

## Journalists' Interpretation of Press Freedom in Papua as a Conflict-Prone Region

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### Abstract

The journey to realize press freedom so that it becomes an inseparable part of the order of the nation and state requires a long time with enormous challenges, especially within the conflict-prone areas. This research aims to explore press freedom in Papua, journalists' interpretation of press freedom, press freedom in reporting sensitive issues, and the causes of journalists' vulnerability to violence. It employed a case study method with a constructivist paradigm. The results showed that press freedom in journalistic activities in Papua, as a prone conflict area, has not gone well due to various obstacles. Journalists interpret freedom of the press as free from all kinds of threats, prohibitions, and intimidation, free to build relationships with anyone, and free to provide true, objective, and non-biased information as a form of responsibility to the public. Journalists interpret the press freedom guarantee in Press Law No.40 of 1999 as still needing firmness and special discussion, especially regarding journalistic activities and special protection in conflict areas as a necessity in various forms. Press freedom in reporting sensitive issues in Papua, as a prone conflict area, requires journalists to consider their safety. The causes of the vulnerability of journalists to violence in Papua Province, as a prone conflict area, are the low professionalism of journalists, the suboptimal role of press companies and journalist organizations in providing protection.

**Keywords:** conflict; journalistic activities; journalist safety; media vulnerability; press freedom

### Abstrak

*Perjalanan mewujudkan kebebasan pers sehingga benar-benar menjadi bagian tak terpisahkan dari tatanan masyarakat berbangsa dan bernegara membutuhkan waktu yang panjang dan dihadapkan pada berbagai tantangan. Terlebih lagi pada posisi seorang jurnalis di daerah rawan konflik seperti Papua yang sarat dengan berbagai kepentingan. Penelitian ini bertujuan memahami kebebasan pers di Papua, pemaknaan jurnalis terhadap kebebasan pers, kebebasan pers dalam pemberitaan isu-isu sensitif dan penyebab rentannya para jurnalis mengalami tindak kekerasan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode studi kasus dengan paradigma konstruktivis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebebasan pers dalam aktivitas jurnalistik di Papua sebagai daerah rawan konflik belum berjalan baik karena berbagai hambatan. Jurnalis memaknai kebebasan pers sebagai bebas dari segala macam ancaman, larangan serta intimidasi, bebas untuk membangun hubungan dengan siapapun dan bebas untuk memberikan informasi yang benar, objektif dan tidak mengada-ada sebagai bentuk tanggung jawab kepada publik. Jurnalis memaknai jaminan kebebasan pers dalam Undang-undang Pers No.40 tahun 1999 masih memerlukan ketegasan dan pembahasan khusus terutama tentang aktivitas jurnalistik dan perlindungan khusus di daerah konflik sebagai sebuah kebutuhan dalam berbagai bentuk. Kebebasan pers dalam pemberitaan isu-isu sensitif di Papua sebagai daerah rawan konflik menuntut para jurnalis mempertimbangkan keselamatan diri. Penyebab masih rentannya jurnalis mengalami tindak kekerasan di Provinsi Papua sebagai daerah konflik adalah rendahnya profesionalisme jurnalis, kurang maksimalnya peran perusahaan pers dalam memberikan perlindungan, dan kurang maksimalnya peran organisasi jurnalis.*

**Kata kunci:** aktivitas jurnalistik; keamanan jurnalis; kebebasan pers; kerentanan media; konflik

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## INTRODUCTION

Freedom is one of the human rights because it is inherent in human beings (Sen, 2012). Press freedom, which initially tended to be interpreted only as the freedom to disseminate information and thoughts through the mass media without any constraints from the authorities, is now developing not only freedom from but freedom for. Press freedom includes both external and internal freedoms. External freedom is a guarantee of freedom for the press to broadcast and write news without any intervention from other parties. Meanwhile, internal freedom is the freedom of the press in writing and broadcasting news without threats from within, that is, the media bureaucracy itself institutionally. Press freedom can be a means of public empowerment, because it requires the participation of the community as a social force, supported by financiers as an economic force, as well as the state and its apparatus as a political force to help build and encourage the democratization of the press (Kenny, 2019, p. 6; Kladakis & Skouralis, 2024, p. 12).

Press freedom is a public property entitled to all citizens because of the right to know and the right to express opinions. The concept of press freedom is different from that of free press. Press freedom is a cultural norm that reflects shared values within the public space, while free press is a condition that underlies the existence of press institutions that ensure their autonomy in conducting social functions. Press freedom is a term that refers to the guarantee of citizens' rights to obtain information as a basis for forming attitudes and opinions in a social and aesthetic context, for which the mass media as a social institution is required. Politically, press freedom means the right of citizens to know about various public issues and to disseminate them openly (Masduki, 2023, p. 4).

The increasingly open press freedom allows journalists to be freer in news gathering, news editing, and news presenting. At the same time, this freedom provides opportunities and convenience for journalists to convey news to the public and conduct their role as agents of social control. However, the journey to realize press freedom so that it truly becomes an inseparable part of the social order of the nation and state takes a long time, with various challenges. Especially in the position of a journalist in a conflict-prone area such as Papua, which is often marked by competing interests. The ongoing social, political, economic, and security situation in Papua also presents challenges for journalists working in the area. The task of journalists as news seekers has a considerable risk which could threaten the safety of lives (Idås et al., 2020, p. 65; Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., 2023, p. 1215; Workneh, 2022, p. 2). Their responsibilities in performing their duties are extremely vulnerable to the threat of danger. The reality in Papua also shows that the dichotomy of Papuans and non-Papuans overshadows journalistic activities. Journalists who serve in Papua come from various ethnic backgrounds, both Indigenous Papuans and those from other regions. Differences in values, norms, and perceptions potentially cause conflicts, either closed or open conflicts, due to misunderstandings in communication (Hassan et al., 2023, p. 38).

In addition, journalists are faced with the condition of the pluralistic Papuan society consisting of more than 250 tribes (Senis et al., 2024, p. 12803). They have ways of life, customs, or cultures that apply in society, so they reflect differences between one tribe and another. The diversity of tribes in Papua does not rule out the possibility of misunderstandings between tribes. Especially if each tribe adheres to its culture, even differences in meaning can also occur due to religious differences. These differences can eventually lead to conflict (Pischedda, 2020, p. 10). Another challenge of the journalists in Papua is the harshness of the assignment terrain because of the long and wide geographical reach with poor infrastructure and transportation. Administratively, even in the process of government, the relationship between

the Papua Provincial Government and the Central Government is an exceedingly long distance, which must pass the Indonesian Ocean. If one flies a plane from Jayapura to Jakarta, it takes 6-7 hours to travel and 7 days if one sails a sea ship (Pamungkas, 2021 p. 694). This condition also affects the government policies, including those that regulate press freedom in journalistic activities, which may not accommodate the real conditions in Papua. No matter how complex the condition of Papua as described earlier, as a mechanism of control for journalists, they must be independent. Journalists must not be mouthpieces for political interests that harm society. Journalists and media managers must be more careful in determining news angles, news sources, and news styles, especially on conflict issues.

Journalists should have special competence in reporting on conflicts. They need to weigh the propriety and impact of their report. News coverage in conflict areas is very vulnerable to provocations that worsen the atmosphere. Coverage on both sides is required to open the confusion of problems that are the source of conflicts. Journalists must make in-depth reportage to uncover the root of all conflicts so that the parties to the conflict can know and communicate with each other. Journalists also need to be sensitive, balance between press freedom and ethical journalistic activities. Freedom in processing information as freely as possible must place an empathetic perspective on conflict victims, not on conflict actors, so that journalists become part of conflict resolution. In this context, the question is not why a conflict is reported but how to cover and report it based on the applicable rules. The Journalistic Code of Ethics emphasizes that Indonesian journalists must avoid airing news that contains sadism, cruelty, and disrespect for the traumatic experiences of victims.

The news in the mass media reflects reality. An image of a social reality can be seen from news in the media (Muzakkir, 2017; Nišić & Plavšić, 2017; Yan, 2020). When the mass media reports a lot about conflict and violence, this is a reflection that indeed there are many conflicts and violence in the community. The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) in its report recorded seventy-three cases of violence against journalists throughout 2024. The most cases of physical violence occurred, reaching twenty cases. The action that took the lives of journalists also occurred once in the same period (Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI), 2025). In detail, Table 1 below shows the total cases of violence experienced by journalists in Papua over the past five years based on the AJI report.

Several earlier studies have been conducted, the first of which is conducted by Sonni et al. (2023). This study analyses the application of peace journalism and framing in the reporting of the Papuan conflict by Suarapapua.com (local) and Kompas.com (national) news portals. Using qualitative methods and Robert E. Entman's framing analysis, this study examined thirty-eight news stories for the January-March 2022 period. The results show that Suarapapua.com tends to frame the conflict as a form of the TPNPB group's rejection of government policies, while

**Table 1.** The total cases of violence experienced by journalists in Papua over the past five years

No	Year	Number of Cases of violence experienced by journalists in Papua
1.	2020	84 (eighty-four) cases
2.	2021	43 (forty-three) cases
3.	2022	61 (sixty-one) cases
4.	2023	86 (eighty-six) cases
5.	2024	73 (seventy-three) cases

Source: processed from: The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI)'s report (2020-2025)

Kompas.com emphasizes national security instability. Both portals apply peaceful journalism by avoiding provocative diction and highlighting peaceful resolution efforts, although the elements of peace orientation and resolution are less consistent in reporting on armed conflict. This study concludes that framing and peaceful journalism by both media contribute to stability in Papua and prevent the escalation of conflict.

Another research is conducted by Robie (2021), which focuses on media freedom and human rights journalism in West Papua. This research reveals the challenges faced by journalists, including access restrictions, intimidation, and violence by Indonesian authorities. Through an analysis of reports from organizations such as Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the study shows how press freedom violations in West Papua are often hidden in global reports on Indonesia. In addition, it highlights the role of the digital revolution and social media in raising global awareness of West Papua's independence struggle, although the mainstream media is still reluctant to cover this issue in depth. The study emphasizes the importance of human rights and peace journalism to drive peaceful and sustainable solutions in West Papua and calls for more unrestricted access for journalists and international organizations to report on the situation in the region.

Earlier studies have provided an important foundation for the world of journalism in Papua, but these three studies have focused on framing analysis of news coverage and the structural challenges of media freedom. Therefore, this research is here to complement these studies by exploring journalists' interpretation of press freedom, including operational challenges and security dynamics that affect their performance. This research aims to understand press freedom in Papua, journalists' interpretation of press freedom, press freedom in reporting sensitive issues, and the causes of journalists' vulnerability to violence. It is expected not only to increase literature on journalism in vulnerable areas but also to be able to provide direct perspectives from actors in the field about the meaning of press freedom in conflict environments.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research used a case study method with a constructivist paradigm. Constructivist arguments reject positivism, which is an understanding that places the importance of observation and objectivity in finding reality over science (Barbehön, 2020, p. 150). Constructivism views social science as a systematic analysis through direct experience of social actors creating and keeping the social world (Musfialdy et al., 2024 p. 115). The constructivist paradigm within research aims to understand and address the problems that individuals, including the researchers themselves, perceive at a given time. This underscores the significant role of the researcher in the process. Constructivist paradigm allows researchers to understand and construct the problems that at that time people, including researchers themselves, held (Bogna et al., 2020). According to the constructivist paradigm, post-reform press freedom in journalistic activities in Papua, as a prone conflict area, can be categorized as a social phenomenon or reality. The press in general is a social product that is influenced by several factors, which are the professionalism of journalists, capital owners, audiences, advertisers, government policies, political situations, legislative constraints, as well as a certain context of space and time.

This is a case study, as formulated by Yin (2018), which is included in a particular case study. The reason for using the case study is that the circumstances of the problem raised are in accordance with the criteria revealed that the design of a single case study is in accordance with several unique circumstances of the case of press freedom in Papua. The case is single, namely only seeing several journalists who are reporting and writing news on the conflict in Papua. The case of this study has several reasons. First, it focuses on journalists working in Papua,

who can be categorized as typical conflict-area journalists, those who have a particular level of readiness in dealing with job risks. The cultural, legal, social, and economic conditions in which they are working are different from those experienced by journalists in other regions. Second, journalists as a profession that is a medium watchdog for the community. Third, considering the lack of research that observes journalistic activities in conflict areas using the case study method, this research is expected to significantly reveal the journalistic activities in Papua.

The subjects of this study consisted of twenty-three journalists selected purposely. Journalists as subjects in this study were determined by purposive sampling with the following criteria: 1. Journalists actively conducting journalistic activities to date; 2. Journalists who have covered and written news about the conflict in Papua; and 3. Journalists who have experienced violence in their journalistic activities.

The researchers conducted the data collection referring to the term “A Data Collection Circle” (Creswell, 2020). The researchers performed all the stages that Creswell suggested because these activities were interrelated with each other. They began by determining the place or individual, the process of seeking access to contact the informant, the strategy of determining the selection of informants, collecting data and recording it, sorting the data or information, and storing it, and so on until adequate results were obtained. Thus, data collection techniques in case studies include interviews, observations, and documentation. Data were analyzed through data presentation, reduction, and conclusion drawing.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Papua is one of the largest islands in Indonesia (Sidiq et al., 2021, p. 140). Areas in the Papua region are also geographically different from each other. The high limestone mountains with steep relief stretch over most of the Papua region, with an altitude of up to three thousand meters above sea level. The mountain range is flanked by a sloping alluvial area, which is located on the north side (Mamberamo plain), in the south (Asmat area), and in the west (Inanwatan lowland). The highest peak of the mountains in Papua stands in the east, named Puncak Jaya. With a height of 4884 meters, Puncak Jaya (Carstensz Pyramid) is the highest peak in Southeast Asia (Chen, 2023, p. 439; Hope, 1976, p. 12). As a large island with a hilly and mountainous topography and the influence of geographical and anatomical location, it faces communication and transportation problems. Until now, there are still few transportation facilities/infrastructure that connect one area to another or between regency cities and sub-district cities. Transportation facilities with inland areas are mostly conducted through air and sea transportation for coastal areas. This condition also causes the cost of transportation between regions in Papua to be much more expensive. Therefore, it is rare for the media to send their journalists to cover the regions, even though most conflict events and the like occur in areas far from Jayapura City as the provincial capital.

In the context of Papua, conflicts have been going on since this area was integrated with the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) in 1962 until now (Rosyidin et al., 2022). The forms of violence include shooting by unknown (mysterious) perpetrators, pretext of law enforcement from Army/Police officials, arrests/detentions related to suspected perpetrators of mysterious shootings, arrest/detention of activists, Army/Police weapon contact with armed citizens, and others. Conflicts occur internally, inseparable from several political momenta in the election of regional heads. On the other hand, there is a disturbance of a group of security disruptors consisting of some people on behalf of an organization. In addition, through the issue of requests for welfare improvements by several PT Freeport employees, the majority of whom come from tribes around the gold mining company.

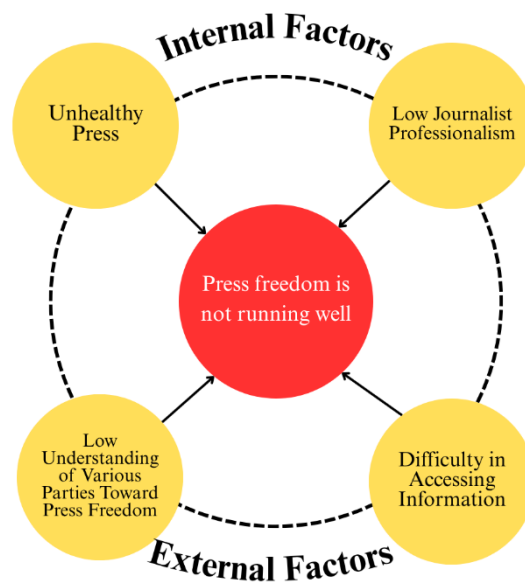


The condition of the Papuan people who remain in conflict can be understood through the Dahrendorf Conflict Theory, which is also the basis of this research. “Authority” and “position” are the central concepts of this theory. The unequal distribution of power and authority is a factor that determines social conflicts systematically. Differences in authority are a sign of the existence of various positions in society. Dahrendorf analyses conflict by identifying various roles and powers in society. According to Dahrendorf, power and authority are terrifying sources because those who hold them have a personal stake in maintaining the status quo. In society, there are always two opposing groups: the rulers and the controlled. Opposition occurs because the ruling class is trying to maintain the status quo, while the oppressed class is trying to bring about changes. Conflicts of interest are always present in every structure (Bulicanu, 2020, p. 143).

No matter how complex the condition of Papua as explained earlier, as a control mechanism, journalists must be independent in carrying out their journalistic activities in the era of press freedom in Papua. Press freedom is a public property right because of the right to know and the right to express opinions. Press freedom is a term that shows a guarantee of citizens’ rights to obtain information as a basis for forming attitudes and opinions in a social context. The ongoing turbulent social, political, economic, and security situation presents challenges for journalists working in the area. Their responsibilities in performing their duties are very vulnerable to the threat of danger (Nuraryo, 2020). Press freedom in press freedom practices that have been in effect since May 1998 (Jurriëns, 2021, p. 539) seem to have opened opportunities for the exploitation of press freedom. The problems of the press, including journalists, are quite complicated with a lot of problems. The reform era is a transition period to usher in democratic life in Indonesia. The reform era can be used as a momentum for journalists or the press in general to develop healthy press freedom.

However, in journalistic activities, there are still journalists who do not see the opportunity for the reform period as a conducive condition. Journalists, in constructing information into the news, look at it from the point of view of their interests, which are also influenced by other interests. Journalists should be professional, that is, avoid conflicts of interest. The difference in the construction of a reality is in line with the constructivist school, which states that a fact or reality is not something that is taken for granted, exists, but is constructed in such a way.

Reality is not something given as if it exists, but it is always produced. Facts in the form of reality only exist in the minds of the person who sees the fact. In this study, the reality in question is press freedom in Papua as a prone conflict area. Press freedom in its implementation is interpreted differently by journalists. The interpretation of each of these journalists certainly results in a diversity of opinions regarding the real conditions in Papua. However, the diversity is not a mistake but a natural case because everyone has a different construction in interpreting an event. Proof that press freedom has not been implemented properly in Papua Province is that there are still many obstacles arising from various parties, both internal and external to the press. Most journalists consider that it is the security forces that most often hinder their press freedom. This was revealed through their bitter experience when dealing with Army or Police personnel, especially when covering group demonstrations demanding an independent Papua, which often occurred in Papua. Another party considered to hinder press freedom is the internal party of the press itself, the journalists, the editors, and even the whole workforce of media companies. Meanwhile, other external parties to the press are the government, the community, and activists of the independent Papua prosecuting movement. The various inhibiting factors within journalistic institutions and external parties can be categorized and visualized as shown in the diagram below. These factors collectively explain why press freedom has not run well



**Figure 1.** Diagram of the actual state of press freedom in Papua  
Source: Source: Researcher data analysis (2025)

in Papua.

In Papua, there are still many unhealthy press companies. The indicator is that the press in Papua is not independent. The level of welfare has not been managed properly through sources other than the government, so its social control function could not run well. The complexity of welfare problems that afflict journalists in Papua Province, both contributors and correspondents in the national media and journalists who are permanent employees in the local media, triggers journalists to act unprofessionally in carrying out their journalistic activities. Unprofessional press freedom in the sense of not being subject to the Journalistic Code of Ethics and press laws will interfere with press freedom itself. Unprofessional journalists will take advantage of the demand for press freedom solely for personal interests and ignore the interests of the public, the owners of press freedom. Finally, behind the press freedom, it is often abused to extort, deceive, or intimidate other parties.

On the other hand, ideally, journalist organizations should be a forum for advocating for the struggle of journalists in their work (Laursen & Trapp, 2019; Le Cam, 2020) as providers of information for the community to educate the nation's life. Journalist advocacy is different from advocacy for professional organizations or other community groups. Journalists are attached to their duties as the fourth pillar of democracy. By bearing the name of the pillar of democracy, they become a balancing force outside the constitutional system in realizing the ideals of a national community. The other three pillars of democracy, which are the executive, legislative, and judiciary, are political society entities, while journalists are in the domain of civil society. With such a position, the advocacy of journalist organizations for their members is not only to improve the welfare of members but also extends to the task of placing journalists according to their historical duties to be directly involved in the formation of the nation's culture at large. Concretely, the task of journalist organizations is to increase the intellectual capacity, professional competence, and social sensitivity of their members. Not only for the improvement of the career and welfare of the journalist, but more broadly, so that journalists perform their duties and obligations to the public interest.

The results of the study show that in the assessment of several research subjects, the role of journalist organizations such as the Indonesian Television Journalists Association (*Ikatan Journalis Televisi Indonesia*), the Indonesian Journalist Association (*Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia*), and Alliance of Independent Journalists (*Aliansi Jurnalis Indonesia*) in Papua, which is suboptimal in resolving several cases of violence experienced by journalists also contributes to the recurrence of acts of violence committed by the community and other parties. Journalists work to find news, process it, edit it, and then present it to the public consciously and responsibly. They are obedient and honest to the truth. They are personally responsible to the press companies that employ them. They are also responsible for the community. A good journalist has a noble purpose related to their job as a seeker of news for society. Journalists feel happy if they succeed in helping others by conveying news and ideas about the world around them. This is what the community needs. To increase credibility, they are encouraged to always respect the community. The trick is to present what the public expects as news and make it the top priority. However, to perform their noble duties and functions, they also need knowledge and appreciation from the public and all parties.

Apart from the obstacles and challenges in journalistic activities, journalists also make several efforts to overcome them. In reporting on conflicts, personal safety is the main concern for a journalist. Threats or dangers that lurk in the safety of a journalist or life come from various sources. Threats can come from situations in the coverage field that are not conducive, or there are parties who are not happy with the news written by journalists. The difficulty and remoteness of the scene require journalists to build good relationships or communicate with various parties who can be sources to obtain the information needed. The location of the incident is far away and out of reach for journalists, making it difficult to get access to accurate information or data related to the events that are happening. Friendship with the resource person is also an effort made for easy access to information from the source. Armed with friendships that have been established before, including with the security forces, they usually provide the required images voluntarily without even being asked by the journalist. Establishing closer communication with fellow journalists who happen to be at the scene of the conflict also needs to be done to share the information they get in the field about the events that occurred.

Press freedom is a social practice that is at the heart of Giddens' structuration theory (Bayu & Triastuti, 2020). Journalists are an important part of the practice of press freedom. Journalists as actors of press freedom are agents who have three internal dimensions in the form of practical consciousness, discursive consciousness, and unconscious motives. Most of the journalists in Papua who are the subjects of this study know about press freedom in their journalistic activities. The competence of journalists as agents is their educational background and journalistic experience. Journalist is a community that has the courage and sensitivity to read a condition and produce some news. Journalism is a challenging field of work, especially in conflict areas such as Papua Province.

Journalists in conducting their journalistic activities adhere to the foundations of ethics and journalism theories, which are not easy to implement. It takes courage, foresight, and willingness to accept risks related to their journalistic activities. It takes adequate knowledge, skills, and education to be a journalist. The results of the study show that journalists in Papua hold bachelor's degrees. However, only a small part of these journalists are educated in the communication science department, which provides insight into how to conduct interviews, document images, news processing theory, journalistic ethics, and so on. Some journalists are trying to forge themselves through various journalistic education and training programs. An educated and trained journalist has ethical skills, recognizing the ethical signs or value system



of journalistic work, attitude and character of loving freedom, and respecting human values, trained to think and work based on objectivity, balance, avoiding hateful and judgmental attitudes, and being careful. Through their practical knowledge, both individually and socially, journalists can conduct their journalistic activities in Papua Province without having to constantly question what will happen or what should be done with the prevailing press freedom. Personal and social routines are formed through the performance of these practical awareness groups.

Furthermore, discursive awareness refers to a series of journalistic knowledge capacities that journalists have in reflecting and providing detailed and explicit explanations of their actions. This journalistic knowledge is covered by journalistic skills which include communication skills (e.g. interview skills), the ability to find reliable and responsible sources (including the obligation to protect sources), the ability to assess news material that can be presented, the ability to find support sources (documents and others), the ability to compile news, and other skills that show the competence of journalists. In this context, journalists as agents in Papua Province in the view of structuring theory are not peacemakers. However, through a series of journalistic knowledge capacities, they can write news correctly and accurately according to the journalistic code of ethics. Journalists must be good at packaging news so that the conflicts do not spread more because of the provocation of the community due to the news presented. The practical awareness and discursive awareness of journalists in Papua are identified through their efforts to overcome all sorts of obstacles encountered in their press freedom in this area. The results of the study show that journalists avoid situations and conditions that threaten their safety. In reporting on conflicts, personal safety is imperative for a journalist. Therefore, the Press Council seeks to prepare journalists who will work in conflict areas by including them in special training in conflict areas.

In addition to the two consciousnesses, Giddens adds that not all motivations from agent actions can be found at the level of consciousness. Giddens uses unconscious motivation as a trigger for some actions. Unconscious motivation concerns desire or needs that have the potential to direct actions but not the actions themselves. Thus, obstacles to the implementation of press freedom in Papua Province come from various parties and are manifested in different forms. However, journalists do not necessarily take the existing obstacles for granted, but they try to overcome them in several ways. This means that journalists as actors, practicing their professionalism in addition to hard competence in reporting and writing news also require soft competencies, where their actions are based on practical awareness, discursive awareness, and cognitive motives. This is done through efforts to increase knowledge and skills in conducting journalistic activities in conflict areas. For example, participating in education and training covering conflict areas. In the context of the implementation of press freedom in journalistic activities in conflict areas, these three realizations are basic competencies that need to be possessed by journalists to support the implementation of press freedom as it should.

## CONCLUSION

Press freedom in Papua Province, a region prone to conflict, remains limited in its journalistic practices because of the internal and external challenges of the press. Internal obstacles to the press are the economically unhealthy condition and the low professionalism of journalists. Externally, journalists have limited access to information due to the low understanding of various parties regarding press freedom and the role of journalists. Also, they face difficulty reporting in the field. Journalists interpret press freedom as free from all kinds of threats, prohibitions, and intimidation, free to build relationships with anyone, and

free to provide true, objective, and non-fabricated information as a responsibility to the public. However, they interpret the guarantees of press freedom outlined in Press Law No. 40 of 1999 as not providing certainty about guarantees and protection for journalists and their families in conflict areas.

Press freedom in reporting sensitive issues in Papua Province requires journalists to consider three aspects: prioritizing personal safety (by not giving a large space in the news to groups against the government, not reporting on the issue of independent Papua or other sensitive issues, and postponing the news if the situation and conditions are heating up), using language with a peaceful perspective (softening the language used by not openly mentioning the parties involved in the conflict and raising the other side of the conflict), and adhering to the journalistic code of ethics (reporting the facts as they are and considering the balance of sources). The cause of the vulnerability of journalists to violence is due to internal factors of the press, which are low professionalism of journalists, suboptimal role of press companies in protecting journalists, and insignificant role of journalist organizations in helping to resolve violence against journalists. Meanwhile, the external factor of the press is the lack of understanding of relevant parties (security forces, government, and the public) about the journalistic profession and its duties.

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