issues of national development, public policy, and state-driven narratives. As a result, political actors, including government officials and bureaucrats, play a decisive role in agenda-setting. This aligns with previous studies indicating that state-owned broadcasters often function as vehicles for policy communication rather than as independent journalistic institutions (Meier, 2003; Vargo & Amazeen, 2021).

Beyond political influence, the state's control over TVRI extends into economic priorities, shaping its media agenda to align with the national development goals. The economic dimension of media agenda-setting within TVRI is closely linked to national economic policies and industry interests. Government-driven economic agendas such as infrastructure projects, national investment campaigns, and domestic industry promotions frequently dominate TVRI's content strategy. This dynamic is consistent with global patterns in which state-owned media promotes economic priorities aligned with national policy objectives (Enh et al., 2022). While this contributes to economic messaging, it also raises concerns regarding the limited representation of alternative economic perspectives, particularly from civil society groups and independent business actors.

In addition to economic priorities, technological advancements play a crucial role in shaping TVRI's agenda-setting process. Advancements in media technology significantly affect TVRI's coordination and broadcasting strategies at both national and regional levels. The integration of digital platforms, enhanced communication channels, and data-driven audience engagement has enabled better alignment between Central and Regional TVRI stations. However, disparities in technological infrastructure between urban and rural regions present challenges to maintaining consistent and equitable information dissemination. The role of technological mediation in agenda-setting is increasingly being recognized as a critical factor in determining the reach, accessibility, and content diversity of public broadcasting institutions (Koivula et al., 2023).

Beyond shaping agenda-setting strategies, these technological advancements have transformed daily journalism practices at TVRI. The TVRI Jakarta Center employs communication technologies, such as Zoom and YouTube live streaming, to gather information from central and regional government sources. The journalists shifted from direct interviews to the use of these technologies for broadcasting press conferences. Information management at TVRI involves program division, documentation, library division, and Information Technology division (Janah & Mayesti, 2020). The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote journalism by utilizing communication technology (Túñez-López et al., 2020). However, some journalists criticize this shift for reducing personal interactions and the depth of relationships with sources.

"The impact of communication technology in finding and extracting information from sources has reduced the intensity of meetings between journalists and sources. So that personal closeness is reduced and sometimes between sources and journalists do not know each other", Informant 2.

While technological changes have reshaped journalistic practices, they have also reinforced centralized control over TVRI's editorial decisions. The findings highlight a critical tension between state influence and editorial independence within TVRI's agenda-setting framework. While harmonization between the national and regional levels facilitates a coherent public broadcasting strategy, it simultaneously limits the editorial autonomy of regional stations**.** The overarching control exercised by the Central TVRI ensures compliance with national directives but also restricts the capacity of regional stations to shape locally relevant narratives independently. This reflects broader concerns regarding the role of public broadcasters in balancing state priorities with journalistic integrity (Colistra, 2012; Webb et al. 2021).

In summary, TVRI's media agenda-setting is structured around five main influences: the government, politics, economy, culture, and technology. While government intervention remains the most dominant factor, economic and technological advancements also contribute to shaping the TVRI's content strategy. Figure 1 visually represents these interdependencies and demonstrates how each factor contributes to the overall agenda-setting process within the TVRI.
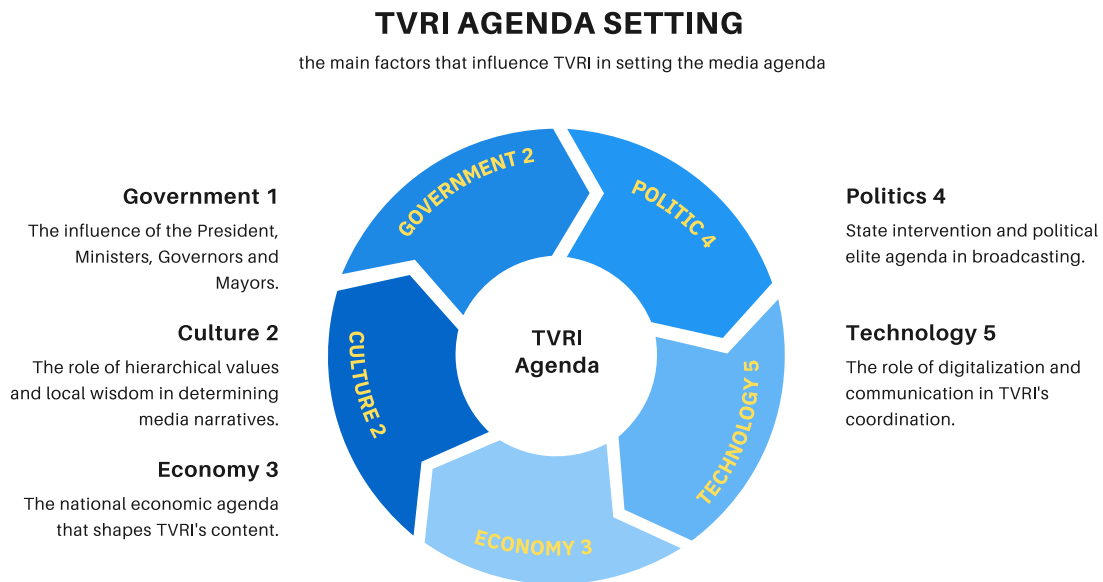
TVRI AGENDA SETTING

the main factors that influence TVRI in setting the media agenda

Government 1

The influence of the President, Ministers, Governors and Mayors.

Culture 2

The role of hierarchical values and local wisdom in determining media narratives.

Economy 3

The national economic agenda that shapes TVRI's content.

Politics 4

State intervention and political elite agenda in broadcasting.

Technology 5

The role of digitalization and communication in TVRI's coordination.

GOVERNMENT 2 · POLITIC 4 · TECHNOLOGY 5 · ECONOMY 3 · CULTURE 2

TVRI Agenda

Figure 1: TVRI Agenda Setting: the main factors that influence TVRI in setting the media agenda

3.2. TVRI agenda-setting at regional levels

TVRI coordinates with governors, mayors, regents, and regional secretaries to shape the regional media agenda. Meetings with various regional officials provide the most recent information on the regional situation. The TVRI Director liaises with relevant regional officials, after which the central editorial team dispatches a team to the area. This top-down coordination with local governments determines news coverage. TVRI's advantage as a public television platform lies in the rapid collection of information and interviews with government sources. Central editorial staff prioritize swift access to information from news sources, facilitating faster news publication and communication between TVRI and regional governments across all leadership levels.

A notable example of this regional agenda-setting process can be observed in TVRI Central Java. TVRI Central Java sets the agenda at the regional level by facilitating government communication, explicitly focusing on the performance of the Central Java Province head, which directly affects the public. The Governor of Central Java can address the current issues of public interest in TVRI broadcasts. Important regional figures, such as the governor, feature as resource persons in news packages and talk show dialogues. TVRI's agenda setting for the region involves three steps: first, the Governor's team communicates the agenda to the Communication and Informatics Office of Central Java; second, this office relays the information to TVRI Central Java; third, the Communication and Informatics Office ensures that the Governor's agenda aligns with both Regional and Central TVRI agendas.

This structured process highlights the institutional mechanisms through which regional agenda setting occurs within TVRI. Official communication teams play a crucial role in facilitating the exchange of information between local governments and media institutions. As described by Informant 4:

" The governor has a communication team that provides information about the Central Java governor's agenda to TVRI Central Java through the Central Java Information Communication Office."

At a broader level, TVRI operates through two interconnected agenda-setting frameworks, one at the national level and the other at the regional level. National-level agenda-setting aligns with government policies and national priorities, such as managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, regional-level agenda-setting is more localized,

addressing region-specific issues such as floods and earthquakes. Despite these distinctions, both frameworks are closely integrated, ensuring regional coverage remains aligned with national broadcasting strategies.

A notable example of regional agenda-setting can be seen in TVRI Central Java, which demonstrates how local adaptation aligns with national broadcasting strategies. To establish regional agenda setting, TVRI Central Java gathered input from various stakeholders, including academics, bureaucrats, and cultural experts. By incorporating these perspectives, the station ensures that its content resonates with both government priorities and local cultural values.

The integration of bureaucratic and cultural elements is a distinctive feature of the TVRI Central Java broadcasting model. A practical example is the "patlikuran" broadcast packages via live streaming, which include a digital "kenduri." Kenduri, a traditional Javanese ceremony for communal prayers, exemplifies TVRI Central Java's strategy to blend public television broadcasting with popular culture.

This programme serves as a platform for direct engagement between government officials and the public, reinforcing TVRI's role as a mediator of national and regional discourse. As informant 4 explains:

"The Patlikuran television broadcast package is a digital broadcast with Digital Kenduri as one of its programs. Digital kenduri presents a dialogue with speakers such as governors, ministers of state, and public figures."

TVRI's role as a public broadcaster extends beyond Central Java with a structured digital broadcasting system consisting of four channels. Channel 1 is dedicated to national broadcasts, Channel 2 to regional broadcasts, Channel 3 to cultural programming, and Channel 4 to sports. TVRI Central Java uses Channel 2 to cover cultural, political, social, and security topics. This programming strategy ensures that regional content remains relevant while still aligning with the national broadcasting priorities.

Despite the significance of regional programming, challenges regarding airtime allocation remain. Channel 2 currently airs regional broadcasts for only four hours daily under the management of TVRI National. Researchers suggest increasing this duration to six hours to better serve the public interest, as TVRI Central Java requires more airtime to accommodate viewer demands. The continued use of local languages in regional broadcasts mirrors the practices of the New Order era (Sen, 2003), highlighting the persistence of localized broadcasting traditions within Indonesia's media landscape.

While Channel 2 operates under centralized control, the regional TVRI stations maintain a degree of autonomy in producing localized content. These stations are responsible for addressing region-specific issues and ensuring that programming resonates with the local audience. For instance, TVRI West Java has utilized regional news slots to focus on issues relevant to West Java, incorporating native languages to enhance viewer engagement.

"News broadcasts of West Java special issues on TVRI West Java use Sundanese language called kalawarta news package" (Informant 5, Interview with the author).

Beyond news programming, TVRI West Java integrates Sundanese cultural elements into its broadcasting strategy. Regional culture significantly influences the organization of entertainment broadcasts by incorporating Sundanese artists and cultural narratives. As the native culture of West Java Province in Indonesia, Sundanese traditions are prominently featured in TVRI's public forums and talk-show formats. These programs invited prominent West Java figures, Sundanese artists, and community leaders to discuss public issues and government policies in the province. To maintain cultural authenticity and ensure accessibility, these discussions were primarily conducted in Sundanese.

In addition to cultural programming, TVRI West Java serves as a crucial platform for regional news and national information dissemination. The station operates a daily 4-hour slot featuring West Java news, talk shows, and entertainment. Regional news covers current issues such as COVID-19 management and natural disasters, ensuring

that local perspectives are included in broader national discussions. TVRI West Java contributes to national news programs by providing regional content for TVRI National broadcasts and strengthening the integration of local and national narratives.

To maintain consistency across the network, TVRI National coordinates with Regional TVRI through weekly editorial meetings. These meetings determine the overarching agenda that Regional TVRI stations follow, particularly concerning national issues. While regional stations retain some autonomy in setting their local agenda, they must align with the TVRI National's perspective when covering overlapping topics. This balance between centralized and decentralized agenda-setting reflects TVRI's dual role as a national and regional public broadcaster.

One example of this agenda-setting process at the regional level is TVRI North Sumatra. The station prioritizes government-driven agendas at the local level, particularly those set by governors, mayors, and the COVID-19 task force units. In North Sumatra, 32 regional leaders from various regencies and cities play a role in shaping TVRI's regional media agenda. This reflects how TVRI North Sumatra integrated local administrative priorities into its broadcasting strategy.

Additionally, national-level agenda-setting, such as the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, was adapted to the regional context. TVRI North Sumatra aligns its messaging with the central TVRI agenda to encourage public participation in the national vaccination program. Along with public health messaging, regional cultural content remains an integral part of North Sumatra's programming. The station incorporates local cultural elements and highlights influential regional figures to inspire the community and maintain its engagement with its audience.

"We TVRI North Sumatra, as Public Television, has a regional agenda setting, namely the government agenda at the regional level of North Sumatra Province with aspects of government administration, entertainment, education and culture" Informant 6.

This regional focus reflects TVRI's broader strategy of integrating cultural heritage into its broadcasting model. While TVRI has successfully incorporated regional and remote cultural narratives into its programming, there has been ongoing skepticism from the international community regarding the effectiveness of TVRI's role in promoting a local cultural identity (Hollander et al., 2009).

Public trust in government-affiliated television has fluctuated globally, particularly in nations in which state-owned broadcasters dominate news dissemination. In some cases, audience skepticism stems from limited educational outreach and a perceived political bias (Min et al., 2020). However, the credibility of the TVRI in Indonesia has been maintained by integrating local cultural themes and addressing regional priorities. This adaptability has helped TVRI sustain public trust, despite broader concerns about the reliability of government-affiliated media outlets.

In summary, TVRI's agenda-setting process operates through centralized coordination with regional flexibility. While TVRI Central Jakarta sets an overarching national media agenda, regional stations modify content to address local concerns while remaining aligned with national directives. This dynamic is illustrated in Figure 2, which demonstrates the structured relationship between national and regional TVRI agenda-setting processes.

Figure 2: Regional Agenda Relationship between TVRI Central and TVRI Regional Agenda

4. Conclusion

TVRI, Indonesia's public broadcaster, plays a crucial role in setting media agendas at both national and regional levels. This study explores how TVRI navigates its agenda-setting function by balancing government influence, editorial independence, and regional priorities. At the national level, TVRI's agenda is closely aligned with government policies, particularly during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The presidential staff and government ministries significantly influenced the TVRI editorial decisions and content strategies. Regional TVRI stations have some autonomy in shaping local narratives but are ultimately guided by TVRI Central Jakarta's national agenda. The relationship between central and regional stations is characterized by a process of harmonization, reflecting Indonesia's cultural values of collectivism and cooperation. However, this centralized structure also limits the editorial independence of regional stations. TVRI's agenda-setting is influenced by cultural, political, economic, and technological factors, with government priorities often taking precedence over alternative perspectives. This study highlights the challenges faced by public broadcasters in maintaining journalistic integrity while navigating state influence and the need to adapt to regional contexts.

5. Limitations

While this study examines agenda-setting processes within the TVRI, it does not assess public reception and trust. Future research should incorporate audience perception studies to evaluate whether TVRI's media agenda influences public opinion and maintains its credibility, particularly in regions with diverse political and cultural landscapes.

To address these limitations, future research should conduct audience-perception studies to assess TVRI's credibility and the impact of its agenda-setting strategies on public trust.

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