

## The Meaning of Citizen Journalism Ethics by Citizen Journalists of *Tempo Witness* in the Central Java Region

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### Abstract

Awareness of the importance of conveying phenomena that are around us is in line with proficiency in utilizing information technology to shape citizens like journalists. The ease with which citizens become like journalists awakens the intention of citizens to uphold the truth by becoming citizen journalists. However, various implementations of citizen journalism ethics that are difficult to implement are actually a challenge in itself. It even creates a temptation to apply citizen journalism ethics. These challenges and temptations diverted their original intention as citizen journalists. They do not comply with the code of ethics that applies when carrying out journalistic activities. This research aims to explore the interpretation of citizen journalism ethics by citizen journalists of *Tempo Witness* in the Central Java region, which is the region with the highest intensity of sending news reports. Qualitative approaches, phenomenological methods, and symbolic interaction theory serve to explore the motives, experiences, and agreements of citizen journalists in implementing citizen journalism ethics. The results showed that the three informants interpreted the ethical aspects of citizen journalism morality well, they maintained good manners and maintained the quality of news reports. However, two out of three informants did not apply citizen journalism ethics by accepting gifts from the sources, in the form of money and goods.

**Keywords:** citizen journalism; citizen journalist; ethics; phenomenology; symbolic interaction

### Abstrak

Kesadaran akan pentingnya menyampaikan fenomena disekitar, selaras dengan kemahiran dalam memanfaatkan teknologi informasi membentuk warga layaknya seorang jurnalis. Kemudahan warga menjadi layaknya jurnalis membangkitkan intensi warga untuk menegakkan kebenaran dengan menjadi jurnalis warga. Namun, berbagai penerapan etika jurnalisme warga yang sulit diterapkan justru menjadi tantangan tersendiri. Bahkan menimbulkan godaan dalam menerapkan etika jurnalisme warga. Tantangan dan godaan tersebut mengalihkan intensi awal mereka sebagai jurnalis warga. Mereka tidak menaati kode etik yang berlaku saat berkegiatan jurnalistik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelami bagaimana pemaknaan etika jurnalisme warga oleh jurnalis warga *Tempo Witness* di wilayah Jawa Tengah yang menjadi wilayah dengan intensitas pengiriman laporan berita terbanyak. Pendekatan kualitatif, metode fenomenologi, dan teori interaksi simbolik berfungsi untuk menelusuri motif, pengalaman, dan kesepakatan jurnalis warga dalam menerapkan etika jurnalisme warga. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketiga informan memaknai aspek moralitas etika jurnalisme warga dengan baik, mereka menjaga sopan santun dan menjaga kualitas laporan berita. Namun, dua dari tiga informan tidak menerapkan etika jurnalisme warga dengan menerima pemberian dari pihak narasumber, berupa amplop dan makan siang.

**Kata kunci:** etika; fenomenologi; interaksi simbolik; jurnalis warga; jurnalisme warga

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**Submitted:** July 2022, **Revised:** January 2023, **Accepted:** January 2023, **Published:** January 2023  
ISSN: 2549-0559 (cetak), ISSN: 2549-1946 (online), Website: <http://jurnal.unpad.ac.id/kajian-jurnalisme>  
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## INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of the *bodrex* journalists or fake journalist phenomenon continues to worry citizens regarding the credibility of the news they produce. This is the reason for a resident in Brebes, Central Java, AA to take part as a citizen journalist for *Tempo Witness* in Central Java. He is determined to fight the *bodrex* journalist phenomenon (AA, Citizen Journalist *Tempo Witness*, March 16, 2022). Research on how the public responds to citizen journalism shows that audiences who are skeptical of political news or mainstream news tend to trust citizen journalism more than professional news (Wall, 2015). The rise of citizen journalism is also a form of reaction of the people to mainstream media which is sometimes discussible as a side that no longer represents the public interest (K.N, 2018), whilst citizen journalism has had a significant impact on bringing news to a wide audience (Salsabila & Adi, 2022).

However, the debate regarding the role and practice of citizen journalism is constantly being discussed, especially the ethical issue of citizen journalists as the main actors in delivering information to the public (Moyo, 2015). In 2020, through the review column on the *Tempo Witness* citizen journalism application, there were 3 out of 6 reviews related to invalid news, unprofessional ethics, and other negative comments. Ethics is a discipline that deals with what is good and bad, as well as with moral duties and obligations. Professions are examples of social groups that incorporate normative or ethical dimensions in defining who they are and what they do to differentiate them from other groups (Friend & Singer, 2015).

Journalism ethics is a set of moral principles that reflect various regulations, written or unwritten, which are adhered to by all journalists regarding the ethics and behavior of journalism

The ethics of citizen journalism is not only related to professional norms and values, but also to who has the right to power or control the course of journalism as a profession (Allan, 2009; Moyo, 2015). *Tempo Witness*, preceded by *Indonesiana* is a citizen journalism platform under the auspices of *Tempo.co*, an online news and article page founded by PT. Tempo Inti Media in 1996. The citizen journalism narrative is known to have been born when wireless modem subscribers in Los Angeles, America alerted the public faster than the mainstream media about an ongoing earthquake.

Jon Katz, an American journalist for *HotWired* magazine also responded that the incident has spawned a newform of journalism, namely citizen journalism (Allan, 2009). Therefore, the presence of *Tempo Witness* has become a forum for citizen journalists in Indonesia that focuses on empowering communities using the citizen journalism methodology. Community empowerment is a process of social transformation that involves the formation and organization of communities (Ulum & Anggaini, 2020).

In a pre-research interview with *Tempo.co* editor-in-chief, Setri Yasra, the establishment of citizen journalism is in line with the current trend that requires public participation. According to Yasra, citizen journalists are bound by the ethics of journalism which is very clear there is a disclaimer at the bottom of each article. However, the standards of citizen journalists cannot be equated with professional journalists under the auspices of the person in charge and the editor-in-chief. The difference between being a citizen journalist and a professional journalist is personal and tied to institutions. Therefore, *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists are given the freedom to write anything, which is the responsibility of the writer personally. *Tempo Witness* acts as a citizen's online media, especially for residents in remote areas with more diverse channels and features.

This citizen journalism forum, which was launched in August 2019 by Tempo Media Group, focuses on community empowerment. In Indonesia, the practice of citizen journalism was started by *Elshinta* radio in 2000. The role and ethics of citizen journalism was initiated

to meet the needs of a democracy that is believed to provide balanced information for citizens in making decisions. Academics believe that the form of citizen journalism can contribute to the wider community, especially in developed and developing countries. According to Yasra, *Tempo Witness* is believed to be far more progressive than *Indonesiana*.

Yasra believes that *Indonesiana*'s lack of development is because citizen journalists do not receive benefits. Thus, the implementation of *Tempo Witness* will promote and attract the active role of citizens to become journalists for themselves, the region, and the country by owning their media. Through the *Tempo Witness* website as of Wednesday, June 22, 2022, the highest number of news coverage, which is 303 reports, is in Central Java and the number is increasing. After that, followed by South Sulawesi (265 reports), West Java (227 reports), West Nusa Tenggara (207 reports), and Jambi (159 reports).

Based on the Official Portal of Central Java Province, this area is divided into 29 regencies and 6 cities with an area of 3.25 million hectares, which is about 1.70% of Indonesia's area. Seeing the participation of citizens of Central Java as citizen journalists and the activity of citizen journalists in the Central Java region, as well as pre-research interviews with the editor-in-chief of *Tempo.co*, the researcher is interested in researching the meaning of ethics by citizen journalists of *Tempo Witness* in the Central Java region. Can the participation and activeness of citizen journalists in the Central Java region ensure that they interpret the ethics of journalism when covering phenomena that occur around them?

Researcher began to build access by contacting one of the journalists from *Tempo Witness* in Central Java, RM through social media. The researcher and RM have communicated well since June 2021. RM directed the researcher to make contact with FSB, the coordinator of citizen journalist *Tempo Witness* from a non-governmental organization (NGO) working in the field of food welfare. Together with FSB, researcher had the opportunity to see how the reporting process of *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists in Dramaga, Bogor. This opportunity gives researcher an idea of how the reporting process goes before making observations in the Central Java region. The researcher obtained *Tempo Witness* editorial access through the FSB.

There are 60 citizen journalists of *Tempo Witness* in Central Java as of Monday, February 14, 2022. Researcher conducted online interviews with 8 citizen journalists who were considered active in sending news reports, they were F, VSK, AA, RM, AP, EV, FI, and FZ. The editor admits that many citizen journalists are considered passive in reporting news. The researcher adjusted the problem limitations and research subject criteria, namely (1) being an active member of *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists, (2) having a high intensity in sending articles to *Tempo Witness*, at least two to three news reports a week, (3) having a minimum of 10 news reports published on the *witness.tempo.co* website.

Based on the limitation of the problem, there are 3 informants who have the feasibility to be studied based on the intensity of news delivery. They are VSK, RM, and AA. After conducting online interviews, researcher started direct observations by conducting in-depth interviews and field observations in March 2022. Researcher looked at the background of the informants by chatting and getting to know their family members. The informants have higher education, VSK works as a junior high school teacher, RM works as a student, and AA works as chairman of the foundation. They know that as journalists, *Tempo Witness* residents do not receive an honorarium.

VSK and AA confirmed that they had received offers of envelopes, lunches, and tenders worth hundreds of millions. They expressly refused any gifts. During in-depth interviews, the three informants have different motives for carrying out their roles as citizen journalists. VSK aims to voice the concerns of marginalized communities, RM aims to hone writing techniques,

and AA aims to fight the phenomenon of *bodrex* journalists in Brebes, Central Java. However, in fact there are aspects of dishonesty during in-depth interviews that are different from the results of field observations related to the application of citizen journalism ethics.

This study examines the meaning of citizen journalism ethics by citizen journalists of *Tempo Witness* in the Central Java region. Researcher used qualitative methods with Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach. With this approach, in essence, we can know human experience and the meaning it contains through the nature and point of view of people who experience the phenomenon directly. Phenomenology is to see and enlighten how someone explains and understands a phenomenon in order to create meaning based on life experiences (Rorong, 2020).

Phenomenology is one of the approaches found in social science, which is used to understand various social phenomena or symptoms in a community group. Alfred Schutz has a concept of phenomenological thinking that is relevant to the development of phenomenology as a paradigm that plays an important role in the social field. The phenomenological approach was introduced by the father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl at the end of the 19th century.

Husserl's ideological foundation starting from phenomenology is the power of legitimacy and the rationale of the successors of this methodology (Nindito, 2013). This study examines how the citizen journalists of *Tempo Witness* in the Central Java region interpret the ethics of citizen journalism in reporting. The researcher hopes to understand and identify their motives for applying citizen journalism ethics, their experiences in applying citizen journalism ethics in the field, and their agreement on citizen journalism ethics.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a phenomenological approach. The researcher describes the phenomenon of a community according to their perspective or the subject to be studied. Moleong (2017a) explains, phenomenology does not assume that the researcher recognizes the meaning of something for the people being studied by them. Researcher must try to enter into the conceptual world of the research subject under study. So that they can understand what and how an understanding is developed around a phenomena in everyday life. Similar to the opinion of Creswell, 'biography reports the life of a single individual, a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the live experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon' (Nindito, 2013).

Likewise, Littlejohn explains, phenomenology makes actual life experiences as the basic data of reality. The theory of phenomenology was introduced by the father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl at the end of the 19th century. Husserl's ideological foundation starting from phenomenology is the power of legitimacy and the rationale of the successors of this methodology (Nindito, 2013).

This study uses a qualitative method with Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach. With regard to research related to meaning, this method is considered very suitable. Schutz explained, looking-forward into the future is important for the concept of action or behavior that is oriented towards realizing a predetermined future. A person has a past (pastness), then an action has a goal to the future (futura) and the past (pastness).

According to Schutz, the motive phase is divided into two: in-order motive (referring to the future), because-motive (referring to past). Alfred Schutz has a concept of phenomenological thinking that is relevant to the development of phenomenology as a paradigm that plays an important role in the social field. Therefore, the researcher uses Alfred Schutz's phenomenological theory to analyze the identification of problems related to motives, experiences, and agreements



in applying the ethics of citizen journalist (Kuswarno, 2009).

Littlejohn explains that phenomenology means letting things become real as they really are, without imposing various categories of researcher on them. An “objective” scientist hypothesizes a certain structure (Nindito, 2013), then checks if the structure does exist. A phenomenologist never makes a hypothesis, but carefully investigates actual direct experience to see how it seems (Supraja & Al Akbar, 2020).

Phenomenology has several ways of collecting research data. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), there are data collection techniques in qualitative research, such as observation, in-depth interviews, documentation studies, and studies of audio or video materials. However, this study only uses three data collection techniques, namely in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews aim to obtain clear and detailed information related to a phenomenon or event being studied. This type of interview is also useful for obtaining “something” from the unseen (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

In this study, interviews were conducted in an open and unstructured manner to the research subject, namely the citizen journalist of *Tempo Witness* in the Central Java region. In-depth interviews were conducted with seven research subjects, each of which took approximately two hours in line with the advice of Moustakas (1994) regarding how to conduct in-depth interviews, he said; “The phenomenological interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilities open-ended comments and questions”.

Researcher try to eliminate the formal impression, by adjusting the circumstances or situation of the research subject. After getting access in two ways, namely by using a guide. Then, of the seven subjects, the researcher made a deeper selection by looking at which subject understood the phenomenon better and was suitable to be a research informant. In-depth interviews were conducted 2-3 times, adjusting to the needs of facts and data. The researcher also explained honestly without clearly mentioning the research objectives to the subjects who asked this question. In addition, the researcher tried to avoid the occurrence of long social distance, by adjusting the appearance or demeanor of the research subject.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The informants have their own decisions in applying the ethics of citizen journalism, namely based on certain motives or reasons for the actions they take. Phenomenology aims to seek an understanding of how each informant can construct meaning within the framework of intersubjectivity. An understanding of the world shaped by the informant’s relationships with other people. The meaning created and the role of others in the actions of each informant are important (Kuswarno, 2009).

The informant’s actions are influenced by their interactions and experiences with other people. The influence of these actions will shape the meaning of their activities in applying the ethics of citizen journalism. Phenomenology of Alfred Schutz sees that the concept of a person’s action (action) will look into the future (looking-forward into the future). It aims to realize the goals in the future that have been determined (determinate).

In addition, a person’s actions will be influenced in the past (pastness). Therefore, action has elements to the future (futura) and the past. According to Kjolseth (1972), two phases of action are needed to describe the motives of the informants in applying the ethics of citizen journalism, namely the cause motive action phase and the in order to motive action phase. The cause motive is a phase that refers to the past, the goal motive is a phase that refers to the future. The results of this study found that there were two phases influencing the motives and actions of the informants as people’s journalists of *Tempo Witness* in the Central Java region.

All informants in this study chose to try to apply the ethics of citizen journalism based on motives for causes or actions that refer to the past. They are VSK, RM, and AA. The three informants chose to apply the ethics of citizen journalism based on their experiences and pasts in the field. Like VSK, his experience in participating in citizen journalism training and often sending articles to *Kompasiana* has made him strive to always apply journalism writing ethics according to the Journalistic Code of Ethics (KEJ).

Other research related to the meaning of the profession of women journalists in Ambon also shows that there are cause and purpose motives in journalists. In this case, female journalists are proven to have the motive to become journalists through the influence of their role models, ideals, and love of writing. Meanwhile, the goal motive makes them want to continue to hone their skills, obtain facts, and carry out ideals. In obtaining information, VSK obtains according to the facts on the ground and can be accounted for. The news reports are of sufficient quality, and even VSK has received appreciation from *Tempo Witness*. "So far, sharing the news link that she uploaded, there's never been a problem... Yes, because so far when Mbak VSK writes news, the reality is like that."

In addition, there is appreciation from the village community, because VSK often raises issues in the village and positive changes occur from related issues. VSK's experience and past influence the results of the coverage, making her always try to apply the ethics of citizen journalism. Not inferior to VSK, a citizen journalist named RM applies the ethics of citizen journalism well. Her passion for writing and her experience in participating in citizen journalism training have made RM consider the ethics of journalism to have a very deep meaning. According to her, the role of citizen journalists in observing, covering, and making news should be in the marginalized layers of society. RM's motive is in line with research related to the Meaning of Citizen Journalism for Citizen Journalists *NET CJ* which shows that there are motives that encourage informants to carry out their citizen journalism activities, such as satisfaction, developing informants personalities, and providing social change through alternative content (Iqbal & Sjafirah, 2019).

So, reveal the facts and make the reader move to be more empathetic. RM's motive is based on past experiences and her morality enables her to apply the ethics of citizen journalism, KEJ, and the Press Law. While AA, technical coverage, news writing, and obtaining and reporting information according to facts on the ground, AA has better abilities than the other two informants. In fact, his years of experience in the world of citizen journalism has given him a deep understanding of the ethics of citizen journalism.

"Yes, the coverage is good because Mas AA himself is also called the Child Assistance Forum, so when he does cover, he knows exactly what the activity is. Yes, because we have a citizen journalist, which means that volunteers who want to participate in the news have training. Training for citizen journalists, now Mas AA is participating as a contributor to Child Friendly District." (E, Personal Interview, 2022)

The researcher sees that the motives carried out by AA are actions of purpose motives (in order to motive) or refer to the future, where AA explains that maintaining a good name in the future is very important. The researcher also clarified to the informant; he said that the news report written by AA was in accordance with the statement he issued. In addition, AA can establish good relations with colleagues, maintain a polite and courteous attitude during coverage. "If Mas AA is indeed frequent, yes, he also means...often with us. It's like covering a lot, often what...like that."

The three informants have different professions from one another. This turned out to affect the motives of the three in applying the ethics of citizen journalism. As VSK and AA

have other jobs besides being citizen journalists, this aspect affects their motives in applying the ethics of citizen journalism.

VSK prioritizes her self-image to his superiors, she achieves this by diligently sending news reports. The editor of *Tempo Witness* noted that VSK was the journalist resident of *Tempo Witness* in Central Java who sent the most news reports. A total of 117 reports, of which 63 reports were successfully published as of Monday, March 21, 2022 on the <https://witness.tempo.co> website.

In terms of intensity of submitting writing or content, AA admits that he writes less than VSK, because he has other activities while working on his postgraduate thesis. The Editor of *Tempo Witness* noted that AA sent 46 reports. A total of 32 of them were successful in publication as of Monday, March 21, 2022.

VSK explained that many of the journalists from *Tempo Witness* were not active in submitting articles because they felt they did not receive an honorarium from sending news. AA explained that other fellow journalists from *Tempo Witness* are not actively submitting articles because they are often selective in choosing the issues they want to raise.

In one coverage, AA claimed to be able to send 2-3 or more posts, VSK also mentioned the same number. Based on these two aspects, the researcher assessed the motives for applying the ethics of citizen journalism to the two informants, focusing on the aspects of morality and ethics as citizen journalists.

**Table 1** Motives in Applying Citizen Journalism Ethics

Reason/Taret		VSK	RM	AA
Maintain news quality	Reporting according to facts	√	√	√
	The results of the coverage can be accounted for	√	√	√
Acceptable in society	Maintain good manners with resource persons and other reporting partners in the field	√	√	√
	Create a good relationship with the resource person	√	√	√
Protect yourself and the media's good name	Introducing yourself as a citizen journalist	√	√	√
	Not claiming to be a journalist	√	√	√
Become a professional citizen journalist	Knowing the limits of ethical journalism	√	√	√
	Creating content according to journalistic rules	√	√	√
Profession		Middle school teacher	Student	Chairman of the organization
Intensity of sending news reports		63/117 reports (As of 21/3/22)	63/117 reports (As of 21/3/22)	32/46 reports (As of 21/3/22)

Source: (Researcher, 2022)

In addition, RM seems to be able to apply citizen journalism ethics well. She really pays attention to the background of the activity before undertaking the coverage. RM explained that

usually she has an idea before undertaking the coverage or before going to the field. In addition to being a citizen journalist, RM works as a student. This seems to make her have a different view regarding journalism ethics.

The editor of *Tempo Witness* noted that RM sent 13 reports. A total of 10 of them were successfully published as of Monday, March 21, 2022 on the <https://witness.tempo.co> website. The researcher concluded that the informants could apply the ethics of citizen journalism. In this case, they try to prioritize the quality of news reports and the truth of information. The motives or reasons for their actions in applying the ethics of citizen journalism are formed.

The phenomenological view of Alfred Schutz describes human social relations not in human actions as a social system, but humans as actors to examine social life between humans that form intersubjective meanings. The role of the actions or behavior of individuals and others affects the meaning that is formed.

In carrying out their role as citizen journalists, the informants must interact with many people, such as resource and related parties when reporting in the field. This gives birth to social actions or behavior between the informant and other social actors, then subjective meaning is formed. Various actions or behaviors are born from the past, present, and future of every action of social actors.

The informants in this study have their own and different experiences in implementing citizen journalism ethics. The experience of the informants referred to challenges, such as being offered lunch, being given an envelope or project, the ability to write when there was an impromptu phenomenon, and technical problems with the *Tempo Witness* application. This discussion will explore how they apply the ethics of citizen journalism during their coverage in the field and face these challenges. In describing the informant's experience holistically, the researcher uses the in-order-motive action phase (referring to the future), because motive (referring to the past).

Based on the observations of researcher in the field, the informants in this study had past experiences that were in accordance with Alfred Schutz's action phase. However, they also have different perspectives when interpreting experiences in applying citizen journalism ethics. The first challenge experienced was being offered lunch. This has happened to AA; he has also accepted the offer.

The researcher sees that this is not the first time AA has received an offer like this, where AA argues that his background working in an NGO requires him to have good relations with the resource persons or a number of related parties. AA has experience that by establishing good relationships, it will be easier to obtain information with resource persons (government) who know their background. One of them joined them for lunch.

In addition, AA knows that it is good etiquette to not accept the lunch offer. During lunch, the researcher was in the field with AA, who captured the moment and sent it to the *WhatsApp* group of citizen journalists *Tempo Witness*. He also said to the researcher, 'Wow, surely Pak Yosep (Managing Editor of *Tempo Witness*) will comment, why is the coverage even lunch?' After the researcher clarified, the first prospective resourcer explained that the lunch was a gathering place.

"Oh, no, no, it's just a gathering place. It means that we have been working for a long time, so we want to take a recess. So, let's eat together, like that. Yes, not every time we eat, no. If he comes and keeps getting transportation money? Yes, not necessarily, Mba. I usually don't get it either, but sometimes I can. Depending on the activity, most of them don't even get it." (E, Personal Interviewer, 2021)

The second challenge was to be given envelopes; two of the three informants received



envelopes from the informants. In field observations, the researcher found that AA and VSK received this gift when they were reporting. Researcher also confirmed, by asking AA by telephone. AA reasoned,

“At that time, it wasn’t covered, it was...the activities that day. So that day there was actually a TIARA PPT meeting, when they got home, they got all the transportation money. It’s not like that... we don’t accept anything like that. So, the realm is different.” (B, Personal Interview, 2022).

Not much different from AA, VSK also received an envelope that was on the table in the village hall living room. She did not immediately take the envelope when it was given by one of the administrators at the village hall, but took it at the end of the question-and-answer session with the informant. After confirming with one of the administrators at the village hall, it was discovered that VSK did not always accept this kind of gift, but this was not the first time. The manager explained,

“Not every coverage, coincidentally Mbak Vera is also a Village Community Empowerment Cadre (KPMO). Positions in the village are also KPMO, KPMO empowerment activities are also included with Direct Cash Assistance (BLT). So, it’s not only Mba Vera, but we do budget for BLT operational activities. For example, for BLT operational activities for one year, it could be that in the middle of that year’s journey we have another consultation, there is a change in BLT recipients and so on. Well, it has to invite the community and so on, which means we need a budget for that activity. Well, including for each BLT distribution meeting, we also invite people who are involved in the village but who are organized, including KPMO, Babinkamtibmas, and activities that fit into the distribution, we budget and allocate them for transport, like that. Not from the journalist.” (B, Personal Interview, 2022)

Meanwhile, the challenges faced by RM are different from the other two informants. RM claimed to have never received any souvenirs, lunch offers, envelopes, projects, or any offers that benefited her. The challenge that RM faces is more about the ability to write when there are sudden phenomenas and technical problems in the *Tempo Witness* application. She said that her news reports were often lost because of her inaccuracies or problems with the application.

Based on the concept of symbolic interaction theory, there is an assumption that humans can understand things through experience and learn them. One’s perspective is interpreted through symbols; one can act on oneself socially. This means that a person can make himself the object of her own actions based on definitions made with other people (Kuswarno, 2009). The concept of symbolic interaction is closely related to the concept of self, which is a relatively stable and trusted perspective of others about themselves.

The various experiences that the informants have in applying the ethics of citizen journalism through the challenges they face are the self-concepts formed from the interaction of the informants with other people around them. Based on the results of the study, it is known that not all informants have the same meaning for the first challenge, which is given money or envelopes by the informants. However, the three of them know that accepting the gift of the envelope violates journalism ethics.

Then, the second challenge was to accept the offer of lunch. Based on the results of the study, only AA accepted the offer of lunch with the party who was originally going to be the resourcer. The researcher saw that AA interpreted the offer of lunch with the resource person as a normal gesture. The reasons were also put forward by the informants who did not comply with the ethics of citizen journalism.

The actions of AA and VSK prove that they do not understand the concept of journalism independence which is included in the Ethical Journalism Network. Independence requires journalists to seek and communicate information to the public without any pressure or

“influence” outside the public interest and conscience of a journalist (White, 2008). There is an ideology related to idealism in journalism, where the efforts of a journalist to provide information from a news report for community empowerment.

Independence must always be upheld, freedom to carry out the ideology of journalism and prioritizing balance, accuracy, not accepting any gifts that tend to shake the independence of journalists, and impartially except for the public interest (Siregar in Avant Garde Vol 7, 2019). Criticism of the citizen journalists is that their main intent when reporting information. Instead of reporting news and accurate information, most citizen journalists publish news and information just because of their personal interest (Akifah, 2012).

Independence means that in various journalistic activities there is no pressure that allows journalists to have a “reluctance” for any party, journalists have the freedom to report news. There are several important aspects in understanding independence issues, such as the presence or absence of opinions, matters relating to personalization, sensationalism, stereotypes, juxtaposition, and accuracy (McQuail, 2012; Suwadi, 2019).

The third challenge is difficulties in technical and writing problems. Based on the research results, all informants often experience technical problems contained in the *Tempo Witness* citizen journalism application. This is felt by RM, where she once lost the results of the coverage when inputting news reports into the application. In this situation, informants often receive nothing from their coverage. Usually, they are no longer at the scene and cannot report back. In addition, RM admitted that she also often has difficulty when he wants to report sudden events around her. RM believes this happened because she is not used to writing phenomena quickly.

“The challenges are usually technical, really. Sometimes we’ve entered the news, then we forget it hasn’t been sent yet and when we check it again... how come it’s gone. So, it’s okay, because we can’t if we are not at the location of the coverage, then we will make news. Because in the application there are special coordinate points like that. Second, the challenge is that I still find it difficult to write news directly if something happens. Maybe it’s because there’s not much practice.” (RM, Personal Interview, 2021)

The three informants have different experiences that they have faced in applying the ethics of citizen journalism. They have their own way of accepting or rejecting the challenges they face. Previously, informants said that they would choose to avoid various forms of giving. They also will not harm others through the news reports they produce.

In fact, two out of three informants chose to accept gifts, namely envelopes and lunch at a restaurant. Meanwhile, the second informant chose to avoid the gift. During field observations, researcher saw that the ethics of citizen journalism were not fully implemented by some informants. The challenges or temptations that exist often make them disobey the ethics of citizen journalism.

The dishonesty of citizen journalists is also in line with other research related to the trust and credibility of online media citizen journalism in the eyes of the millennial generation. This study shows that the millennial generation is more ignorant of news sources because they do not see the honesty or credibility factor of citizen journalism, as well as the media concerned.

In addition, the informants admitted that they had no difficulties in obtaining sources. The researcher saw that some of the informants had a wide enough relationship to cover various issues, especially related to the village fund budget or government offices. They have the ability to build good relationships. The challenge actually comes from technical problems in the application of *Tempo Witness* citizen journalism. They occasionally find their news reports missing, after undertaking coverage.

**Table 2** Experience in Applying Citizen Journalism Ethics

Experience		VSK	RM	AA
<b>Given an envelope by the resource person</b>	In the form of money or envelopes	√	-	√
	A free meal at the restaurant	-	-	√
<b>Technical difficulties of coverage</b>	Covering impromptu	√	√	-
	Technical problem in <i>Tempo Witness</i> app	-	√	-
<b>Honesty</b>		-	√	-

Source: (Researcher, 2022)

The citizen journalists of *Tempo Witness* uses a certain foundation to apply the ethics of citizen journalism. The Journalistic Code of Ethics (KEJ) is their basis for reporting events around them. Although until now there is no written regulation regarding the ethics of citizen journalism. In addition, the citizen journalist of *Tempo Witness* is also familiar with the Press Law and the 9 Elements of Journalism which are the guidelines for being a citizen journalist.

However, AA and VSK only know, but do not understand and practice journalism ethics properly. The results of the research related to the understanding of *Tribun Jabar* journalists on Article 4 of the Journalistic Code of Ethics showed that there were two categories of informants, those who were guided by the Articles of the Journalistic Code of Ethics and those who understood Article 4 of the Journalistic Code of Ethics as a limitation. There are *Tribun Jabar* journalists who are in a dilemma when they have to comply with Article 4 of the Journalistic Code of Ethics and who feel limited based on Article 4 of the Journalistic Code of Ethics (Pamungkas, 2020).

However, unlike RM, he is based on the KEJ in applying the ethics of citizen journalism by understanding and practicing ethics when conducting journalistic activities. The three of them conveyed the facts well while reporting the news. Meanwhile, AA and VSK understand the Press Law and KEJ, but cannot apply citizen journalism ethics properly. The researcher see that the citizen journalist of *Tempo Witness* has a different foundation in applying the ethics of citizen journalism. This is in line with the symbolic interaction theory which assumes that every human being can understand everything by learning based on past experiences.

The views of every human being are translated into various symbols, humans can launch actions or behavior towards themselves. Where humans can make themselves the object of their behavior or actions through understanding made with other people (Kuswarno, 2009). Symbolic interaction also has a close relationship with the concept of self, namely the view or relative perception that other people believe about themselves. Research related to the Meaning of Citizen Journalism Ethics by Citizen Journalists *NET CJ* in Solo also shows that various agreements made by informants contribute to building self-concept as citizen journalists (Annur & Yudhpramesti, 2022).

The editors of *Tempo Witness* admit that they have never provided training materials related to the ethics of citizen journalism. This also affected the understanding of VSK and AA, they violated ethics by accepting envelopes and offers of lunch from the informants. The agreement between *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists regarding ethics is also a self-concept formed from their interactions with the people around them. Although the three research informants have different responses regarding the agreement or the basis, they use in applying the ethics of citizen journalism, their responses have meanings that are formed directly and indirectly.

The researcher found that all of the informants had an agreement in applying the ethics of citizen journalism regarding the quality of the news reports they made. Such as acknowledging

his role or status as a citizen journalist, making news reports according to facts, maintaining the good name of himself and the media concerned. This agreement was carried out by VSK, RM, and AA who acknowledged their status as citizen journalists, reported news according to facts, and maintained their good name.

Based on the results of the research, the three informants have their own meaning in interpreting the opportunity to apply citizen journalism ethics by conveying their roles or intentions to the informants through words. Like VSK and AA, they always convey to the informants by introducing themselves as citizen journalists. After the researcher confirmed with the informants, in fact it was true that they knew VSK's role as citizen journalists.

In addition, RM also always conveys her intentions or role as a citizen journalist. She maintains her role by reporting news that can be a voice for the marginalized. Thus, she always applies the ethics of citizen journalism. One of them is by introducing herself as a citizen journalist and explaining that the report she wrote will be published in *Tempo Witness*.

According to RM, citizen journalism is a noble profession and should be carried out properly. Based on KEJ, a journalist must take various professional ways in carrying out his journalistic duties. This refers to every journalist by showing their identity and intentions to the source. Likewise for citizen journalists, they must show their professionalism by telling their roles to the informants. "In my opinion, this profession is truly noble and should be utilized so that marginal groups and those who need them can voice what they feel, can criticize the government or the environment or others."

AA and VSK receive envelopes from sources, and this can clearly affect the independence of a citizen journalist. KEJ Article 6 reads, Indonesian journalists do not abuse their profession and do not accept bribes in any form that can affect independence. Meanwhile, RM as a citizen journalist who has independence and high ideals, makes news according to facts and pays attention to the accuracy of her news reports. Research related to journalism for women journalists with families means that the journalist profession demands idealism and can influence policy (Herlinawaty, 2016).

RM adheres to the rules of journalism in carrying out her role as a citizen journalist, this is also in line with the KEJ that every journalist must report events according to facts without interference from other parties. Regarding accuracy, every journalist must check & recheck the information they receive. This should also be done by citizen journalists in order to maintain the quality of the news reports produced.

Maintaining the good name of oneself and the media is also an agreement between *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists in applying the ethics of citizen journalism. VSK, AA, and RM not only protect themselves as citizen journalists, but also the good name of *Tempo Witness*. The three made this agreement by introducing themselves as citizen journalists. VSK and AA also seem to always maintain good relations with the sources, of course giving a good impression to themselves and the media concerned. The various agreements in applying the ethics of citizen journalism made by these three informants were not explained in the training to become a citizen journalist of *Tempo Witness*.

This was also clearly explained by the mentor, that (1) *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists were only ordinary citizens who practiced journalism, (2) citizen journalists were not included in the protection of Law No. 40/1999, because the applicable legal sanction was the Criminal Code. Except for the *Tempo Witness* version of citizen journalists protected by Law No. 40/1999, (3) *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists follow general ethics (including journalistic ethics), (4) *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists follow journalistic principles, (5) *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists never attend basic education, (6) *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists can only



report phenomena or events, observations, and data, do not conduct interviews (only questions and answers), (7) *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists need to master the skills and knowledge: understanding facts, observe and collect data, write in good Indonesian, 5W+1H, inverted pyramid, (8) reports using a mobile application are sent to editors, editors check before publishing them, (9) *Tempo Witness* citizen journalists learn to think like journalists.

However, the mentor puts emphasis in brackets on the third point related to journalistic ethics. The results showed that the three informants had implemented the agreement as citizen journalists based on the KEJ and the Press Law. Thus, the agreement in applying the ethics of citizen journalism by the citizen journalist of *Tempo Witness* can be concluded as follows.

**Table 3** Agreement on Applying Citizen Journalism Ethics

Agreement	VSK	RM	AA
Acknowledging his status as a citizen journalist	√	√	√
Making news reports according to facts	√	√	√
Keeping the good name of the media	√	√	√
Receiving envelopes	√	-	√
Not sending the same news report to other media	√	√	-

Source: (Researcher, 2022)

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the researcher's analysis of the ethical meaning of citizen journalism by citizen journalists of *Tempo Witness* in the Central Java region, conclusions and answers can be drawn from the identification of research problems. When describing the motives of the informants in applying the ethics of citizen journalism, the researcher uses two phases of action from Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach, namely those referring to the past (because-motive) and those referring to the future (in-order-to motive). RM has a phase that refers to the past by maintaining the quality of the news so that it can be accepted in the community. Meanwhile, VSK and AA have a phase that refers to the future to maintain the good name of themselves and the media. The motives of the informants are to become a bridge for the voices of marginalized communities, to fight against the phenomenon of *bodrex* journalists, and to hone writing techniques. The experience of the three informants in applying the ethics of citizen journalism is an act or self-concept that is formed from the interaction of the informants with the parties around them. Based on the concept of symbolic interaction, informants have meaning for the various challenges they face. The researcher also uses two phases because-motive and in-order-to-motive to describe the experience.

The agreement of the informants in applying the ethics of citizen journalism is a self-concept that is formed from the results of their interactions with the people around them. Based on the theory of symbolic interaction, the informants have a meaning regarding the ethical agreement of citizen journalism that they form directly and indirectly. There are several agreements between informants regarding the ethics of citizen journalism. First, acknowledging their role as citizen journalists. Second, reporting news according to facts. Third, keeping the good name of yourself and the media. Fourth, refused to give envelopes. Fifth, sending the same news report to other media.

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