

**Beyond the Newsroom:
Making News in Three Indonesian News Organisations
During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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Abstract

Across the world, newsrooms underwent disruption due to the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic as they struggled to navigate routine transitions amid an unexpected crisis. Unlike other crisis events such as conflicts or disasters, COVID-19 is neither visible nor material; it did not physically destroy newsrooms, but there is no centrally located place of the pandemic for journalists to work from. The pandemic has meant that the physical centre of news-making and a source of symbolic power - the newsroom - is no longer a safe space for journalists. The outbreak, resulting in drastic limitations on mobility and interaction, offers a compelling context to examine changing news routines, practices, and changes in journalists' relationships with 'place', objects of journalism, and news sources.

This study employed ethnography and focused on the Global South context to uncover cultural nuances in news production and diversify our global understanding of journalistic practices. It addresses these gaps in three Jakarta-based Indonesian newsrooms: SCTV, a television station, and two digital newsrooms, Liputan 6.com and BBC Indonesia. The data collection includes approximately 245 hours of offline and online observations, 35 in-depth interviews, and an analysis of internal documents. The fieldwork for this study spanned over 15 months, from the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia in April 2020 to the second wave in July 2021.

The data revealed four main findings. First, the pandemic severely affected journalism routines, changing how news is produced and the quality of the content, with journalists experiencing both resilience and anxiety in their professional challenges. Second, newsroom reconfiguration caused by the pandemic created tension as making news in the newsroom was inseparable from their professional journalistic identity and authority. Third, journalists heavily relied on news objects in the newsroom and encountered difficulties when parting them, as specific objects of journalism held significant meaning. Lastly, the impact of social distancing hindered journalists from finding and verifying sources, resulting in a dependency on official sources, which had major consequences for power relations between journalists and state authorities.

Overall, this study reinvigorates news production studies by laying the theoretical groundwork for understanding the changing journalistic routines and newsroom culture in crisis environments. Empirically, the study contributes to a better understanding of the legacy newsroom and digital newsroom within a rapidly evolving field of journalism from a Global South case study.

Keywords: COVID-19, Newsrooms Disruption, Making News, Journalistic Routine, Ethnography, Indonesia

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 The Centrality of News Making	3
1.1.1 Routine Disruptions Due to the Global Crisis	5
1.1.2 Place: The Dynamic Hub of News Production	6
1.1.3 The Role of Objects of Journalism During the Pandemic	7
1.1.4 Challenges in Accessing News Sources	9
1.2 Methodology	11
1.3 Terminology.....	12
1.4 Thesis Outline	13
Chapter 2 Literature Review	15
2.1 Introduction.....	15
2.2 Routines Practices in News Production	16
2.2.1 Exploring Routines Patterns	16
2.2.2 News Crises Coverage	19
2.2.3 News-making in an Unexpected Crisis.....	22
2.3 Exploring Places in the Pandemic Setting	25
2.3.1 Place as a Material Setting in News-making	26
2.3.2 Newsroom Shaping Professionalism	28
2.3.3 The Symbolic Power and Authority of Places.....	31
2.3.4 Place Realignment Challenges.....	33
2.3.5 The Reconfiguration of Physical Places	36
2.4 Exploring Objects During the Pandemic	37
2.4.1 Objects of Journalism in Digital Newsroom.....	38
2.4.2 Digital-enabled Objects as Socio-Materiality	41
2.4.3 Mobile Journalism and Multi-Skilling Requirements	43
2.4.4 Resistance Culture Towards Digital-Enabled Objects.....	45
2.4.5 Objects in Social and Cultural Contexts	48
2.5 Dynamic Relationship Between Journalists and Sources	49
2.5.1 Gatekeepers' Authority to Select Sources	50
2.5.2 The Evolving Role of Gatekeeping.....	51

2.5.3 Pandemic Pressures: Testing the Limits of Sourcing	53
2.5.4 The Dominance of Elite Sources in COVID-19 Coverage.....	54
2.6 Context Study: Journalism in Indonesia	60
2.6.1 Shift in Power: From State to Conglomerate Media Control	60
2.6.2 Journalistic Autonomy: Overcoming the Shadow of the Past	63
2.6.3 The Intersection of Traditional and New Media.....	65
2.6.4 Indonesia's Media Landscape Amid COVID-19	67
2.7. Addressing the Gaps in Existing Literature	69
Chapter 3 Research Methodology	71
3.1 Introduction.....	71
3.2. Methodological Approach	71
3.2.1 Newsroom Ethnography	71
3.2.2 Field Sites.....	74
3.3 Data Collection	77
3.3.1 Observation.....	79
3.3.2 Interviews.....	82
3.3.3 Diaries and Supporting Documents	85
3.3.4 Field Notes	86
3.3.5 Triangulation of Methods	86
3.4 Approaches to Data Analysis.....	87
3.4.1 Coding and Key Themes.....	88
3.4.2 Ethics.....	90
3.4.3 Reflexivity.....	90
Chapter 4 Routine Practices in Disrupted Newsrooms	93
4.1 Introduction.....	93
4.2 Adjusted Routines in Disrupted Newsrooms	94
4.3 Coping Strategies: Developing Mechanisms During the Pandemic	101
4.3.1 Lack of Safety Training	105
4.3.2 Resilient Journalism: Surviving in Crises.....	107
4.4 Tensions in Remote Communication.....	110
4.5 New Approaches to News Creation.....	113
4.6 Conclusion	116
Chapter 5 Place and Newsroom Reconfiguration.....	120
5.1 Introduction.....	120
5.2 Place as a Material Setting of News	121
5.3 Reconfiguration of Physical Place	127
5.4 Place Realignments in Digital Newsrooms.....	133

5.5 Place as Symbol of Power and Authority	137
5.6 On Location: The Place for Live Reporting	139
5.7 Conclusion	146
Chapter 6 Objects of Journalism During the Pandemic	150
6.1 Introduction.....	150
6.2 Journalists’ Reliance on Objects as Attachments to the Newsroom.....	151
6.3 Authority Beyond the Objects	155
6.4 Digital-enabled Objects and Challenges in Virtual Environments	161
6.5 Leveraging Mobile Objects.....	164
6.5.1 The Indispensable Role of Multiskilled Journalists.....	166
6.5.2 The Gap in Digital Technology Skills	168
6.6 An Experiment to Foster Audience Engagement.....	170
6.7 Conclusion	172
Chapter 7 Accessing Sources During the Pandemic	176
7.1 Introduction.....	176
7.2 Gatekeeping Challenges Amid Sources Restrictions.....	177
7.3 Balanced Stories: Challenges in Diverse Sourcing.....	180
7.4 Reliance on Official Sources	184
7.5 Challenges in Verifying Official Information.....	190
7.6 Self-Censorship and Journalists ’Autonomy	193
7.7 Conclusion	199
Chapter 8 Conclusion	202
8.1 Introduction.....	202
8.2 Main Findings	203
8.2.1 Changing Routine Practices in Disrupted Newsrooms.....	204
8.2.2 Reconfiguration of Place.....	206
8.2.3 Redefining the Objects of Journalism.....	209
8.2.4 Gatekeeping Challenges and Press-State Relations	212
8.3 Implications for the Study of the Newsroom.....	215
8.4 Limitations and Future Research	217
References.....	220
Appendices.....	255
Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview List.....	255
Appendix B: Initial Codes	259

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Typifying News in Routine Practices	17
Table 2.2 Media and Crises: Four Typical Cases.....	21
Table 2.3 Journalists with Diverse Skills	44
Table 2.4 Media Ownership and Political Affiliation in Indonesia	62
Table 3.1 Data Collection.....	78
Table 3.2 On-site and Online Observations in Three Newsrooms.....	80
Table 3.3 On-site and Online Interviews in Three Newsrooms.....	82
Table 3.4 Participants' Job Titles and Years of Experience	84
Table 3.5 Final Codes.....	88
Table 5.1 Newscasts Comparison of Pre-Pandemic (2019) and Mid-Pandemic (2020).....	143
Table 6.1 Video Production Equipment Used by Three News Organisations Before and During the Pandemic	157
Table 7.1 Sources in News Stories During the Pandemic March-April 2020.....	186

List of Figures

Figure 4.1 News Sources in Indonesia During the Pandemic, April 2020.....	97
Figure 4.2 Newsroom During the Pandemic, August 2020	98
Figure 4.3 Liputan6.com Newsroom During the Pandemic, March 2021	99
Figure 4.4 BBC Indonesia Newsroom During the Pandemic, March 2020.....	101
Figure 4.5 Natural Disasters in Indonesia, January-December 2020	109
Figure 5.1 Empty Newsroom at SCTV, April 2020.....	122
Figure 5.2 Liputan6.com Newsroom, March 2021	124
Figure 5.3 BBC Indonesia Newsroom, February 2020	125
Figure 5.4 Home Studio, March 2020	130
Figure 5.5 Multimedia Studio at Liputan6.com, March 2021	134
Figure 5.6 BBC Indonesia Newsroom, April 2020	136
Figure 5.7 Reporting Live During the Pandemic in 2020	141
Figure 6.1 Production Control Room SCTV, August 2020	152
Figure 6.2 BBC Radio Indonesia, March 2021	154
Figure 6.3 Multimedia Studio Liputan6.com, March 2021	155
Figure 6.4 The Satellite News Gathering (SNG) Truck.....	159
Figure 6.5 ENG versus DLSR.....	165

Chapter 1

Introduction

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic became a global public health crisis, as declared by the World Health Organisation (WHO).¹ This was a tipping point for the whole world, and journalism was seriously interfered with. The Coronavirus pandemic impacted newsrooms across the globe. Journalists encountered exceptional expectations and strain in this unprecedented crisis challenge. Some scholars have suggested that at no other time has journalism been so disrupted all over the world as it is now because of the coronavirus (e.g., Newman et al. 2021; Posetti et al. 2020). The Global South, particularly emerging democracies and developing economies, were deeply affected by the pandemic (Radcliffe 2021).

Before the global pandemic, journalism struggled to confront the pressures triggered by digital disruptions² (e.g., Franklin and Canter 2019; Pavlik 2021; Steensen and Westlund 2021). For example, in Indonesia, the focus of this study, the pandemic, occurred during a period when most newsrooms were undergoing an ongoing transition into a multi-platform (Ambardi et al. 2014; Jurriens and Tapsell 2017; Tapsell 2015). The pandemic, however, created disruptions in the middle of transformations and changed the pattern of journalistic work in Indonesia (Geni et al 2021; Masduki and Prastya 2021).

Globally, journalists have continued to adapt to these digital shifts. The lockdowns and social distancing measures exacerbated challenges faced by journalists, which led to questions about the ongoing evolution of digital journalism practices (Hanusch 2022; Lee 2021; Pavlik 2021). The outbreak's severity prompted governments in many countries to restrict journalists' access to information sources (e.g., Mellado et al. 2021; Papadopoulou and Maniou 2020). According to the World Press Freedom Index 2021, journalism is completely or partially restricted in 73% of the 180 countries surveyed, with Indonesia ranked 113 of 180. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had far-reaching consequences for journalism, numerous changes are potentially long-lasting, raising many

¹ On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stated at a press briefing that this was the first coronavirus to cause a pandemic.

² The digital disruptions refer to the profound changes in the media landscape brought about by the affordances of digital technology. The advent of the internet, social media, and digital platforms has transformed the traditional ways news is produced, consumed, and distributed.

critical questions concerning the present and future of journalism (Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen 2021).

While the COVID-19 pandemic was a global crisis, the impact of the pandemic varied across different contexts due to differences in news media systems and politics. In Indonesia, the government's response on COVID-19 was influenced by a recent decline in democratic values over the past decade, emphasising the desire to maintain ruling authority (e.g., Fealy 2020; Masduki 2020; Mietzner 2020; Mujani and Liddle 2021). This situation reflected broader patterns in Southeast Asia, where regimes exploited the crisis for power consolidation (Kurlantzick 2020; Hooi 2020). In Southeast Asia, Indonesia and the Philippines are known for having a diverse media climate compared to other countries (Freedom House 2020; George and Venkiteswaran 2019). During the pandemic, however, journalists struggled with the shrinking space for criticising people in positions of authority (Bernadas and Ilagan 2020; Steele 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath is a critical moment not only for digital journalism but also for journalism research, and it underscores what we study and why we study them (Lewis 2020; Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen 2021). Especially given the distinctive circumstances brought about by the pandemic, the challenges journalism faces extend beyond typical newsroom crises. Disruptions in the logistical aspects of news production forced remote working arrangements and hybrid newsrooms (e.g., Hendrickx and Picone 2021; García-Avilés 2021; Vargo 2020). The outbreak also led to a notable absence of in-person interactions, reconfiguring the newsroom, distinct from the traditional dynamics of newsrooms (e.g., Santos and Mare 2021; Saptorini et al. 2021). The pandemic changed the typical newsroom space as a place for face-to-face collaboration and spontaneous exchanges, which described as a “place where editors can talk to news editors, news editors to reporters” (Franklin et al. 2005, p. 193).

The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism conducted research on ‘Changing Newsrooms’ three times between 2020 and 2023. Remote working was obviously the main focus of the early pandemic (Cherubini et al. 2020). In the two following years, research delved into the consequences of the social and collaborative working dynamics (Cherubini 2022) and, subsequently, the impact on newsroom's hiring, productivity, diversity and talent (Cherubini and Sharma 2023). Nonetheless, there is still a need for further exploration within the literature concerning how newsrooms and journalists manage their workplace dynamics in the context of pandemic crises. Understanding the evolution of newsroom culture in response to the substantial global disruption caused by the pandemic requires a more

comprehensive investigation. As Lee (2021, p. 7) stated, “Journalism researchers are forced to question long-standing assumptions and revisit previous findings.”

The pandemic provided a unique moment to investigate how the news-making process changed during a time of extraordinary circumstances. With social distancing measures in place, the pandemic introduced new challenges and considerations to newsrooms’ traditional news production process. This thesis investigates the pandemic’s impact on the news-making process and changes in journalists’ relationships by focusing on newsroom routines. The main question addressed in this study is: How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact newsrooms and change news-making? I explore questions about whether these shifts have redefined the relationships between journalists and place, objects of journalism, and their news sources- particularly press-government relations.

Four main questions are addressed in this study. First: How did the COVID-19 pandemic crisis impact journalism routines and change news-making? Second: How did the value of a physical place affect journalistic professionalism during the pandemic? What were the consequences of the reconfiguration of the place on the symbolic power of journalism? Third: How did objects of journalism contribute to the news-making processes during the COVID-19 pandemic? Fourth: How did the pandemic impact gatekeeping processes and change journalists’ relationships with their sources?

1.1 The Centrality of News Making

The newsroom provides critical insight into journalistic cultures. It is where news production is centralised and concentrated as a professional practice (Wahl-Jorgensen 2009). It is a focal point of news gathering operations, whether print, broadcast or online (Franklin et al. 2005). Studies have found that newsroom cultures are not static; rather, they are constantly in flux and evolving (Cottle 2019; Usher 2019). The newsroom’s development and its role in news production are linked closely to technological changes and working practices (e.g., Nerone and Barnhurst 2003; Pavlik 2000). In the digital era, the traditional newsroom has undergone significant changes as the contemporary newsroom is no longer limited by the temporal constraints of traditional media (Boczkowski 2004; 2015). The contemporary newsroom adapts to the demands of real-time news dissemination across various digital platforms, creating a 24/7 news cycle.³

³ A news cycle is a round of coverage that was traditionally determined by the interval of time between each newspaper publication. The term first appeared in a 1922 Los Angeles Times article. Smaller local and

The digital media landscape, however, also raises questions about the centrality of the newsroom. Studies show that the newsroom is not only a conventional environment for journalism practice but also a dynamic ecosystem that fosters collaboration and shapes journalism practice (e.g., Schmitz Weiss 2015; Robinson 2011; Usher 2014, 2019). The newsroom characterised as a distinctive physical setting, also significantly influences how journalists perceive their association with the professional community and their identity within journalism (Deuze 2008; Gonzales 2017; Maares et al. 2023; Singer 2004). Some studies have challenged the conventional centrality of the newsroom in journalistic work (e.g., Boczkowski 2015; Zelizer 2017), which questions the relevance of the newsroom in the digital media landscape (see Chapter 5). In the ongoing academic discourse on newsroom centrality, a fundamental question has emerged regarding the role of the newsroom in times of crisis. This question drives this research to explore the newsroom's functions amid a pandemic, considering the consequences of lockdowns and social restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Newsrooms have experienced significant changes since the first outbreaks of COVID-19. A significant literature on studies on news production during the pandemic also emerged. Research has tended to focus on specific aspects, such as innovation and how the pandemic fosters creativity in remote work (e.g., Arafat and Porlezza 2023; García-Avilés et al. 2022; Porcu et al. 2020). Other studies have focused on newsrooms' transition in data journalism, such as analysed data stories from news outlets in six Asian countries (e.g., Wu 2022, 2024). My study, however, aims not only to investigate aspects of news production that have changed the routines in the newsroom operation but also to investigate the relationship between journalists and the key elements of news production. These are 'place' where journalists work, 'objects of journalism' and news sources. More importantly, this study seeks to explore how these changes shape newsroom culture and may define newsroom operations in the future. In addition, studies on newsrooms during the pandemic mainly focus on the press and online platforms, highlighting the necessity for additional research on broadcast journalism.

This research seeks to fill this gap by examining the newsroom within the context of an unusual crisis and analysing the news production process. The fieldwork for this study was

international newspapers operated on a 24-hour cycle, publishing daily in the morning or evening. Slowly, the trend toward shorter cycles emerged. In 1952, the Today Show on ABC introduced a morning news cycle. In the 1980s, the expression "24-hour news cycle" developed to describe how satellite transmissions and later Internet postings updated international events continually.

conducted in Indonesia's newsroom during the early stages of the pandemic in 2020. Many news organisations closed their operations and did not allow researchers to carry out studies inside the newsroom. Gaining access to newsrooms in the middle of the pandemic was invaluable for this study to scrutinise the change inside the newsroom through an ethnographic lens. This process of direct observation contributes to understanding how journalists navigated their daily news routines during this unprecedented period.

The main case studies focus on three Indonesian newsrooms based in Jakarta during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021: SCTV, a privately owned television station and two digital newsrooms: Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia. By closely examining news production processes within newsrooms, this research offers insights that enrich media practices and scholarship within and beyond Indonesia. Moreover, it aims to critically analyse the overall quality and adaptability of the Indonesian media landscape. The study also seeks to understand how non-Western newsrooms navigated the challenges presented by digital media during the pandemic, contributing to the broader field of Global South media studies (e.g., Waisbord and Mellado 2014; Wasserman and de Beer 2009).

The following overview provides a foundation for understanding the changing newsrooms during the pandemic crisis and the relationship between journalists and places, objects of journalism, and news sources.

1.1.1 Routine Disruptions Due to the Global Crisis

Newsrooms all over the world experienced changes in journalism practice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the profound effects of the pandemic on newsrooms was the disruption of routine practices. This is not the first time newsrooms have been disrupted, as earlier research has revealed that some newsrooms were inoperable due to various forms of calamities, such as disasters (e.g., Usher 2009). To understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on news routines means thinking beyond established knowledge of crisis or disaster journalism. One illustration considers Usher's (2009) work on a local newspaper, the New Orleans Times-Picayune, during Hurricane Katrina. Usher demonstrated how journalists confronted the physical inoperability of their newsrooms caused by flooding and destruction. Nevertheless, they returned to routines once the immediate danger was over, though they still faced many challenges. In the COVID-19 pandemic, the newsroom was no longer a safe space for journalists to work from. While it did not destroy any physical infrastructure, the practice of social distancing restricted physical presence, changed the workplace

environment, and forced the newsroom to reconfigure in order to continue functioning and producing news. Both situations disrupted routine practices; however, these disruptions differed in terms of their effects on journalism. The pandemic was unique in its global scale and prolonged period with simultaneous challenges.

In comparison with previous health crises and their impact on news coverage, none have shaped newsrooms like the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Choi and McKeever 2019; Ducharme 2020; Holland et al. 2014; Leask et al. 2010). Several studies have investigated journalism practices while covering public health emergencies (e.g., Kim 2020; Klemm et al. 2019; Thompson 2019). While crises typically present challenges in reporting and news gathering, the pandemic introduced disruptions within the newsroom itself—a crisis ‘on our own doorstep’ (Jukes et al. 2022). In contrast with other crises, journalists became part of the coronavirus threat. The lockdown, the necessity for social distancing, and the shift to remote work prompted questions about how this extraordinary crisis challenged the traditional news production process in the newsroom. Previous studies on the intersection of journalism with health crises do not fully apply due to two key distinctions. First of all, unlike earlier crises, the pandemic directly affected newsrooms. Secondly, the reporting dynamics diverge, with the pandemic requiring sustained commitment compared to shorter reporting situations. The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic prompts the first research question: How did the COVID-19 pandemic crisis impact journalism routines and change news-making?

1.1.2 Place: The Dynamic Hub of News Production

Much research has already been produced on the intersection of the pandemic and journalism. One aspect that is often overlooked, however, is the investigation of ‘place’. It is crucial for this study to examine how the newsroom, as a physical place, has been impacted by the pandemic and how it affects the work of journalists.

Place and space have long been studied in several fields, including philosophy, geography, and social sciences. Lefebvre (2014/1991), in “The Production of Space”, introduced the concept of place as the social, cultural, and emotional significance individuals and communities attach to specific spaces. The connection between place and space can also be understood through the Topophilia concept (Tuan 1974), which describes place more like a relationship between people and physical settings.

In journalism studies, ‘place’ often denotes the physical location characterised by dynamic space crucial for news production. This particular place acts as a hub of activity where journalists gather information and produce news content (Tuchman 1978; Usher 2019). In this thesis, the term ‘place’ refers to the newsroom, with occasionally the location where news is gathered and reported. As defined by Usher (2019, p. 86), places of news can be considered “the physical locations where reporting happens” and “where news decision-making occurs” (e.g., newsrooms). The newsroom is “a place where editors can talk to news editors, news editors to reporters, where the day’s output can be planned and executed” (Franklin et al. 2005, p. 193).

Journalism scholars often interchange the terms ‘place’ and ‘space’. For example, Schmitz Weiss (2018, p. 51) describes a “spatial journalism framework,” emphasising the incorporation of space, place, and location (physical, augmented, and virtual) into the journalism process and practice. Accordingly, this thesis establishes the newsroom as a place, informed by place-based journalism theory (Schmitz Weiss 2018; Usher 2015, 2019), that place is where journalists work and shape the news they produce. Usher (2019) argues that research often assumes news-related places are unchanging and rarely explores journalists’ relationships with these places when examining how journalists depict them. One of the most significant concerns is that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the places. To understand the impact of place on journalism during the pandemic and the consequences of place realignment, this study investigates the changing places by asking the second research question: How did the value of a physical place affect journalistic professionalism during the pandemic? What were the consequences of the reconfiguration of the place on the symbolic power of journalism?

1.1.3 The Role of Objects of Journalism During the Pandemic

Objects of journalism during the pandemic have not been extensively addressed. Therefore, this study aims to scrutinise the objects in digital newsrooms during the pandemic crisis, with a particular focus on digital-enabled objects as the backbone of news production. The term ‘objects of journalism’ or the concept of ‘news objects’ is not commonly found in conventional dictionaries or widely recognised journalism references. Scholarly attention to the study of objects of journalism is limited, with little attention paid to the technological and cultural dimensions of the newsroom (Anderson and De Maeyer 2015). Some scholars (e.g.,

Boczkowski 2004; Moran and Usher 2021), however, have explored this area, and their research contributes to understanding the objects of journalism in this thesis.

The term ‘objects of journalism’ in this study refers to the material forms of journalism, the technological parts that populate digital news-making (De Maeyer 2016). These objects can be classified as ‘hard things, soft things, and in-between things’ (Schudson 2015). Objects are further categorised as hard and soft objects. According to Schudson (2015, p. 63), “The software is flexible and can be tweaked; it can be improved repeatedly over time with relative ease and does not have to start over. However, hardware lasts long and is not easily changed.” In this study, ‘objects of journalism’ or ‘news objects’ refers to digital-enabled objects. It includes physical objects like news production equipment or non-physical objects like software. Digital-enabled objects are used in the process of news gathering and production. For instance, in the process of news gathering, one might use hard objects such as a camera, smartphone (Väättäjä 2012; Westlund 2013), live reporting equipment (Guribye and Nyre 2017), broadcast media servers and audio mixers (Hemingway 2008). Meanwhile, soft objects include software and applications (e.g., Anderson and Kreiss 2013; Bounegru 2019; Rodgers 2014).

The increasing digitisation in recent decades has led to extensive discussions about the relationships between journalists and material objects (e.g., Boczkowski 2004; Deuze 2004; Steensen and Westlund 2021). The concept of the ‘material turn’ in journalism studies (Anderson and De Maeyer 2015; Boczkowski 2015) brings more attention to the broad spectrum of actors implicated in news-making, the role of technologies in the creation of news, and the relationship between materiality and journalists. Previous studies have examined objects of journalism as hard objects (e.g., Schmitz Weiss and Domingo 2010; Westlund 2011) and soft objects (e.g., Anderson and Kreiss 2013; De Maeyer and Le Cam 2015). Yet, research has not investigated how the pandemic changed how journalists use objects. As this pandemic disrupted newsrooms, it could have consequences for the objects used in news production. Especially since the implementation of social distancing measures compelled journalists to leave the newsroom, which necessitated remote work for their safety. The conditions wrought by the pandemic were frequently referred to as ‘unprecedented’. It is thus crucial that this study analyses how the pandemic accelerated the relationship between journalists and objects and what the implications were for journalism practices.

Digital-enabled objects have played a critical role in news production within journalists’ work environments (e.g., Moran and Usher 2021; Neff 2015; Schmitz Weiss and Domingo 2010). These objects include news production equipment (physical) and software

(non-physical). As such, it raises questions about the consequences of journalists leaving the newsroom and moving to remote environments. This study examines how digital-enabled objects influenced journalism practices and culture during the COVID-19 pandemic by drawing upon the socio-materiality framework (Anderson and De Maeyer 2015; Boczkowski 2015). Socio-material contexts that shape journalistic practice within and beyond the newsroom consider relationships between humans and physical and non-physical objects. Socio-materiality refers not only to what objects do, but also to what they mean for people and how they mediate practice (Neff 2015). Therefore, this research seeks to comprehend how the pandemic has influenced the objects of journalism and possibly contributed to redefining its objects. Thus, the third research question is as follows: How did objects of journalism contribute to the news-making process during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.1.4 Challenges in Accessing News Sources

Crisis situations have historically presented journalists with challenges when accessing news sources (e.g., Franklin and Carlson 2010; Manning 2000; Van der Meer et al. 2014, 2017). Journalism is a source-driven practice, and the trade of information between journalists and their sources is at the heart of journalism practice (Van der Meer et al. 2017; Broersma et al. 2013). Journalists' professional responsibilities require them to seek out and verify important statements from different sources (Ekström and Westlund 2019; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). In times of crisis, however, the gatekeeping process is truly tested. The very nature of crises can disrupt the normal flow of information and challenge clarity amid crisis and chaos (Ryfe 2018).

Previous studies have examined the difficulties faced during crisis situations regarding sourcing (e.g., Bruns 2013; Franklin and Carlson 2010; Van der Meer et al. 2017). This study needs to determine whether these challenges are similar during a pandemic like COVID-19, which started to impact newsrooms in Indonesia in March 2020. It aims to address the fourth research question: How did the pandemic impact the gatekeeping process and change journalists' relationships with their sources?

The term gatekeeping was introduced by social psychologist Kurt Lewin⁴ to understand how information flows within social systems. In journalism, gatekeeping theory

⁴ Social psychologist Kurt Lewin coined the "gatekeeper" in 1947. Lewin used the term to describe the role that individuals or groups play in controlling the flow of information. The gatekeeper determines which data should be transferred to a group or individual and which should not. At first, the gatekeeper concept was widely used in

posits that media professionals, including editors and journalists, act as gatekeepers who select, filter and determine the content as well as control the passage of information through various stages of the communication process. The gatekeeping model gained prominence in the field of mass communication through the research of David Manning White⁵ in the 1950s. Building on White's work, several scholars (Reese and Ballinger 2001; Shoemaker and Reese 2013; Shoemaker and Vos 2009; Vos and Russell 2019) further developed the gatekeeping theory. While there is debate about the pertinence of the traditional role of journalists as gatekeepers of information in the digital age (e.g., Hermida et al. 2012; Singer 2014; William and Delli Carpini 2004), some scholars argue that gatekeeping in mainstream media is still relevant (e.g., Shoemaker and Vos 2019; Vos 2019).

As gatekeepers, journalists encounter dual challenges concerning their sources: the need for diversity and the imperative of verification (Matthews 2013). In times of crisis, journalists tend to rely heavily on specific sources such as news agencies, organisations or information from the public, resulting in less diverse sources (e.g., Lewis et al. 2008; Van der Meer et al. 2017). In crisis situations, the changing dynamics between journalists and sources raise questions about power balance (Broersma et al. 2013).

Amid the crisis, journalists found themselves in an unusual situation in accessing their news sources (Perreault and Perreault 2021). While journalists continued to be critical gatekeepers in obtaining and selecting sources, they did not have easy access to sources, particularly those with authority. Manning (2000) analysed how elite voices marginalise those with limited access to the public arena, emphasising how less powerful individuals are excluded. The classic theory of press-state relations focused on Western media and portrayed elite power as the primary news source during wartime (e.g., Bennet 1990; Hallin 1989). In emerging democratic countries, the relationship between government and media is marked by governments frequently exerting control through censorship, legal pressure, and state-operated outlets (Hadland 2015).

One of the objectives of this thesis is to revisit the theory of press-state relations and comprehend the changed relationship between journalists and authorities in global crises like

psychology; now, it is one of the essential theories in communication studies and has become a common usage term in journalism.

⁵ David Manning White is known for his research that uses the term "Mr. Gates". In his 1950 study, he investigated the decision-making processes of news editors, conceptualising them as "gatekeepers" who control the flow of information within a mass communication channel. White's study focused on the factors that an editor, whom he pseudonymously referred to as "Mr. Gates," considers when determining which news stories are included in the newspaper and which are excluded. Mr. Gates, the wire editor of a morning newspaper in a mid-sized city, served as the subject of the case study.

COVID-19. As countries around the world imposed physical restrictions, studies show the government plays a central role in the media's crisis coverage (e.g., Papadopoulou and Maniou 2020; Van Aelst and Blumler 2021), including in the Global South (e.g., Bernadas and Ilagan 2020; Bulut and Ertuna 2022, Hooi 2020). Similarly, in Indonesia, the government, as the central authority, leveraged the pandemic to continue to undermine democracy and jeopardise the press and political freedom. The government's response to the pandemic underscored a decline in democratic principles (e.g., Meckelburg and Bal 2021; Mujani and Liddle 2021; Primandari 2020; Setijadi 2021). The lack of in-person interactions with the government during the coronavirus outbreak raised the power balance issue as the relationship becomes less mutually reliant due to pandemic restrictions (Newman et al. 2021; Steele 2021).

Using press-state relationship theory as the framework, this study investigates the changing relationship between journalists and the government against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, examining how the press-government relationship during the outbreak has considerable implications for journalists' autonomy is also important. The fourth question of this study is: How did the pandemic impact the gatekeeping process and change journalists' relationships with their sources?

1.2 Methodology

This study employed an ethnographic approach by following three newsrooms during periods of journalistic change. Several journalism studies have shown that newsroom ethnography is commonly used to explore newsroom culture amidst the rapid changes in digital technology (e.g., Boczkowski 2004; Usher 2014). Ethnography focuses on understanding what people believe and think and emphasising what people actually do within their own environment (Fetterman 2019; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

The data presented here was obtained through ethnographic methods by relying on observations, which were recorded visually and textually, interviews, participants' diaries, newsroom photos and videos, and internal documents. To ensure anonymity, participants were identified using pseudonyms throughout the study. Data collection spanned 15 months, encompassing two rounds of fieldwork conducted during different waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, from the initial wave in Indonesia in April 2020 to the second wave in July 2021. A total of 245 hours of observation occurred in three newsrooms. Due to pandemic

constraints, these observations were conducted through a hybrid approach involving on-site and online observations.

1.3 Terminology

This study uses the term ‘news-making’ to refer to newsroom production processes that are accomplished through institutionalised routine practices. It employs the sociology of news theory (Schudson 2019, 2005) to take into account social organisation, cultural perspective, and political context. News-making and news production are sequential steps in the news creation process. The term news-making describes the process through which events, issues, or individuals are selected and featured as the subject of news coverage in the media. While news-making determines what is covered, news production focuses on how it is presented. Some well-known sociologists, such as Tuchman (1973, 1978, Gans 2004/1979) and Galtung and Ruge (1965), have significantly contributed to understanding news-making processes. They explained how news-making includes selecting topics, framing stories, and producing content. For instance, Gans (2004/1979), in “Deciding What’s News”, discusses the factors influencing news selection and values. Galtung and Ruge (1965) question “How do ‘events’ become ‘news’?” as the central of their work. Scholars have extensively examined the factors and processes influencing news-making decisions, such as news values, agenda-setting theory, gatekeeping, framing, media ownership, and commercial interests.

News production begins as a process of editing “as soon as a journalist sees and hears of something newsworthy” (Wilson 1996, p. 29, cited in Hanitzsch and Hoxha 2016) and is produced by journalism professionals. In other words, news production can be seen as transforming events through systematic criteria into published news in the media. Tuchman (1978), in her seminal study “Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality”, examines how news is produced, focusing on the routines and practices of journalists in newsrooms. Schudson (1989), through his work “The Sociology of News Production”, provides insights into the sociological dimensions of news production. It emphasises that news is not simply a neutral reporting of facts but rather a complex social and cultural construct influenced by various factors, including the news production process and institutional factors that influence decisions about resource allocation, story selection, and presentation.

The term news production in this study refers to the physical and technical processes of creating news content, from collecting information or raw news events to the final

presentation for various media platforms. This process involves various stages and decisions that shape the content and delivery of news. It includes the steps from gathering information to presenting it in a format suitable for publication or broadcast, including reporting, writing and editing, and distribution. News production also involves making ethical decisions based on privacy, accuracy, and fairness. Therefore, this study uses news-making to deal with the editorial and content decisions determining what becomes a news story, while news production focuses on the practical aspects of gathering, creating, and disseminating news content.

1.4 Thesis Outline

In brief, this thesis consists of eight chapters. The first chapter serves as the introduction. Chapter 2 provides the literature review, rationale, and theoretical framework of this study. It begins by discussing the newsroom crisis and its impact on journalism's routines. The chapter elaborates on how the COVID-19 pandemic crisis differs from previous news crises that journalists have reported. It then examines the newsroom as the central place of news production, exploring workplace reconfiguration and the journalist-place relationship. This is followed by an overview of the role of objects in journalism, including the relationship between journalists and news objects. The next section addresses journalists' roles as gatekeepers, discussing the relationship between journalists and their sources, particularly press-state relations. Finally, the chapter introduces Indonesia's media as the contextual backdrop for this study.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology, mainly focusing on news production. The primary objective of this chapter is to present the observation on news-making. The chapter details the research method and data collection procedures, including coding and data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents data analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on newsrooms. It begins by examining the challenges faced by news organisations during the early stages of the outbreak and discusses how journalists adapted to new circumstances. This section also addresses the dual role of journalists in disseminating news while dealing with social distancing and lockdowns. The chapter then explores how newsrooms coped with the increased demand for information brought about by the pandemic, leading to significant changes in news production. It shows how journalists adopted new approaches to continue their work under extraordinary conditions. Finally, the chapter explores the critical role of

communication, particularly the shift from traditional face-to-face interactions to online communication. It highlights the challenges posed by emerging news cultures and the importance of maintaining established news routines.

In Chapter 5, the data analysis continues with an examination of the newsroom as a physical workplace in three news organisations. It identifies the importance of place as a material setting for news and focuses on reconfiguring the newsroom. The chapter then looks at how journalists perceived professionalism as their identity and how they endeavoured to maintain their professionalism through the quality of their work while adjusting to the reconfiguration of the physical place. The last section examines the newsroom as a physical space in relation to its symbolic power and the journalist's authority.

Chapter 6 analyses journalists' reliance on objects within the newsroom. It discusses the dependence on objects in the newsroom, followed by an exploration of objects in a virtual environment, as journalists had to leave the newsroom and adapt to remote work. The next section scrutinises mobile journalism during the pandemic, focusing on the significance of mobile objects as they become relevant for independent work and social distancing. The last section discusses the creative solutions and innovations employed to maintain news production and foster the audience.

Chapter 7 discusses the role of journalists as gatekeepers in verifying information and their relationship with sources, particularly the government. Firstly, it examines the obstacles encountered in the gatekeeping process due to limited available sources and explores the significance of gatekeeping within the context of mainstream media during the crisis. This is followed by a look at the emergence of virtual sourcing as a transformative gatekeeping process, reshaping traditional methods of gathering information. Subsequently, it explores source verification, presenting the distinct approaches journalists employ to validate their sources and ensure the accuracy of information. This section examines the complexities in validating official sources due to restricted access. The last section focuses on journalists' censorship and autonomy.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the thesis, presents the main research findings, discusses this study's limitations, and offers suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The sudden emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in tremendous changes throughout all aspects of journalism (e.g., Lewis 2020; Posetti et al. 2020; Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021). The newsroom was not exempt from the profound effects of this global pandemic crisis. The scale and duration of the COVID-19 crisis far surpassed any previous crisis. This extended period of uncertainty and constantly evolving information put immense pressure on journalists. Nonetheless, during the Coronavirus pandemic, the newsroom was an ideal location for research due to its location at the intersection of practice and analysis. It offered an investigation of the changes in the newsroom and the relationship between the journalists and their workplace.

This chapter unpacks the core theoretical foundations of this study and discusses various theories and approaches. First, to analyse routines in the newsroom, this study is informed by Schudson's (2005) four different approaches to the sociology of news: the economic organisation of news, the political context of news making, the social organisation of news work and cultural approaches. Second, this study draws on the ideas of place-based journalism theory (Usher 2014, 2019), expanding on the importance of place in the context of contemporary journalism. Specifically, it responds to calls to understand how the routines and practices of news production change when the places of news themselves change (Usher 2019). Third, to examine the role of objects in journalism, this study refers to a 'material turn' in journalism studies (Anderson and De Maeyer 2015; Boczkowski 2015). This approach explores practices and a broader sociocultural lens rather than viewing objects solely as technology. Fourth, this study revisits newsroom gatekeeping studies (e.g., Singer 2014; Vos 2015), especially the debate around the relevance of gatekeeper functions in the digital age and news source studies during the crisis (Van der Meer et al. 2017). This is followed by the press state relations study, including in hybrid democracy countries (Hadlan 2016). Finally, this literature review addresses the media landscape in Indonesia as the case of this study.

2.2 Routine Practices in News Production

News production relies heavily on routine practices. Scholars define routines in journalism as “patterned, repeated practices concerning technology, deadlines, spaces, and norms that serve as guidelines for media workers in carrying out their jobs” (Shoemaker and Reese 1996, p. 105). Newsrooms deploy the same routines, such as planning, gathering, news selection, and presentation (Golding and Elliott 1979; Saltzis and Dickinson 2008). According to Golding and Elliott (1979, p. 12), “News production is mechanical, routine, passive, and systematic.”

In contemporary journalism, Schudson (2005) has argued that routines in news production can be explained by wide-ranging organisational, cultural, economic, and political perspectives. Economic and political perspectives “relate the outcome of the news process to the structure of the economy and the state, respectively.” On the other hand, the organisation is concerned with news routines, whereas culture “emphasises the constraining force of broad cultural symbol systems” on journalism (Schudson 2005, p. 174). This section discusses newsroom routines to understand how journalists deal with routines during crises, related to the first question: “How did the COVID-19 pandemic crisis impact journalism routines and change news-making?”

2.2.1 Exploring Routine Patterns

Earlier routines in the newsroom were documented extensively through sociology and media studies to understand the existence of working routines in news production and decision-making processes. The main studies from the 1970s and 1980s mostly describe the process of manufacturing news as a product of a bureaucratic process. Studies of news-making were conducted inside newsroom television in the United States (Altheide 1974; Epstein 2000/1973; Gans 2004/1979; Tuchman 1978), and essential works in the United Kingdom focused on news production (Elliott 1972; Golding and Elliot 1979; Schlesinger 1978). Other scholars have delved deeper into organisational, professional, and news routines (e.g., Ericson et al. 1987; Fishman 2014/1980; Gitlin 2003/1980). Schlesinger’s study of the BBC newsroom (1987, p. 79) found a routine agenda of predictable stories that support each day’s production requirement. He also argues that “the production of news is, in general, highly routine, and the efforts of its editors are to make the workings of the system as predictable as possible” (p. xxxiii). Schlesinger’s study confirms those of a previous study conducted in a

US newsroom by Epstein (2000/1973). Although the news is defined by its immediacy, journalists rely on routine and heavily rely on planning, which is prepared in advance.

In terms of the ability to predict and manage a schedule, the dichotomy between hard and soft news was first revealed during the early waves of news production research (Zelizer 2004, p. 66). Sociologist Gaye Tuchman (1973), in her study “Making News by Doing Work: Routinising the Unexpected”, approaches routines by classifying news typification. Tuchman (1973) describes the typification process integrated into journalists’ daily practical tasks. Organisations tend to systematise the handling of unexpected events by categorising them along dimensions that mirror the practical tasks related to the work of journalists. For example, news events can be classified as hard news, representing a factual presentation of significant events that are subject to analysis or interpretation. These events can further be categorised as either unscheduled or pre-scheduled. While soft news consists of human-interest stories that are interesting but not necessarily urgent, Tuchman (1978, p. 51) notes that soft news “need not be timely” and is typically non-scheduled. Spot news events are unscheduled, specifically unforeseen events-as-news; while developing news is unexpected, reporters were not present to accurately record facts, so facts must be reconstructed. Tuchman notes that most spot news stories are developing news, but television journalists use the term developing news more restrictively; they identify some stories as spot news that newspapers term developing news. Meanwhile, journalists control work through prediction in continuing news, as continuing news events are generally prescheduled. The table below explains the typification of news.

Table 2.1 Typifying News in Routine Practices

Typification	How is an Event Scheduled?	Is Dissemination Urgent?	Does Technology Affect Perception?	Are Future Prediction Facilitated
Soft News	Non-scheduled	No	No	Yes
Hard News	Unscheduled Prescheduled	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes
Spot News	Unscheduled	Yes	No	No
Developing News	Unscheduled	Yes	Yes	No
Continuing News	Prescheduled	Yes	No	Yes

Source: Tuchman (1973, p.117)

News production involves various tasks, structures, processes, routines, and influences on the stories. These elements are organised into a particular news cycle based on the division of labour within the newsroom (Jensen 2013; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch 2009). Routines are journalists' repeated activities while conducting their work (Becker and Vlad 2009). They are also seen as defining a concrete practice that stems from journalists' habits and is embedded in an organisational context (Westlund and Ekström 2019). Routine behaviour is a set of professional practices journalists use in their work. They are a set of rules journalists must follow to do their professional duties (Deuze 2008). Here, news routines make journalism practices more manageable and encourage journalists to maintain their independence and professional status (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019).

Regularly, news routines include looking for news in the form of events (Berkowitz and Adams 1990), relying on a regular pool of news sources for information (Gans 2004/1979), gathering news through a beat reporting system (Tuchman 1978) and packaging newscasts into a standard format (Berkowitz 2009). The elements of routines differ across time and contexts among media organisations and journalists (Becker and Vlad 2009, p. 59). Most television or newspaper news is based on planned, intentional events, press releases, press conferences and interviews scheduled in advance (Schudson 1986). In online platforms, evolving routines and practices involve elements such as aggregation, curation, and the application of audience analytics and algorithms. These changes underscore digital technology's significant impact on news production's landscape, shaping routine information collection and presentation (Firmstone 2023). Despite this, journalists often approach some problems in news production similarly (Saltzis and Dickinson 2008). For example, in her study on the culture of production, Harrison (2000) found similarities across news organisations, although working in different newsrooms. She discovered that journalists share a common culture composed of a set of "existing formulas, practices, and normative values" (Harrison p. 108). Since they arise out of the practical needs of the organisation and the field, news routines will adapt and emerge as a changing set of practical needs confronts journalists. Such adaptation opens the way to new information structures and ideologies (Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019).

In an unexpected crisis, unusual routines can change the news production process, and when news practices change, the process tends to be uneven and chaotic (Ryfe 2013; 2018). News-making tends to become disorganised when crises disturb journalists and their daily routines, especially at the centre of news production. This non-routine work in extraordinary times inevitably catches them off guard (Westlund and Ekström 2019). During fast-breaking

crises or disasters, journalists quickly fall back on “what-a-story” (Berkowitz and Liu 2016), the process of taking extraordinary occurrences and reporting on them in a way that makes journalistic work appear competent to news media audiences (Berkowitz 2009).

The unexpected crises left journalists unprepared to handle routine changes, as journalists are unprepared to cover many types of crises, and many news organisations have no disaster plans or strategies during disruptive crises (e.g., Lowrey et al. 2007; Olsson 2010). There are several reasons why disaster plans are not established at news organisations. According to Lowrey et al. (2007), the significant factor is the unpredictability and complexity of the crisis that makes developing a comprehensive disaster plan difficult. News organisations often work under tight deadlines and have resource constraints that sometimes prevent long-term planning and preparedness activities. Besides this, the continual change in newsroom personnel and technologies makes it difficult to maintain and adapt consistent disaster response strategies. Moreover, according to Olsson (2010), the rapid pace of news production does not allow significant time for being proactive in disaster planning; it reacts and copes with a disaster. News organisations spot a premium on the pursuit of immediacy to respond to the news immediately when it breaks. They tend to work on short-term objectives rather than extended-term contingency plans. In addition to this, the media managers may often be ignorant or oblivious to needing a disaster plan. Their concentration is on day-to-day operations and not on possible future crises.

News organisations aim for immediacy during a crisis and pressure journalists to keep up with a rapidly moving news cycle. However, during uncertain and difficult moments in a crisis, journalists sometimes become rushed and do not follow all of the appropriate journalistic protocols, leading to inaccuracies in their stories (Olsson 2015; Quarantelli 2005).

2.2.2 News Crises Coverage

To understand the gaps in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, this section examines news production and global health coverage crises. Most research on the media in crises focuses on the coverage of crises. Crises such as terrorist attacks, war, natural disasters, climate change, and disease outbreaks are extraordinary, often unexpected events that challenge journalistic routines (e.g., Allan and Zelizer 2004; Olsson et al. 2015). Crisis reporting can involve framing the crisis or portraying the actors involved. For instance, a comparative study of three crisis cases, terror, floods, and financial crisis, was conducted to analyse the differences in journalistic routines and preparedness (Olsson et al. 2015). A study on several television

newsrooms found that journalism faces coverage of natural disasters in four groups: the emotional and psychological effects, logistical difficulties, restricted access to information, and ethical dilemmas (Puenta et al. 2013). Studies in tsunami Asia found that the press suffered from ‘disaster exhaustion’ but continued covering news as the mandate of professional journalists (Hollings 2005; Knight 2006).

The crisis was viewed through the lens of how journalists cover crises and disaster events (Pantti 2019; Ewart and McLean 2019), report from high-risk exposure areas and be on the front lines (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti, 2013; Tumber 2016), and address journalists’ practices and professional culture in news reporting through emotions (e.g., Peters 2011; Kotišová 2019). Another study explores the ethical complexities of changing disaster reporting practices that challenge objectivity (Wahl-Jorgensen and Pantti 2013). Almost all natural and technological disasters are generally considered consensus crises (Quarantelli et al. 2018). The coronavirus pandemic was a global health crisis that lasted approximately three years (2020-2023). However, geopolitical considerations significantly influence disaster coverage, affecting the choice of events featured in the news and how stories are framed or domesticated. Pantti (2019, p. 2) asserts that:

In addition to the perceived significance and proximity of the event, disaster coverage is also strongly shaped by various practical considerations. Editorial decisions about which events to select and how to cover them are also based on considerations of the allocation of resources, access to sources and physical location, and the logistics of dispatching a reporter to a (remote) disaster area.

The media also focuses on the coverage of public health crises, which range from specific health problems, such as disease outbreaks, to large-scale disasters and multiple public health issues (Bolton and Burkle Jr 2013, p. 210). Several studies have examined journalists’ practices when covering public health crises, such as their perceptions of news-making of a global outbreak of disease in the local context (e.g., Kim 2020); how specialist and general journalists perceived their roles when covering health crises (e.g., Klemm et al. 2019) and the impacts of routines and practices of news production on health reporting (e.g., Thompson 2019). In particular, scholars have previously looked into how journalists deal with pandemics and epidemic crises. Some studies included how media reporting played a critical role in the SARS crisis (Ma 2005), how news values influenced the decision-making process when covering Avian Influenza (Choi and McKeever 2019; Hooker et al. 2012), and how

journalists framed coverage of and had conflicts of interest when reporting on the Swine Flu pandemic (Holland et al. 2014; Klemm and Hartmann 2016; McCauley et al 2013).

Journalists not only adjust their routines during crises but also encounter specific challenges tied to the nature of the crisis. For instance, journalists navigate unique issues when dealing with health crises in the modern media landscape (Steffens et al., 2017). In the field of public health, specialised health journalists play a vital role in critically evaluating and reporting on emerging health information. How various dimensions of professional roles manifest in news content depends on media orientation and the journalistic beat (Mellado and Lagos 2014). Differences between general and specialist reporters contribute to the dynamic nature of journalists’ roles, particularly when covering health crises compared to non-crisis situations. Specialist reporters exhibit greater proficiency in addressing challenges related to health crisis coverage and strive to balance critical analysis with collaboration with authorities (Klemm et al. 2017).

Compared to other health crises, COVID-19 news coverage was different; it was more intense and longer, reflecting the uncertainty of how the story would unfold (Ducharme 2020). Previous research mentioned above can provide valuable guidance in understanding how a crisis directly affects the work environment of journalists. Unlike any other health crisis in the past, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a unique challenge to journalists. To compare, a study in the past (Nord and Strömbäck 2006, p. 89) identified four types of crises in news coverage. First, crises that have never been heard of before and cannot be predicted; second, crises that the media have been able to prepare for; third, sudden events that have happened before, such as accidents, catastrophes or disasters; and fourth, routine events that can be prepared for. Below is the figure for four typical cases in media and crisis based on Nord and Strömbäck’s (2006) study.

Table 2.2 Media and Crises: Four Typical Cases

		Media Preparations	
		Bad	Good
Media Routines	Bad	Type I (new and surprising events)	Type II (new but expected events)
	Good	Type III (surprising events that have happened before)	Type IV (expected events that have happened before)

Source: Nord and Strömbäck (2006, p.89)

Based on these criteria, COVID-19 falls into the first category. Past crises are similar but not identical to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the previous studies on health crises do not fully apply to an analysis of how the pandemic impacted newsrooms. The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented for journalists, placing them in a situation unlike any other previous crisis or disaster. There are two gaps in previous crisis studies compared to the coronavirus crisis. The first difference is that the last crisis did not directly affect journalists, whereas, in the COVID-19 crisis, journalists became part of the coronavirus threat. According to the Thomson Reuters Foundation's COVID report on journalism (Radcliffe 2021), journalists placed themselves at the disease's epicentre.

The second gap in scholarly research on crises, disasters or war reporting is that the reporting place differs from the newsroom. Journalists did not foresee the specific reporting standards that would be required during a pandemic. Covering health, including science, such as specialised areas like natural disasters and climate change, may pose challenges for journalists lacking specific training in these fields (Hiles and Hinnant 2014). While some journalists may lead their everyday lives without encountering trauma, local journalists often connect intimately to the crises and disasters affecting their communities (Perreault and Perreault 2021).

The ongoing process of balancing considerations such as safety, risk, the credibility of information, and the personal and professional repercussions of these choices becomes even more intricate during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Perreault and Perreault 2021). This complexity is particularly evident when addressing the pandemic, which significantly differs from the analogy of more fleeting reporting situations. It is exemplified by the expression "parachuting into a distant war and then returning home" (Jukes et al. 2022, p. 1). The COVID-19 pandemic requires ongoing commitment from journalists, setting it apart from reporting situations that are usually shorter in duration.

2.2.3 News-making in an Unexpected Crisis

The routine practices of daily news production have undergone a significant transformation in the face of an unexpected crisis. Earlier newsroom studies have classified news stories as 'planned,' referring to predictable and planned activities, and 'unplanned,' indicating 'unexpected' reports (Molotch and Lester 1974, cited in Schudson 1989, p. 270–271). An unexpected routine is described as unusual and unbelievable, changing the work rhythm

drastically. Tuchman (1973) points out that journalists are workers who need control over their work because they are called upon “to give accounts of a wide variety of disasters—unexpected events—on a routine basis” (Tuchman 1973 p.111).

Journalists recognise the urgency inherent in times of crisis and strive to deliver timely information to their audience. Digital technology has transformed journalists and newsrooms to strive for immediacy, a characteristic of the increasingly competitive media industry in the Internet era (Deuze 2009; Lewis et al. 2005). The advent of cable TV broadcasts in the early 1980s led to the emergence of the 24-hour news cycle, known as the rolling news cycle (Barnett 2011; Rosenberg and Feldman 2008; Cushion 2019). When the Internet came into existence a decade later, news and information flowed faster than ever before, and there has been a growing demand for up-to-date information 24 hours a day (Castells 2013; Cushion 2010). Consequently, the media industry, including the media organisations, media reporting, and news landscape, has become more obsessed with pace and speed (Lewis and Cushion 2009; Rosenberg and Feldman 2008), changing daily routine practices.

Traditional news organisations, including television stations, have adjusted their reporting strategies to meet the evolving needs of their audience (Cushion 2010; Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011). Television news, particularly during a crisis, prioritises immediacy through live reporting. The objective of a live broadcast on news television is to promptly deliver information—a routine standard practice since the early days of the medium, especially in times of crisis.

The penetration of everyday life by the media is a widely recognized phenomenon. But it is perhaps less widely understood that television’s conceptualization of the event is heavily dependent upon a particular organization (or penetration) of temporality which produces three different modes of apprehending the event: information, crisis and catastrophe (Doane 1990, p. 222-223, cited in Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011).

At the forefront of this crisis lies the pressure on journalists to conform to keep up with the fast-paced news cycle. As Hemmingway and Van Loon (2011, p. 223) described it, “We’ll always stay with a life until we have something better to go to.” The decision to prioritise live reporting profoundly impacted the news cycle. Brown’s (2015) study found audiences have embraced eyewitness media as a vehicle for news gathering and storytelling. There was

consistent praise for this type of media's immediacy and perceived authenticity. Meanwhile, Lewis et al.'s (2005) study suggested that rolling news serves audiences' three main purposes: immediacy, convenience, and engagement. In many cases, breaking news stories are predictable, and most of the time, the rolling stories are repetitive (Lewis and Cushion 2009; Tuggle and Huffman 2010). Being the first and the fastest to cover a story is all achieved for the purpose of filling airtime.

Live reports and immediacy can create a situation where there is "No Time to Think" (Rosenberg and Feldman 2008), which often leads to sacrificing accuracy and thoroughness in favour of quick updates. For example, the purpose of most live broadcasts of rolling news is to be the one who immediately and speedily delivers the information. Unfortunately, live news has more to do with conveying a feeling of 'liveness' rather than the delivery of 'live news' by 'on-the-spot' newscasters (Lewis et al. 2015; Tuggle and Huffman 2010). The 'liveness' focuses mainly on the engagement between the newscaster and the audience, in which the audience is given a sense of being 'right there, right now', even if the reporter is merely summarising or speculating the information.

Market competition fostered a more 'fast news' culture, putting pressure on journalists to be the first to deliver the news. Being the first and fastest to fill airtime may result in charges of deteriorating journalistic standards (Juntunen 2010; Lewis and Cushion 2009). In this situation, Lewis et al. (2005) describes it as "meaning is secondary, timing is all." Immediacy supposedly controls the news production process, influencing critical decision-making and the overall quality of journalism (Karlsson 2011). Contrarily, studies found that immediacy in such hurried competition reduces accuracy (Buhl et al. 2019; Lewis et al. 2005), resulting in the news being over-replicated and decreasing the standard of journalism (Rosenberg and Feldman 2008).

The time and speed constraints in meeting the demands of news-hungry audiences have resulted in increased inaccuracy in news and the replication of news and have even driven the standard of journalism to go downhill (Rosenberg and Feldman 2008; Boczkowski 2010). Fast news is a common practice in newsrooms and not a new concept for journalists (Cushion and Lewis, 2014). While the association between fast news, speed, and the modernity of contemporary journalism is common, the rise of slow journalism in regular news production consistently challenges the dominant culture of fast or hard news (Greenberg 2013). Characterised by high standards, slow journalism transcends the mechanistic, expository style often associated with hard news stories. It requires time for investigation, length, and deeper reflection on an original subject (Le Masurier 2015, p. 143).

In crisis times, however, “the audience expectations and the public’s right to know as immediately as possible are used as justifications to legitimise the need for speed in the fast-news culture” (Juntunen 2010, p. 170).

During the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for timely and reliable news surged to unprecedented levels (e.g., Schumann 2022; Spyridou 2022; Van Aelst et al. 2021). The media landscape found itself at the forefront of delivering crucial updates as its audience sought information to navigate the uncertainties of the crisis (e.g., Cushion et al. 2022). This surge in demand led to an increased emphasis on hard news—facts, figures, and developments that directly impacted public life. A survey conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism among independent news media organisations in the early stages of the pandemic revealed that most of them experienced an increase in overall audience reach during the COVID-19 crisis (Nielsen et al. 2020). Similarly, a study in seven regions, Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America, and Oceania, discovered the coverage of COVID-19 in high-circulation newspapers across 50 countries increased dramatically in early 2020 (Pearman et al 2021). COVID-19 cases in these 50 countries constitute approximately 85% of total global COVID-19 cases. The sudden shift in the pandemic made it difficult to keep up with the constantly changing routines.

The surge in demand for news during the pandemic disrupted news production routines, affecting both the field where news is gathered and the newsroom where it is processed. This challenge was particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the usual ‘places’ for news production underwent significant disruptions. The subsequent section will discuss the significance of the newsroom as a physical place and the meaning of a place for making news.

2.3 Exploring Places in the Pandemic Setting

Journalists have long-encountered numerous crises, including conflicts, wars, natural or man-made disasters, and health crises. But the COVID-19 pandemic posed unprecedented challenges. In such situations, attention is directed to specific places, described as “where news-decision making occurs” and “the physical locations where reporting happens” (Usher 2019, p. 86). Places are often reconfigured due to concern for journalists’ safety. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about similar challenges, but to a greater extent, due to its prolonged duration and the implementation of social distancing measures that have impacted newsrooms. The pandemic provided an important context for studying the changing ‘where’

of journalism (Hallin 1986), a topic under scrutiny and not frequently examined in journalism studies. The following sections will focus on two key news production places: first, the newsroom, where journalists make editorial decisions, and second, the field, where reporters gather the materials for news coverage. This provides essential perspectives and knowledge relevant to the second research question: How did the value of a physical place affect journalistic professionalism during the pandemic? What were the consequences of the reconfiguration of the place on the symbolic power of journalism?

2.3.1 Place as a Material Setting in News-making

Historically, the physical place has been essential to journalists' work as a material setting in news-making. In her seminal study, "Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality", Tuchman (1978, p. 23) demonstrated how spatial factors were important in journalism's daily routines and decision-making processes, as she stated, "news events occur at some locations but not at others". In the early 19th century, newspaper locations were based on town criers who brought news, and publisher locations were the main hubs to exchange information (Tuchman 1978). News production buildings have been strategically situated near centres of societal power and political influence, such as government offices, law courts, police headquarters and financial districts (Usher 2019). This demonstrates the importance of being in proximity to practical and symbolic authority.

'Place' is a physical location and carries social and cultural meanings. They are where people interact, build relationships, and create their own unique experiences and identities (Lefebvre 2004/1991). A place is not merely a geographical location but a space that has acquired meaning, significance, and a sense of attachment for individuals or communities (Tuan 1974). In journalism studies, place refers to the significance of the geographical location. Investigating a place's role in news production involves examining how the material geographic location of journalists, news organisations, or media institutions affects their news content (Gans 2004; Gutsche and Hess 2019; Usher 2019). Tuchman's (1978) study also emphasised the implications of physical geography, which she called the "news net" and social symbols. "The news net is flung through space, focuses upon specific organisations, and highlights topic" (Tuchman 1978, p. 25). In developing the newsroom as a place, some scholars suggest a spatial turn to reevaluated news production, distribution, and consumption (Reese 2016; Schmitz Weiss 2015). The concept of place-making helped establish ideas of 'here' and 'there' in particular narratives of geography (Schmitz Weiss 2018; Zelizer 2007).

To better understand the place in relation to news production, Usher (2019) outlined three aspects. First, the place is the geographic and material setting: the place is a real, material, tactile location and understanding of the ‘where’. Second, place as lived is both an agent and structure that shapes everyday life. Third, place as cultural, economic, and symbolic power, which reflects who and what has power (Usher 2019, p. 8). Meanwhile, Schmitz Weiss (2015) explored how journalists perceive and make meaning of the places and communities in which they work. She analysed three themes: journalists’ sense of place and belonging, the impact of location on news judgment and reporting practices, and the importance of building relationships and trust with sources in local communities. In sum, place-based journalism studies emphasise the importance of understanding how a location’s physical, social and cultural aspects shape how news is produced and experienced (Gutsche 2014; Usher 2014, 2019).

The physical newsroom as a material setting serves as a binding force for those who work there, which “enables people to define themselves and to share experiences with others and form themselves into communities” (Rantanen, 2009, p. 82). This setup promotes face-to-face interactions between journalists and editors, ensuring the preservation of journalistic professionalism (e.g., Larrondo et al. 2017; Gonzales 2017). For example, physical newsrooms foster teamwork and creative approaches to news production, as the spatial organisation considerably influences these activities (Usher 2015). Within the complex news production environment, media professionals collaborate to construct meaning and distribute information (e.g., Singer 2014; Wahl-Jorgensen 2009). This is particularly relevant as the evolving media landscape transforms journalism into an increasingly affective and collaborative practice (Papacharissi 2015).

In journalism, the traditions of location are connected to the fundamental aspects of reporting and news production. The physical locations where news is gathered are referred to as reporting sites, whereas the decision-making processes for news production occur at the newsroom (e.g., Gans 2004; Ryfe 2018; Tuchman 1978). The use of place in journalistic practice can also be viewed as a framework for decision-making by reporters or editors based on the concept of proximity. In this regards, proximity defines news based on its ‘closeness’ by considering what is ‘nearby’ or ‘close’ to its audience (Schmitz Weiss 2015). The phrase “they were there” in news production carries significant meaning as it suggests the presence of reporters in a specific place. This phrase is central to crafting a news story as it highlights the importance of first-hand observation in capturing the unfolding of events (Zelizer 2017, p. 98). This includes considering how geographic factors like physical distance or ‘proximity’,

‘witnessing,’ ‘live,’ and ‘events’ impact news coverage (Usher 2019, p. 11). For example, reports from news outlets far from major events may depend on wire services or collaborations with local journalists, which might affect how they are reported (Usher 2019).

Journalistic reporting involves observing and documenting significant events, often through first-hand accounts or eyewitnesses, and the physical proximity to the site enables journalists to act as eyewitnesses. According to Usher (2019, p. 22), journalists have established themselves as socially involved individuals accountable for witnessing events on behalf of those who cannot be present. Similarly, Zelizer (2017, p. 100) points out, “Journalism is made more credible by on-site presence. Eye witnessing thus becomes valuable for marking journalism’s credibility and authenticity, particularly when the public has no first-hand knowledge of what is being reported.”

Being physically present at the location of a news event can lend credibility to the journalist’s reporting and help establish them as legitimate authorities (Couldry 2000; Usher 2019). When journalists offer “live” reporting, viewers believe the reporter’s proximity to the event site (Couldry 2000). The on-site presence of reporters during “live events” enhances the credibility of journalism, as it assures viewers that the news is being accurately reported. Journalists not only provide details about a particular event but also tell details about where we are in a broader and more critical sense (Hallin 1986). To stress their proximity at the news events scene, television and newspaper coverage conventions include a place and date line at the beginning or end of their reporting (Hallin 1986, p. 111). However, scholars found that the places hold more significance during live broadcasts as manufactured justifications for journalistic authority than actual reporting sites. Often, when journalists claim to be reporting live from an ongoing event, the event has already ended, and the importance of journalists’ proximity to the place is more symbolic than material (Livingston 2011; Tuggle and Huffman 1999).

In addition to referring to the physical locations where reporting happens, the concept of ‘place’ in news-making also encompasses the material setting where news decision-making occurs (Usher, 2019, p. 86). A newsroom is a crucial place where products are created and decisions on news production are made.

2.3.2 Newsroom Shaping Professionalism

The transformation of newsrooms makes it important to explore how journalists’ workplaces have developed over time in shaping journalist professionalism and culture (e.g., González

2017; Maares et al. 2023; Robinson 2011; Singer 2012; Zaman 2013). The history of the newsroom is closely intertwined with the history of journalism itself, as it emerged in the same period as the notion of a professional culture characterised by certain work practices (Wahl-Jorgensen 2009, p. 3). The newsroom has existed as a place to discuss and craft news content since newspapers were first published in the seventeenth century (Hoyer 2003, cited in Franklin et al. 2005). A large body of literature characterised the newsroom as the central locus for news production. Franklin et al. (2005) depict the newsroom as “a window on the world with wire services, press releases, and telephone calls coming in that the day’s output can be planned and executed.”

The newsroom is also described as a “factory floor” of journalism owing to the “newsroom-centricity” of news production (Wahl-Jorgensen 2009, p.5). For example, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) newsroom in Sydney was described as a “battleground” between order and disorder (Zaman 2013). The British Broadcasting Company (BBC) newsroom in the UK is similar to a typical television newsroom, “buzzing with the discussion of journalists and producers” (Hemmingway 2007, p. viii). In the New York Times, the US newsroom has a few cubicles in the centre, “positioned low enough to allow people to talk to each other” (Usher, 2014, p. 19). In a newsroom convergence in the midwestern United States, editors communicated through regular group meetings or individual face-to-face talks (Robinson 2011, p. 6).

These studies represent newsrooms from different locations with the same characteristics of a large room filled with people engaged in intense conversation. The journalists and editors constantly talk face-to-face in this bustling place. The physical environment of a newsroom plays a vital role in how journalism is practiced and the results that are achieved. Research has shown that a newsroom’s physical environment can significantly impact journalistic outcomes and that newsroom design can affect power distribution and influence within a news organisation, ultimately affecting quality (Robinson 2011; Zaman 2013). Usher (2015) shed light on the importance of a newsroom’s physical design and layout in influencing journalistic practices and values. Some scholars argue that newsrooms are often designed in ways that reinforce hierarchical power structures, which can profoundly affect newsroom culture and operations. For instance, the open-plan layout in many newsrooms can foster collaboration (Usher 2015). Similarly, research conducted by the American Press Institute (2017) found that newsrooms featuring open floor plans and collaborative workspaces are more likely to promote collaboration and innovation when compared to those that follow traditional, hierarchical layouts.

As such, the newsroom as a physical place is essential for upholding journalistic professionalism, where the culture and practice of journalism are created and maintained (Deuze 2007; Singer 2004). In this context, the newsroom is no longer seen as a fixed physical workspace devoted to news production; instead, it exists as a locus for professional cultures and practices. Wahl-Jorgensen (2009, p.2) characterised the newsroom as follows:

The newsroom is the most obvious place to seek out cultures of journalism because news production, as a professional practice, has been centralised and concentrated there.

During the ‘convergence era’, the newsroom has undergone changes where news organisations have transformed into multi-media companies and developed cross-media alliances (e.g., Dailey et al. 2005; Erdal 2011; Lawson-Borders 2006). The growing degree of convergence has exacerbated the newsroom production crisis, as the shift from single platforms to multi-platforms led to disruption (e.g., Dupagne and Garrison 2006; Huang et al. 2006). Even so, convergence has not changed the existence of newsrooms; instead, it has made physical newsrooms “more similar to any other office in the eyes of journalists” (Franklin et al. 2005, p. 194). Simply put, the newsroom remains the beating heart of news production. However, digital technology has posed questions about the newsroom's future. Boczkowski (2015, p.3) argues that “newsrooms have not become irrelevant, but rather, they need to be placed within a larger and more intricate web of content creation”. In his previous study, Boczkowski (2004) notes that from time to time, news production experiences major changes, and the pace of change in news production has been fast since the emergence of the digital age, from the acceleration of the news cycle, the increase in interpenetration across media, and the growing reliance on digital technology. Undoubtedly, technological innovation has influenced the dynamics of the newsroom (Pavlik 2000). Simultaneously, shifts are evident in both its organisational structure (Küng 2017) and newsroom cultural dynamics (Wahl-Jorgensen 2007).

The importance of a physical newsroom was questioned again after the unforeseen coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) in early 2020. When COVID-19 became a global pandemic, most nations implemented lockdowns and enforced social distancing practices, drastically changing the newsroom. Several studies were conducted during the pandemic, demonstrating how the newsroom’s nature and dynamics within were shifting. For example, a survey of 136 news industry leaders from 38 countries, titled “Changing Newsroom 2020”,

found that “news organisations have had to change their thinking about the importance of the physical newsroom” (Cherubini et al. 2020, p. 9). Another Reuters Institute Digital Report study found that 77% of news professionals admitted remote working was challenging, especially in building and maintaining relationships. Newsrooms were closed or partially closed when the news organisation implemented a work-from-home policy to reduce the risk of virus spread. The COVID-19 pandemic has unsettled conventional newsroom operations, prompting a transition towards remote work while preserving the teamwork and creativity that are part of newsrooms (Newman et al. 2021).

This shift to working from home has introduced unique hurdles for journalists, including communication and cooperation (Posetti et al. 2020). Newsrooms were forced to use the concept of a collaborative virtual environment, with teleworking becoming an established and ongoing common practice in the setting of new newsroom environments (García-Avilés 2021). The pandemic raised uncertainty about the place of news-making and led to redefining journalistic practice, professionalism, and authority (Saptorini et al. 2021).

2.3.3 The Symbolic Power and Authority of Places

‘Place’, where news is produced, holds significant symbolic power, offering valuable insight into how media institutions negotiate power and authority over their audiences (Usher 2019). Specifically, “place is central to journalism’s efforts to position itself as a cultural authority” (Usher 2019, p. 2). The places where media is produced, typically inaccessible to the general public, emphasise the distinction between “media people” and “non-media people”. This separation validates the symbolic power held by media institutions (Couldry 2002). According to Couldry (2002, p. 4), “Most of us simply don’t go near the places where detailed knowledge of what media institutions do is available.” This distinction is closely tied to the symbolic power of the newsroom, with media professionals having greater access to and control over the production and dissemination of news than non-media individuals.

The authority of journalism is complex, with power over news and knowledge legitimised through professionalism and discourses. It also involves relationships with audiences, sources, technologies, and critics, all complicated by digital media (Carlson 2017). Carlson notes that contesting this authority can significantly impact society’s information flows. For Usher (2019, p.2), “place is central to journalism’s efforts to position itself as a cultural authority.” The concepts of journalistic authority, which refer to how journalists acquire knowledge, are intertwined with the place. Convergence, for example, has led to

innovative changes even in traditional television newsrooms (Tapsell 2015). To respond more effectively to the increasing demands of the news cycle, news teams working in television are now placed together with those working in other areas in one centralised space (Ekström and Lundell 2011). A materialised newsroom equipped with high-tech production facilities draws news professionals to the physical setting, ensuring their sense of professionalism and maintaining the authority of the newsroom (Usher 2014).

News media also signifies their professionalism by representing the places where news events happen (Gutsche and Hess 2019). For instance, journalists value being physically present at or near the location of news events as it allows them to “claim authorship and establish authority for their stories” (Zelizer 1990, p. 38). The ability of journalists to be present at an event site and provide first-hand accounts is a fundamental factor in establishing their authority and credibility. Papacharissi (2015, p. 28) argues that place is “a particular location that bears significance for human agents, assembled and attained relationally, but also reflective of power structures and allowing the potential for agency.”

Within this framework, newsrooms and news gathering sites are treated as the place of the position of power. Bourdieu (1989) argues that news gathering and production is a “field of power,” defining the power dynamics in society. He states that the simple report, the fact of reporting, always implies a social construction. Bourdieu argues, “The most important development was the extraordinary extension of the power of television over the whole cultural production” (Bourdieu 1989, p. 36). Television reporters rely heavily on visual backgrounds to tell their stories, while photojournalism plays a significant role in defining the sense of place in news reporting (Zelizer 1992). Even digital news reporters use digital cartography to establish their authority on news narratives based on their extensive knowledge (Usher 2020).

Over time, journalists have had to adapt and renegotiate their authority in response to challenges to their material, professional, and social impact bases (Vos and Thomas 2018). Journalistic authority is maintained through various means during the news-making process. As such, they establish their authority by producing “credible and valid knowledge of reality” and positioning themselves as legitimate agents of information dissemination (Tong 2018, p. 258). As part of producing news, journalists rely on authority signalling to construct expert source authority (Chadwick et al 2020; Franklin and Carlson 2010). Journalists can also mitigate power imbalances by building relationships with sources and understanding the perspectives and experiences of the communities they report on (Gutsche 2014; Schmitz

Weiss 2015). Therefore, building strong relationships with sources and being sensitive to the communities' perspectives are essential for journalists to maintain their authority.

Furthermore, the newsroom stands at the core of news production and fosters a communication culture among journalists, a place for collaborative sensemaking, where journalists collaborate together to understand complex events and issues. It is central to journalism's efforts to establish and maintain practices and symbols of power (Robinson 2011; Usher 2014, 2019). While the newsroom may seem like a mere physical space, it is also a site of symbolic power, where ideas, values, and beliefs are negotiated and constructed (Bourdieu 1989). Scholars further recognise 'place' as not only the physical location of news work but also a symbol of authority—a social space where power dynamics are determined (Caldwell 2004; Castell 2013). Numerous studies emphasise that the newsroom serves as a key to comprehending news practices and their cultural and symbolic power (Robinson 2012; Usher 2014, 2019; Zaman 2013). Deuze and Witschge (2018, p. 165) describe newsrooms and newswork as part of a 'self-organizing social system.' Usher (2015, 2019) emphasises that places should not be considered mere backdrops; instead, they actively influence journalists' work and content production. In other words, places significantly shape journalistic practices and news coverage, embodying cultural, social, and power dynamics that define professional journalism.

2.3.4 Place Realignment Challenges

Place-based realignment affects symbolic and news routines, and changes in the physical and geographical setting of newsrooms impact news coverage quality. The realignment of newsrooms also challenges how audiences perceive and engage with the news media. Hence, geographical reconfigurations of places can profoundly impact news production and consumption (Gutsche and Hess 2019; Usher 2019). For example, researchers have examined the consequences of foreign bureaus' decline in global news coverage (McChesney 2015) and the importance of proximity to sources for journalistic legitimacy (Usher 2015, 2019). In a case study of The Miami Herald, Usher (2015) demonstrated how changes in the physical and geographical setup of the newsroom had consequences on news coverage procedures. For example, longer commuting time to the newsroom and distance from sources led to a shift in news production. This shift, in turn, reduced coverage of major subjects such as city policy, ultimately weakening the newspaper's connection with readers (Usher 2015).

Furthermore, scholars have employed the concept of the “spatial turn” to emphasise the importance of understanding the spatial aspects of news production, distribution, and consumption (Reese 2016; Schmitz Weiss 2015). Schmitz Weiss (2015, p. 51) defines spatial journalism’ as “a revolutionary journalism that incorporates space, place and location (physical, augmented and virtual) into the process and practice of journalism”. She suggests that news organisations must reconfigure the place within the complexities of geographic spaces and move beyond the existing place in the digital age. The relationship between place and journalism is no longer fixed or stable in the digital landscape. Usher (2014) argues that the conceptions of news places are evolving, and the relationships between journalists and these places are also in a state of flux. According to Usher (2015, 2019), place-based realignment, which in this study refers to the reconfiguration of the newsroom, has both symbolic and material impacts on news routines. Usher’s (2015, 2019) three categories of place—absolute, relative, and relational—offer a valuable framework for comprehending the newsroom. As such, journalists must consider the changing and dynamic relationship between the physical place and the digital realm in a mobile context (Schmitz Weiss 2015; Usher 2015). This growing complexity of digital journalism can further amplify the “imaginative power of place in making news” (Gutsche and Hess, 2019, p. 1). The locations where news is gathered and produced are contested, as Usher (2019, p. 3) notes:

The “where” of news is changing—within journalism because the industry is being reshaped, but also outside of journalism, as place-based realignments of people and power become increasingly important in understanding the relationship between journalists, audiences, and other social actors and institutions that legitimate professional journalism.

Indeed, technological advancements have significantly and profoundly impacted the relationship between journalism and place. On the one hand, news organisations are taking advantage of emerging technologies such as interactive maps, virtual reality, and drones to assert their knowledge of the place (Pavlik 2019; Wemple 2014). On the other hand, with the rise of mobile technologies, ordinary citizens have become more involved in producing place-based knowledge (Goode 2009). People and non-professional journalists can now more easily produce citizens’ witnesses and share place-based knowledge (Allan 2013). New technologies facilitate the transformation of newsrooms into more dispersed and virtual environments, allowing journalists to work from virtually anywhere in theory. As a result,

mobile technology and other devices may be perceived as undermining journalists' claims to authority based on their geographic proximity to events in a specific location (e.g., Ananny and Crawford 2015; Goode 2009).

In light of these discussions, some news organisations have been at the forefront of adapting to the digital environment by exploring the concept of virtual newsrooms. This concept entails using various multimedia elements, such as pictures, videos and interactive visuals, to enhance narrative experiences and engage audiences more effectively (Küng 2017). The study found that the newsroom incorporated multimedia components while retaining the newsroom as the central place for news production. Likewise, Usher's (2019) research showed that the Fort Worth Star-Telegram in Texas was ready to adopt an entirely virtual newsroom model. Virtual newsrooms are becoming more common in online news outlets and newspapers, and online and mobile technologies have changed broadcast journalism (e.g., Chadwick 2014). Some online news organisations and newspapers have the capability to operate a virtual newsroom, while broadcast news production largely depends on material settings. They heavily rely on material settings such as the studio and key technologies like high-quality cameras, specialist editing hardware and other broadcast production equipment (Nielsen and Sambrook 2016; Pavlik 2015). Nevertheless, it is essential to consider how broadcast news is undergoing place-based realignments compared to other news formats. Most literature on the "place" section in earlier research is based on the press and online platforms, not broadcast journalism.

With regard to the digital phenomenon, some scholars (e.g., Boczkowski 2015; Zelizer 2017) have questioned whether the newsroom should continue to be the main focus of news production in journalism studies. Digital tools give journalists the freedom to work from any location (e.g., Pavlik 2015; Westlund 2013). However, the pressure to produce many online stories quickly might result in journalists spending more time in the newsroom for better efficiency than visiting event sites (Usher 2019). In this setting, the newsroom is a central place for physical meetings with editors and colleagues and the principal site for communicating organisational culture (Usher 2019, p. 31).

As mobile journalism continues to grow and reshape journalism, journalists still seem bound to the newsroom for practical and cultural reasons (Usher 2015). Practically and culturally, the centrally located place allows journalists to go back and forth from news gathering site to newsroom, maximising the benefits of working with colleagues. The main challenge is the alteration of established newsroom workflow involving the changes in the news setting, where most news gathering processes are switched online (Boczkowski 2004).

The editorial dynamics also change, creating a spatial issue in journalism practice. The use of digital technology in the media industry has tested journalism routines and practices, such as the development of newsrooms and their role in news production (Nerone and Barnhurst 2003). Thus, Usher (2015) argues that a digital presence might not replace a physical place. Previously, Anderson (2013) asserted that the newsroom is not extinct; it is a central locus in which various fragmented actor networks find themselves tied together to create an occupation. Newsrooms, however, function as dynamic places that shape journalistic practices, and they have consistently evolved and remained in flux, particularly during crises (e.g., Cottle 2019; Ryfe 2013). A crisis, such as a pandemic, can profoundly shape news production environments, potentially leading to transformations within the newsroom.

2.3.5 The Reconfiguration of Physical Places

The COVID-19 pandemic reconfigured the places of news production. This unexpected turn of events shook up how news organisations operated and news-making processes within newsrooms. When the coronavirus pandemic struck the world in early 2020, it thrust newsroom organisations into a whirlwind of change like never before. The most alarming aspect was how this crisis profoundly changed journalists' daily routines, practices, and work environments (Pavlik 2021; Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen 2021).

During the pandemic, when governments-imposed lockdowns and other kinds of social restrictions, news organisations had to reconsider the physical newsroom (e.g., Santos and Mare 2021; Saptorini et al. 2021). The importance of proximity was questioned and forbidden in scarce situations. COVID-19 was invisible, so the place where news could be obtained and produced was unsafe (e.g., Hoak 2021; Jukes et al. 2022). As a result, the journalists involuntarily had to accept that their work location was changing (e.g., Cherubini 2022; Hendrickx and Picone 2022). As Usher (2019, p. 3) noted, the “where in news production” can change from fixed to temporary locations, transforming the practice of journalism.

In the time of the pandemic, mainstream media outlets had to revisit the concept of the newsroom as a physical place central to news production. Several newsroom studies were conducted worldwide (e.g., Masduki and Prastyia 2022; Matsilele et al. 2022; Arafat and Porlezza 2023) to examine the reconfiguration of the news-work place during the outbreak. Studies discovered that newsrooms found themselves needing to restructure their operations. This unprecedented situation called for swift adaptation, as news organisations sought to

maintain their essential role in delivering timely, accurate information to the public (e.g., Lee 2021; Lewis 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has unsettled conventional newsroom operations, prompting a transition towards remote work while preserving the teamwork and creativity that are part of newsrooms (Newman 2021). This shift to working from home has introduced unique hurdles for journalists, including communication and cooperation (Posetti et al. 2020). The pandemic also prompted a re-evaluation of the newsroom's role, transforming it from a fixed physical hub into a dynamic, interconnected network capable of weathering complex challenges (Pavlik 2021). In some newsrooms, the outbreak has accelerated some ongoing improvements in the news-making process in mainstream media newsrooms (Cherubini and Sharma 2023). Journalists and editorial teams embraced remote work, leveraging digital tools and technologies to facilitate collaboration and communication beyond the confines of a physical newsroom (García-Avilés, 2021). This shift underscored the adaptability of news production processes, with the newsroom evolving into a more flexible virtual space for gathering, discussing, and disseminating information (García-Avilés et al., 2022). The study found evidence that digital transformation accelerated in legacy media. Several traditional newsrooms have evolved their journalism practices through telework and collaboration facilitated by digital technology (García-Avilés et al., 2022, p.1). The relations between digital technology and the realignment of the place during the pandemic and the impact on journalism practices will be discussed in the following section, focusing on the ‘objects of journalism.’

2.4 Exploring Objects During the Pandemic

The sudden coronavirus pandemic and the resulting lockdowns forced journalists to leave the newsroom for their own safety, leaving behind some of the objects in the digital newsroom that had been the backbone of news production. In these unprecedented times, journalists were made to reconsider their working practices, which had hitherto been supported by modern technology in the newsroom (e.g., García-Avilés et al. 2022; Pavlik 2021).

The relationship between journalists and the objects of journalism has yet to be examined in the context of the global pandemic. This study is particularly interested in digital-enabled technology in news-making and its consequences when journalists shift from the newsroom to remote environments. Drawing upon the socio-materiality framework (Anderson and De Maeyer 2015; Boczkowski 2015), this study examines how digital-enabled

objects influenced journalism practices and culture during the pandemic. Limited research specifically focusing on this timeframe has created a gap in the literature. This gap offers an opportunity to gain insights into the objects of journalism by reviewing the previous literature relevant to this third research question: How did the objects of journalism play a role in news-making during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2.4.1 Objects of Journalism in Digital Newsroom

A growing body of literature has extensively discussed the relationships between journalists and technology (e.g., Boczkowski 2004; Deuze 2004; Pavlik 2015; Steensen and Westlund 2021). Whether in analogue or digital eras, objects of journalism within the technology have played a critical role in news production within journalists' work environments (e.g., Mari 2019; Moran and Usher 2021; Neff 2015; Schmitz Weiss and Domingo 2010). In light of news objects, it is worthwhile to recall Pavlik's (2000) argument that technology has greatly impacted journalism throughout history, changing the nature of newsrooms, journalistic practices, and news content. In Pavlik's (2000) view, technological change affects journalism in four different ways: first, the way journalists do their jobs; second, the nature of news content; third, the structure and organisation of the newsroom and the news industry; and fourth, the nature of the relationships between and among news organisations, journalists, and the public.

Considering previous research, it is necessary to clarify and define the term 'objects of journalism' used in this study, as well as specify which news objects will be addressed. Objects of journalism have been described as "the material forms of journalism, the technological parts that populate digital news-making" (De Maeyer, 2016, p. 461). An object in journalism studies is a physical item that can be seen and touched. It is usually considered a tool, an artefact, or a device. Additionally, a broader set of objects can be considered infrastructure, such as the newsroom and the building of media companies (De Maeyer and Le Cam 2015, p. 87). Objects of journalism are also referred to as "hard things, soft things, and in-between things" (Schudson, 2015).

We conventionally distinguish between hardware and software. Both are things. But hardware lasts a long time, and it is not easily changed. Software is flexible and can be tweaked, you can improve it repeatedly over time with relative ease, you don't have to start over. (Schudson, 2015, p. 63)

Objects shape the news environment for journalists. Several studies have explored how physical and digital objects of journalism in the newsroom contribute to valuable aspects of news production (Boczkowski 2004; Robinson 2011; Weiss and Domingo 2010). Media historians have used materiality approaches to investigate various issues related to news production, such as pica sticks, portable typewriters, 35mm cameras, and telephones (Mari 2018). In recent years, studies on the history of news objects have been conducted in order to increase understanding of how material technologies affect journalists' work habits. This has included considering the history of newsroom computerisation (De Maeyer and Delva 2021), the transition from analogue to digital devices in newsrooms (Mari 2018), the camera as a newsmaker's tool (Creech 2017) and objects of editing power in twentieth-century newsrooms (Keith, 2015).

As journalism studies have been increasingly interested in technology in recent years, numerous scholars have explored the diverse objects of journalism in news production, examining how hard objects and soft objects play a role in the news-making process. Hard objects that have been studied include digital video production for television (Hemingway 2007), video tools for live news reporting (Guribye and Nyre 2017), mobile phones (Westlund 2011), and the use of mobile technologies among professional journalists (Väättäjä 2012). On the other hand, soft objects that have been studied include software (Weiss and Domingo 2010) and mobile chat applications (Dodds 2019). Also, tools and devices used in digital news work (Bounegru 2019), blogs and hyperlinks (De Maeyer and Le Cam 2015), and content management systems (Anderson and Kreiss 2013; Rodgers 2014). Meanwhile, interest in digital object research has grown, contributing substantially to various aspects of news practice, most notably how materiality matters in news work. Examples of this include how digital objects have experimented with participatory journalism (Singer et al., 2011), digital storytelling transformation (Pavlik and Pavlik 2017) and diversifying online storytelling formats (Thorsen and Jackson 2018).

One of the objects that evolved quickly in the modern journalism industry is the mobile phone. Arguably, the smartphone, the most important object in the digital age, has changed journalists' working habits and altered the flow of the news cycle (Bivens 2008; Westlund 2013). The versatility of mobile devices, especially smartphones, has led to the transformation of newsroom routines and culture (Mari 2021). For example, smartphones as an object of journalism demonstrate how the immediacy and portability of these devices have

reshaped the dynamics of news gathering, enabling journalists to capture, report, and share information rapidly from diverse locations (Hjorth 2005).

The invention of the telephone and later the mobile and smartphone have shaped new journalistic cultures (Mari 2021; Westlund 2013). According to Mari (2018), after 1920, reporters and their phones became frequently associated with their professions. By the mid-1930s, journalists were expanding access to the telephone and utilising it to streamline and enhance their work, expressing their autonomy and independence beyond the newsroom (Mari 2018). In the 21st century, this object has undergone multiple transformations, with journalists using smartphones for video journalism and working remotely with digital devices (Westlund 2008, 2013). Furthermore, Watkins et al. (2012) point out that emerging smartphone cultures provide a lens for examining contemporary cultural technologies, work practices and media effects. They identified smartphones as a poignant symbol for rethinking cultural and media studies today.

Smartphones are not the only journalism objects that have grown in sophistication, portability, and ubiquity. Research in the late 1990s described how journalists used satellites to transmit crisis news in real time (Cottle and Ashton 1999), but in the digital era, streaming technology has since replaced this (Guribye and Nyre 2017). Some news organisations continue to use large and costly objects, such as satellite trucks or outside broadcast vans (Higgins-Dobney and Sussman 2013). However, since internet streaming has increased in stability, journalists have moved to streaming services and do live reports from a smartphone using a wireless network (Karhunen 2017). Journalists have replaced large electronic news gathering (ENG) cameras with smaller objects such as lightweight cameras, compact lighting equipment, wireless mics, and portable editing (Bock 2009; Briggs 2013). These mobile objects have made it easier for journalists to produce news videos on the go without needing lots of equipment. Video production is one example of how journalists have adapted to mobile objects (Borum 2015; Nielsen and Sambrook 2016). News organisations are also now using various new digital objects, such as interactive maps, virtual reality and drones, which enable them to reassess their understanding of 'place' (e.g., Pavlik 2020; Usher 2019).

While prior research has explored the active engagement of objects in news production of journalism, there is still an unaddressed need to investigate how journalists perceive the functions of these objects, specifically in the context of a newsroom crisis. It is important first to understand the role of news objects in mobile journalism and how they relate to journalists' work. As Neff (2014, p.2) stated, all objects that shape journalists' jobs

can substantially impact how journalists perform their tasks. These objects are not just news-related artefacts but are also connected to social and cultural contexts (Schudson, 2015).

2.4.2 Digital-enabled Objects as Socio-Materiality

The ‘material turn’ in journalism studies (Anderson and De Maeyer 2015; Boczkowski 2015) brings more attention to the broad spectrum of actors implicated in news-making, not only the role of technologies in creating news but also the relationship between materiality and journalists. In the case of this study, these contexts are between journalists and digital-enabled news objects, encompassing both hard and soft objects. Objects of journalism extend beyond material things and include the practices, conventions, and relationships between humans and technology (Schudson 2015). Socio-materiality refers not only to what objects do but also to what they mean for people and how they mediate practice (e.g., Mari 2021; Neff 2015).

The influence of objects on news-making in journalism is heavily emphasised in technological approaches, neglecting the importance of cultural context in socio-materiality (Anderson and De Maeyer 2015, p. 4-5). A growing body of research has examined objects from a technological standpoint, such as the concept of news networks (Domingo et al. 2015), the interaction between technology and news organisations (Lewis and Westlund 2015), and specific physical objects and equipment used in journalism (Primo and Zago 2015). While Anderson and De Maeyer (2015) acknowledged that previous research had provided valuable explanations for news production, they suggested exploring a broader concept that embraces a variety of objects in context, both historical and cultural. In other words, objects of journalism should not be seen in isolation but rather as part of a more extensive, ever-evolving network deeply embedded in culture and power (Carlson 2017). For example, digital objects like software are not merely products of journalistic practice “but as objects related to journalism” (Rodgers 2014, p. 23).

Similarly, Moran and Usher’s (2021) work observed that the objects of journalism were related to culture and emotion. They advocated revisiting the affective and emotional dimensions of journalism, for instance, how objects of journalism were felt, experienced, and culturally situated: “Hard and soft objects retain important affective and emotional dimensions for exploration within journalism studies” (Moran and Usher 2021, p. 9). For example, hard objects in the newsroom, such as digital-enabled objects, provide a sense of stability to the news professionals and remind them of the importance of the news

organisation, whereas soft objects, like ‘news interactives’ and digital software, foster sociality within an organisation among its audiences (Moran and Usher 2021). In her newsroom ethnography study, Robinson (2011) found that technologies facilitated cultures and that the employment of technologies could shape journalism cultures. Journalists used digital objects to capture the result of their reporting and the relationships, habits, and culture surrounding it.

Objects of journalism are fundamentally concerned with symbolic and material technological intersections (Anderson and de Maeyer 2015). Despite the media’s focus on technology, however, scholars have rarely addressed the complicated interplay between objects and symbolism (Gillespie et al. 2014). Studies have examined the impact of mobile journalism on the news-making process and audience engagement (e.g., Dodds 2019; Westlund 2013). Some news organisations have had to make significant changes to adapt, while others have hesitated to undergo the necessary cultural shifts. Some journalists have encountered increasing pressure to learn and lose power as they have struggled to adopt new technology and cultures (e.g., Deuze 2019; Perreault and Stanfield 2019).

The pandemic clearly provided a new dynamic in the context of the relationship between journalists and the objects of journalism. Data from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in 2022 confirmed that the Coronavirus pandemic had accelerated the structural transition toward a more digital, mobile, and platform-dominated media environment, with implications for journalism formats (Newman et al. 2022). The emergence of mobile journalism offered a promising approach to balancing the demands of journalistic duties and personal safety during the pandemic, such as driving the trend towards teleworking in a visual newsroom (Garcia-Aviles 2021) and changing workflows to incorporate remote editing and live streaming (Cherubini et al. 2020, p.9). With the rapid advancement of technology, newsrooms are becoming increasingly virtual, allowing journalists to work from anywhere (Usher 2014). This trend has been particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, where remote work, online interviews, and mobile apps have become standard practice (e.g., García-Avilés 2021; Vargo et al. 2021).

The shift to remote work presented a major challenge for news organisations, as they had to adapt their established workflows and switch to online news-making processes (Cherubini et al. 2020; Cherubini, 2022). Newsrooms were required to use a variety of online digital platforms, such as teleworking, video conferencing platforms like Zoom and Teams, and messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Slack (e.g., Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés 2020; García-Avilés 2021). Editorial discussions and news-making decisions were changed,

bringing the disrupted newsroom into a new type of newsroom, variously described as a hybrid newsroom (Hendrickx and Picone 2022) or a visual newsroom (García-Avilés 2020). However, the challenge in this new environment was not only because of the need to use hard and soft objects remotely but also because the news production culture had changed.

2.4.3 Mobile Journalism and Multi-Skilling Requirements

A new set of journalism practices has arisen since digital technology has become more widely available. In response to technological changes, a new form of journalism has emerged: mobile journalism (e.g., Blankenship 2016; Westlund and Quinn 2018). Mobile journalism in the digital age is one of the fastest-growing areas, changing consumer behaviour and journalistic works (e.g., Briggs 2016; Perreault and Stanfield 2019; Salzmänn et al. 2021). It appears that mobile technologies are also challenging journalistic authority since ordinary citizens are now more involved in producing place-based knowledge (Goode 2009; Burum 2016).

Journalists are becoming more mobile and adopting mindsets that encourage them to acquire multi-skilling, ushering in a “new era in news gathering” (Quinn, 2013, p. 213). Multi-skilling has emerged as news organisations have embraced convergence due to technological innovation and editorial integration in multi-media companies (e.g., Erdal 2011; Kaltenbrunner and Meier 2013; Wallace 2013). Convergence occurs across various domains, namely technological, organisational, professional and cultural, and has redefined the work of journalists (Boczkowski 2004; Deuze 2004; Singer 2007). One of the most difficult challenges for journalists in the convergence era in the 2000s was mastering both news gathering and storytelling techniques, known as ‘multi-skilling’ in new media formats (e.g., Erdal 2008; Garcia-Aviles 2009; Huang et al. 2006; Quinn 2005). Journalists were required to work in a multimedia newsroom, become multiplatform experts, and perform formal duties in multiple mediums (Quandt and Singer 2009; Quinn and Filak 2005).

In the literature on newsroom convergence, the terminology of a multi-skilling journalist has been associated with ‘backpack journalists’ (Gordon 2003), ‘inspector gadgets’ (Quinn 2006: 31), or ‘jack of all trades’, ‘master of none’ (Huang et al., 2006). Later, there is a new term for multimedia journalists known as ‘mojos’ or mobile journalists (Salzmänn et al. 2021; Westlund and Quinn 2018); ‘sojos’ or solo journalists (Blankenship and Riffe 2021; Martyn 2009); or ‘VJs’, video journalists (Blankenship 2016). As informed by Bock’s (2011) work, the term ‘video journalist’ (VJ) in this study, refers to a one-person journalist who

films, writes and edits video stories, using a smartphone or a video camera and other mobile objects. Previously, the quest for multi-skilling journalists has sparked a debate about whether it is necessary to urge journalists to possess new skills and oblige them to adopt new technology (Dupagne and Garrison 2006; Filak 2004).

When covering crisis events, journalists benefit from being multi-skilled in the field. Zafra's (2018, p. 102) study explored the impact of digital technologies on disaster reporting, suggesting that video journalists adopting a 'backpack' style may face more technical issues and heightened stress levels in disaster zones. Nevertheless, this solo approach provides increased opportunities for humanistic storytelling. For example, video journalists operating in disaster zones can gather more personal narratives from survivors who may feel less intimidated using less formal equipment. The situations in disaster crises and the pandemic are not identical, but using mobile objects in crisis zones provides valuable insights.

As digital objects have advanced, there is a growing demand for journalists to be multi-skilled and perform mobile journalism themselves (Westlund, 2013). Multimedia journalism is a dynamic field that requires a combination of skills to make news using various objects. According to contemporary literature, the table below explains some essential skills a journalist should possess.

Table 2.3 Journalists with Diverse Skills

Technical Production Skills		
1	Photography	Basic photography skills for capturing images to support the journalist's written or audio content.
2	Video Production	Basic knowledge of video production is needed to produce engaging video content that tells a story.
3	Audio Production	The ability to produce audio content such as podcasts, audio clips, and audio slideshows
4	Editing	The ability to edit audio, video, and written content to ensure that it is concise and easy to understand.
5	Graphic Design	Basic graphic design skills for creating compelling visual elements

Content Production Skills

1	Writing	Be able to write clear, concise, and compelling stories for different mediums, such as print, online, and broadcast.
2	Storytelling	Have the writing skills to produce engaging content for various platforms and be able to tell compelling stories using different media.
3	Data Analysis	A basic understanding of data analysis is required for incorporating data-driven stories into multimedia content
4	Social Media	Understanding social media channels and knowing how to create engaging content to attract a larger audience
5	Research and Fact Checking	Individuals must have strong research and fact-checking skills to ensure the accuracy of their stories

Source: Guribye and Nyre (2017); Perreault and Stanfield (2019); Westlund and Quinn (2018)

Multi-skilling is becoming more important for journalists as newsrooms become more digitally centred-and technologically advanced. Modern newsrooms have replaced their analogue systems with digital-enabled objects in the digital era. These objects, which are a combination of hard and soft components, necessitate a certain level of technological expertise to operate (Paulussen 2016; Perreault and Ferrucci 2020). Consequently, it has significantly impacted journalists and has been met with some reluctance in the newsroom (Bunce, 2019).

2.4.4 Resistance Culture Towards Digital-Enabled Objects

The fast-changing nature of the media industry's technology and the emergence of digital objects have generated hesitation and resistance in the newsroom. Previous research conducted during the convergence era in newsrooms in the United States and Europe found that the quest for multimedia tasks has raised controversy, increased journalistic tensions and generated scepticism (e.g., Cottle and Ashton 1999; Dupagne and Garrison 2006; Silcock and Keith 2006). Other research found that journalists are concerned about quality since multimedia journalism tasks are centrally managed by a single individual (e.g., Wallace 2013; Higgins-Dobney and Sussman 2013).

It appears that journalists were reluctant to respond to the changing nature of news objects, particularly in traditional media such as television (e.g., Erdal 2011; Nielsen and Sambrook 2016). This process calls into question notions of journalistic professionalism,

particularly the practices of television journalists (Cushion 2011). TV journalists were pressured to multi-skills and transform for interactive new media content (Nielsen and Sambrook 2016; Saltistz 2015). Yet, the evolution seems to have not been well received by television journalists, as some were reluctant to change their old habits (e.g., Cushion 2011; Sambrook and McGuire 2014; Quinn 2013). This may reflect the industry's conservatism, leaving professionals woefully unprepared for the revolution that occurred. Many legacy broadcasters appear to have responded to the rise of online video content and challenges in digital technology in a reactive, defensive, and pragmatic way (Nielsen and Sambrook, 2016), just as newspaper journalists reacted to the rise of the internet in the 1990s and 2000s (Boczkowski, 2004).

Considering the significance of digital skills, research conducted at the top 10 television and newspaper companies in the United States found that many broadcast journalism jobs require mobile skills (Wenger et al. 2014). According to this study, the number of TV job postings mentioning mobile skills increased from 2% in 2010 to 27% in 2013. It “lags behind mobile’s prominence in newspaper and online job ads” (Wenger et al. 2014, p. 138). Mobile journalism and digital objects find themselves in a state of tension with traditional journalists. For example, small cameras have become “one of the most controversial elements in the sweeping technological changes underway” (Cottle and Ashton 1999, p. 31).

Online videos are one of the new news formats leveraging mobile technology (Nielsen and Sambrook, 2016). According to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2016), there has been an exponential increase in online video in recent years, facilitated by digital objects, and both traditional and digital media organisations have invested in this new format. Online video news has been shown to receive greater interest when there is a breaking news story and has also emerged as a new visual storytelling format (Kalogeropoulos et al. 2016). However, new digital object skills pose challenges for broadcast journalists, as described here:

Broadcasters should be in the best position to take advantage of the move to video with a wealth of relevant skills, but in many cases, we find them struggling to adapt to the new grammar of digital online video. By contrast, both newspapers and digital-born companies have had to build capacity and skills from scratch (Kalogeropoulos et al. 2016, p 5).

In contrast to television journalists, who face technological and presentational challenges due to the shift from traditional to digital media, new media born after the digital era benefits from easier access to technological objects (Boczkowski 2004). New media journalists have become increasingly common to learn and use mobile journalism skills outside their everyday duties or job descriptions (Perreault and Stanfield 2019). As a result, technological change is a constant feature in media industries, changing interactions between journalists and objects in legacy newsrooms. While journalists deal with digital-enabled objects, newsrooms have gradually found solutions to the dilemmas of both the content and format of new multimedia (Newman et al. 2011; Newman 2017).

Journalism is in a constant state of disruption, but the COVID-19 pandemic was a particularly intense moment of journalistic disruption. The current literature on journalistic disruption differs from what was experienced during the pandemic. Disruption in the media is typically associated with a large technological shift, such as digitalisation, or with the resulting disruption of established newsroom systems (García-Avilés 2021). Whilst the media industry has faced significant challenges in keeping up with digital disruption, the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic has presented a new set of obstacles and has had a profound impact on how news organisations conduct their operations (e.g., Pavlik 2021; Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen 2021). With severe social restrictions in place, journalists were forced to leave their newsrooms and work remotely (Newman 2020). The shift to remote work presented a major challenge for news organisations, as they had to adapt their established workflows and switch to online news-making processes (Cherubini et al. 2020). Newsrooms were required to use a variety of online digital platforms, such as teleworking, video conferencing platforms like Zoom and Teams, and messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Slack (e.g. Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés 2020; García-Avilés 2021). Editorial discussions and news-making decisions were changed, bringing the disrupted newsroom into a new type of newsroom, variously described as a hybrid newsroom (Hendrickx and Picone 2022) or a visual newsroom (García-Avilés 2021).

One of the key challenges of this new environment was the need to use a wide range of hardware and software technologies. Recent research (Vargo et al. 2021) identified approximately 15 types of hardware and over 50 types of software used during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mobile technology has emerged as the dominant force in digital innovations, encompassing mobile devices, teleworking, and video-based communication platforms. As mentioned previously, one notable trend in mobile technology is mobile journalism, which had already gained momentum prior to the COVID-19 outbreak but was further accelerated

by the pandemic. Nonetheless, despite these advancements, there is a lack of research on how objects of journalism can influence newsroom cultures during times of prolonged crisis, such as a global pandemic.

2.4.5 Objects in Social and Cultural Contexts

The objects of journalism were not merely news-related artefacts but also connected to social construction and cultural contexts (Schudson 2015). For example, digital objects like software are not merely products of journalistic practice “but as objects related to journalism” (Rodgers 2014, p. 23). A growing body of research has examined objects from a technological standpoint, such as the concept of news networks (Domingo et al. 2015), the interaction between technology and news organisations (Lewis and Westlund 2015), and the role played by technological artefacts in journalism (Primo and Zago 2015). While Anderson and de Maeyer (2015, pp. 4-5) acknowledged that previous research had provided valuable explanations for news production, they argued that most studies of objects tended to emphasise technological approaches while failing to account for cultural context.

Objects of journalism are fundamentally concerned with symbolic and material technological intersections (Anderson and de Maeyer 2015). However, despite the media’s focus on technology, scholars have rarely addressed the complicated interplay between objects and symbolism (Gillespie et al. 2014). To better understand the objects of journalism in a social-cultural context, Anderson and de Maeyer (2015) suggested exploring a broader concept that embraces a variety of objects in context, both historical and cultural. In other words, objects of journalism should not be seen in isolation but rather as part of a more extensive, ever-evolving network deeply embedded in culture and power (Carlson 2017). Several studies have examined the impact of mobile journalism on the news-making process and audience engagement (e.g., Quandt and Singer 2017; Dodds 2019). While some news organisations have had to make significant changes to adapt, others have hesitated to undergo the necessary cultural shifts. Some journalists have encountered increasing pressure to learn and lose power as they have struggled to adopt new technology and cultures (e.g., Deuze 2019; Perreault and Stanfield 2019).

Looking at the role of journalists during a digitally driven paradigm shift, as media structures shift from traditional to radically different structures, has revealed a great deal about the deep nature of news production and professionalism culture (Carlson 2017; Flew 2018). In the realm of professional journalism, both television and online journalists are

shaped by media culture as they strive to establish and validate their position within society through their work (Hanitzsch 2007; Hanusch 2018). However, the uniqueness of each platform means that journalists develop a different relationship with the objects of journalism (e.g., Boczkowski 2004, 2011; Morley 2012). These relationships are dynamic, unstable, and subject to ongoing change (Deuze and Witschge 2018). The emergence of mobile journalism offered a promising approach to balancing the demands of journalistic duties and personal safety during the coronavirus pandemic, such as driving the trend towards teleworking in a visual newsroom (Garcia-Aviles 2021) and changing workflows to incorporate remote editing and live streaming (Cherubini et al. p.9). With the rapid advancement of technology, newsrooms are becoming increasingly virtual, allowing journalists to work from anywhere (Usher 2014). This trend has been particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, where remote work, online interviews, and mobile apps have become standard practice (e.g., Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés 2020; García-Avilés 2021; Vargo et al. 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges for journalists as social distancing measures made it difficult for them to access newsrooms and engage with objects. This led to a reassessment of the role of objects in news-making and the relationship between journalists and these objects. Similarly, the restrictions brought about by the pandemic have made it challenging for journalists to obtain news sources and verify the information. This social distance tested the relationships between journalists and their news sources.

2.5 Dynamic Relationship Between Journalists and Sources

The nature of the relationship between journalists and their sources is dynamic and complex (e.g., Berkowitz and TerKeurst 2006; Carlson and Franklin 2011; Harcup 2004; Jackson and Moloney 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic made this relationship even more complicated due to social distancing measures, making it harder for journalists to access their sources. This also led to a challenge in verifying sources and accessing reliable and credible sources (Cushion et al. 2022; Mellado et al. 2021). This section will discuss the gatekeeping process during the pandemic and the relationship between journalists and their sources, particularly with the government. The relevant previous literature will be reviewed to provide guidance for Research Question Four: How did the pandemic impact the gatekeeping process and change journalists' relationships with their sources?

2.5.1 Gatekeepers' Authority to Select Sources

As gatekeepers, journalists have the authority to choose sources to lend their voice to coverage. This source selection process has been highlighted in earlier studies that emphasise journalists' reliance on sources to quickly, clearly and accurately construct their stories (e.g., Berkowitz 1997; Schlesinger 1978). Some of the earlier studies on routine news work inform our understanding of the relationships between journalists and their sources (Gan 1979; Fishman 1980; Tuchman 1978). These studies also emphasise the significant responsibility journalists hold in providing accurate information to the public and holding powerful institutions accountable, thereby maintaining a well-informed society and upholding the values of a democracy (e.g., Curran et al. 2009; Gans 2018; Hanitzsch et al. 2011).

The importance of comprehensive and accurate information is widely acknowledged in journalism (McQuail 2010), with journalists being seen as crucial in ensuring the truthfulness and credibility of the news they report (Deuze 2019; Singer et al. 2011). To fulfil their professional responsibilities, journalists must go beyond mere reporting and actively seek out and verify statements from various sources (Ekström and Westlund 2019; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Since mainstream media is often considered the 'go-to' source for the latest and most reliable news (Deuze 2019, p. 1), journalists are expected to continue serving as trusted information providers while holding powerful entities accountable (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014).

Studies have found that journalists typically gather news through routine channels, and relationships between sources, journalists, and audiences are interdependent (Deuze 2005; Hanusch 2017; Tandoc 2015). News primarily arises from the interplay between journalists and para-journalists, such as public information officers, public relations firms, political spin doctors, and other professionals. This highlights the power dynamics and relationships between journalists and their sources, as well as underscores the potential impact on the quality and independence of journalism (e.g., Jackson and Moloney 2016; Schudson 2003). In order to provide legitimate and convincing information to the public, journalists must build trust with sources and rely on credible and reliable sources (Donsbach 2008; Hayes et al. 2007). The relationship between journalists and their sources must be mutually beneficial and depend on each other. However, it does not always reflect reciprocal ways; in many cases, the relationship does not always reflect this (Carlson and Franklin 2010; Van der Meer 2017). The relationship is more "driven by a strategic complementarity of interests" (Franklin, 2003, p. 47).

Officials are generally regarded as the best source for factual details (Berkowitz, 2009). However, when official sources are lacking, journalists often rely on online sources, such as blogs and social media (Bruns et al. 2012; Lecheler and Kruikemeier 2016). Research by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in 2020 found that journalists increasingly turn to social media as a primary source of information. The study revealed that social media information could be unreliable (Newman et al. 2020). When attempting to determine the reliability of social media sources, there is particular concern about this sourcing (e.g., Atton and Hamilton 2008; Couldry 2010). Social media, however, has expanded the traditional gatekeeping role of journalists and news editors and challenges conventional journalistic authority (Berkowitz and Liu 2016). The proliferation of social media has created a new form of journalism in which information flows through interpersonal chains of social media users and organisations, overlapping with traditional news media (e.g., Hermida 2011; Shoemaker et al. 2017). As a result, journalists have less control over the spread of information, which raises questions about the role of journalists as gatekeepers in the digital age.

2.5.2 The Evolving Role of Gatekeeping

The role of journalists as gatekeepers became important to discuss during the pandemic, as the concept of gatekeeping evolved and turned into a subject of academic debate since the rise of the digital era. The ongoing academic debate focuses on whether journalists are still relevant as gatekeepers of information in the digital age (e.g., Hermida et al. 2012; Singer 2014; William and Delli Carpini 2004), with some scholars arguing that gatekeeping in mainstream media remains relevant (e.g., Shoemaker and Vos 2019; Vos 2019). Gatekeeping involves decision points (gates) and decision-makers (gatekeepers) who determine which news items should be covered and which ones should be discarded (Shoemaker 2020). This editorial control is pivotal in shaping public discourse, influencing public opinion, and defining the news agenda. Gatekeeping has previously been defined as “the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day” (Shoemaker and Vos 2009, p. 1). In the popular discourse, gatekeeping is considered “decline, dying and dead” (Vos 2019, p. 90).

Traditionally, gatekeeping was closely associated with legacy media outlets. Tuchman (1978) revealed how journalists use gatekeeping processes to select and categorise news stories. This gatekeeping function involves editors and journalists deciding which stories,

events, and issues are newsworthy and should be published or broadcast. The gatekeeping theory was extended by Shoemaker and Vos (2009), who identify resource constraints, organisational norms, and the influence of external sources. These factors can affect the gatekeeping process and shape the news agenda, leading to biased and incomplete news coverage. Scholars also revisit the theory of gatekeeping and the role of gatekeepers in the digital era (Vos, 2015; 2019; Vos and Russell 2019).

The advent of online platforms and social media has substantially reshaped the information landscape, challenging conventional gatekeeping. The changing landscape of journalism in the digital age and the rise of social media and citizen journalism impact gatekeeping (e.g., Hermida et al. 2012; Singer 2008b). In their article, William and Delli Carpini (2004) stated about the ‘collapse of gatekeeping’ and argued that the media environment undermines the idea that political information is passed through discrete gates. Thus, the gatekeeping function has been challenged. Scholars note that gatekeeping serves as a filter for accuracy, accountability, and ethics in journalism; some argue that the rise of social media and citizen journalism has made it easier for anyone to report on events and share information and that this has led to a more democratic and diverse range of voices in the news (e.g., Allan 2013; Carlson 2015).

The debate about the relevancy of gatekeepers in journalism is ongoing, with many calling for a balance between gatekeeping and open-access information. A viewpoint is articulated through the statement: “There’s no gatekeeper. There’s no gate. There’s not even a fence” (Whyte 2008, cited in Vos 2019). As Singer (2008b, p. 61) indicated, “a traditional gatekeeping role that no longer exists,” Vos (2009) believed that the statement did not intend to suggest that journalists have stopped being selective; instead, it referred that journalists no longer control the information environment.

Ultimately, I argue that notions of gatekeeping still capture relevant journalistic processes. In other words, gatekeeping is not declining, dying, or dead. What we mean by gatekeeping does need to be refined, but this is a necessary step to revitalize a key journalism and communication concept. (Vos 2009, p. 90)

While social media have challenged the traditional concept of gatekeeping, research in journalism studies suggests that the gatekeeper role is still relevant in the current media landscape. The article “How Gatekeeping Still Matters” (Thorson and Wells 2015) discusses journalistic roles and how routines and reiteration of journalistic practices reinforce social

structures, allowing journalists to maintain powerful influence over news content. Nonetheless, gatekeeping can be incredibly challenging during a crisis as the information landscape is constantly changing and incomplete, disrupting gatekeeping practices (Van der Meer et al. 2017). Crises disrupt the normal flow of information (Diers-Lawson 2012). Journalists face difficulties dealing with sourcing and gatekeeping strategies in times of crisis. The situation tests journalists' commitment to objectivity and professionalism (e.g., Anderson and Schudson 2019), challenges clarity amid chaos (Ryfe 2013), and questions journalists' ability to hold information in power accountable (Schudson 2001). As the crisis unfolded, journalists scrambled to keep up with rapid changes and provide the public with accurate information. Clearly, the global crisis pandemic created a challenging context for source verification and gatekeeping (Mellado et al. 2021; Perreault and Perreault 2021).

2.5.3 Pandemic Pressures: Testing the Limits of Sourcing

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a surge in demand for news, and journalists encountered unprecedented challenges in obtaining accurate and reliable information. Sourcing and gatekeeping became even more critical as the stakes were often high, and the public demand for information was heightened (e.g., Casero-Ripollés 2020; Jurkowitz and Mitchell 2020). The public sought credible news sources for accurate and up-to-date information during the outbreak. Traditional news sources, such as legacy media and government agencies, have been the most widely used and trusted sources of information during the pandemic (e.g., Nielsen et al. 2021). However, several studies have also found that journalists were often overloaded with misinformation during the pandemic, further complicating their efforts to verify facts and leading to a decline in public trust in journalism (Brennen et al. 2020; Luengo and García-Marín 2020; Westlund and Hermida 2020).

The abundance of news sources and the spread of misinformation and disinformation have made obtaining accurate and trustworthy information difficult. For instance, during the pandemic, social media platforms and other online sources have been breeding grounds for misinformation and conspiracy theories (e.g., Nadzir 2020; Shahsavari et al. 2020). In countering misinformation and promoting accurate information, scholars have emphasised the importance of journalistic fact-checking and verification practices (e.g., Muzykant et al. 2021; Tandoc and Lim 2020). Yet, simultaneously, the coronavirus outbreak presented journalists with significant challenges in source verification, including seeking accurate information, using reliable and credible sources, and fact-checking their reporting (Nielsen et

al. 2020). Despite the efforts of news organisations to keep the public informed, some claim that media coverage contributed to public confusion and inconsistencies, which were exacerbated by pressure to report on a rapidly evolving situation (Kim 2020).

Nevertheless, with countries imposing physical restrictions and lockdowns, it took much work for journalists to gather information in a landscape where traditional avenues for source verification were severely limited. Journalists recognised the urgency of delivering speedy, factual reporting to prevent public panic and provide much-needed information, but they were confronted with a source verification challenge (Mellado et al. 2021; Perreault and Perreault 2021). Studies have demonstrated that broadcast news audiences expect the media to achieve a balance between government-appointed and independent experts, aiming to provide evidence-based scrutiny of executive decision-making. In routine reporting, the audience prefers diverse expert sources, particularly expert viewpoints on managing the pandemic (Cushion et al. 2022; Morani et al. 2022). However, working under lockdown and social distancing conditions, journalists, experienced limited freedom to gather information and reduced access to sources. Despite these challenges, journalists have a critical responsibility to provide the public with accurate information; therefore, as Schudson (2017) stated, they should have access to data from officials with power in society.

Research on the journalist-source relationship investigates the interaction between sources and journalists involving encounters with power dynamics, roots from inquiries about bias, power, and influence (e.g., Berkowitz 2019; Broersma 2013; Strömbäck and Karlsson 2011). In this context, this study investigates the dynamics between sources and news media in crisis communication within a digital media environment. It specifically explores how official authorities influence news production, highlighting the challenges posed by the pandemic, mainly due to restrictions on social distancing measures.

2.5.4 The Dominance of Elite Sources in COVID-19 Coverage

During the pandemic, governments worldwide dominated the sources and played a crucial role in the media's crisis coverage (e.g., Price and Harbisher 2021; Van Aelst and Blumler 2021). Governments also used the crisis to restrict critical journalism. A study based on worldwide press freedom monitoring tools (Papadopoulou and Maniou 2020) revealed COVID-19 worsened existing press freedom issues and introduced new threats. Several studies explored the issue of state media coverage control, particularly in countries where press freedom was already fragile. For instance, Turkey increased journalist restrictions

(Bulut and Ertuna 2022), Hungary controlled information flow (Bleyer-Simon 2021), and Slovenia's government tightened media control (Pajnik and Hrženjak 2022). In the Pacific areas, including Fiji and Papua New Guinea, the government was accused of masking a media crackdown during the pandemic (Robie 2021). Southeast Asian regimes exploited the crisis for power consolidation (Hooi 2020). For example, in the Philippines, journalists struggled with a shrinking space for press freedom and limited access to information (Bernadas and Ilagan 2020), while in Indonesia, the government revised the Electronic and Information Transactions Law during the pandemic, which limited media freedom of expression (Steele 2021).

Amidst the pandemic, access to information is limited, challenging the power dynamic between journalists and authorities. Reporters Without Borders (RSF), an international non-profit based in Paris focused on safeguarding the right to freedom of information found a significant decline in information accessibility. Similarly, a survey conducted by Freedom House (2021), a US-based non-profit organisation, revealed that global press freedom declined as governments increased their efforts to control media content and limit access to information. The study demonstrated how journalists in countries with low press freedom often face censorship, harassment, and imprisonment. In some countries, news coverage barriers intensified as information became more centralised and the government took control of it.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, access to information sources emerged as a critical concern in many countries. Scholars have investigated how the crisis has impacted the media's reliance on official sources. For instance, Mellado et al. (2021) conducted a computational content analysis of COVID-19 coverage on social media platforms published by mainstream media in seven countries. The study found that elite sources dominated the media, particularly in Latin American countries where official sources were more prevalent than in the US, the UK, and Germany. In addition, other studies have explored the issue of state media coverage control, particularly in countries where press freedom is already fragile. Papadopoulou and Maniou (2021) and Wu (2021) are among the researchers who have revisited this classical issue. Several scholars sought to explain the relationship between the press and the state for maintaining a free and democratic society and ensuring an independent media landscape (e.g., Bennet 1988; Curran 2011; Hallin 1989). The following section examines the dynamic relationship between journalists and the government.

2.5.4.1 Navigating the Complex Press-State Relations

The press and state relations are often called symbiotic relationships, where each entity depends on the other to achieve its objectives. The state relies on the media to communicate with its citizens and to shape public opinion, while the media relies on the state to provide access to information (e.g., Gans 2004; Hallin 2012; McQuail 2010). In times of global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to scrutinise the dynamics between the press and the state closely. Such an examination is necessary to understand how media provide accurate and timely information to the public as the data and information relate to authorities.

Several theories of press-state relations represent Western sources' perspectives. Classic press-state relations theory, which examined the Western media, described elites' power as the primary news source during the war (e.g., Bennet 1988; Bennett and Paletz 1994; Hallin 1989). Press-state relations may vary across different countries, but Hallin and Mancini's (2004) work "Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics" categorises media into three models widely used to understand the diversity of media systems and the relationship with political power. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that the dynamics of media systems in non-Western contexts may differ significantly due to cultural, political, and historical factors. Hallin and Mancini's (2004) original work focused primarily on Western media systems, and their typology was developed based on observations in Western democracies.

The comparative media system has been widely used to analyse media systems in non-Western or South Global countries. Some scholars, however, question the adequacy of these frameworks in comprehensively characterising non-Western, non-democratic contexts. For example, Brüggemann et al. (2014) and Norris (2009) raised concerns about the absence of the media freedom variable when comparing media systems. In a similar vein, based on studies in Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand, Radue (2022, p. 158) argues that Western-biased categories and media system models often overlook political communication's social, political, economic, cultural, and historical contexts. This concern is also found in Hadlan's (2015) book "Emerging Democratic Countries." Through his research on South Africa and China, he discovered a new trend that has emerged in most third-wave democracies. This trend has resulted in a gradual increase in state power, which has led to interference with the democratic process and the freedom of the press. Hadland (2015) expresses his concern about the emergence of an "acquisitive state," where the government oversteps its democratic

boundaries to favour itself and the wealthy elites. The government seizes more power than it is legally entitled to and aims to monopolise the economy.

In Southeast Asia, the government's interest easily trumps the media's public interest with frequent attempts to control media coverage and prevent critical reporting. This approach goes beyond just comparing media systems using fixed categories and models, revealing additional factors that play a role. Southeast Asia hosts a long-standing electoral authoritarian regime, with all nations having expression-incompatible laws (George and Venkiteswaran 2019). Governments have sought to control the media through various means, including censorship, legal harassment, and using state-run media outlets to propagate government-friendly messages. Under the concept of "developmental journalism," the media has become one of the government's partners in the nation's development (Bromley and Romano 2012; Pintak and Setiyono 2011). According to Freedom House, there are no media outlets in Southeast Asia that are considered to be free. In Indonesia, authorities have a long history of enforcing the concept of a 'responsible' press, which promotes collective thinking among journalists (e.g., Ritchey and Muchtar 2011; Sen and Hill 2011; Tapsell 2017). Unsurprisingly, journalists became more reliant on the government as their main source during the pandemic. Paradoxically, the government's communication missteps were driven by a desire to uphold its power, compromising democracy in favour of economic growth (e.g., Masduki 2020; Mietzner 2020; Mujani and Liddle 2021; Setijadi 2021).

Apart from political factors, economic factors such as media ownership and advertising influence the relationship as media becomes anchored in the domain of the economic system (e.g., Bagdikian 2004; Herman and Chomsky 2010; McChesney 2008). Due to the free market and commercialisation that leads to media aggregation, "governments in newly democratic countries can intervene more profoundly and strengthen their control and influence over media content" (Hadland, 2015, p. 30). Not surprisingly, ownership is particularly problematic in Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia, as a limited number of wealthy individuals or corporations' control most of the media in newly democratic countries. This conglomeration reduces the diversity of viewpoints and the capacity of the media to challenge power (e.g., d'Haenens 2022; Haryanto 2011; Tapsel 2014). This intervention may affect journalists' autonomy, as seen in hybrid democracies like Indonesia (Power 2018; Tapsel 2017).

2.5.4.2 Power Dynamics: State, Ownership and Journalistic Autonomy

The relationship between the press and the government has considerable implications for journalists' autonomy. The autonomy of a journalist refers to their independence and ability to make decisions about the news stories they cover without undue influence from external factors such as governments, corporations, or other interest groups (Waisbord 2013; Ward 2015). This autonomy is essential for ensuring journalists can serve as watchdogs and hold those in power accountable. According to Ward (2018), the autonomy of journalists is threatened by the rise of government and corporate surveillance and the collection of personal data. Ward (2018, 20) stated that "journalists' autonomy is threatened by the widespread and often unseen collection and processing of data by governments, corporations and other entities". In general, a journalist's autonomy is not absolute and can be affected by various factors, such as media ownership structures, economic pressures, and editorial guidelines (Eldridge and Franklin 2019; Waisbord 2013; Ward 2018).

When governments pressure the press or try to control media content, it can lead to self-censorship, a reluctance to report on specific stories, and a restriction on the free flow of information. For instance, a study by Hanitzsch et al. (2011) that includes Indonesia found that journalists have less autonomy and face more censorship in countries where the government heavily regulates the media. "Journalists have been found to frequently practice self-censorship, particularly when covering sensitive issues that involve politics, religion, and national security" (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017, p. 415). Journalism entails different levels of self-censorship when gathering, editing, and choosing information to publish. Self-censorship is a voluntary limitation on free speech or "opinion expression inhibition" (Hayes et al., 2005, p. 300) employed to avoid adverse responses to creative expression. Self-censorship can harm journalism, leading to a lack of transparency and accountability. Hanitzsch and Vos (2017; p. 415) noted that "journalists' self-censorship has become a serious challenge to the principles of free expression and democracy."

Some scholars have found that journalists in countries where the government interferes with the press are more likely to practice self-censorship and decrease press freedom (Maniou 2022; Tapsell 2012). Research has also demonstrated how governments frequently employ various methods to regulate media content. Maniou's (2022) study, for example, analysed the dynamic of influence on press freedom in 16 countries, and the results indicated that press freedom is severely challenged and steadily declining. According to Sjøvaag (2013), journalists may only sometimes recognise political pressure or perceive it as

a significant limitation on their autonomy. This could be because the government frequently influences journalists' work indirectly rather than directly through open threats, the use of force, or other explicit pressures.

Globally, journalists faced unique challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic as governments restricted information flow. Specifically, in some countries, journalists faced challenges such as a threat to their autonomy and self-censorship. A study by Tandoc Jr. and Lee (2020) found that journalists in Asia faced challenges in fighting fake news and censorship during the pandemic. The study also noted that some journalists in the region had been harassed and censored by authorities. In addition, studies from different Asian countries showed that journalists struggled to report on COVID-19 while navigating state censorship and self-censorship. For example, the Committee to Protect Journalists (2020) reported how the Iranian government suppressed independent reporting and arrested several journalists for reporting on the pandemic. The government used fake news and conspiracy theories to downplay the severity of the pandemic (Alimardani 2020).

Meanwhile, journalists in Indonesia also encountered profound challenges. Freedom of speech and the press is primarily seen as a way to liberalise the media business, especially privately held media outlets in urban regions (Lim 2012). This emphasis bolsters the freedom of political interests held by media owners rather than prioritising the public interest (Tapsell 2015; Armando 2014). Studies in Indonesia have highlighted the obstacles faced by Indonesian journalists during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as government restrictions on information access, media ownership's impact on editorial independence, and self-censorship due to government pressure (e.g., Arifianto 2021; Harahap 2020). Recent research based on the Journalism Fellowship Programme in Indonesia revealed a crisis in journalism, signalling a loss of its role in overseeing government power (Iskandar et al., 2023). Journalism Fellowship is a unique model because it involves financial assistance from the state during the COVID-19 pandemic. The state's financial funding to journalists eroded the press's role as a watchdog due to the incentives compromising journalistic independence and impartiality. Other research found criminalising and the limitation of the freedom of expression by the state during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Several journalists and human rights activists faced state hostility and criminalising charges for expressing their opinions. The Indonesian government rationalised these actions to enforce national and regional laws (Armiwulan 2020; Utomo 2021). The Indonesian case study offers a unique perspective on the complexities of journalism and the media landscape in a rapidly changing democratic

country. The following section will focus on the media landscape in Indonesia and the impact of COVID-19 on journalism practices.

2.6 Context Study: Journalism in Indonesia

This section discusses the context of journalism in Indonesia. It also addresses the challenges faced by Indonesian media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the scope of this literature review, the discussion will consider the influence of political and economic factors in shaping news organisation cultures and the interplay between traditional and new media.

Indonesia is the world's fourth-most populous country and one of the largest economic markets in Southeast Asia. It successfully transitioned to democracy with the emergence of the Reformation era in 1998 (e.g., Bouchier and Hadiz 2014; Sen and Hill 2010; Tapsell 2015). Indonesia's media landscape is characterised by a dynamic and diverse environment, and it is generally considered relatively liberal (George and Venkiteswaran 2020; Sen 2010; Steele 2020).

The media environment in this country is known for its diversity, with independent media outlets sharing a wide range of opinions and witnessing growing pluralism in the media industry (George and Venkiteswaran 2019; Steele 2005, 2021). However, limited information on Indonesian media necessitates further investigation. For instance, a study on media ownership worldwide titled 'Who Owns the Media? Media Concentration and Ownership Around the World' (Noam 2016) covered 29 countries worldwide, including five East Asia countries, yet it failed to include Southeast Asia media, especially Indonesia. Likewise, the Reuters Institute Digital News Report, which reports yearly on the development of digital technology, has only mentioned Indonesian media since 2020. The lack of attention towards Indonesia's media is regrettable, considering that Indonesia is one of the region's most vibrant and diverse media sectors (Newman et al. 2021).

2.6.1 Shift in Power: From State to Conglomerate Media Control

The media in Indonesia gained significant press autonomy following the fall of President Soeharto in May 1998 (Haryanto 2014, Hill 2010; Tapsell 2012, 2015). The New Order Era, which spanned 32 years (1967-1998), ended, signalling the authoritarian regime's conclusion and the dawn of the Reformation Era (Kitley 2000; Pepinsky 2009). This period witnessed numerous new regulations that transformed the Indonesian media landscape and established a

strong foundation for freedom of speech and expression. One such ‘groundbreaking law’ was Press Law No. 40, enacted by the Indonesian parliament in September 1999 (Romano 2003, p. 50). This law guarantees press freedom and the democratisation of information while eliminating government control, censorship, and the threat of bans when criticising the government (Gazali 2014; Sen and Hill 2011). Further necessary regulation is Broadcasting Law No. 32/2002, which addressed some controversies such as centralisation, regulatory independence, content regulation, and media concentration (d’Haenens et al. 1999; Haryanto, 2011, Kitley 2000; Sudiby and Patria 2013).

The media reform abolished the government's authority to control the media and established a democratic system but led to the liberalisation of the media market (Armando 2014). After the Department of Communication was dismissed, numerous news media outlets emerged, such as newspapers, magazines, and television stations. Despite this proliferation, McChesney’s (2002) work pointed out that the main concern is not the number of media outlets but the diversity of the content. In a similar vein, Lim (2012, p.8) stated, “The most persistent issue in the production and content, especially in mainstream media, is the lack of diversity”. Instead of fostering a more democratic communication system, the transition led to the proliferation of media outlets and the concentration of conglomerate control (Gazali 2003; Lim 2012). Consider this, Doyle (2002) argues, “In practice, it is no easy task to isolate the role played by ownership patterns in determining what range of media output is made available to the public” (Doyle 2002, p. 13).

In the Reformation Era, the debate on media in Indonesia primarily focused on the threat of ownership since the government no longer controlled media. Several studies have investigated whether the news media landscape led to commercialisation or served as a tool for the media owners’ political interests (Haryanto 2011; Lim 2012; Rianto et al. 2012; Tapsell 2015). It can be argued that the owners of media companies in Indonesia have been able to navigate their media platforms with much freedom. They not only own a newspaper publication or a TV station but also turn them into a vast multi-platform media business. Consequently, the large media owners are financially successful and actively involved in Indonesian national politics (Haryanto 2011; Sean and Hill 2011; Tapsell 2015).

Media moguls and political parties sometimes have close ties, which can connect ownership and politics (e.g., McChesney and Schiller 2003; Chomsky 2016). In Indonesia's media landscape, 13 groups dominate, including state-run media as TV public and 12 commercial entities. Four major media companies are owned by tycoon-turned-politicians, with two being political party chairmen and two affiliated with political parties. Two other

significant players have political ties, though not officially affiliated with any party. Lim's (2012) study, 'The League of Thirteen: Media Concentration in Indonesia' and the Centre for Innovation Policy and Governance's 2012 report (Nugroho et al. 2012) came to the same conclusion, revealing that Indonesian media ownership is heavily consolidated among 12 major groups. These 12 commercial groups control national TV, most prominent newspapers, popular online news, and radio networks. Four also manage digital pay-tv services (Lim 2012; Nugroho et al. 2012). The table below is the summary:

Table 2.4 Media Ownership and Political Affiliation in Indonesia

Media Group	Media ownership	Owner	Political Affiliation
Media Nusantara Citra (MNC Group)	Four national TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, magazines/tabloids, online media	Hary Tanoesoedibjo	Chairman of the Indonesian Unity Party (Perindo)
Media Group	One national TV station, newspapers, online media	Surya Paloh	Chairman of the National Democratic Party (Nasdem)
Visi Media Asia (VIVA) / Bakrie Family	Two national TV stations, online media	Anindya Bakrie	Affiliate with the Party of Functional Groups (Golkar)
Lippo Group/ Riady Family	One TV station, magazines/ tabloids, online media	James Riady	Affiliate with the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP)
Elang Mahkota Teknologi (EMTEK)	2 national TV stations, radio stations, magazines, online media	Eddy Kusnadi Sariatmadja	Private Advisor to the President
Mahaka Media Group	One local TV station, radio stations, newspapers, magazines, online media	Erick Thohir	Minister of State-Owned Enterprises
CT Corp	2 national TV stations, 2 pay TV channels, online media	Chairul Tandjung	Former Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs
Jawa Post Group	Network TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, magazines/ Tabloid, online media	Dahlan Iskan	Former Minister of State-Owned Enterprises
Kompas Gramedia Group	Network TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, magazines/ tabloids, online media	Lilik Oetama	

Media Bali Post Group	Network TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, magazines/ tabloids, online media	Satria Narada	
Mugi Reka Abadi (MRA) Group	TV stations, radio stations, magazines/ tabloid	Dian Muljani Soedarjo	
Femina	Radio stations, magazines/ tabloids	Pia Alisyahbana, Mirta Kartohadiprodjo	

Source: Lim (2012), Nugroho (2012), official media company website, International Consortium of Investigative Journalists

The relationship between media owners and political practice has led to the utilisation of journalism for promoting specific political agendas. This affects the objectivity of news coverage as it tends to favour the interests of media owners with political connections (Armando 2014; Ekayanti and Hao 2018). Several researchers found that most media companies in Indonesia serve as vehicles to meet the political needs of the owners and rely on the political power of the media owner (Armando 2014; Ford and Pepinsky 2014; Haryanto 2011). In this concentration and conglomeration context, Steele (2011, p. 114) asserted that Indonesian journalism's future is unlikely to be bright if "the idealism and professional goals of Indonesian news organisations become increasingly subordinate to the market-driven aims of media owners and conglomerates". As media moguls maintain connections to political entities, journalists may find themselves caught in a complex network that affects journalism practice (Armando 2014; Ekayanti and Hao 2018).

2.6.2 Journalistic Autonomy: Overcoming the Shadow of the Past

Despite the ongoing concerns surrounding ownership within Indonesia's media landscape, news organisations and journalists within the country have never been entirely free from the shadow of political power in the past, as the prevailing socio-political climate has consistently impacted them (Dhakidae 1991; Bromley and Romano 2012; Webber 2006). In Indonesia, there has been a long history of the authorities enforcing the 'responsible' press concept, encouraging a collective thinking mindset among Indonesian journalists (Ritchey and Muchtar 2011; Tapsell 2017). According to Hanitzsch (2006), the government's supervision over the journalism practice has depoliticised the profession systematically. This

can be traced back to the authoritarian New Order regime, which governed Indonesia for over three decades. The newspaper functioned as a critical instrument for disseminating and controlling information, although generating little revenue during the New Order regime (Dhakidae 1991).

Media in Indonesia is also deeply rooted in ‘development journalism’, the concept that refers to values in many countries, including in Asia (George and Venkiteswaran 2020; Romano 2009). Development journalism portrays the media as one of the government’s partners in the nation’s development and that the press should be considered a government partner during the national development phases (Bromley and Romano 2012; Jeffrey and Romano 2009). The values hold that journalists have a social responsibility to promote the harmony of social stability while emphasising communitarianism and showing respect for authority to strengthen and improve the country’s national growth (Hanitzsch 2005; George and Venkiteswaran 2019). Unsurprisingly, Indonesian journalists often collaborated with the government to promote national development agendas (Pintak and Setiyono 2011).

A study called *Worlds of Journalism* (2019), which looked into journalistic cultures across the globe, discovered that journalistic practices had evolved considerably in numerous countries. Interestingly, the research, which covered 66 nations, revealed that media professionals from the Global South are not necessarily less proficient than their counterparts in the Global North (Hanitzsch et al. 2011). The findings for Indonesian journalists aligned with prior research (Hanitzsch 2006, p. 182), which stated that “most Indonesian journalists follow the traditional Western understanding of journalism which advocates objectivity, neutrality and detachment”. Nearly 40% of Indonesian journalists viewed themselves as proactive, taking on a critical role in driving change, while only 20% of American journalists shared this perspective. In contrast, 10% of Indonesian journalists saw themselves as “detached watchdogs,” while 65% of American journalists identified with this role. Scholars also noted that Indonesians adhere to journalistic standards which emphasise objectivity and accuracy in their news production (George and Venkiteswaran 2019; Hanitzsch 2006). Hanitzsch’s (2006) study’ concluded:

There are some indications that journalism in democratic societies is moving towards a common mainstream culture. Perhaps one of the most surprising findings of this survey is that Indonesian journalists are, in fact, so similar to their colleagues in many Western countries, at least in terms of their professional views. Most Indonesian

journalists follow the traditional Western understanding of journalism, which advocates objectivity, neutrality and detachment. (Hanitzsch, 2006; p. 182)

Nevertheless, the Indonesian media remains under the shadow of the old regime and the pervasive influence of dominant ownership and conglomeration (Hadiz 2003; Lim 2012; Tapsell 2017; Webber 2006). The association with the previous regime and the owner's interests in the news content erodes journalistic autonomy and encourages journalists' self-censorship (Kwanda and Lin 2020; Sen and Hill 2011). Thus, it was unsurprising that a Freedom House (2020) report rated Indonesia's media as 'partly free' and revealed that Indonesian journalists had been frustrated "by legal harassment from powerful politicians and businesses as well as continued attacks against journalists". On a similar note, a recent 2022 Reuters Institute Digital News Report survey (Newman 2022) found that a mere 28% of respondents think Indonesian media is free from undue political or government influence, and only 29% believe media is free of inappropriate business or commercial impact.

2.6.3 The Intersection of Traditional and New Media

Over the years, Indonesia's media landscape has undergone profound transitions, ranging from political fluctuations to grappling with issues of ownership and consolidation while facing the challenges of digital innovation (Jurriëns and Tapsell 2017; Lim 2013). Digital technology started to gain momentum in Indonesia in the late 1990s and early 2000s, following global trends (Jurriëns and Tapsell 2017). As the internet was introduced in the country and digital technology began to flourish, Indonesian private media companies started to explore opportunities within the digital media realm (Purbo 2002). Large media enterprises reformulated their business strategies to expand their influence within the growing digital market (Ambardi et al. 2014; Nugroho et al. 2012). In this new digital environment, most Indonesian media companies maintain traditional formats such as newspapers and television as their primary business. Simultaneously, some large companies ventured into developing multimedia websites (Lim 2013). For example, Kompas, the largest newspaper company, launched its website in 1995, and in 2000, SCTV, one of the biggest television stations, pioneered developing websites for their flagship news programme, 'Liputan 6' (Ambardi et al. 2014).

During 2002 and 2011, numerous mergers and acquisitions occurred among Indonesian media groups. Consequently, newsrooms underwent significant transformations

following consolidation efforts within the print, broadcast, and online media sectors into more integrated and converged environments (Nugroho et al. 2012; Tapsell 2015).

Newsroom convergence in Indonesia was driven by the need to adapt to changes in the media landscape and generate revenue. At the same time, it has led to commercial convergence and media oligopolies, which significantly impact media pluralism and diversity (Tapsell 2014, 2015).

Ideally, converged newsrooms should continuously reach varied viewers across different platforms, resulting in better journalism practice and business development for the media (e.g., Fioretti and Russ-Mohl 2009; Lawson-Borders 2006; Quinn 2005). However, convergence in Indonesia primarily increases the political power of a media owner instead. Scholars pointed out that owners of large media companies are financially successful and actively involved in Indonesian national politics (Haryanto 2011; Sen and Hill 2011; Tapsell 2015). Given the media owners' involvement, the apparent conflicts of interest that arise from the need to deliver unbiased news to the public are common findings, including in Indonesia. A study in America by Quandt and Singer (2009) found that the primary beneficiaries of convergence are the media companies rather than practitioners or the public. Likewise, in Indonesia, media mergers had little impact on the quality of news coverage but a significant impact on the media companies' profits (Haryanto 2011; Lim 2013; Souisa 2020).

The newsroom convergence and its impacts on Indonesia's media industry have been further highlighted by the rise of social media platforms in the late 2000s. Many news organisations under the newsroom convergence began to use these platforms to distribute their content and engage with their audience as social media platforms have grown significantly in Indonesia (Ambardi et al. 2014). The latest data in 2023 showed Indonesia experienced significant digital adoption and use, boasting 212.9 million internet users and an internet penetration rate of 77%. This digital growth was evident in social media, with 167 million users, representing 60.4% of the total population, actively engaging in various platforms (Kemp 2023). Data from Statista for 2022 showed Indonesia ranks third after China and India among active social media users in the Asia Pacific. Notably, Jakarta, the capital city, has been named the most vibrant city on Twitter worldwide. Despite fierce competition among news outlets, social media have helped establish brand loyalty among readers and viewers. This is in line with a study that both newspaper and television stations and newspapers are using their social media platform to update the stories, especially for publishing or broadcasting 'breaking news' (Sambrook and McGuire 2014).

The growth of digital news in Indonesia further accelerated with the proliferation of smartphones and affordable internet access in the 2010s (Rao 2012). One of the characteristics of digital media is the capacity to facilitate mobility, co-presence and interconnectivity (Hjorth 2005). As more and more Indonesians gained access to smartphones, digital news consumption shifted from desktop to mobile devices (Balea, 2016). The number of mobile cellular connections in Indonesia surpassed the total population, resulting in a 128% penetration rate. This resulted in the creation of mobile apps for news organisations, as many Indonesians consume news primarily via mobile devices.

In Indonesia, the presence of new media does not merely replace the existence of traditional media. This aligns with Chadwick's (2017) study of how conventional journalistic institutions and practices adapt to the rise of digital and social media in a hybrid system. Connectivity can be found in the convergence of television as traditional media and the mobile phone as new media (Baulch 2017). Despite the growth of online news and social media, television has remained the primary source of information for most Indonesians. It is still Indonesia's most widespread and influential medium (Tapsell 2015). The dominant television reception platforms in Indonesia are terrestrial and satellite. Together, they account for some three-quarters of the total television reception.

The Broadcasting Board of Governors and Gallup survey on "Media Use in Indonesia 2012" found that new media are becoming increasingly important, but traditional media remain the primary sources of news (Hamzah 2013, cited in Jurriëns and Tapsell 2017). Television remains a vital news source as broadcast media maintain a significant presence, particularly in rural regions with limited internet access (Steele 2022). Data from the Digital News Report (2022) indicates that television accounts for 57% of news sources in urban areas. Interestingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has resurged the role of legacy media, particularly television, as some audiences value the dependability and credibility associated with long-established news organisations (Casero-Ripollés 2020). Following the Indonesian government's announcement of the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, television news viewership witnessed a 25% surge (Nielsen 2020), highlighting its enduring relevance in the evolving media landscape.

2.6.4 Indonesia's Media Landscape Amid COVID-19

Several studies conducted on media in Indonesia during the pandemic have highlighted major issues. These issues include the vulnerability of journalists (Kalaoi et al. 2023) and the

decline in journalism quality (Masduki and Prastya 2021). Like many newsrooms around the world, the outbreak caused a slowdown in media operations, with companies where journalists have been laid off, furloughed, or received pay cuts (e.g., Febrina 2020; Saputra 2020; Wahyuni and Fitrah 2022). Prior to the pandemic, country experts praised democracy in Indonesia for its ‘stability, vibrant civil society, and press freedom’, which is among the freest in the region (Aspinall and Warburton 2018, p. 3). However, the global crisis led to a profound shift in how news organisations conduct journalism practices, posing risks to press freedom and journalists’ independence (Iskandar et al. 2023; Steele 2021).

The unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic has also forced journalists to continue in their professional roles despite the risks they face while performing their daily duties. In Western studies, research has shown how journalists face dilemmas when their professional responsibilities collide with their emotional labour. Anxiety and depression (Osman et al. 2021; Šimunjak 2021), trauma and mental health (Jukes et al. 2021; Selva and Feinstein 2020), and tensions and stress related to working conditions (Hoak 2021; Libert et al. 2021) are among the emotions experienced by journalists during the pandemic. In Indonesia, journalists have also struggled with the rapid changes caused by the coronavirus, frequently lacking adequate preparation and resources, heightened vulnerability (Kalaoi et al. 2023). On the other hand, a study revealed the resilience of Indonesian journalists in maintaining their mental health. Embracing data-driven journalism and teamwork appears to enhance the resilience of the journalistic community (Parahita 2021, p. 99).

The coronavirus pandemic emphasised the government’s response to the pandemic and noted a significant decrease in Indonesian’ satisfactions with democracy following the pandemic. This raises concern about the long-term impact of the pandemic on Indonesian democracy in the future (Sevindik et al. 2021; Pepinsky 2021; Primandari 2020). Human rights groups, including Amnesty International Indonesia, have repeatedly urged the government to stop exploiting the pandemic to restrict freedom of expression and instead focus on combating COVID-19. Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2021) expressed concern upon discovering that Indonesia’s police have been instructed to address not only disinformation related to the coronavirus pandemic but also critiques of the president and government. RSF emphasises the risk of combining the two and urges the police to permit journalists to work without restrictions.

2.7. Addressing the Gaps in Existing Literature

Through various theories, this chapter has elucidated the dynamic relationship between journalists and the newsroom, place, objects of journalism, and news sources. The literature reviewed serves as a foundation for examining news production in Indonesian media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the literature review, a gap in understanding the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on journalism practices, particularly news-making processes, was identified.

The most significant distinction lies in the crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted routines and presented a type of crisis unfamiliar with what journalists typically cover. Here, the gaps need to be addressed again: the previous crises did not directly affect journalists, whereas, in the pandemic, journalists became part of the coronavirus threat. The COVID-19 pandemic established different crisis standards as social distancing practices changed life, including journalism practices.

The importance of this study lies in the limited research on how pandemics affect the news-making process. There is also a lack of studies conducted within newsrooms during a pandemic due to restricted access for non-journalists. By gaining access to the newsroom, this research provides valuable insight into how newsrooms handle crises during a pandemic. In light of these gaps, the first research question seeks to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on news-making and journalism practices, with a focus on how newsroom crises affect journalists' daily work, the influence on news production processes, and the adjustments journalists make to cope with disruptions in the newsroom. Secondly, there is a certain gap in the literature on physical place realignment. Therefore, this study questions how the significance of a physical place impacts journalistic professionalism and the consequences of a place reconfiguration on journalists' symbolic power. This question explores the effects of place realignment during the outbreak, examining the repercussions of an unsafe newsroom and journalists' experiences since being compelled to leave their usual work environment.

The third question seeks to comprehend how the objects of journalism contribute to news-making during the COVID-19 pandemic, raising concerns about the changing relationship between journalists and digital-enabled objects. It will seek to comprehend how the pandemic and subsequent shifts in physical locations affect journalists' relationships with the objects, the broader implications of these changes, and journalists' professionalism and authority. Lastly, earlier news source studies have little direct relevance to the present

pandemic study. As in-person meetings with sources are no longer feasible, the COVID-19 pandemic raises concerns about the changing relationship between journalists and their sources, particularly concerning government officials. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how journalists may navigate relationships and maintain professionalism and autonomy during the pandemic.

Theoretically, this study contributes to news-making theory by demonstrating the importance of proximity and that diminishing physical presence changes the relationship between journalists and the place, objects and sources. Empirically, this study can provide a new media perspective on Indonesia. It can be used as a reference to enrich the public's knowledge and further studies in media and journalism in Asia. Moreover, this study highlights how Global South newsrooms responded to the digital media challenge during the pandemic.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological approach used to conduct the research, from data collection to analysis. I demonstrate how data was gathered and analysed for this thesis, including some negotiations during the fieldwork in response to the lockdown. The chapter is structured in four main sections: methodology, data collection, analysis, ethics and reflexivity. This chapter establishes the methodological rationale and provides justification for the chosen case studies. The second section covers data collection, including offline and online observations and interviews, a key set of questions, and triangulation. The third section elaborates on the data analysis, and the final section discusses ethics and my reflexivity as a researcher.

3.2. Methodological Approach

This study employed a newsroom ethnography, widely used in journalism studies, to investigate the news-making process during the COVID-19 pandemic. This methodology was used to observe three newsrooms in Indonesia, a television station, SCTV, and two digital news organisations, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia, and answer research questions about newsroom changes during the pandemic. As already mentioned in the introduction (Chapter 1), this study had four research questions. First: How did the COVID-19 pandemic crisis impact journalism routines and change news-making? Second: How did the value of a physical place affect journalistic professionalism during the pandemic? What were the consequences of the reconfiguration of the place on the symbolic power of journalism? Third: How did objects of journalism contribute to the news-making process during the COVID-19 pandemic? And fourth: How did the pandemic impact the gatekeeping process and change journalists' relationships with their sources? In the following section, I will explain how newsroom ethnography was used to answer the four research questions. The section starts with the rationale of newsroom ethnography in this research.

3.2.1 Newsroom Ethnography

The first generation of newsroom ethnography studies in the United States (e.g., Altheide 1976; Epstein 1974; Fisman 1980; Gans 1979; Tuchman 1978) and in the United Kingdom (e.g., Elliott 1972; Golding and Elliot 1979; Schlesinger 1978) has become influential and enduring. These ethnographers work greatly, contributing to knowledge about news production processes and newsroom culture (Anderson 2013; Wahl-Jorgensen 2009). According to Paterson (2008, p.2), “Without the well-known early ethnographic investigations of news production, our understandings of journalism would be limited to what little we are able to glean from the observation of content, or from what journalists say they do.”

Since classical ethnography research has impacted news production studies, Cottle (2000, p.1) argues for more news ethnography, stating that “a number of productive ethnographies are opened up for future investigation in a fast-changing and differentiated news ecology.” Cottle (2000) suggests that a “second wave” of ethnography is needed to update, theoretically map, and empirically investigate. The argument for the greater role of ethnography is linked to changes in the field, such as new technological advancements and convergence (Cottle 2007; Boczkowski 2004; Steensen 2009; Deuze 2004; Singer 2008a; Usher 2014; Anderson 2013). A new wave of ethnographies has begun to tackle the challenges of understanding digital journalism using the concept of thick description (Reese 2016). These studies are important for providing more material for reflection and strengthening our understanding of how news is produced today. In accordance with Cottle’s arguments that in-depth newsroom research is required for researching news production, this ethnographic study attempts to examine newsroom production in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Ethnography, which originated in the field of anthropology, is used to gain a deep understanding of cultures through participation and observation, collecting whatever data is available to shed light on the researched issues (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). As a qualitative research method, ethnography studies people and cultures in their regular contexts. People’s behaviours and accounts are investigated in real-life situations, or research is carried out “in the field.” Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.3) emphasise “describing what happens in the setting, how the people involved see their own actions and those of others, and the contexts in which the action takes place.”⁶ Therefore, this approach fits with

⁶ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson’s work, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, is one of the classic textbooks about ethnographic methods. The first and second editions did not discuss digital media. The third

this research's objective, which was to examine how the pandemic impacted journalists' workplace. Ethnography is about delivering a "credible, rigorous, and authentic story" (Fetterman 2019). In keeping with Fetterman's arguments, the study sought robust data from three newsrooms. Nonetheless, conducting observations proved to be a profound challenge during the pandemic crisis. Meanwhile, ethnography relies heavily on observations as researchers need to enter the newsroom to see journalists' daily routines (Boczkowski 2009). In alignment with this study, newsroom fieldwork was conducted to gather data through observations, interviews, and documents.

Studies of journalism have shown that newsroom ethnography is commonly used to explore newsroom culture amid rapid technological change. An ethnographic study of the BBC News Centre in Bristol was one of the first to examine journalists' responses to the shift from traditional single-platform to multi-platform newsrooms (Cottle and Ashton 1999). Meanwhile, Boczkowski's (2004) work on news digitisation acknowledges the reintroduction of ethnographic research after a long absence (Anderson 2013). Instead of focusing on the values that drive journalistic behaviour, as Tuchman (1978) and Gans (1979) did, Boczkowski focused on the material-spatial aspects of the newsroom that were in line with this research. Similarly, Usher's ethnographic works (2014) on the changing of the journalist's workplace in the New York Times were used as a reference to investigate the shifting of the news production place during the pandemic.

Several studies have been conducted on newsroom convergence using ethnography, including works by Singer (2008a) and Sue Robinson (2011). It is worth understanding ethnography studies of newsroom convergence since the two newsrooms in this study are converged. As Singer notes, "the richness of interview data from ethnographic studies of newsrooms confirms that the method is one with which journalists are especially comfortable" (Singer 2008a, p.6). In short, the ethnographic works mentioned above and some newsroom ethnography (e.g., Hemmingway 2007; Paterson and Domingo 2008; Ryfe 2012) were appropriate for approaching the methodology in this study. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has sharply curtailed in-person gatherings, including traditional ethnography. Ethnography studies in this research need to be adjusted. The fieldwork was not only in the 'real field' but also demanded to be done virtually to obtain sufficient data.

edition I used in this research pays some attention to digital space and real and virtual ethnography on pages 133–139, which fits my study.

3.2.2 Field Sites

Classic ethnography fieldwork typically takes several months or years in a single location (Delamont 2004). This model, however, is no longer viable for many researchers. This was especially so in my research, given the possibility that the newsroom could be temporarily closed or partially opened to curb the spread of the virus. This fieldwork was conducted in three newsrooms, and using multiple newsrooms did not jeopardise ethnography's commitment to depth and thick description, as demonstrated by Boczkowski's ethnographic studies at three online newsrooms (Boczkowski 2004).

An ethnographer has to be knowledgeable and familiar with the field and the people and focus on one aspect of the culture (LeCompte and Schensul 2010). These criteria also fit with the sites observed: SCTV, Liputan6.com, and BBC News Indonesia. Most importantly, the three sites studied were chosen to represent traditional media and new media, each of which has a strong position among similar media competitors and has audience credibility. In addition, the two national news organisations selected, SCTV and Liputan6.com, are not affiliated with any political party, which is important to ensure the neutrality of the news-making process. A brief background news organisation is provided to contextualise each study site.

3.2.2.1 SCTV

SCTV, a private national TV station, is owned by EMTEK Group - one of the biggest media conglomerates in Indonesia (Lim 2012; Nugroho et al. 2013; Tapsell 2017). The newsroom is situated on the ninth level of a 22-storey skyscraper, positioned within a prominent business district in Jakarta. SCTV Tower is also located near important landmarks such as the Parliament Building, the Indonesian Police Headquarters, and the Attorney General's office. The newsroom, which spans over 2000 square meters, is staffed by 140 employees, including 95 editorial teams and 45 production support crews.

SCTV has been one of the most popular stations for news programs, and "Liputan 6" (The 6 pm Report) was regarded as the "most watched news programme" in Indonesia, according to Nielsen ratings (Ambardi et al. 2014, p. 23). Liputan 6 SCTV gained popularity since it was the first news TV programme to criticise the New Order regime openly and played a key role in dethroning President Soeharto in 1998 (Ishadi 2012). Interestingly,

SCTV supported the Reform movement and demonstrated some independence from the ruling power, ending President Soeharto's 32-year authoritarianism even though the owner was one of Soeharto's sons. Several conflicts in the Liputan 6 newsroom between senior journalists and news leaders with station management, which was naturally closer to the owner, were rare in Indonesia (Ishadi 2014). With the significant contribution of the SCTV news programme to the rise of Indonesia's democracy, "Liputan 6 SCTV would become a benchmark for Indonesian television journalism and provided its own journalistic contributions to Indonesia's democratization process" (Souisa 2020, p.124).

Following President Soeharto's fall, several businesses controlled by relatives of the Soeharto family and their associates, including the SCTV station, were sold. SCTV was acquired in 2002 by a pair of brothers, Eddy and Fofa Sariaatmadja, through their EMTEK holding company (Lim 2012, Sudiby and Patria 2013). This TV station then became a public company, acquiring Indosiar, another major TV station and one of Indonesia's top five TV stations (Lim 2012, p.2). Since then, the holding company, EMTEK, has continuously expanded its dominance in Indonesia's media industry through a series of investments in several online news media, video platforms, production houses, radio, and cable networks (Ambardi et al. 2014, p.65; Lim 2012, p.3).

3.2.2.2 Liputan6.com

Liputan6.com is one of Indonesia's leading online news portals, ranked 8th in website traffic among all online media sites (Alexa.com. 2021). It was created in 2000 with the emergence of digital news platforms in Indonesia and was a part of SCTV's newsroom convergence. Initially, Liputan6.com only published news that had been broadcast on Liputan6 SCTV stations. From 2000 to 2012, Liputan6.com served as SCTV's "online television" and was then managed separately from SCTV by Kreatif Media Karya (KMK), a sub-holding company founded by EMTEK. Since 2012, Liputan6.com has created diverse news, including Citizen6, in order to accommodate citizen journalism. A year later, Liputan6.com established its multimedia division and expanded its features by integrating various social media platforms. "After being de-converged from SCTV, Liputan6.com grew bigger by converging with social media platforms and other online news portals by semi-converging its newsroom" (Widjanarko and Hariyani 2022, p.11). The company relocated to a central Jakarta office, occupying two floors for a 140-person online editorial and multimedia team, complete with its own studio.

Liputan6.com became the most significant visitor traffic contributor among all online media under the umbrella of EMTEK Group. Furthermore, with around 63 million unique visitors, all EMTEK online media ranks second among other online media conglomerates in Indonesia (Comscore.com 2021). In 2017, Liputan6.com initiated and led a “media syndication” or “content syndication” program with twenty-nine local online media outlets across Indonesia. Liputan6.com soon added two increasingly popular platforms, podcast and TikTok, to its content portfolio in 2019. It was Indonesia’s first online media outlet to include TikTok in its content portfolio. Meanwhile, their podcast was integrated into the Liputan6.com website, allowing readers to listen to the content on the website without having to visit Spotify (Widjanarko and Hariyani 2022).

Liputan 6.com is also one of the pioneers in live streaming and has a Fact Check page to counter hoaxes and fake news. In July 2018, after an arduous selection process, Liputan6.com became one of 54 media organisations worldwide to pass the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) verification successfully. IFCN verification is exclusively granted to media organisations that regularly publish non-partisan news reports on the accuracy of statements made by public figures, key institutions, and widely held beliefs in the community.

3.2.2.3 BBC News Indonesia

BBC Indonesia made its first radio broadcast on October 30, 1949, four years after Indonesia’s independence. Since then, BBC Indonesia has greeted its audience with broadcasts from Jakarta or London.⁷ With a regional office in Jakarta, BBC Indonesia is one of the BBC’s World Service subsidiaries. BBC Indonesia has offices in a building at the heart of Jakarta. The building is home to various foreign media representatives and is situated close to the Presidential Palace, ministerial offices, and the centre of government. During this study, BBC News Indonesia had 17 journalists based in Jakarta and three journalists in London working on radio, web, and video.

It broadcasts news and current events and weekly magazines that convey global news and events and Indonesia’s democratic transition from the New Order era of Soeharto to the reform era. Democratisation is what the BBC focuses on, and during the new order era, BBC Indonesia gained popularity among those inclined to listen to alternative sources of

⁷ BBC Indonesia ended its radio broadcasts on December 30th, 2022. Along with Indonesia, BBC closed radio broadcasts in nine other languages. The BBC announced its closure due to financial constraints, with plans to focus on news digital services.

information as the local-based media in Indonesia was strictly controlled. Due to its popularity, BBC Indonesia expanded its access to listeners through a relationship with a Jakarta-based news radio station. Then came the continued collaboration with other radio partners in several Indonesian provinces. BBC Indonesia has increased its reach across various media outlets as new media has emerged.

In 2011, BBC Indonesia shifted its focus from conventional radio to digital platforms, including establishing its own website. During this time, BBC Indonesia formally changed BBC Broadcast Indonesia to BBC News Indonesia. Along with the expansion of the website, BBC News Indonesia, like its parent company, BBC UK, has since been increasing its radio audience and digital readership through a range of partnerships with conventional and digital media outlets and various social media platforms. With its robust transition, a series of well-planned training was created for the reporters to smooth the transition from conventional broadcast to multimedia.

3.3 Data Collection

Ethnography typically involves multiple data collection techniques in the field as this methodology emphasises watching, listening, and interacting with people (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Data collection aims “to describe what happens in the setting, how the people involved see their actions and those of others, and the contexts in which the action takes place” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007 p.3). Following this, data for this study was collected from “What people say” (interview transcripts, notes, audio recordings, and visual material collected by participants); “What people do” (field notes, photographs collected by researchers, and other visual data); and also, from “What people use”, such as archives and documents (Gray 2014). In other words, fieldwork is the most characteristic element of ethnography. This study thus applied more informal participation techniques with “being there” to observe, ask questions, and take notes on what I saw and heard (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

The research usually employs three types of data collection methods: observation, interviews and documents, with all three methods being used in a single study (Creswell 2018). This study collected data from a variety of sources to gain a nuanced understanding of how the newsroom changed during the pandemic. Through observation, interviews, and document analysis, ethnographic methods revealed complex changes in journalism

professionals' and newsroom practices, all of which met the objective of this study to understand how the newsroom and news production changed during the pandemic.

The data was collected over 15 months, with two rounds of fieldwork conducted during different waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first round was held in April 2020, during the first peak after the Indonesian government implemented large-scale social restrictions, and the second round was during the second wave of the pandemic in Indonesia in July 2021. In total, the length of the fieldwork amounted to 245 hours of observation in three newsrooms, with hybrid observations conducted on-site and online when the newsrooms were closed due to pandemic constraints. Observation included editorial meetings (daily and weekly) and observing interactions, primarily between journalists in the newsroom. Interviews were conducted in two ways (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

First, in-depth interviews with 33 journalists, ranging from junior reporters to senior editors, with varied experience levels were conducted inside and outside the newsroom. All interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, and all participants used pseudonyms to protect their identities and ensure anonymity. Second, there were 35 informal interviews with newsroom team members, 32 from the editorial team, and three key people in charge of technology. The individuals I spoke to in an informal setting differed from the journalists I interviewed in-depth. These interviews were not recorded but were kept in field notes for analysis. In the second phase, I followed up with the same participants who were interviewed in the first phase. I asked them to reflect once again on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their work and personal lives and to provide an update on how they have been affected by this crisis. There were approximately 280 pages of single-spaced interviews and field notes in total. Other secondary data collected included the diaries of four participants, a series of photographs and videos, and internal documents.

According to Hammersley (2006), long fieldwork is necessary as access to a research setting cannot be considered a "one-time" event and must be re-negotiated to complete the data. This fieldwork had to be divided into stages to adhere to the pandemic workspace policy. I was unable, however, to access the two digital newsrooms for field observation as they closed their office during the first phase of my research in 2020. Thus, the digital newsroom fieldwork was shorter than in the TV newsroom, as the TV newsroom was never entirely closed. Below are the details of the data collection:

Table 3.1 Data Collection

Site of study	SCTV	Liputan6.com	BBC News Indonesia
Time frame of observation	April 2020 August 2020 March 2021	March 2021 July 2021	September 2020 July 2021
Field observation	150 hours	20 hours	0
Online observation	30 hours	25 hours	20 hours
Number of interviewees	17 participants	10 participants	6 participants
Hours of in-depth interview	12 hours 45 minutes	7 hours 30 minutes	4 hours 30 minutes

3.3.1 Observation

Traditionally, ethnography required the researcher's actual presence for observation. Fieldwork is the fundamental aspect of ethnography, which involves studying places, people, culture, and artefacts (Preissle and Grant 2003). "Being there" is vital for a researcher as physical displacement is a requirement. Nevertheless, ethnography is a flexible approach, and there are no fixed rules for achieving the perfect ethnography (Van Maanen 2011). In this study, the primary observation in the field site suddenly had to adjust as the Indonesian government officially implemented large-scale social restrictions in March 2020, at the same time I started to collect the data. Two digital newsrooms, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia, closed their office; meanwhile, SCTV only closed for a week at the beginning of the lockdown. Through several negotiations, I finally gained access to the newsroom on-site. Therefore, the ability to obtain in-depth, thick descriptions and meanings was gathered from participants on-site and online. Several changes were made to continue ethnographic research remotely. Regardless of how those experiences are mediated, the primary goal of an ethnographic study is to observe and analyse how people interact with one another and with their surroundings to better understand their culture (Creswell 1998). Thus, this study observed the news-making process and followed how journalists produced the news by hybrid observation, from on-site and online observation.

On-site observation involved attending editorial news meetings, watching journalists producing their news stories, and observing live newscasts in the SCTV gallery and Liputan6.com's studio. Meanwhile, on-site observation in Liputan6.com was conducted

during March and April 2021. Due to the pandemic in 2020, the newsroom was mostly closed, and many journalists worked remotely. The focus of the fieldwork was on the multimedia and video journalists' team, as they were the ones who were on-site. On the other hand, no on-site observations were possible at BBC Indonesia as all team members had been working from home since March 2020. This remote observation was conducted in two rounds in both the TV and two digital newsrooms during the first wave of the pandemic, from around April 2020 to March 2021, and the second wave, from June to July 2021. A few journalists continued to come to the newsroom during the first wave of the pandemic, but as the second wave⁸ became more severe and many more journalists tested positive, newsrooms closed down completely, except for TV newsrooms. The following table describes the on-site and online observations in three observed newsrooms.

Table 3.2 On-site and Online Observations in Three Newsrooms

Organisation	On-site observation	Days of observation	Hours	Online observation	Days of observation	Hours
SCTV	April 2020 August 2020 March 2021	6 12 8	30 72 48	April 2020 June 2021	9 6	18 12
Liputan 6	March 2021 April 2021	4 2	12 8	April 2020 June 2021		25
BBC Indonesia				April 2020 June 2021		20

As shown in the table above, the total number of on-site observations in the TV newsroom in May, August 2020 and March 2021 lasted for 26 days or approximately 150 hours. In comparison, on-site observations in the online newsroom lasted nearly 20 hours in March and April 2021. As for the online observation, I conducted it in all observed newsrooms.

Although I gained access to do fieldwork in SCTV, as the pandemic reached its peak in April 2020, I moved the on-site observation at SCTV to online observation. The length of online SCTV observation was 30 hours. At the same time, from April to May 2020, I conducted virtual observations in the two digital newsrooms. I repeated the process in each newsroom

⁸ Indonesia reached a COVID-19 case peak in June 2021, with daily positive cases reaching a record high - the highest since the pandemic began in 2020. The increase in cases began after the Eid holiday in May 2021, and there have now been over three million confirmed cases in Indonesia as of July 2021.

during the second wave in June and July 2021. The total time spent on online observation was about 25 hours on Liputan6.com and 20 hours on BBC Indonesia.

My remote observations included attending online editorial meetings, watching news programs, and being involved in several informal discussions via text messages or phone conversations. I also attended weekly virtual meetings with various small teams. In TV editorial meetings, a maximum of six people were usually present in the meeting room: a presenter, an assignment editor, two producers, an executive producer, and the news manager. The remaining news team members were present through the Zoom meeting application. Using these online observations, despite not being physically present in the newsroom, I understood how journalists responded to the pandemic, altered their daily practices, and altered how they worked when the newsroom was changed.

Nevertheless, on-site observation gives more flexibility to observing how journalists work. Most of my on-site observations in TV newsrooms were conducted during the daytime and occasionally during night and weekend shifts. I was granted full access to the newsroom to observe the daily production, and I was frequently present in the production control room when the news aired from the studio. On the day of observation, I observed everyone in the SCTV newsroom, including reporters, editors, video journalists, camera persons and photographers, as well as the production support crew. At the same time, I attended as many editorial meetings as possible in the TV newsroom, daily meetings, weekly meetings, and special program meetings. I also joined meetings with the programming department and the research and development team two times during the fieldwork.

Meanwhile, at Liputan6.com, I was only present during the day shifts since they only did live news streaming in their studio three times a week. While observing several live newscasts, I gained insight into the news production process during the pandemic. During the observation, I maintained neutrality and did not engage in journalistic work. I observed how journalists produced news during the pandemic, for the most part, and then talked with them about what the newsroom meant to them afterwards. Additionally, I inquired about their previous work before the pandemic and their experiences when the newsroom as the central workplace was reconfigured following the outbreak. These observations gained a nuanced understanding of how the news-making process changed during the outbreak and how journalists valued the newsroom as a workplace when it was reconfigured due to the pandemic.

3.3.2 Interviews

Interviews are an essential data-gathering technique in ethnography to explain and put into a larger context what researchers see and experience (Fetterman 2019). This study used two types of interviews commonly used in ethnographies: semi-structured or in-depth interviews and informal or unstructured interviews. To ensure effective data collection, the interview design structures that the interview process systematically and accurately collects relevant data. I planned and structured an interview to gather data to address four themes of research questions: First, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on journalism routines; second, the value of physical newsrooms; third, the contribution of journalistic objects; and fourth, the gatekeeping process. In my interview design, I informed the interviewees that this interview aimed to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on newsrooms and the change in journalism practices. I assured them that all responses would be confidential and used solely for research purposes. Additionally, I explained the need for consent and requested permission to record the interview for accuracy.

The interview design started with general questions and followed up with detailed questions. I conducted semi-structured interviews with pre-arranged questions and interview lists (Appendix A) and then asked follow-up questions to clarify answers and avoid misperceptions (Fetterman 2019). The semi-structured interview format was chosen because it allows for a guided conversation where specific topics can be explored in-depth while also providing flexibility to probe further based on participants' responses. I asked all participants to have an open-ended dialogue concept, similar to semi-formal interviews, and the interviews were conducted without any coercion or word-feeding towards the participants.

Before the interviews, I followed ethnographic methods to establish a rapport with the participants. Rapport building involves continuous communication with the participants to build the researcher's trust and facilitate thoughtful exchanges (Brennen 2013). In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic first emerged in Indonesia, I contacted each person via email, text, and phone, requesting to shift their offline interview to an online one if a face-to-face interview was not feasible. As a result, this study employed in-person and online, as described in the table below.

Table 3.3 On-site and Online Interviews in Three Newsrooms

Organisation	In-person interview participants	Hours of interview	Online interview participant	Hours of interview
SCTV	14	12 hours 30 minutes	3	2 hours 15 minutes
Liputan 6	7	5 hours 30 minutes	3	2 hours
BBC Indonesia			6	4 hours 30 minutes
Total Interview	21	17 hours 30 minutes	12	9 hours 15 minutes

Throughout my fieldwork in 2020 and 2021, I conducted 21 in-person interviews with journalists and editors in two newsrooms, SCTV and Liputan6.com. A total of 12 participants were interviewed online, and around nine hours and 15 minutes of recorded material were produced. The total length of each in-person and online interview is around 45 minutes, with the longest being 60 minutes and the shortest 30 minutes. The online interviews were conducted via audio-visual interfaces, and I also forged intensive communications with the journalist participants by exchanging text messages via messaging services and telephone conversations to address the research questions. Thus, although online interviews rely on technology, these interviews are just as sufficient as one-on-one in-person interviews as I establish relationships and curate discussions with participants.

Despite shifting to the online method, I used the same structured questions prepared for the face-to-face interviews and addressed the same research questions. As the ethnography emphasises open-ended questions, these online interviews were also conducted as semi-structured interviews by giving open-ended questions to the participants, allowing me to probe, clarify, and follow up on participants' responses. All semi-structured or in-depth interviews, both online and face-to-face, were digitally recorded with the consent of all the participants. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian as it is the first language of the interviewees and the researcher. These interviews were then transcribed verbatim as it is helpful to have an actual account of what participants say and how. Despite maintaining the originality and preciseness of their answers, the recorded interviews allowed the transcription of interview data for closer analysis. It ended with 140 pages of documentation, transcripts, and notes.

The most common technique for selecting the sample in an ethnography study is to rely on the ethnographer's preference and judgement. This study used criterion-based

selection as proposed by LeCompte and Schensul (2010) to determine the most appropriate characteristics that fit with this research. The criterion-based selection ensured that participants had relevant and substantial experience in the field of journalism, which is crucial for this study. The consideration is not the question of representativeness per se but whether the subjects have significant information or experience in their role or relevant expertise and whether their responses are rich enough to help answer the research questions. By selecting individuals from various roles within the newsroom, the research captures a comprehensive view of the practices and challenges faced by media professionals at different levels of the hierarchy. This diversity in perspectives is essential to understand the broader implications of the findings.

The key unit of analysis for this research project is journalists. I selected participants and directly contacted reporters, camera persons, and video journalists, as well as those at the top managerial level, such as news managers and chief editors, who mostly work in the newsroom. The length of working experience of a journalist participant ranges from two to 25 years. The table below describes the participants involved in semi-structured interviews. Participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Table 3.4 Participants' Job Titles and Years of Experience

Name of the Newsroom	Participants (pseudonym)	Job Title	Experience
SCTV	Rey	Deputy Chief Editor	18+years
	Dinno	Executive Producer	23+years
	Carlo	Executive Producer	16+years
	Cinta	Senior Producer	15+years
	Dede	Senior Producer	15+years
	Alex	Field Producer	24+years
	Karunia	Producer	24+years
	Jacob	Producer	17+years
	Ferdinand	Producer	15+years
	Indira	Manager (News Gathering)	25+years
	Sonny	Coordinator of Assignment Editor	23+years
		Assignment Editor	22+years
	Nadia	Video Journalist	7+years
	Andy	Senior Reporter	10+years
	Mustafa	Reporter	5+years
Diva	Reporter	2,5+years	
Ken	Reporter	2+years	
Renata			

Liputan6.com	Irina Kristi Satrio Nugra Hamzah Edo Tantri Nona Kartini Galang	Chief Editor Deputy Chief Editor Managing Editor (Health) Managing Editor (Multimedia) Managing Editor (Regional) Managing Editor (National) Managing Editor (Entertainment) Presenter Reporter Videographer	18+years 15+years 17+years 14+years 16+years 15+years 17+years 5+years 4+years 4+years
BBC Indonesia	Rosali Ayu Iko Ahmad Dimar Fanno	Head of News Service Deputy Head of News Service Senior Video Journalist Senior Video Journalist Video Journalist Video Journalist	17+years 15+years 18+years 19+years 10+years 7+years

3.3.3 Diaries and Supporting Documents

The secondary data was collected from photos, videos, internal documents such as news bulletin rundowns, and the above primary data sources. The data was intended to capture the changes in journalism routines during the pandemic. This included the news production process, the work within the newsroom when the place changed, and how the objects of the news were altered. I also used online observations (Lupton 2020) of photos, videos, and diaries/journaling for data collection to reveal the journalism practices amidst the pandemic. I asked my participants to describe their activities, feelings, and emotions related to the four main questions. Participants were asked to describe their experiences with the following topics: changing their daily routines, transitioning from working in the newsroom to working from home, utilising technology, and managing relationships with sources.

I initially asked them to keep a journal for two weeks and write in it every day in April 2020. However, since they were still coping with the pandemic and keeping their dedication to daily activities such as journaling was difficult, I did not emphasise the structure but asked for more free-flowing reflection. They produced over 3,000 words of text reflecting on their experiences covering the pandemic and their everyday news routines. Additionally, I asked participants to take pictures and record their activities during news gathering, editorial meetings, and production processes such as editing and broadcasting the news from the gallery. Finally, a total of 65 photos were taken, and 60 minutes of video footage were recorded in newsrooms, studios and galleries. Having provided these

documented images, audio recordings, and journals, I could supply the tangible evidence needed in an ethnographic study.

3.3.4 Field Notes

Field notes were used as one of the main data collection methods in this study as they helped preserve a large amount of data for later analysis. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), field notes are never a complete record of what happened, but they can help capture descriptions and perspectives on interactions. I followed Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) guidance that field notes should be selective and based on the researcher's primary focus. As a result, I kept detailed records of my daily interactions with journalists and my personal experiences and observations, totalling approximately 25 pages or approximately 6,500 words.

3.3.5 Triangulation of Methods

I used triangulation to verify the data I gathered. Triangulation tests the validity of data obtained from various sources, methods, and times (Denzin 2012). Denzin proposed this methodological concept as a tool for qualitative research validation and recommended that the same strategy be used to investigate as many different areas as possible. Ethnography is also routinely built on triangulation alongside other key techniques, such as thick description and reflexivity, to improve the quality of the study (Flick 2018).

This study uses triangulation procedures within and across methods by contrasting material from data collection to ensure the research's validity and clarify the findings. I triangulate my data by checking the data from various sources. The sources include newsroom observations, in-depth interviews and informal conversations. First, interview data was cross-referenced with field notes. After that, the data was compared to informal conversations and documents. The purpose of triangulation, however, in this study is not just to cross-validate data but also to capture distinct dimensions of the same phenomenon. While triangulation improves data quality and the precision of ethnographic findings, it also reduces the negative influence of bias (Fetterman 2010).

3.4 Approaches to Data Analysis

This study gleaned significant raw data through interviews, field notes, and material documents. Following the completion of the data collection process, analysis began with what experts have referred to as “data cleaning,” “data management,” and “cataloguing.” (LeCompte and Schensul 2013, p.51). After organising the data, the next step was to code and label the data. The term “code” refers to a technique for identifying themes in a text, as code describes a word or phrase that summarises or captures the essence of language-based or visual data (Saldaña 2015). From there, data analysis for this study progressed to interpretation, which “involves attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining the patterns, categories, and relationships” (Brewer 2000, p.105).

I used an inductive approach from particulars to general themes to analyse the data, with the researcher providing interpretations of the data’s meaning (Creswell 2018). Thus, the first step in this data analysis was to create initial categories, followed by general themes, to make interpretations of the meaning. To organise the massive amount of data, I initially classified my interviews and field notes into initial coding. For example, I began capturing the details of the newsroom crisis that journalists were experiencing during the lockdown, the impact of social distancing and mobility restrictions, how safe they felt working in the newsroom, and the consequences of leaving the newsroom and working from home, and then developed them as ‘newsroom disruption’ theme. I repeated the process, clustering each category, examining the differences and similarities, and merging the same categories until I arrived at general categories such as ‘news production process’, ‘place reconfiguration’, ‘objects of journalism’, and ‘relationship between journalists and sources; all in the context of the pandemic.

In addition to observations and interviews, I approached the analysis by comparing key news stories from three media organisations as complementary data to enrich my ethnographic study. This involved selectively reviewing and contrasting several current news stories from the programme rundown, the website or their social media to understand differences in news production across the three newsrooms studied. Examining these specific examples provides additional context and further insights into journalistic practices during the pandemic.

3.4.1 Coding and Key Themes

I applied two coding cycles to the data analysis (Saldaña 2015). The first cycle codes developed from initial phases, whereas the second cycle involved “classifying, prioritizing, integrating, synthesizing, abstracting and conceptualizing, and theory building” (Saldaña 2015, p. 58). Therefore, the first coding process in this study was to create initial coding from interviews and observations, which was attributed to it for database structure and overview. After reviewing 55 initial codes (Appendix 2), 15 final codes were identified for further coding, as shown in the table.

Table 3.5 Final Codes

No	Code
1	Describing pandemic and crisis
2	Refers to physical distancing and restricted mobility
3	Defining newsroom disruption
4	Defining news production
5	Refers to news routine
6	Defining professionalism
7	Defining place
8	Place reconfiguration
9	Work from home, refers to online meeting
10	Defining objects, refers to technology
11	Access to technology
12	Innovation, refers to replacing existing technology
13	Discourse gatekeeping
14	Defining news sources and verification
15	Mentioning democracy and press freedom

In the next step, I classified the various subcategories, which were more focused, selective and conceptual than the initial coding to find themes and patterns. As this data analysis used NVivo software program, the categories and subcategories are known as “nodes,” “children,” and “siblings.” With this categorising, coding became systematic and rigorous, quickly finding quotes and identifying patterns and themes to help analyse. Meanwhile, the second coding process involved reviewing the transcripts and extracting discrete excerpts for similarities and differences. Then, codes are grouped into themes to evaluate and revise before writing the narrative based on the theme (Braun and Clarke 2012).

Yet, the coding process in this study was not linear; it was a cyclical process that went from coding to analytic memo writing and then reviewed, revised and refined, which is known as the “coding cycle” (Saldaña 2015) or “spiral” (O’Reilly 2012). According to O’Reilly, ethnographic research is commonly “iterative-inductive,” which indicates that analysis is continual, resembling a spiral process, and researchers attempt to make general assertions from the specific data (p.181). In practice, the data analysis in this study was not solely inductive, “giving voice” to the data and allowing for further theoretical development, but also used the themes drawn from existing literature (Linneberg and Korsgaard 2019, p.264). The process between induction and deduction code is the “cyclical and interactive process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation used by ethnographers” (LeCompte and Schensul 2013, p.65). Thus, the emerging analysis requires a combination of inductive and deductive coding as the technique offers a flexible approach to the empirical framework and is suitable for the analysis of this study.

To interpret the themes for analysis, I refined the coding first and then transformed it. During this procedure, some codes went through multiple rounds of the coding cycle, including being combined or even being eliminated as initial codes. For example, based on my data identification, I excluded “trauma” and “post-trauma disorder syndrome” (PTSD) but kept “stress and anxiety” and “emotions” from the psychological impact of the COVID-19 theme. This identification was obtained through NVivo coding methods that relied on participants’ words. Process coding, which refers to what participants do, was another method used in this analysis (Brewer 2000 p.110). These two method codes were beneficial in providing detailed descriptions of the phenomena in the findings.

Even though there is no consensus for identifying key themes in data, this study employs a common strategy of taking notes to assess how frequently specific codes appear. The more frequently it appears, the more open the pattern becomes to interpretation. In this case, research questions are critical for driving coding and analysis and focusing on the final written result. However, in order to conduct further analysis, the frequency of occurrence of specific codes in relation to research questions must be determined. The appearance of a specific code more than a few times could be a coincidence or random chance. Nonetheless, frequency is an important indicator of a potential theme as the emergence patterns may lead to theory (O’Reilly 2012).

3.4.2 Ethics

This research, with Ethics ID no 29555, was approved by the Social Science and Humanities Research Ethics Committee at Bournemouth University, including an amendment to include online observation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Research ethics are guided by the Bournemouth University Research Ethics Code of Practice (2019), which emphasises the importance of considering ethical aspects while conducting journalism and media projects.

In ethnographic research, informed consent is essential as the most fundamental of all ethical norms (Brennen 2013). Therefore, before journalists decided to participate in this ethnographic study, I provided them with detailed information about the research project and its implications. All interviewees were provided information on the topic's context and the research aims. After that, I sought informed consent to conduct my research and had participants sign a consent form. I also mentioned to the participants that they must consent voluntarily and withdraw from the study at any time (Iphofen and Tolich 2018; Mero-Jaffe 2011). To inform participants that the observations were conducted, all chief editors announced in meetings and emailed all newsroom teams.

In this study, ethics is demonstrated by selecting participants to reduce the risk of potential harm occurring to those individuals, groups, or organisations (Mero-Jaffe 2011). The potential factor that could harm journalists and editors participating in this research is that the information shared could be interpreted as critical of the media organisation for which they work. Therefore, the participants in this study were kept anonymous and pseudonymous. Identities and distinguishing features indicated in the interview transcript were omitted to ensure that participants could not be identified from the text.

3.4.3 Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the practice of reflecting on how the researcher's background, experiences, and perspectives may influence the research process and findings (see Davies 2008; Fook and Gardner 2007). Fook and Gardner (2007, p. 29) have pointed out that "knowledge is also mediated by our own subjectivity", meaning that the researcher's experiences play a significant role in choosing and interpreting research. According to Davies (2008, p.4), reflexivity refers to how research products are affected by the personnel and process of doing research. In ethnography, the researcher is part of the research conducted, as, during fieldwork, he/she establishes interaction with people and becomes immersed in the society.

My reflexivity is based on the belief that various factors influence knowledge, including personal experiences and background. This understanding of reflexivity highlights the importance of acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity and potential biases in the research process. As a researcher, it is necessary to maintain an objective distance in order to ensure our integrity and to have the authority to decide which data to analyse and how to interpret the results. This is not only a matter of principle but also a practical necessity. Paterson and Zoellner (2014) point out that they warn of the potential loss of objectivity and an increased researcher effect that may arise due to intimacy with research subjects.

While doing this research, I needed to be conscious of my relationship with my participants, as it could potentially impact my research. Batabyal's (2007) study highlights how his past experience as a journalist and professional contacts helped him gain access to television newsrooms and connect with journalists. Similarly, I was fortunate enough to have access to newsrooms during the height of the pandemic. However, I must also acknowledge that the result of this access may have created certain biases or limitations in my research.

I have a long history of working in the media industry as a journalist. I began my career as a reporter for a national newspaper in Indonesia and then transitioned to seven different television stations. Progressing through various roles, I became a producer, executive producer, vice-chief editor, and editor-in-chief. Over the years, I have also worked in newsrooms across different news organisations in Asia, contributing to establishing TV stations on various platforms: terrestrial, cable, satellite, and network TV.

As I was responsible for starting up five TV channels from scratch, I recruited hundreds of journalists for different TV newsrooms. Many of my recruits, previously part of my newsroom teams, work in various newsrooms across Indonesia. This includes three newsrooms that I studied. I did not, however, intentionally choose them because of our past relationship. Even though if I had chosen different news organisations, I would have likely met former team members. I am concerned that the participants in my study may have affected the accuracy of my data collection. As they were familiar with me, their responses and behaviour could have introduced bias into my findings.

Furthermore, returning to the newsroom may have created a more comfortable atmosphere for me as a researcher, potentially leading to confirmation bias when collecting the data. To minimise bias, I took several steps to ensure the accuracy and reliability of my data collection. Firstly, I maintained a strict protocol throughout the study, providing clear instructions to all participants. Second, I ensure consistency in data collection procedures. Additionally, I conducted a thorough data analysis, starting with eliminating some

expressions in coding. These measures aimed to enhance the objectivity and validity of my research, counteracting any potential biases that may have arisen from the familiar environment.

Chapter 4

Routine Practices in Disrupted Newsrooms

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the routine practices within newsrooms that were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis shows that a television station and two digital media in this study responded differently to the crisis. To understand the influencing aspects and the changes in routine practices, this chapter addresses the first research question: How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact journalism routines and change news-making?

Based on an analysis of three news organisations, including a television broadcaster (SCTV) and two digital newsrooms (Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia), it was evident that newsrooms experienced significant disruptions in their daily routines. While the disruption forced journalists to adapt and change their routines, in some cases, newsrooms preferred to maintain their regular routines. The nature of the newsroom, the culture and the organisational aspects determined the way the newsroom approached the routine adjustment. In this regard, the changing practices of journalism align with the perspective of news sociology (Schudson 2005), which asserts that journalism practices are influenced by organisational, cultural, economic, and political factors. These findings highlight crucial distinctions in routine journalism practices in the three observed newsrooms and the evolution of newsroom culture, reflecting changes in all aspects of news sociology.

The chapter starts by examining routines in disrupted newsrooms. I observed that each newsroom adjusted its routine in distinctive ways to establish new patterns of work. This section sheds light on how newsrooms navigated news gathering, responding to an unprecedented surge in the demand for information. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant increase in public interest for information, leading to a substantial effort in producing news content. The chapter then delves into discussions concerning the responsibilities of journalists within society to disseminate news while confronting the challenges of social distancing and lockdowns. It explores how journalists, who are kind of ‘essential workers’, employed coping strategies and developed mechanisms for maintaining some routines. This section also illuminates the resilience of journalists in producing news content while ensuring safety and sustaining their work. Later, this chapter explores the

critical role of communication and the consequences that arise when traditional face-to-face interactions are replaced by online communication. Finally, it presents a portrayal of newsrooms in the context of developing news creation. The discussion considers implications for teamwork, collaboration, and the potential shift in journalistic culture.

4.2 Adjusted Routines in Disrupted Newsrooms

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, journalists experienced a transformative period as they had to adjust their routines while maintaining journalistic standards in their disrupted newsrooms. This research revealed that journalists in three studied newsrooms, SCTV, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia, adapted their routine practices differently. Every platform had its own routine practices in response to the crisis, and each adapted them accordingly based on the needs and demands of its audience. For example, the routine practices for presenting current news remained evident even during crises, as demonstrated in the SCTV newsroom. During the first year of the pandemic in Indonesia in December 2020, a crisis unfolded when five volcanoes erupted, two of which had a severe impact. Multiple crises were unfolding at the same time. I made notes in one editorial meeting during my fieldwork.

The SCTV team decided to dispatch a crew to cover a massive volcanic eruption. The assignment editors agreed to arrange for a reporter and cameraman to head to the disaster area, approximately two hours by plane from Jakarta, Indonesia's capital. When the meeting wrapped up, the news manager who had led the meeting stated, "We chose to send the team to cover this big story because we have the proper equipment, and more importantly, we have to provide live reporting as on-site witnesses with a good presenter. We'll do as usual as TV journalists." (Fieldnotes, 2 December 2020).

In the case of the volcano disaster, SCTV dispatched personnel from Jakarta's headquarters to the crisis zones, although they had regional journalists in this area. The editorial meeting determined that television required high-quality visuals and could not rely on local reporters or contributors with basic equipment. SCTV took a similar approach in January 2021, assigning a team to cover a domestic flight accident in which all 62 passengers died. The findings correspond to Tuchman's (1973) study on "routinising the unexpected", which approaches routines by classifying news typification. SCTV treated volcanic eruptions

and plane crashes as important stories, as they qualified as hard news, spot news, and developing news. Hard news is a “quickenning urgency” because it is timely, and urgent hard news demands speed, especially in gathering facts and meeting deadlines. “If journalists do not work quickly, the hard news story will be obsolete before it can be distributed during the day’s broadcast” (Tuchman 1973, p. 118). It also categorises spot news and developing news, which pertain to allocating resources according to the technology used. Spot news because it is allocating resources and dealing with technology. Spot news events are unscheduled; they appear suddenly and must be processed quickly. While developing news concerns “emergent situations”. Tuchman’s (1973) study also used plane crashes as spot news and developing news examples.

By sending the team to the event location, SCTV positioned itself as an eyewitness, establishing credibility and authenticity. They stressed the proximity, assuring viewers that the news was accurately reported (see Hallin 1986; Zelizer 2017). In line with this, news organisations prioritise stories that resonate with national audiences by framing news events through geographical, cultural, and emotional proximity. This often involves domesticating disaster news by highlighting national relief efforts and relatable victims (Pantti 2018; p.2). SCTV continued to send their crew to gather news from the location. SCTV rundown⁹ showed that around 70-80% of news content was still gathered from the field during the early pandemic between April and June 2020.

Television is considered one of the most important forms of media due to its unparalleled reach, impact, and versatility (see Carlson 2017; Cushion 2015). SCTV continued to dispatch reporters to the field, as their footage archives had become invaluable visual resources. This not only confirmed the professional issues that arise with the use of amateur images in the mainstream news media but also highlighted the significance of first-hand reporting in covering disasters in global and national contexts, as Sjøvaag’s (2011) study. On the other hand, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia took different approaches to adjust their routines. Research suggests that the elements of routines vary across contexts among media organisations (see Becker and Vlad 2009). During editorial meetings, both digital newsrooms decided they did not necessarily need the same routine of being present on location. As the impact of the pandemic was unpredictable, they preferred to mobilise their local stringers and freelancers to gather the news. “Visuals are crucial, but we’ve worked

⁹ Rundown or line up, according to broadcast news term is *a chronological outline or order of stories or segments to be used in a newscast*. This is the producer's blueprint for the newscast.

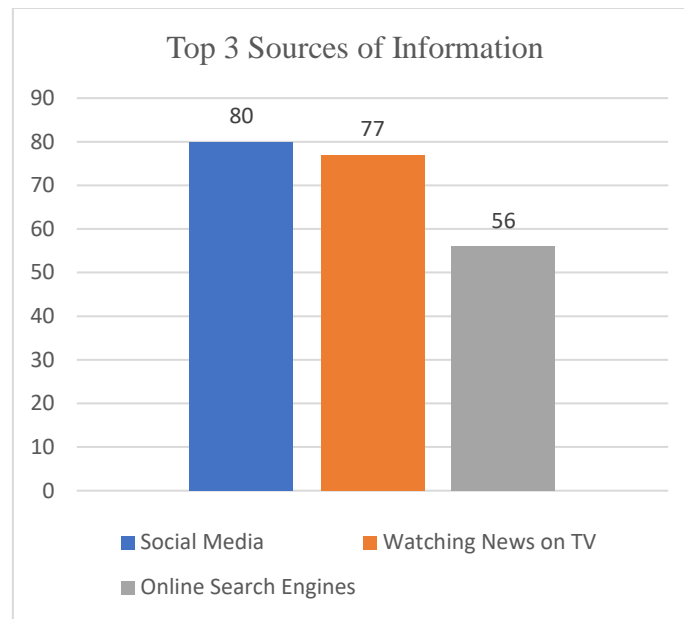
with local stringers for quite some time, and they are familiar with our standards,” Iko, a senior video journalist at BBC explained.

In separate cases, SCTV and Liputan6.com followed their routines to respond to audience demand. During the early stages of the pandemic in 2020, it was unsurprising that COVID-19 stories took centre stage in the news agenda. The pandemic led to a remarkable increase in media readership and viewership around the world (e.g., Broersma and Swart 2022; Kalogeropoulos et al. 2020; Schumann et al. 2022). To respond to audience needs, from February to May 2020, over 90% of the news stories from TV rundowns and the web line-ups in three observed newsrooms were related to the pandemic. This validates Schudson’s (2005) theory that in exceptional situations, such as a threat to human life, the audience tends to follow the news as a critical activity and inactive citizens become monitoring citizens. In this context, individuals who typically show little interest in current or public affairs found themselves re-engaging with the news.

Due to the exponential increase in demand for information during the outbreak, SCTV management increased the airtime for news programmes to meet the higher demand. In June 2020, SCTV extended their newscast airtime. The morning bulletin was extended from one hour to one and a half hours, while the noon bulletin was increased from thirty minutes to one hour for midday news coverage. Rey, the Deputy Chief Editor of SCTV, stated, “Our programming team allocated timeslots to extend our broadcast schedules to provide updated information to our audience”.

Indonesian television gained high ratings at the beginning of the pandemic as audiences turned back to mainstream media for news, similar to surveys of the Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel in the United States, 2020. Studies on television also found that audience viewing surged during the pandemic (e.g., Cushion et al. 2022; Morani et al. 2022). In Indonesia, television was one of the audience’s main preferences for updating the news on the coronavirus. According to Nielsen’s study in April 2020, the most accessed sources for Indonesian audiences to keep up with the latest news about COVID-19 were social media (80%), TV news (77%), and online search engines (56%). The figure below shows the news sources in Indonesia that cover COVID-19.

Figure 4.1 News Sources in Indonesia During the Pandemic, April 2020



Source: Nielsen (2020)

Some SCTV journalists raised concerns about the policy to increase the airtime during the crisis. In interviews and informal conversations with journalists, some voiced concerns about their schedule and safety when required to perform ‘normal’ work under unusual circumstances. Within a messaging platform, their WhatsApp group, SCTV and Liputan6.com journalists occasionally challenged the decision to operate normally, leading to tensions among their peers. “Our daily schedule is not expected in an uncertain environment. First, we have to adjust our daily activities because of the pandemic, and now we have to adjust again because of the additional broadcast time,” a reporter complained about the change in their routines.

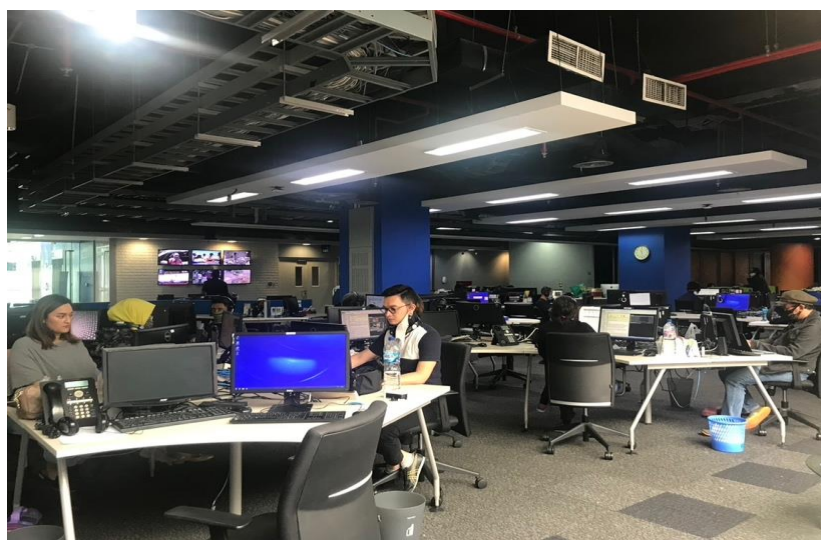
SCTV’s News Gathering Manager, Indira, wrote the following participant diary entry regarding the additional airtime:

Monday, 1 June 2020: At the senior news meeting, we were informed that the programming department wanted to add an extra hour to the news programme because people want to know what’s happening with the COVID-19 pandemic. I shared this with the assignment editor’s WhatsApp group, and everyone had the same concerns, especially because our team is small since we have to work in separate shifts. Once some teams do live reporting, we might not have enough people to cover

more stuff. Plus, we can't hold the reporter in the field for too long; we must ensure they are safe.

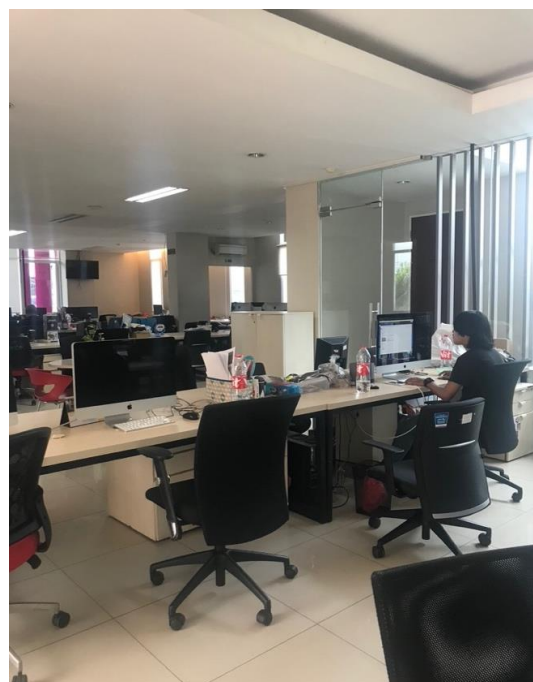
Eventually, journalists accepted an hour of additional airtime and returned to their routines. One producer said, "The show must go on." While several television journalists questioned the management's decision to add airtime, others consider it their responsibility to inform viewers who stay home and watch TV. This routine behaviour comprises a set of practices that journalists adhere to for their professional duties and to maintain their professional status (e.g., Deuze 2008; Le Cam et al. 2019; Tandoc Jr. and Duffy 2019). Some TV journalists believed that television served as a final source of clarification for any information the audience received. Despite dealing with the gathering team and facing protests from some reporters, Indira, the News Gathering Manager, managed to justify management policy to add the on-air time, "It's okay if the audience wants to watch things online, but when they seek main news or, in this case, require final confirmation, it is on us (television). Television is still the go-to source". Earlier research suggests that legacy media, particularly television, appears to have regained some of its journalistic authority during this global crisis, demonstrating credibility through audience preferences and trust levels (Casero-Ripollés 2020, p. 9). The photo below shows that the SCTV newsroom maintained normal routines during the pandemic.

Figure 4.2 Newsroom During the Pandemic, August 2020



Meanwhile, Liputan6.com, the digital newsroom, adjusted its routine after the Indonesian government announced large-scale restrictions on 16 March 2020. The Chief Editor, Irina, explained that Liputan6.com closed its office a week later: “Our initial decision was to decrease news output by around 5%. However, we resumed operations during a week and noticed that the demand for news had increased drastically.” Due to the high traffic volume and the public’s growing interest in the coronavirus, Liputan6.com opted to resume its regular volume of news content. Irina said the team could still produce news without covering events from the field. The nature of online news allows them to create content by contacting sources by phone. “We did not go to the field frequently, but we have to keep contact with our sources as we have to keep the certain target stories,” an editor explained. Thus, the number of articles could remain the same as before the pandemic, and sometimes, according to Irina, it could even be higher, but without specifying the exact details. The photo below shows that a few editorial people came to the office to produce news content.

Figure 4.3 Liputan6.com Newsroom During the Pandemic, March 2021



This study identified two factors that influenced Liputan6.com and SCTV’s decision to expand news coverage: journalistic professionalism and the business dynamics of the news industry. Journalists, serving as essential workers, were charged with providing up-to-date

information on the evolving challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Simultaneously, the business aspects of the industry came into play. The Deputy Chief Editor of SCTV, Rey, acknowledged that viewers were returning to television and admitted that the company aimed to captivate audiences to boost ratings and draw more advertisers.

Similarly, online media platforms pursued viewer engagement and sought to secure more advertisers to generate revenue. SCTV and Liputan6.com are prominent players in the Indonesian media industry. Both news leaders admitted that their companies attempted to secure a significant audience share in an environment marked by intense rivalry among media organisations. They also emphasised the significance of television ratings and online media traffic as vital components of their business strategy. Whether in Indonesia or worldwide, mainstream media is engaged in a continual struggle to survive amidst intense competition and the growth of social media. The pandemic has worsened financial difficulties, advertising revenues, and income losses (e.g., Olsen et al. 2020; Susilawati et al. 2020). My findings, however, have contrasted with a separate study conducted during the pandemic, which showed a decline in news content as a response to the coronavirus outbreak. For example, Santos and Mare (2021) found that some print media organisations drastically reduced their print run due to lockdown restrictions.

In this case, BBC Indonesia ensured that information was disseminated during those challenging times without placing excessive pressure on content production. While many media organisations grappled with the need to generate more content during the outbreak, BBC Indonesia, a part of the London office operating as a public service, focused on delivering content. During the pandemic, the BBC World Service proposed 382 post-closures as part of savings, including the radio service in Indonesia, as the BBC had to adapt to meet the challenges of a changing media landscape (Bushby 2022). Nevertheless, in Indonesia, Ayu, the Deputy News Service at BBC Indonesia, explained that the BBC Indonesia team focused on content.

Our guiding principle is to inform the audience of credible information, especially in an uncertain situation like this pandemic. We connect with our audience through different formats, but the important is to make sure that the content is comprehensive. Sometimes, we may hold the story if it is not completed and only publish it once it's fully developed. This is the best practice to keep and engage with our audience.

The BBC Indonesia team left their newsroom and set up news routines remotely. The picture below shows the empty newsroom of BBC Indonesia in March 2020, during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 4.4 BBC Indonesia Newsroom During the Pandemic, March 2020



In response to the pandemic, all journalists in three observed newsrooms developed coping strategies to adapt and establish new daily routines. While experienced journalists quickly adapted to the situation, others lacking experience were less resilient than their colleagues. This will be discussed further in the following sections.

4.3 Coping Strategies: Developing Mechanisms During the Pandemic

Journalists at the three selected newsrooms coped with the pandemic crisis differently, depending on their experience and training. This study found that those with prior experience in crisis reporting and who had undergone safety training were more likely to have demonstrated resilience and navigated the challenges posed by the pandemic. Conversely, journalists lacking adequate safety training struggled to cope with the uncertainties and risks associated with reporting during the outbreak.

The main challenge in maintaining the news routine during the pandemic was that journalists were not just dealing with the crisis as an external factor; they could also become victims themselves. Mustafa, a senior television reporter at SCTV, expressed his experience during the first few weeks of the coronavirus outbreak: “At first, I thought it was just another breaking news story, but it turned out it was not just a piece of news. I was a bit shocked because it also affected us as journalists.” The fear of being part of the story concerned Diva, a TV reporter assigned to high-transmission areas. “It was fine at first, but after continuously covering the coronavirus, I began to worry.” Diva was one of the earliest journalists to contract the virus when public awareness of coronavirus was still limited. Since then, undergoing tests has become a routine part of her life. To compare, in Hoak’s (2021) study, female journalists and those who were younger and less experienced felt significantly more stress associated with pandemic coverage.

During health crises, journalists are forced to adhere to their normal coverage routines and be on the frontline in high-risk exposure areas, endangering themselves. The nature of the journalist’s profession inherently exposes them to various risks, but the pandemic heightened those anxieties (see Jukes et al., 2022). The invisible threat of the virus adds stress to an already dangerous and demanding job. Similar to Šimunjak’s (2022) work, journalists experienced a range of negative emotions during the pandemic, with anxiety and frustration being among the most commonly reported ones.

While some journalists in this study demonstrated resilience by accessing high-risk exposure zones to cover certain cases that required on-location reporting, others worried about their safety and chose not to go to the field. Studies during the pandemic found journalists were also not immune to the emotional toll of covering dangerous and traumatic events (see Feinstein 2020; Newman 2020). The fear of contracting the virus becomes an ever-present concern as they venture into crowded spaces, healthcare facilities, and pandemic hotspots. For example, a Liputan6.com photographer initially refused the assignments. Irina, the Chief Editor of Liputan6.com, mentioned that the senior team needed to convince him and ensure his safety by carefully selecting the events they were required to cover. Irina explained:

I get my team’s concerns; this is an uncertain situation. We often put ourselves at risk by being close to infected individuals or working in high-risk areas. But we can’t simply stop reporting the news. It’s our duty and responsibility to keep the public

informed, and we are trying to adapt as quickly as possible to ensure our team's safety so we can fulfil our obligations.

During my observations, I found that one of the most intense tensions was between television producers and reporters when a young reporter refused to be assigned to create a story from a hospital. After a day's delay, the editorial team asked the doctor and hospital staff to help film the video and use the visuals from the hospital. Dinno, an executive producer of SCTV, explained, "Our concern is how we can continue to create news updates without putting our field reporters in danger. Reporters must understand that sometimes we are in the midst of a crisis while reporting, and as journalists, we must find ways to gather the news story." He mentioned that adaptability would be crucial because production constraints would be an issue until the pandemic ends.

For junior journalists, in particular, covering the pandemic presented a unique set of challenges. Although journalists affirmed that they were dedicated to fulfilling their duty, they sometimes worried about their own safety as they witnessed the devastating impact first-hand. For instance, some reporters at SCTV and Liputan6.com feared that they might infect their families with the virus when returning home after reporting news from the field. Meanwhile, a television reporter, Ken, expressed her doubts about her safety. "I was initially confused. Should I wear the masks while doing live reports? How should I follow the safety SOP (Standard Operation Procedure) in the field?" All senior editors from three observed newsrooms mentioned that they do not always possess detailed knowledge of the field, so they urged reporters to cover the news sensibly, such as by adhering to social distancing, avoiding large gatherings, and maintaining cleanliness. They stressed that they had rigorously adopted new health protocols and implemented specific safety policies for both journalists and interviewees.

The debate about coverage on locations was intense in the SCTV newsroom during the early stages of the pandemic in 2020. Sometimes, there were debates between the producers and the assignment editors as the producers demanded the latest and updated news from every place while the assignment editors had to assess how dangerous a place is to cover the news. Sometimes, the debate was between assignment editors and the reporters, as some reporters were reluctant to go into the field and tended to avoid some assignments. SCTV assignment editor Nadia recollected that communication with reporters was incredibly intense during the first two months of the pandemic, which was from March to April 2020. However, some young journalists looked for challenges regardless of their own safety. While

senior reporters judged certain areas unsafe, their younger colleagues showed no hesitation in going to locations that the more experienced reporters considered red zones. “Young reporters seek unique experiences, strive to be eyewitnesses, and attempt to accomplish more,” Nadia elucidated. A TV journalist and cameraperson said, “We just want to have an experience. It feels good to get more stories when we are close to the events.” Another digital reporter explained, “I want to cover different stories. I got bored with the same ones every day.”

The debates regarding journalists’ safety concerns and where to cover mainly occurred at SCTV because they kept sending reporters to the field. In other newsrooms, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia, safety and mental impact problems arose, although they did not regularly send the team to the field. Journalists working from home were also vulnerable to experiencing anxiety (e.g., Irawanto et al. 2021; Robinson et al. 2021). Nona, a presenter for Liputan6.com, admitted that she felt anxious and lonely while working alone. A senior journalist, Kristi found it challenging to balance her well-being with her busy work schedule as vice editor-in-chief at Liputan6.com. “My plate is quite full to manage the job from home, which is usually easier to do in person at the office. Dealing with personal problems while working from home can be stressful.”

While some journalists shared the same feelings, some of them tended to ignore their emotions for various reasons. For example, a junior SCTV reporter was cautious not to appear vulnerable, stating, “To be honest, sometimes I worry, but I don’t want my assignment editors to think I’m a mediocre journalist.” Another reporter at Liputan6.com neglected his emotions as he felt fortunate to retain his job when other journalists were losing theirs. Meanwhile, a video journalist at BBC Indonesia repressed his feelings and remained committed to upholding his professional work since it was his obligation.

The findings revealed that journalists had varying approaches to dealing with the pandemic. Not every journalist was suited to be a “crisis journalist”. With varying levels of experience in crisis coverage, they each had different ways of dealing with these challenging situations. Studies on Indonesian journalists also suggested that journalists had different coping strategies when it came to the pandemic. The pandemic highlighted the resilience of Indonesian journalists, who were able to collaborate with each other to strengthen their community’s resilience (Parahita 2021). Conversely, a study found that journalists (Kalaloi, 2023) who lacked institutional or structural support were more vulnerable. However, it further emphasises that certain journalists employed by reputable media companies were not vulnerable in this way. Given the reputation of the three newsrooms under examination,

vulnerabilities mainly stemmed from their experience in crisis management and preparedness in handling crises, including a lack of training in crisis and safety procedures.

4.3.1 Lack of Safety Training

The lack of safety training and journalists' experience may have contributed to their inability to handle crises. According to the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ), safety training, also known as hazardous or hostile environment training, is intended to guide journalists in assessing and mitigating risks to ensure their safety. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous news organisations have had to send journalists to the field.

Journalists sometimes encountered difficulties reporting the story due to self-isolation and needed to venture into the field. In this situation, news organisations were confronted with a significant safety challenge. Three observed news organisations began implementing increased safety precautions for their field-based journalists: reporters, video journalists and photographers. The news chiefs from the three examined newsrooms clarified that even when their journalists were required to go into the field during the pandemic, they had to exercise caution, such as employing safety equipment. They restricted their teams from entering high-risk exposure areas, particularly hospitals and public centres, without protective gear whilst on duty. “We have to prioritise our team safety and ensure that we do not compromise it,” Ayu, the Deputy of News Service BBC Indonesia, said. Likewise, compromised safety can have personal and social consequences, as threats may affect job performance (see Slavtcheva-Petkova et al. 2023).

Although the safety policy was straightforward to implement at the headquarters in Jakarta, its execution proved more complex for regional journalists due to external factors. For instance, Hamzah, the Regional News Coordinator at Liputan6.com, recounted that during the early stages of the pandemic, some central and provincial government authorities continued to hold press conferences. These events drew many journalists despite the police-enforced ban on gatherings announced in March 2020. Local government officials often guided journalists into hospitals or airports to cover their events. Hamzah explained the dilemma:

The news gathering system is not like here (the headquarters). Things work differently outside Jakarta. We do not have those scheduled diary meetings; we typically coordinate through WhatsApp groups. Our regional reporters are always

looking for news in their areas and send it our way. They tend to prioritise news quantity, and during the pandemic, they get caught up in the number of stories and forget about staying safe. We always remind them to adjust to their normal job.

At SCTV, Indira, the News Gathering Manager, stated that their reporters were urged to take precautionary measures to protect themselves from the virus while covering news in the field. This was because neither the producers nor the assignment editors were familiar with the on-site specifics. They worked in smaller teams or had their time in the field reduced for safety reasons. For instance, SCTV created an A/B team system, with teams working at different times to avoid having too many people in the office at the same time. They also established new operation posts in a different studio from the headquarters for the news gathering team. Sonny, the Assignment Editor at SCTV, told me, “During the pandemic, we’re trying to reduce the number of crew members in the field. We’re working with shorter deadlines outside the office.” Renata, a reporter, said that before the pandemic, she visited two to three locations per day, but during the pandemic, she only went to one location and returned to the office earlier than before. “Now we are only assigned to one place. However, we might be asked to create scripts with two or three different angles afterwards. It's fine, as long as we’re safe.”

In another case, Karunia, a senior video journalist at SCTV, continued to cover news stories that were not thoroughly reported in daily news but deserved a feature story. With over 20 years of experience, he went alone into the hospital’s dedicated COVID-19 treatment ward, crafting a story about the first nurse to contract the virus. He also interviewed COVID survivors from outside their homes, while daily news only covered press conferences by health officials. Furthermore, he visited cemeteries and COVID-19 patient shelters. As a result, he received a cautionary notice from the technical department, as they had agreed not to bring equipment into areas with potential virus spread. Karunia said he received support from his manager and the editorial team. He explained:

I understand the safety and health concerns. I have a lot of field experience in different situations. For me, it’s important to connect with the audience by sharing interesting stories. This not only gives them more than just the daily news but also keeps them interested in our weekly feature program.

Several reporters admitted that they lacked experience in covering crises. The majority of them had not received sufficient personal safety training, even though their daily work exposed them to potential danger before the pandemic. In terms of safety training, based on my conversations with SCTV and Liputan6.com journalists, their company has not yet established a comprehensive training system. They only provide brief training sessions for select journalists assigned to specific coverage, such as conflict zones. This approach contrasts with that of BBC Indonesia. With a small team at BBC Indonesia, several of their members had already undergone safety training.

Studies in Asia found most journalists do not receive adequate safety training (e.g., Jamil 2018; Mardaras et al. 2017). Research has highlighted the importance of safety training courses and manuals to ensure the safety of journalists, especially in conflict zones or dangerous areas. International training programs generally focus on physical safety issues, while national or regional manuals are more practice-oriented and primarily take a journalistic approach to safety (Høiby and Garrido 2020). At SCTV and Liputan6.com, journalists felt that media organisations did not do much to set guidelines for conflict reporting or provide regular safety training. In a discussion, a group of TV reporters mentioned they wanted more opportunities to gain experience in covering crises.

4.3.2 Resilient Journalism: Surviving in Crises

In the three observed newsrooms, journalists emphasised that their resilience and ability to survive as professionals were shaped significantly by their coverage of diverse crisis stories. As Indonesian news is often dominated by crisis stories, including conflicts and natural disasters, journalists in the country have developed unique coping mechanisms to deal with such challenging situations. For example, Indonesia has seen its fair share of conflicts and explosive group violence, recognised as national, regional, and local patterns of collective unrest (e.g., Bertrand 2004, 2008; Miller 2008). Senior journalists recalled being on the front lines covering one of Jakarta's major riots. This tumultuous event claimed the lives of at least 1,000 people and led to the downfall of the New Order regime, culminating in President Suharto's resignation on May 21, 1998¹⁰ (Bertrand, 2004, 2008; Varshney et al., 2008).

¹⁰ The May 1998 riots in Jakarta, Indonesia, marked a period of extensive civil unrest and violence, mainly centred in the capital city. Triggered by economic and political turmoil, exacerbated by the Asian financial crisis, demonstrations erupted in every city, calling for a more democratic governance system. The movement gained momentum as students voiced their concerns and students emerged as key protagonists in the protests, pressing for an end to authoritarian rule and demanding increased political transparency. The May 1998 riots

Reflecting on their experiences, some senior journalists from SCTV described the chaos they witnessed. “It was one of those unforgettable moments in our career. We witnessed a large demonstration that escalated into violent clashes between students and the police. We saw rampant rioting, looting, and the destruction of hundreds of stores. It was an absolutely horrible experience,” they recounted. A few of them also covered another major conflict during the separatist civil war in Aceh, which claimed thousands of lives (Miller, 2008; Zeccola, 2011). Meanwhile, some journalists said they gained first-hand experience by being sent to various local conflict areas. A study in Indonesia (Barron et al., 2009) found that the nature and impact of local conflicts in Indonesia differ across districts and provinces.

The journalists of the three newsrooms I studied have continually had to adapt to various obstacles, hindrances, disruptions, and interferences. According to them, crisis conflicts have declined since the reformation era (1998-2005), but they have continued to encounter natural disaster crisis coverage often. Priester (2016) identified a profile of disasters in Indonesia as geological, hydrological, and biological hazards, in addition to other natural and man-made hazards. Natural disasters and catastrophes, for example, are frequently featured in the daily news. Earthquakes and tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, mass flooding, and landslides are just a few examples of everyday news items.

This study discovered that senior journalists across all three news organisations endeavoured to maintain their resilience as they adapted to their daily routines. Iko, a senior video journalist at BBC Indonesia, stated that their previous experience with covering crisis events taught them how to handle such situations. Similarly, some editors on Liputan6.com said that although they were initially shocked, they had covered many crises before and knew how to manage their teams. The Health Managing Editor at Liputan6.com, Satrio, mentioned that no one was prepared for a crisis like a coronavirus pandemic, but he convinced his team to learn one step ahead from non-health journalists how to handle this crisis. “I use all my network, talk to them, read and study about this pandemic, so I can lead my team to explain this crisis for us, and then we can share the accurate news for our readers”. On the other hand, Hamzah, one of the editors responsible for managing news contributors and freelancers for Liputan6.com across all 38 provinces, claimed that his team’s resilience came from their daily experiences in the field, covering a wide range of crisis stories. However, it raised

also marked by widespread violence targeted at the Chinese-Indonesian ethnic minority, as well as their businesses and properties, and continue to be a delicate national issue. As of now, there has been no criminal investigation, no prosecution of those responsible, and no restitution for the victims of the May 1998 riots. (Himawan et al. 2022; Pattiradjawane 2000; Siegel 1988).

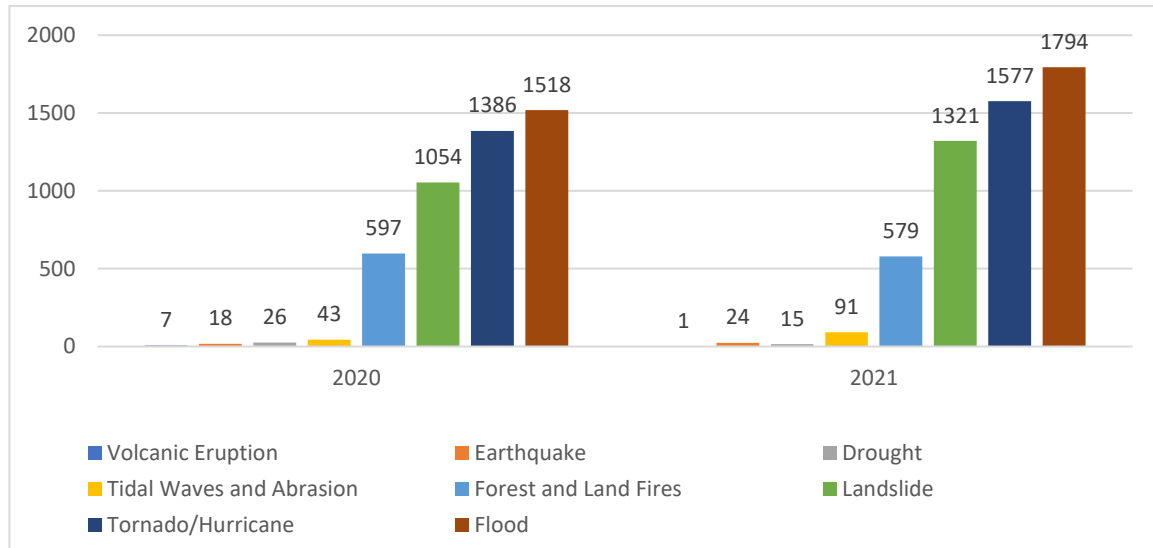
questions about the extent of their preparedness, as most journalists may have lacked safety training, potentially impacting their well-being in challenging situations.

Many countries have experienced one of these disasters at some point. However, Indonesia has to deal with all of them frequently. The profile of disaster risks in Indonesia shows that:

The archipelagic country of Indonesia is one of the world's most natural disaster-prone countries in the world. Around 129 active volcanoes must be closely monitored due to the continuous threat of eruption and earthquakes. Indonesia also faces regular landslides, droughts, wildfires and floods (Priester, 2016).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian National Disaster Management Agency recorded 4,650 natural disasters in 2020 and 5,042 cases in 2021 across the country. The figure below shows that a significant crisis occurred during COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, the same period as this research.

Figure 4.5 Natural Disasters in Indonesia, January-December 2020



Some journalists developed their own coping mechanisms to overcome these crises. In this context, resilience means the ability of an individual or organisation to adapt to a disaster without being overwhelmed. Support from the company helped them stick to their routine jobs, even under abnormal circumstances. As a result, greater perceived

organisational support was linked to lower stress levels and higher work commitment (see Hoak 2021).

Diva, a TV reporter, told me, “The office carries out regular testing every two weeks for all employees.” Diva also mentioned carrying a safety kit, including face masks, vitamins, and disinfectants, all supplied by the office whenever she assigned to the field. She considered herself fortunate, as she was aware that the testing rate in Indonesia was low, with only a few thousand tests being carried out. Another TV reporter, Ken, mentioned that the support from the office in terms of safety procedures helped her remain composed. She felt she had found the rhythm of working during the crisis, “Thankfully, our problem in the field was quickly addressed. So now it feels like I’m doing normal coverage, although, in reality, it’s far from normal.”

Senior editors from the three observed news organisations agreed that one significant news routine challenge involved covering news during the outbreak. Along with the Indonesian Alliance of Independent Journalists monitoring journalist complaints concerning labour issues and workplace safety, the three organisations adjusted their working procedures. They modified their news routine practices when reporting on the outbreak. The two digital newsrooms implemented precautions to minimise the number of team members attending public gatherings. To ensure the newsroom could deliver as much information as possible with minimal physical contact, the routine’s focus shifted to technology, collaboration, and the invention of innovative methods for news gathering and producing.

4.4 Tensions in Remote Communication

The transition from traditional to online communication disrupted established routines and raised tensions among journalists. While Garcia-Avilés’s (2021) study found that journalists quickly incorporated teleworking when the pandemic disrupted the news workflow, this study discovered that television journalists struggled to adapt to working remotely. Beyond the technical issues, the restrictions on physical contact have changed how newsroom staff interact, as online interactions have replaced in-person ones. Editorial meetings, during which news members discussed their stories, were transformed due to the imposed restrictions. Despite the convenience of digital tools, the shift to remote communication was challenging. The editorial meetings at BBC Indonesia showed that communication was not as smooth as traditional face-to-face interaction. I observed the following in my notes:

Tuesday morning, 2 March 2021: The BBC Indonesia online meeting was attended by 10 participants, but only two or three people turned on their cameras at the same time. The News Service Head led the discussion and called on each participant who was responsible for different news areas like web, radio, broadcast magazines, videos and social media, asking them to provide their updates. The meeting went fine, although not always smoothly. However, the atmosphere during the online meeting was somewhat distant and less personal, lacking the warmth of in-person interactions. When the meeting ended, it highlighted the challenges in online meetings, especially when trying to feel connected like in face-to-face meetings. (Personal diary)

Many editorial discussions in other observed newsrooms felt different when conducted online due to the absence of gestures and nuances. From what I observed, it was apparent that online meetings can present communication hurdles. All participants expressed that an important challenge that emerged with the shift to remote newsrooms was the inability to engage in in-depth discussions, explore controversial topics, or address sensitive conversations. To confirm my observation, I spoke with Iko, a Senior Video Journalist at BBC Indonesia, who shared his view.

I think face-to-face communication is still crucial in the newsroom. Especially for editorial meetings that discuss ideas in an in-depth manner. Particularly for any discussion that involves debates. That is really difficult to do online, through video calls. Different sets of managerial skills are needed to manage communication in an online newsroom.

While modern tools can support a “virtual newsroom” technologically, the ability of individuals to adapt to a different work environment—a “virtual space” as a newsroom—was tested (García-Avilés 2021). For instance, during an editorial meeting at SCTV, I observed that the proceedings were not as smooth, as several participants joined the online meeting without opening their cameras. This led to a sense that not all attendees were fully engaged in the discussion. After the meeting, one of the producers expressed their concern, saying, “We don’t know what people do when they don’t use their cameras during the online meeting. They may be busy doing something else, not following our conversation.”

In all observed newsrooms, I found that non-verbal cues, which are crucial for effective communication, were often lost in virtual interactions. This resulted in potential

misunderstandings and a diminished sense of connection among team members. The lack of nonverbal cues often made it hard to understand the participants' true intentions or emotions, which could affect the effectiveness of the discussions. Deputy Chief Editor Liputan6.com, Kristi, shared her opinion:

We usually coordinated through WhatsApp as an online media, but it was all text. When we switched to online meetings, though, things felt different. When I questioned my team or disagreed, I couldn't really tell how they were reacting or what they were thinking, which made it harder to communicate and maintain a sense of teamwork.

It could be argued that communication among newsroom members has raised tensions among news members. The editorial dynamics in all three newsrooms were changed, leading to distinct issues. This study found various adjustments in the three newsrooms examined at the onset of the pandemic in 2020. BBC Indonesia transitioned to a fully remote working setup. Liputan6 implemented a hybrid approach but mainly deployed photographers and video journalists to the field while maintaining a small number of editors stationed in the newsrooms. SCTV also adopted a hybrid newsroom model, with a mix of in-office producers, reporters in the field, and remote workers. As SCTV's Senior Producer, Cinta, explained, they have a hands-on approach to news production, live coverage, and studio-based programmes that require different strategies than digital or print (see Saptorini et al. 2021). The results showed that broadcast news crews, as part of the traditional media landscape, were more likely to face unique challenges adapting to remote or hybrid working environments. Similarly, a study conducted by Hendrickx and Picone (2022) found that TV newsrooms are experiencing employee frustration due to changing circumstances in hybrid newsrooms and remote work settings during the pandemic.

In casual conversations, some journalists told me that discussing their work online via video calls and other digital platforms was not easy, especially when it involved debates. "Sometimes we need to talk about something sensitive, and it is not easy to discuss it online," shared a reporter. A senior editor remarked, "Some news is important; we need to handle it carefully, and sometimes we need to talk face-to-face". These quotes revealed that both junior and senior journalists agreed that face-to-face communication was far more effective than online interaction, particularly for editorial meetings that discuss ideas in-depth. They

also admitted that working remotely made it more arduous to establish and maintain relationships, with many expressing concerns about effective communication.

Remote work presented its own challenges, with participants from the three observed newsrooms acknowledging the difficulties they faced in producing news during the early stages of the pandemic. Building and maintaining relationships was particularly difficult. These findings are broadly similar to the 2020 Reuters Institute Digital Report study, where more than three-quarters of news professionals admitted that remote working was challenging. A large body of literature has revealed remote news production routines pose challenges. Several African studies found that journalists from various newsrooms have reported experiencing difficulties in adopting an online system. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need for a more robust online media infrastructure (e.g., Chibuwe et al. 2022; Matsilele et al. 2021; Santos and Mare 2021). In Egypt, many participants reported a lack of digital infrastructure, digital skills, and journalistic training as major challenges (Arafat and Porlezza 2023). Similar conditions were found in studies in Indonesia (e.g., Iskandar et al. 2023; Wahyuni and Fitrah 2022).

The issue of remote work in this study was affected by several factors. One of the main factors was the sudden shift that news organisations had to make towards remote work without sufficient preparation. Another factor was communication problems, as remote work often relies heavily on digital communication tools (see García-Avilés et al. 2022; Pavlik 2021). The sudden increase in the use of these tools sometimes resulted in communication overload, misinterpretation, or isolation for some journalists. However, while remote work presented challenges, it also highlighted the potential for flexible work arrangements and accelerated the adoption of digital tools and technologies in the workplace. Three news organisations in this study worked to address these challenges and create more sustainable and effective remote work practices. Some journalists concurred that adaptability was essential, given the anticipation that production restrictions related to the coronavirus would persist indefinitely. They recognised the importance of effective communication and new approaches to overcome these challenges, although newsrooms do not know whether many changes would become permanent ways of doing news in the future.

4.5 New Approaches to News Creation

Examining the news production process at BBC Indonesia, the pandemic opened up new avenues for journalists to develop their craft. The unprecedented circumstances prompted

them to find innovative approaches to identifying stories suitable for publication. Since they implemented remote working in March 2020, concerns emerged amongst both management and journalists about the potential impact on productivity. These fears, however, proved unfounded. Dimar, a video journalist from BBC Indonesia, informed that the outcome was the other way around; most of the BBC's journalists and editors felt more creative in exploring stories to cover.

After we went through this one month, it turned out that we were actually getting even busier. By not going anywhere, we were even more productive. As we were forced to think hard, how could we avoid getting stuck? We ended up making news all the time, so the ideas flowed out. It happened to the team.

The team started to experiment with story ideas and production treatments. For instance, Dimar conducted a story featuring video conference interviews with four Indonesian Governors, discussing the large-scale social restrictions and the impending Eid holiday travel. He managed this while also producing an explanatory piece, all from his home. Explanatory stories emerged as a popular approach among journalists in all the observed newsrooms. These pieces sought to clarify complex issues affecting people, such as infection prevention measures like mask-wearing, social distancing, isolation techniques, and ways to minimise the risk of new outbreaks. Meanwhile, as public knowledge about the coronavirus increased, these explanatory pieces lost their appeal, prompting journalists to develop fresh story ideas. Dimar told me then, "This is definitely the time when you have to innovate and be pretty creative." For BBC Indonesia journalists, the situation presented challenges regarding access and the ability to explore stories at the street level rather than just focusing on policymaking.

As I compared selective news stories to enrich my data analysis, I observed that the two digital news organisations leveraged innovative storytelling formats on their web and social media platforms to present stories mainly related to the coronavirus pandemic. In recent years, digital journalism has seen an increase in public engagement. One of the reasons for this is the emergence of new forms of digital news storytelling (Pavlik 2017). These new forms include interactive content, multi-sensory experiences, and mobile accessibility. The growing use of immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) has also contributed to this trend. These unique qualities have made digital news more engaging for users (see Pavlik 2020). BBC Indonesia has led the way in adopting these new storytelling techniques. Before the pandemic, they consistently enhanced their infographics,

integrating them with video content and reducing reliance on text-based storytelling. They also employed cross-media storytelling across various platforms and maximised data visualisation.

While a study from the Reuters Institute for Digital News Report 2020 (Cherubini et al. 2020, p.7) discovered that respondents expressed concern about the impacts of creativity on news story production, this study demonstrated that journalists made innovations and were as creative as possible for some reasons. For instance, Tantri, Managing Editor of Liputan6.com for news entertainment, developed new approaches to producing news stories when traditional entertainment events, such as music performances, festivals, film premieres, and art exhibitions, were scarce. Tantri informed me: “I urged my team to craft stories using artists’ social media content, integrating relevant clips from their music or films, incorporating comments from fan communities, and adding graphics or other elements.” Liputan6.com also relied less on textual storytelling formats and increased its digital storytelling. They used infographics, video graphics, transmedia storytelling, and data visualisation tools.

The findings in two digital newsrooms suggest that innovations in content production and internal organisation are the main drivers of change in the media industry (see García-Avilés 2021; García-Avilés et al. 2022). These results also showed that journalists adopted new storytelling formats and changed their digital news storytelling techniques, especially when covering stories related to the pandemic, similar to some studies on news production in Africa (Arafat and Porlezza 2023; Santos and Mare 2021).

My study, however, has found that SCTV could not maximise their augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) during the early stages of the pandemic, from March to July 2020. “We could not use our immersive graphics in the studio when we reduced the number of people to operate. We need the graphic and production support teams to operate AR and VR,” Dinno, the Executive Producer, explained. SCTV only employed infographics to update the numbers of infected and deceased patients. The newsroom optimised video graphics to condense COVID-19-related information into concise one to two-minute news stories. However, SCTV was unable to adopt various digital news storytelling as they heavily relied on people and technology in the newsroom.

4.6 Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted newsrooms, affecting news routines and organisational practices. This chapter has examined the impact of COVID-19 on news routines in three newsrooms in Indonesia: a television (SCTV) and two digital newsrooms (Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia). It has investigated how the prolonged crisis affected journalists' daily tasks and assesses the routines and work patterns. This chapter thus contributes to understanding how crises and disruptions brought by the pandemic shape routine practices in news production. Research findings suggest nuanced differences in news routines across various aspects. The television newsroom SCTV tends to maintain its established routines, while two digital newsrooms are more inclined to adapt and change their routines. The results of comparing television and digital newsrooms showed differences in news gathering.

One of the key findings here is that news routines refer to patterns of outcome-oriented behaviour influenced by the production culture. In the case of SCTV, it was observed that during the pandemic in 2020, this television station continued to deploy reporters for on-the-ground news gatherings, even amid the challenges posed by the pandemic's peak. The programme content indicated that approximately 70-80% of news content originated from the field, underscoring SCTV's sustained reliance on its established reporting pattern. SCTV reflects the characteristics of television journalism: possessing the advantage of immediacy, combining audio and visual elements to capture viewers' attention and engage them emotionally, a concept Ekström (2000) termed "Information, storytelling, and attractions." SCTV follows the production culture that news on television can provide a more immersive experience with live reporting, on-site interviews, and visual storytelling, as mentioned in previous studies (e.g., Harrison 2000; Hemingway 2008).

Meanwhile, the findings related to the two online organisations showed that the reliance on digital tools and remote sources became essential for their routines. The production culture of online news is shaped by a combination of technological advancements, the evolving nature of journalism, and the need to meet the demands of a digital audience (Boczkowski 2004). In the absence of on-the-ground reporting, journalists from two digital newsrooms turned to alternative ways to gather information, such as virtual interviews, remote data analysis, and social media monitoring. Aligning with this, Tandoc Jr. and Duffy (2019) point out that news routines will adapt and emerge as journalists are confronted by a changing set of practical needs.

The practices approach, however, exists alongside a broader recognition that news production relies on a journalism routine—a series of patterned and repeated practices guiding journalists in their daily tasks (see Ryfe 2016; Reese 2001). Apparently, SCTV interprets routines by following the conventional understanding as Golding and Elliott (1979, p 12) stated that “news production is mechanical, routine, passive, and systematic.” Meanwhile, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia perceive routine as a flexible and responsive strategy, only deploying the team for selective news stories. Even though all observed newsrooms formed routines through hard, spot, and developing news, which Tuchman (1973) called news typification in routine news-making. All news types are unscheduled and refer to “quickenning urgency,” “emergent situations,” and must be processed quickly.

My findings show the way each media platform adapts routine practices in its news-making process depends on its nature. This study suggests that television journalists show adherence to their established routines to assert their authority and validate that their work aligns with the nature of television journalism (see Carlson 2017; Cushion 2015). My research has revealed how journalists assert power in complex relations with technology and their audience when SCTV prefers to use the proper broadcast equipment to gather news. The intentional commitment to a set routine in television closely corresponds to portrayals of journalistic routines, which are depicted as repetitive practices ingrained within an organisational framework (see Reese 2001; Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Westlund and Ekström 2019).

In response to the surge in audience demand during the pandemic, SCTV extended the airtime for news programmes to meet the heightened need. We can see that television journalism becomes even more critical during crises, natural disasters, or emergencies. Surprisingly, Liputan6.com was also required to keep the content quantity consistent without scaling back, even though it only deployed the team for selective news stories. Like SCTV, this is because, while fulfilling their journalistic responsibilities, they were also compelled to safeguard the company’s business interests by maintaining their performance despite the pandemic. SCTV must maintain their ratings as ratings are commonly used to measure a program’s audience size and popularity. While Liputan6.com measures its performance through web analytics or digital metrics. They rely on metrics such as website traffic, page views, unique visitors, click-through rates, engagement, and social media interactions to gauge performance and audience reach. Here, the pandemic has highlighted the intricate connection between the responsibilities of journalists and financial considerations (see Olsen et al. 2020). As Tandoc and Duffy (2019) argue, news routines are also structured by a larger

force, the motivation for profitability in market-oriented news organisations. Arguably, the change in news routines during the pandemic has had two main consequences. While they facilitated an environment conducive to continuous journalistic content production, they drove journalists under economic pressure and increased the risk of compromising journalists' well-being.

What also becomes apparent in the analysis is how the previous crises taught journalists to deal with the pandemic. Previous research showed that newsrooms were caught off guard, leading to confusion and disrupting news production. The tension and contradiction in this context affected routine practices (Kim 2020). Newsrooms lacked suitable structures to cope with crises, leading to management failures due to inexperience (Olsson 2009). This study's findings highlight the critical adaptation of journalists during the pandemic and the importance of safety training for them. Several studies have emphasised the crucial role that such training plays in mitigating the risks (e.g., Høiby and Garrido 2020; Slavtcheva-Petkova et al. 2023). Journalists in the three observed newsrooms responded differently to the COVID-19 pandemic based on their experience and training. While Indonesia is recognised for its susceptibility to natural disasters and crisis-like conflicts, not every journalist qualifies as a crisis journalist despite the extensive media coverage of such events. Regardless of television or digital media journalists, those with crisis reporting expertise and safety training demonstrated more resilience, while others grappled with uncertainty.

Safety concerns sparked debates on coverage locations during the pandemic, but interestingly, some junior journalists sought unique experiences and points of view despite risking their health and safety and covered some stories from the pandemic-affected areas, such as quarantine zones and COVID-19 facilities, to get intriguing coverage. Emotional responses varied; some expressed concerns openly, while others suppressed feelings for professional or gratitude reasons, similar to several studies conducted during the pandemic that have highlighted the emotions and trauma experienced by journalists (e.g., Hoak 2021; Jukes et al. 2022; Šimunjak 2022). In this regards, institutional support proved crucial, with vulnerabilities linked to a lack of crisis management and safety training.

Another finding in this study indicates that the transition from traditional to online communication disrupted established routines. Navigating this shift to 'virtual spaces' from conventional newsrooms is undeniably challenging. Studies on news production have also identified technical challenges experienced by journalists globally (e.g., Chibuwe et al. 2022; Guðmundsson 2020; Ndlovu and Sibanda 2022). However, the challenges faced by

journalists in the three newsrooms studied go beyond just lacking digital skills. They also involve the proficiency required to navigate the shift towards virtual communication. Such findings demonstrate how communication in virtual rooms presents challenges due to the absence of face-to-face interactions. Non-verbal cues are limited, making it harder to interpret nuances and emotions. In line with recent research (Cherubini and Sharma 2023; García-Avilés et al. 2022), the reliance on digital platforms requires additional skills, and the absence of physical presence can hinder spontaneous collaboration, making effective communication more demanding.

Interestingly, the pandemic prompted digital newsrooms in this study to continue to improve their innovative shifts in news creation. The pandemic was a transformative period for some Indonesian journalists, leading them to reassess their roles and adapt to the digital transition by innovating their work routines. Particularly, this study highlights the crucial role of innovation in content production and storytelling. At the BBC Indonesia newsroom, journalists explored creative approaches and became more inventive, experimenting with new story ideas and production techniques. Meanwhile, Liputan6.com showcased adaptability by leveraging social media content and diversifying digital storytelling. The findings emphasise how the crisis compelled journalists to adapt to the situation by modifying their news production practices, similar to some studies (see Newman et al. 2021; Garcia-Avilés 2021). In contrast, SCTV faced challenges maximising augmented and virtual reality due to reduced studio staff. However, the results in three newsrooms demonstrated that journalists endeavoured to maintain audience engagement through innovative news creation.

While journalists made adjustments to work remotely, many of my participants emphasised that the newsroom remains essential for centralising news production and facilitating team collaboration. This leads to a crucial question: are physical newsrooms still relevant during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic? This topic will be examined in the next chapter. Chapter 5 will investigate the reconfiguration of newsrooms during the pandemic. Specifically, it will examine the value of physical place on journalistic professionalism and explore the implications of the newsroom reconfiguration on journalism's symbolic power.

Chapter 5

Place and Newsroom Reconfiguration

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined how journalists adapted news production routines when the newsroom was subject to disruptions during the pandemic. This chapter will further explore the newsroom as a physical place for journalists' work. It aims to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of place for journalists and the impact of place reconfiguration on journalists' professionalism and authority. The disruption of the traditional newsroom as a place offers a unique opportunity to investigate the relationship between journalists and the place.

Throughout journalistic history, be it in times of war, natural or man-made disasters, or health crises, places “where news-decision making occurs” and “the physical locations where reporting happens” (Usher 2019, p. 3) have had to be reconfigured due to safety concerns for journalists. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced similar challenges but with the added dimension of its unpredictable and prolonged duration and the implementation of social distancing measures, which directly impact the newsroom itself. Consequently, the pandemic provides a crucial context for investigating journalism's changing “where” (Hallin 1986), an aspect often neglected in the existing literature on journalism studies.

Scholars have examined the concept of place for newspapers through ethnographic studies of newsrooms (Tuchman 1978; Usher 2014). These studies are useful for investigating television and digital newsrooms in this research. Tuchman and Usher have demonstrated the significance of spatial factors in journalism's daily routines and decision-making processes. Their research in different eras, suggests that a newsroom is an essential physical place where the materials of news production are established. Moreover, a newsroom is a relational space that embodies relationships among news teams. This framework provides valuable insights into comprehending the newsroom as a physical space for news production, especially during crises that disrupt its traditional operations.

This chapter examines the changing places of news production through Usher's (2019, p. 8) framework, which focuses on places as “material settings for news, places as sites of journalistic professionalism, and places as symbols of power and authority.” It explores the places of news-making during the pandemic and the consequences of place-

based realignments on journalistic practice, professionalism, and authority. This chapter aims to answer the second research question: How did the value of a physical place affect journalistic professionalism during the pandemic? What were the consequences of the reconfiguration of the place on the symbolic power of journalism?

The findings from my study of these three newsrooms—a television newsroom (SCTV) and two digital newsrooms (Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia) — begin by analysing the importance of place as a material setting of news. My exploration delves into how journalists attribute value to the newsroom, viewing it both as a physical place for news production and a meaning-making product. The second section analyses the reconfiguration of the newsroom during the pandemic. This section aims to provide insight into the impact of this reconfiguration on journalists' work and professionalism. It then details the place realignment in digital newsrooms, a consequence of journalists being compelled to work remotely. This shift underscores the challenges faced by virtual newsrooms. The subsequent section scrutinises the newsroom as a physical place in relation to its symbolic power and journalists' authority. This section highlights Usher's (2019, p. 8) concept that “place reflects who and what has power” and how place-based realignment impacts news routines and symbolises authority. In the final section, the discussion centres on the importance of live reporting in establishing journalists' credibility and authority as eyewitnesses in specific places where events unfold.

5.2 Place as a Material Setting of News

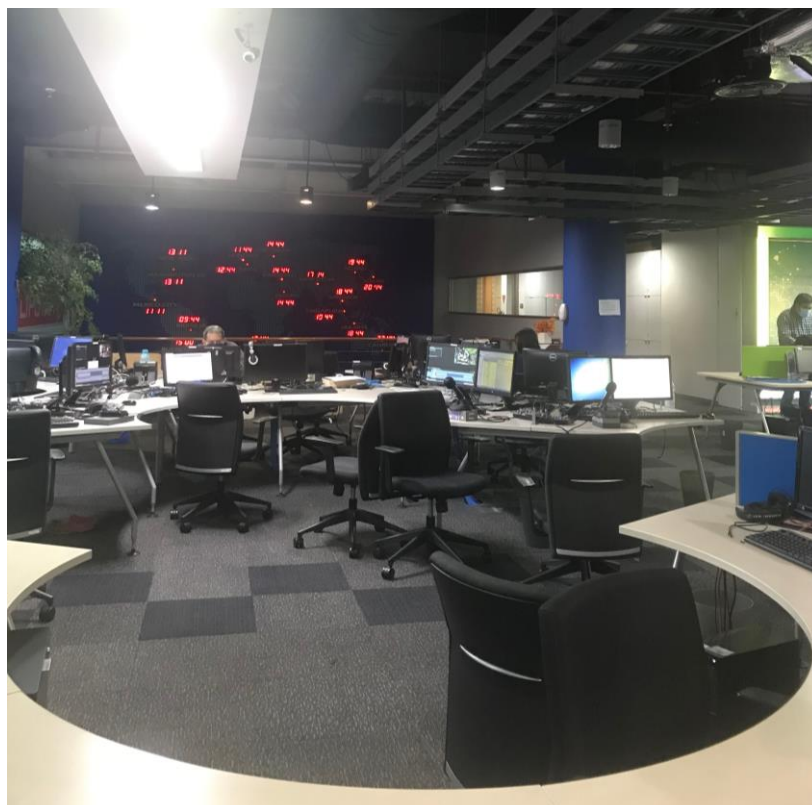
The three observed newsrooms are based in central Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia are located near the Presidential palace, governmental offices, and the city's main financial districts. Similarly, the television station SCTV is located in central Jakarta, close to the Parliament Building, courthouses, and police headquarters, which are its neighbours. These buildings are typical examples of news production sites strategically located near key hubs of social power and political influence hubs. It is not by chance that the three newsrooms are strategically positioned near power; rather, according to Usher (2015), it signifies the practical and symbolic value of being close to power – a parallel mirrored by the location of the three newsrooms studied.

The observed television newsroom and studio are on the 9th floor, designed with an open-plan layout – a common feature of TV stations. The open and modern design reflects the current convergence trend in news organisations (Hemmingway 2004; Rodgers 2014).

The SCTV newsroom occupies the ninth floor of the 22-story building. The office is used by 260 staff members, including 140 SCTV employees and 120 from Indosiar, another station acquired in 2011, resulting in newsroom convergence. Before the pandemic, 135 staff members, including 70 from SCTV and 65 from Indosiar, would be in the newsroom, operating on a shift basis. However, on-site staff were restricted to a maximum of 65 people during the pandemic, with 35 from SCTV and 30 from Indosiar.

During my fieldwork, the actual headcount frequently dropped even lower. I noticed that there were only three places regularly in use: the producers' desks, arranged in large circles with an outer and inner ring, a desk cluster for assignment editors, and an island desk where visual editors work on video editing. The other islands-shaped multiple tables packed with computers were vacant. There were also some cubicles in the other area, but only one duty manager was working on every shift. This photo captures a snapshot of the SCTV newsroom during the early pandemic in April 2020.

Figure 5.1 Empty Newsroom at SCTV, April 2020



Dede, a senior producer, recalled the newsroom before the pandemic:

On a normal day, this big newsroom is full of people, especially during the overlap shift from the morning shift to the afternoon shift. Sometimes, I feel a bit crowded, especially when breaking news, but it's better than quiet like now. We can talk, discuss, brainstorm—anything to make sure our content is properly broadcast.

In contrast to the definition of a newsroom as a dynamic and busy environment (Franklin et al. 2005), the television newsroom I observed, SCTV, was often eerily quiet. The vast newsroom, spanning approximately 2,000 square meters, appeared almost empty and devoid of noise. The fast-paced nature of journalists' lives had come to a halt; only some journalists were still present in the newsroom. This situation is abnormal for television newsrooms, as Zaman (2013) describes TV newsrooms as “battlegrounds”. SCTV's newsroom still had a small staff despite the circumstances. Producers and the technical team were physically present to facilitate coordination for live news broadcasts, studio recordings, and live reporting. The presence of these key personnel highlights the necessity for a place for real-time coordination and communication.

The pandemic profoundly changed the connections of journalists to their physical places. One senior television producer, Carlo, compared the newsroom during the pandemic to how it was before:

Before the pandemic, our newsroom was a really lively place. We worked closely together, and there was so much energy in the air. It was always bustling with activity, ideas flying back and forth, and everyone collaborating in real-time. That was just our everyday routine.

Within a newsroom that experienced a reduction in staff due to the pandemic, Cinta, a senior producer, described the typical situation:

Normally, we are extremely sensitive to time constraints during deadlines, with people getting in each other's way. Yelling is normal; we even shout while on air. But now, there is no longer that hectic atmosphere.

Similarly, when I entered the Liputan6.com newsroom, the bustling scenes of journalists and staff interacting with one another disappeared. Liputan6.com, as part of the online news convergence, is located in a five-floor building in the centre of Jakarta. The online team occupies one floor, while the studio and multimedia teams use another. During my fieldwork visit in March 2021, I was struck by many empty desks and offices. Among the abandoned personal belongings and scattered papers remained remnants of the previously crowded workstations where journalists had worked shoulder to shoulder. Kristi, the Deputy Chief Editor, said,

Before the pandemic, some of us, especially reporters, usually worked from home. So, the newsroom is not always filled with journalists. However, it is still lively; many people are here because we need a place to coordinate and discuss. We can do some work remotely, but we still need to meet the team. We are online media, but it doesn't mean everything is done online.

Kristi referred to the newsroom as a “diminishing newsroom”, which is different from the study's portrayal of the interactivity in the daily routine of online newsrooms (see Domingo 2008). She emphasised the need for a physical newsroom as a collaborative place to interact and attach to communities to build relationships (see also González 2017). The newsroom at Liputan6.com partially reopened a week after it closed completely due to Indonesia's large-scale restrictions in March 2020. The finding shows that even modern media platforms still require a physical location, as is the case with Liputan6.com.

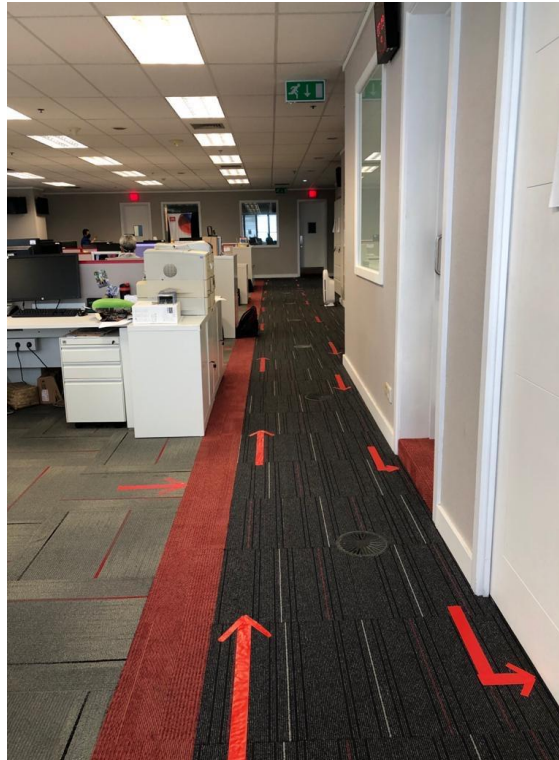
Figure 5.2 Liputan6.com Newsroom, March 2021



Conversely, the other digital media online platform, BBC Indonesia, completely closed its newsroom in central Jakarta in March 2020. The newsroom is situated on a 15-floor building that houses several foreign media representative offices in Indonesia, including ABC, AFP, APTN, Al Jazeera and Voice of America. In BBC Indonesia. The newsroom was only left with floor markings throughout the entire space as all teams worked remotely. As seen in the image below, the markings on the ground were designed to respond to social distancing during the pandemic. As the team continued adapting to remote work, Fanno from BBC Indonesia shared his experience transitioning away from the newsroom during the pandemic.

As a video journalist, I mostly work outside to gather stories, but I felt a sense of disconnection and a loose newsroom atmosphere when I had to leave. This is not only about sharing ideas and working together but also fostering a stronger team spirit and friendship.

Figure 5.3 BBC Indonesia Newsroom, February 2020



One of the main consequences of requiring a physical newsroom for news teams was the loss of physical interaction and robust discussions that affecting productivity. Before the pandemic, journalists relied on face-to-face interactions and lively debates to make decisions regarding stories, headlines, or images, as described in previous studies (e.g., Robinson 2011; Usher 2014). In Hemmingway’s words (2007, p. viii), a newsroom is “buzzing with the discussion of journalists and producers.” The once bustling newsroom felt deserted during the pandemic. Iko, a senior video journalist, expressed,

Building and maintaining team culture is more challenging remotely, in my opinion. Spontaneous interactions, team-building activities, and casual conversations that happen naturally in the office can be difficult to replicate virtually.

The journalists I engaged with at the three newsrooms shared with me that they viewed the newsroom as the ideal workplace. Despite reducing the number of individuals present, the newsroom functions as a necessary workspace. This suggests that the physical place has been essential to journalists’ work. Tuchman (1978) noted this in the early newsroom ethnography study. She found how spatial factors were important in journalism’s

daily routines and decision-making processes. In line with this viewpoint, TV journalists perceive the newsroom as the central hub for their work even during the pandemic. As Usher (2019) contends, the newsroom remains the central place for decision-making processes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the newsroom, but it remains the central hub. For journalists, the newsroom is not simply a workplace but a multifunctional space where various tasks are performed, such as exploration, discussions, and idea brainstorming (see González 2017; Robinson 2011; Zaman 2013). Unsurprisingly, SCTV and Lip6.com journalists preferred to work from the newsroom. Editors at Liputan6.com stated that they felt they could do their job better in the newsroom. Similarly, SCTV producers said the newsroom provided TV journalists with everything they needed to produce high-quality news stories. This perspective aligns with the concept of the centrality of location for both information and journalists, as suggested by Tuchman (1978). In a similar vein, Usher (2019) highlights that when the newsroom undergoes transformations, such as reconfigurations, it poses challenges in maintaining the professional work of journalists.

5.3 Reconfiguration of Physical Place

Social distancing measures reconfigured newsrooms for the safety of journalists. The change in the workplace and the absence of a physical newsroom challenged journalists' professionalism to produce the news based on their quality standards. Professional journalism can be identified through a set of consistent practices, where both the news organisation and journalists adhere to specific practices and attributes shaped by professional requirements. In the case of SCTV, the management decided to relocate the gathering team to another building. They also reconfigured the newsrooms after reducing the number of team members working in the same shifts. Deputy Chief Editor SCTV, Rey, admitted that transitioning to a smaller team and working separately in different newsrooms was both "chaotic and daunting." She stated:

We all understand how important the newsroom is for journalists. It was hard as we had to reduce the team size, and it was kind of chaotic and daunting not to be in the newsroom. However, the management had no choice but to implement a contingency plan to make this newsroom a safe workplace for us.

The management's decision to reconfigure the newsroom resulted in feelings of tension among journalists. Almost all television news teams, including producers and reporters, echoed similar concerns and experienced the same feelings during the newsroom reconfiguration. While it is widely acknowledged that reporters and cameramen spend most of their time in the field, they always return to the newsroom and still consider it an essential hub place. For instance, Andy, a video journalist, shared that he occasionally needed the newsroom to have in-person brainstorming sessions with assignment editors and producers. Although he mainly worked independently, covering news at the President's office, he always returned to the newsroom when he needed to discuss specific news topics, such as new presidential policies or the latest government issues. "Yes, we could meet at a coffee shop, but it feels different when we do it in the newsroom; it's more like a deep discussion," he explained.

The reconfiguration of workplaces resulted in mixed reactions from the participants. While some were able to adapt well to the new workspace configuration and expressed satisfaction with working from a different location than the headquarters, others found it difficult to adjust. This difficulty was not present in the past when in-person communication was facilitated by a centralised newsroom. Some reporters admitted feeling anxious when unable to access the newsroom, stating, "I'm a bit nervous doing everything from home, alone. It's easier to talk to seniors in the newsroom." Renata was among the reporters who expressed concern when the news gatherings team was separated from the newsroom at the headquarters. The newsroom plays a crucial role in reflecting journalists' professionalism, as the values serve as a framework for their everyday practice, guiding and regulating them (see Ryfe 2009; Usher 2019; Wahl-Jorgensen 2009).

During my conversations with my participants, a reporter admitted needing a long period of adjustment as he had moved from the headquarters. "Before the pandemic, I used to wait for the producers to edit my scripts, discuss them, and sometimes argue when they changed my stories. I also prefer to attend in-person meetings instead of only receiving assignments through the WhatsApp group. When we moved to a different building, we just sent our news without discussion and sometimes without feedback." Meanwhile, Diva, a reporter, used to write her news script anywhere, but she realised that when it came to explaining her story during a discussion, the newsroom was her preferred location.

Along with relocating the team to another building, the SCTV newsroom in headquarters also reconfigured their newsroom. A new layout system was implemented in response to the pandemic, resulting in changes to the spatial arrangement. Desks and

workstations, previously arranged close to facilitate face-to-face interactions, were reconfigured to allow for increased distancing between producers. One television producer described the newsroom in his participant diary.

Since the outbreak, a new layout system has changed how things are set up. Desks and workstations that had been close together to make it easier for us to talk to each other face-to-face were moved to give more space. Our communal areas, such as the break room, were redesigned to minimise the risk of infection and limit the number of us gathering in one area. This is one of our favourite spots to spend time after on-air to discuss news stories or just for rest. The partition which separates the two meeting rooms is open to give more space even though usually only a few of us attend the offline meeting as others do it online. It's totally weird. I have worked for 12 years, and this is the first time it has happened in the newsroom.

The reconfiguration of newsrooms due to the pandemic significantly affected the collaboration and spontaneous exchange of ideas among SCTV journalists. TV journalists faced challenges in maintaining the same level of teamwork as before. It also affected the speed and mode of information exchange, and they needed to adapt to accessing necessary resources or coordinating with team members. In line with this, Usher (2015) emphasised the significance of a newsroom's physical design and layout in shaping journalistic practices and values. Although Usher (2015) pointed out that an open-plan layout in newsrooms can promote collaboration, the SCTV newsroom experienced the opposite during the pandemic crisis due to a reconfiguration of the place.

Changes in the material and geographical setting of the newsroom had consequences on the quality of the news. For on-air 'talents' like presenters, the reconfiguration of the newsroom forced them to conduct on-air broadcasts from home. Presenters aired newscasts from home during lockdown in the early stages of the outbreak. Dede, a presenter, shared his experiences hosting a morning show from home. He said it was challenging because the duration of the morning programme is long, about 1,5 hours. The lack of a full technical production staff presented a significant challenge, especially in terms of real-time communication, often during a live news broadcast. Technical issues persisted for most of them while working remotely. According to Dede:

After broadcasting our programme, we reviewed the on-air recording and we were mostly dissatisfied. The audio quality was frequently unstable, and the video quality was not up to broadcast standards. Also, the background setting depended on our house, and despite our efforts to find a good angle, it did not meet the broadcast standards.

From my observations, each individual's home's varying and inconsistent setups became evident on the screen during the broadcast. The makeshift nature of the home studios and the lower quality of visuals made the shows appear less sophisticated and prestigious. For many journalists working on television, maintaining a higher technical standard compared to their print or online counterparts contributed to a sense of greater esteem.

Figure 5.4 Home Studio, March 2020



Most producers said the process of putting a show on air is one of the biggest hurdles experienced by the production teams. Journalists have increasingly relied on their own digital studios to create content or even broadcast their shows from home. One producer expressed the difficulties: “Working from home is incredibly challenging. The deadlines for the noon bulletin are very tight, and we waste time dealing with technical and communication issues.” Another producer voiced her frustration, emphasising the importance of access to the

newsroom, saying, “We work for television, not for print or online media. It’s so complicated to work from home.” According to TV producers, working outside the newsroom presents significant challenges for television journalists, mostly because of technical limitations. Television journalism often requires specialised equipment and a controlled environment for high-quality production (see Cushion 2011; Hemmingway 2008). Working remotely may lead to technical limitations, affecting broadcasts’ visual and audio quality. The shift to remote work requires journalists to adapt to new recording, editing, and broadcasting technologies. This learning curve can be time-consuming and may lead to initial disruptions in the workflow. This change, according to Deputy Chief Editor Rey, significantly impacted their working approach and the quality of their work:

We could only implement the work-from-home practice for two weeks because of technical issues like connectivity and audio and video problems. We tried, but we had poor broadcast quality.

The findings align with Deuze and Witschge (2018), recognising that newsrooms continue to be important anchoring points for news work to produce quality content. The reconfiguration of newsrooms challenged television journalists as SCTV journalists struggled to continue their work without a newsroom. For example, Cinta, a Senior Producer, compared the newsroom to a kitchen where masterpieces are crafted. She questioned:

How can we properly handle content without a newsroom? There are certain requisites to produce a piece of good news: good materials from the field, a place with proper equipment to ‘cook’ and process it, and another place to present the content. So, yes, we need a newsroom and studio.

It seems that Cinta perceives the newsroom as a tangible necessity. On the other hand, Carlo, the executive producer, emphasises the need for a physical place as an intangible requirement. He expressed frustration at times due to the absence of the team and reporters in the newsroom, as it limited his ability to engage in discussions and provide feedback on their stories. Carlo stated:

I sometimes felt frustrated without the team in the newsroom and without the reporters here because I couldn't talk to reporters or discuss their stories with them. The newsroom is where we find the best way to create good news.

Similarly, Sonny, the Coordinator of Assignment Editors, highlighted the newsroom's role as an ideal environment for resolving debates between editors and producers. Sonny said:

We use the newsroom for best practices. As an assignment editor, I frequently debate with producers, and the newsroom is the perfect place to address our issues. Talking face-to-face in the same room is better to resolve our problem.

This study shows that television does not seem to demonstrate the same level of adaptability as print despite both being conventional media. Several earlier studies have suggested that print media may demonstrate a comparatively higher level of adaptability in transitioning from a physical newsroom to a remote newsroom. For instance, Chibuwe et al. (2022) conducted a cross-country study examining print media in three African countries and found the newspaper's journalists had adapted to the newsroom transitions.

Based on my observation and interviews, broadcast journalists were eager to return to their studios for several reasons. First, television and radio production often require specialised equipment and controlled environments that may not be easily replicated in remote settings. Studios are equipped with professional-grade facilities, ensuring high-quality broadcasts that may be challenging to achieve remotely. "The studios provide a controlled and optimised setting for producing content with high production quality," a TV producer explained. Studios also offer access to specialised resources, which contribute to the production process's efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, television and radio production involve collaboration among various team members, including producers, technicians, and presenters. Being in a shared physical place allows for real-time communication, spontaneous interactions, and the collaborative energy to produce news content.

In August 2020, only five months after Indonesia implemented its large-scale restrictions, I observed that SCTV was considering allowing more staff into the newsroom. Until the end of 2020, more news staff gradually returned to the newsroom. Rey, the Deputy Chief Editor, confirmed that by the beginning of April, approximately 40% of the news team had returned to the newsroom, while about 60% continued to work from home. In the study "Changing the Newsroom", which involved 136 news industry leaders from 38 countries, the

findings suggest that there was an eagerness among the broadcast media to return to the studio (Cherubini et al. 2020, p.10). Similarly, SCTV and BBC Indonesia radio teams tend to return to their studio. Meanwhile, the rest of the BBC Indonesia team transitioned to fully remote work, and Liputan6.com partially worked remotely.

5.4 Place Realignments in Digital Newsrooms

The nature of digital work and its reliance on physical places differs from television. The digital landscape offers enhanced flexibility and convenience in news production, allowing for a more seamless integration of remote work practices. The two digital newsrooms, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia have shown more flexibility in place realignment and adapting to remote work. BBC Indonesia was the most prepared among the three observed newsrooms in this case. This news organisation offers technological resources, especially software tools, to enable work-from-home arrangements.

The transition to remote work within online news platforms has garnered significant attention in the past (see Allan 2006; Boczkowski 2004). However, one of the observed digital newsrooms, Liputan6.com, showed that the mere availability of digital tools and technologies did not automatically translate into the ability to conduct all news production remotely. Despite efforts to adapt to online work, Liputan6.com encountered challenges in fully embracing remote work practices. While the organisation demonstrated a reduced reliance on physical workplaces compared to their television counterparts, there was still a need for a physical workspace to some extent.

When faced with large-scale social restrictions imposed by the government in March 2020, Liputan6.com initially implemented a month-long work-from-home policy. However, within the first week of the lockdown, there was a surprising shift in management's approach. The team had a few reasons for preferring the newsroom environment—mainly for reasons based around 'communication' and 'collaboration'. Senior editors were permitted to return to the office, and a rotation system was implemented, allowing staff members to take turns working on-site. Edo, a managing editor, told me, "Communication was easy in a newsroom; being physically present allowed for face-to-face interactions. It was also a fast-paced environment facilitating quick decision-making and response to breaking news. The newsroom also provided access to various resources".

In this case, the newsroom management's decision demonstrated that the newsroom still maintained a physical workplace rather than completely transitioning to remote work. It

became evident that journalists at Liputan6.com showed an attachment to the traditional newsroom environment and faced challenges in fully embracing a virtual work setup. This finding highlights the importance of understanding the place reconfiguration, even within news organisations that appear to be well-suited for digital transformation. Chief Editor of Liputan6.com, Irina, explain this:

We can't totally leave for some reason. People feel it's hard to communicate and collaborate when they're far away. But it's especially difficult for the multimedia team. There is increasing audience engagement in our online platforms, especially with our video content. They need all kinds of technology to live stream and create videos and studio access.

As I observed, however, the multimedia team at Liputan6.com not only preferred to return to the studio, but also most editors tended to return to the office. Some of them admitted that working from home certainly has its challenges because of technology issues like internet connection and personal problems. Another issue is that the editors still had a responsibility to meet specific targets regarding the number of articles and viewers during the pandemic. Tantri, a managing editor at Liputan6.com, stated:

Even during the pandemic, our company sets certain targets as people increasingly rely on mainstream media, Other online platforms also compete for clicks, hits and viewer engagement. While this competition was standard before the pandemic, it becomes challenging when we have to work at home.

It is clear that remote work did not suit all teams at Liputan6.com. As a solution, the multimedia team was allowed to use the office studio once a week. Every week, the multimedia group, consisting of a producer, a presenter, the production crew, and the social media team, would come to the office to broadcast live from the studio. This decision illustrated the importance of physical workspaces even in a digital media environment (e.g., Bunce 2019; Cohen 2019)

Figure 5.5 Multimedia Studio at Liputan6.com, March 2021



Liputan6.com faced unique challenges due to its tight deadlines for producing articles and multimedia content, which were not observed by BBC Indonesia. BBC Indonesia produced news content for several platforms, such as websites and social media, including video production and long-form programmes. The pandemic led to the development of new collaborative practices for BBC Indonesia journalists, who communicated and worked through virtual channels. Most of the crew worked from home except the radio team, which occasionally returned to the office to use their studio after sometimes broadcasting remotely from home. However, the team also returned to the newsroom for their social media livestream to ensure smooth operation without technical issues. The Deputy of BBC News Service Indonesia, Ayu, put it:

When the first wave of COVID hit, we could still go to the office by following the BBC rules, and we tried to implement health protocols. But we had to work from home after things got worse. The only exception is for teams who work on the radio. They still need to come to the office because the broadcasting equipment ensures better quality. Plus, they have to communicate with the London office, which is pretty tough to do from home. Also, we agreed that having the live producer physically present in the newsroom during the live stream was better than working remotely.

Figure 5.6 BBC Indonesia Newsroom, April 2020



The BBC Indonesia newsroom underwent a transformation to adapt to the new circumstances. Several changes occurred in the production routines when they transitioned to remote work practices, but they tended to follow traditional professional practices. For example, the virtual newsroom replicated the same practices and workflows as the physical newsroom. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, journalists were accustomed to having daily and weekly meetings in the newsrooms. The pandemic outbreak meant journalists and editors moved to online meetings and followed the regular schedule.

Nonetheless, the transition to working from home presented several obstacles since it required adapting to new circumstances and reconstructing workflows. Rather than technological challenges or tool-related difficulties, BBC Indonesia Senior Video Journalist Iko believes deep communication and a lack of space for debate and discussion were lost. He pointed out the importance of the newsroom for journalists, that the newsroom promotes face-to-face interactions between journalists and editors, ensuring the preservation of journalistic professionalism. All journalists interviewed shared the same experience, showing the importance of newsrooms as a place to collaborate and communicate and build a sense of community among journalists (e.g., Usher 2014, 2019; Schmitz Weiss 2015)

Journalists from two digital newsrooms, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia, shared a common concern: the inability to engage in in-depth discussions, explore controversial topics, or address sensitive material due to security considerations. Prior to the pandemic, journalists frequently interacted with each other and engaged in lively debates. Despite digital newsrooms adapting to an online working system, Iko, BBC Indonesia's journalist, stressed that editorial discussions are more effectively conducted in a newsroom.

5.5 Place as Symbol of Power and Authority

The place represents symbolic power and authority where news teams engage in complex interactions and communication processes between them and people from outside the newsroom. Before the pandemic, the newsroom served as a dynamic hub of activity, regularly hosting visitors and guests for news shows, as well as external individuals participating in studio tours. During the outbreak, the interactions between visitors and the news team have completely disappeared. This used to be an active part of the newsroom's operations and has been significantly affected by the current situation. Rey, the Deputy Chief Editor at SCTV, shared that the newsroom has undergone significant changes in its usual dynamics due to the pandemic. She told me:

Before the pandemic hit, our newsroom was always busy. People came in for news shows, and others were just here for a studio tour. But now, we can't let anyone in except our team. It's just not safe. Look around; there's nobody from outside the newsroom except you. And we don't see those guests getting ready for their interviews anymore. It feels like we have lost our pride.

Rey's sentiment, "it feels like we have lost the pride," sums up her view that the symbolic significance of a physical presence in news sites was decreasing. According to Couldry (2000), there are two groups of people involved in news production – 'media people' and 'non-media people.' This division highlights a gap within the industry, where access to the newsroom is typically limited. Couldry's findings suggest that there is an established structure within newsrooms that prevents 'non-media people' from accessing news production sites. During my fieldwork, gaining entry to the newsroom involved navigating several checks and procedures. The newsroom is considered "a highly regulated arena for status ranking in television newsrooms" (Caldwell 2004).

This evolving symbolic significance is further demonstrated in newly recruited reporters who had been in their roles for just six months and a year when the pandemic struck. Since news gathering moved to other buildings, they found their new place quite different from the headquarters in Jakarta's city centre. The new place, while home to large television production studios, was previously under-utilized and sits on the fringe within a residential neighbourhood. In this context, Usher's studies (2015, 2019) accentuate the importance of proximity to practical and symbolic authority. Thus, the symbolic nature of news production places is deeply intertwined with the significance of the newsroom, functioning as a hub of creative expression and symbolic power in the media landscape.

The importance of a physical place for news production is underlined by a recent relocation of the news gathering team from the SCTV newsroom, sparking mixed reactions among the news team members. A new reporter that just joined expressed,

It feels different. I had just begun to enjoy the newsroom. It's a great building in a nice neighbourhood, and I felt proud telling my friends that I work there. It's close to most of the places we cover stories, not far from public facilities; it's different from the new place that's somewhat removed from the city centre.

This finding parallels Hemmingway's (2004) study, which explores professional relationships between journalists working in the separate news gathering and news production zones of a BBC regional newsroom and explores the spatial organisation of the newsroom. Similarly, Usher's (2015) research delved into the correlation between physical and digital environments and their impact on journalists at different U.S. newspapers during their transition from the old newsroom to the new one. The SCTV Deputy Chief Editor said that some of her teams felt 'abandoned' by the move, and some even felt 'dump'. However, during my observations at their "new newsroom," which is used by the gathering team, I noticed that many reporters were fine with working from a location separate from the headquarters. Diva, a senior reporter, stated, "I enjoy this newly found freedom because I have no pressure from assignment editors and producers." Ken, another reporter, adding that she did not mind the move as long as she had a place to work.

Even though Usher's research (2015) differs from the COVID-19 context, it highlighted the relevance of considering the need for a physical news production place that remains essential to journalists. Within this study, the SCTV decision to relocate from the epicentre of a major news story hub resulted in certain reporters and camera persons

experiencing a sense of loss. However, some individuals embraced this change as long as they maintained a physical workspace. Overall, these diverse sentiments collectively affirm the newsroom's dual role, serving as a symbolic place of power and a practical centre for news production.

Whilst the places of media production caused anxiety and tension among television participants due to their symbolic power, participants from one digital newsroom, Liputan6.com, were more adaptable and approached the situation. They had recently undergone a place transition from a towering skyscraper to a smaller building three years before the pandemic. The Editor in Chief, Irina, explained that their business was evolving. They merged with over ten digital media outlets, and by merging into the online media industry, they no longer shared the same premises as their television counterparts during newsroom convergence.

Meanwhile, Kristi, the Deputy Chief Editor at Liputan6.com, representing the sentiments of the news team, voiced the collective unease about the newsroom's recent relocation in my conversation with a group of editors. Kristi said, "I know many of us feel differently when we're no longer housed in a grand, well-equipped building." She elaborated that they held monthly on-site events to discuss current affairs, inviting prominent guests to engage with a large audience. Nonetheless, a newsroom, the physical place, still held importance for this digital news organisation. On the other hand, a physical location outside the newsroom, the news gathering field, is also important for television journalists, as discussed below.

5.6 On Location: The Place for Live Reporting

Television journalists, in particular, acknowledged the importance of providing live reporting from the sites of news events. In contrast to digital organisations, BBC Indonesia and Liputan6.com, SCTV continued to send their journalists, reporters and camera persons to gather news from the location. At the beginning of the pandemic, there were arguments among the editorial team regarding the deployment of reporters to high-risk locations for live news. However, all team members eventually recognised the importance of live coverage from the field. Deputy Chief Editor Rey stated that live reporting is a trademark of TV news, setting them apart from other media platforms and news agencies. This finding demonstrated that journalists' identities are linked to their work (e.g., Cushion et al. 2014; Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011).

Live reporting reflects the essence of journalism with its immediacy and physical presence. The presence on-site is seen as a fundamental aspect of the job, lending authenticity to the reports. This immediacy helps journalism establish a relationship with its audience. As Rey pointed out, live television reporting stands apart from other media forms, and this unique aspect has become deeply embedded in television journalists' professional identity. The professional identity here involves the evolving self-conception and societal role of journalists. It encompasses professional standards, which influence how people perceive their responsibilities and their impact on society (Hanitzsch 2017). In television live reporting, Cushion et al. (2014) discuss the concept of mediatisation, noting that the adoption of 24/7 media values in traditional news formats significantly influences journalistic identity. Similarly, Hemmingway and Van Loon (2011) explore how the constant live broadcasting of 24-hour news channels creates a unique temporal framework that defines journalists' work and identity. Journalists' constant focus on the present moment influences both their professional behaviour and their self-perception. This affects their relationship with the audience and their sense of purpose in society.

During this study, the news was mostly focused on COVID-19 stories. However, there was a significant shift towards live stand-up segments, with the number of live reports increasing. I noted this when observing SCTV in their production control room.

Program: Noon Bulletin. Location: Control room SCTV.

Five reporters are ready to go live and report from different locations. Reporters are split into certain places: quarantine houses, hospitals, markets, shopping centres, and underground stations. The content of the live reports was the same almost every day, featuring similar information. Reporters are updating the cases of COVID-19 infection and deaths and a brief account of the immediate surroundings. Today, it seems like there aren't many new visuals. In some reports, producers play clips from their archives (Fieldnotes, 2 August 2020).

As I questioned the decision to send many reporters during the pandemic, Dinno, an executive producer, emphasised the importance of maintaining live reports and acknowledged their necessity during the pandemic. Dinno stated:

SCTV has a long history of serving our audiences live from location and leading live reports before the rise of some news channels. We have the latest technology, field

producers, and teams and want to maintain this for our viewers and ratings. This is our identity. During the coronavirus, live reporting is even more crucial because of the complexity of the COVID-19 story. Stories are unpredictable, making live reports the best way to deliver news.

Similarly, Cinta, a senior producer with extensive experience managing broadcast newscasts across three television stations, agreed that the coronavirus was an important enough story for the newsroom to address quickly. She preferred to open newscasts with current issues from the field, updating the audience on the latest situations in various locations. “I argued with the assignment editors as I always asked for four to five reporters to be sent to the field daily.”

Television producers believed live news coverage held more value than pre-recorded story packages, primarily for three reasons. First, the presence of reporters at news event sites as witnesses helped ensure the credibility of the coverage. Diva, a reporter, remarked, “To me, live reporting means delivering the facts. We want to share what is happening with our viewers. There’s no fake news here because we’re on location, and the visuals are real.” Second, the closer a reporter is to the event location, the more powerful and immediate the impact on the audience, which often leads to higher ratings. Head of Assignment Editors, Sonny, told me, “We must dispatch reporters to the field, broadcasting live on location, be it regular or breaking news. The audience enjoys it, and the ratings are good.” Third, considering the decision to extend the flagship news programme from 30 minutes to one hour (from March to mid-August 2020), live news presented a convenient way to fill airtime within the available resources.

Figure 5.7 Reporting Live During the Pandemic in 2020



While some reporters initially resisted live reporting during the pandemic, they eventually embraced its usefulness. Renata, the new reporter, believed that is what TV journalists are doing: Reporting live from the scene, engaging with people on camera, and providing real-time updates. Another young reporter, Ken, referred to live reporting as presenting the facts. The observations on live reporting largely align with previous research on ‘immediacy’, ‘rolling news’, and ‘fast news’, particularly during news reporting crises, as several previous studies mentioned (see Barnett 2011; Cushion and Lewis 2010; Lewis et al. 2005).

Although television editors placed high importance on live news coverage during the pandemic to showcase the importance of place, this study found live reporting mostly functioned as a routine practice, with coverage focusing on basic updates such as the number of COVID cases rather than pursuing a specific agenda. Most of these live reports tended to be descriptive, sometimes speculative and lacked analytical depth, often delivered by junior reporters with less experience. Reporters admitted that they only needed to make minor

adjustments from the previous report and change the report’s angle, add some data if there were any updates, and then summarise the story.

Although live reporting was deemed essential for credibility and audience engagement, the repetitiveness and lack of analysis in the coverage highlighted potential shortcomings in this approach during the pandemic. Earlier studies showed that the imperative for immediacy has ushered in an era where speed often precedes the foundational principles of accuracy and thorough fact-checking (see Karlsson 2011; Rosenberg and Feldman 2008). Due to strict deadlines and the requirement to produce content continuously, especially information related to COVID-19, journalists were trapped in a cycle where delivering news quickly takes precedence over accuracy. Some previous studies also found these findings during crises (e.g., Buhl et al. 2019; Lewis et al. 2005).

For example, the observed television, SCTV, changed some news packages to live reporting during the pandemic in 2020. An analysis of SCTV news rundowns revealed that 70-80% of their news content was from news gathering in the field, with live stand-up segments being the highest content. The table below shows a rundown comparison before the pandemic (2019) and mid-pandemic (2020).

Table 5.1 Newscasts Comparison of Pre-Pandemic (2019) and Mid-Pandemic (2020)

RUNDOWN 1	Date: Tuesday, 26 May 2020 In: 12.00; Duration: 43 min	RUNDOWN 2	Date: 11 Nov 2019 In: 12.00; Duration: 21 min
SLUG/ TYPE	STORY	SLUG/ TYPE	STORY
Headline 1/VO Headline 2/VO Headline 3/VO	Amateur air balloon President visit MRT, inspect the health protocol Giant snake	Headline 1/VO Headline 2/VO Headline 3/VO	250 shops burned down Mutilation, body in a suitcase Queues for good conduct certificate
Grand Opening		Grand Opening	
Air Balloon/ PKG	Police prohibited amateurs from flying air balloons	Mutilation/ PKG	The mutilated bodies were dumped into the forest
Lockdown/ PKG	Reckless for going hometown during the pandemic	Graves damaged/ PKG	Local cemetery vandalized, dozens of graves destroyed
Lockdown 1/ LIVE	Live report – location 1 – Cikampek	Market Fire/ PKG	250 stalls were caught in the market fire
Lockdown 2/ LIVE	Live report – location 2 – Kalimalang	Return to school/ PKG	Back to school after the classroom collapsed, killing two people

Lockdown 3/ LIVE	Live report – location 3 – Cikupa	Certificate queues/ PKG	Civil servants candidates queued up to obtain a police record certificate
Restrictions/ VO	Jakarta to tighten mobility restriction	Civil servant/ VO+GPX+ Screen Wall	News analysis, data, figure & commentary
Permit/ VO	Exit and enter Jakarta permit	Prabowo/ VO	Indonesia Minister of Defence meets MPs
Teaser/ VO	Close border to reduce COVID- 19 spreads	Teaser/ VO	Indonesian artist, known to the world as space artists with his astronomical art
Commercial Break 1		Commercial Break 1	
Borders/ VO	Abandoned Jakarta’s borders	TV Magazine/ Long Format Story	An Indonesian artist participated in the Mars Desert Research Station by NASA. Story about his artwork, exhibition, and engaged in space science art in various countries
Border 1/ LIVE	Live report – location 4 – Jakarta	Teaser/ VO	19-year-old Indonesian wins The Voice of Germany 2019
Border 2/ LIVE	Live report – location 5 – Bekasi	Commercial Break 2	
Border 3/ LIVE	Live report – location 6 – Banten	Check Facts/ VO+ GPX+ Apps	Hot issues today: Check for fact, bias and fake news from Liptuan 6 Apps
Border 4/ LIVE	Live report – location 7 – Airport	International News/ PKG	Three viral videos from all over the world
Teaser/ VO	People ignoring social distancing	Winner of The Voice/ PKG	Indonesian young singer wins “The Voice” of Germany
Commercial Break 2		Grand Closing	
Arrogant / PKG	Arrogant police refused to wear a face mask		
COVID 1/ LIVE	Live report – location 8 – Quarantine centre		
COVID 2/ GPX	Update COVID-19 cases		
	President inspect the implementation of health protocol		
Ignore / PKG	Jakarta people’s ignoring large scale social distancing		
Teaser/ VO	Donations for animals		
Commercial Break 3			
Donation/ PKG	Donate for animal’s feed during the pandemic		
International/ PKG	Hairdresser positive COVID-19		
Teaser/ VO	Celebrating Eid at home		
Commercial Break 4			

Citizen Journo/ PKG	Celebrating Eid at home		
Snake/ PKG	Giant snake entering a resident area		
Grand Closing			

The table above demonstrates how television values the place for reporting by allocating eight live reports, as previous studies emphasised that live reporting adds immediacy and authenticity to news coverage. Journalists on the ground can provide real-time updates, witness important developments, and interview key figures directly (see Cushion 2015; Tuggle and Huffman 2007; Zelizer 2007). It shows two news programme rundowns from mid-pandemic 2020 and pre-pandemic 2019. It also demonstrates the shift towards live reporting, with live reporting higher in 2020. Due to the resources required for live reporting, fewer capabilities were available for in-depth and analytical stories, which were common before the pandemic. The number of news packages remained similar, but there were qualitative differences between pre-and mid-pandemic packages. During the pandemic, packages were shorter, lacked analysis, and rarely included data, figures, or graphics, as these require specialised newsroom equipment. Observation discovered that the investigative and documentary unit had been disbanded since the pandemic, and the journalists were reassigned to daily news beats. According to Jacob, a senior journalist, they were unable to cover stories outside of their region due to travel restrictions. He also suspected that management used the pandemic as an excuse to disband the investigative and documentary units, which are costly to maintain.

The participants, particularly television journalists, seem to have re-established their journalistic authority as audiences reconnected with and placed their trust in traditional media. On the other hand, the abundance of information compelled television journalists to deliver news rapidly. Being the first to present fresh or breaking news became a significant factor in news-making decisions throughout the pandemic. The findings indicate that the pressure to be swift and keep up with the rolling news cycle challenged news routines and threatened journalism quality. Nevertheless, they continued to prioritise the latest news events, often implementing live reports from the scene. These observations highlight a possible contradiction in the way news is presented over time. Previous studies on rolling broadcast news reporting have shown that there is a tendency to focus on keeping the news live and quick and the desire to be the first to break the news, often at the expense of accuracy and depth (Lewis and Cushion 2009; Rosenberg and Feldman 2008). This type of

journalism is known as fast journalism (Le Masurier 2015). However, in cases where there is a lot of airtimes filled with live reports but very little actual news being reported, the news takes on a different temporality, which cannot be described as fast.

In this study, SCTV maintained this practice as they believed live reporting was integral to their identity. This aligns with previous studies (e.g., Couldry 2000; Hallin 1986; Livingstone 2011; Zelizer 2007), which suggest that physical presence at a news event can lend credibility to a journalist's reporting and establish them as legitimate authorities. The concepts of 'liveness', 'eye-witnesses', and 'proximity', as discussed in Usher (2019) and Zelizer (2017), help explain why SCTV prioritised live reporting during the pandemic crisis. Journalistic reporting is normatively based on events and 'eyewitnessing', which are significant factors in the interaction of the place with the news output. In news production, the word 'there' has a meaning of a particular place. "They were there" and "On having been there" imply a physical presence on the site that enables journalists to accomplish their reporting (Zelizer, 2007, 2017). SCTV consistently conducts live reports from the location, indicating that being "there" at a certain place means journalists become eyewitnesses. "Eyewitnessing" is considered a hallmark of good journalism. "Live events" for television journalists make journalism more credible under on-site presence.

When journalists claim to offer 'live' reporting, the viewers highly emphasise the close proximity of the reporter to the site where the event occurs (e.g., Cushion and Thomas 2013; Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011; Tuggle and Huffman 2001). The reliance on live reports from the field resulted in more news content but less journalism. This was because the viewing public was subjected to constant live pieces from the field, giving them the impression of constant newness during unfolding events. Behind the scenes, however, the newsroom was operating well below capacity, with relatively little original news gathering.

5.7 Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of social distancing measures have profoundly impacted how journalists work. This has raised questions about the significance of the physical place where journalists carry out their work. This chapter explores how the pandemic and associated physical distancing restrictions shaped the context of news-making during the outbreak, examining the relationship between journalists and place. A central finding emerging from this study is that journalists from television (SCTV) and two digital newsrooms (Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia) value the newsroom as an ideal physical

place for news production. Place-based reconfigurations have consequences for journalistic routines, professional identities, and perceptions of journalistic authority.

First, the established material settings for news production were compelled to undergo significant reconfigurations. This study revealed that three studied newsrooms showed varying degrees of dependency on the physical newsroom. The newsroom was partially occupied as the team was small; some journalists made news from newsrooms while others worked remotely. This finding demonstrates that television journalists show a stronger attachment and dependency on the physical newsroom, showing a working culture favouring physical proximity.

Meanwhile, journalists in digital newsrooms recognised the newsroom's importance as a crucial place for news production, even though they were not physically present in the newsroom to the same extent as their television counterparts. Several senior editors at Liputan6.com took turns at the office and coordinated with small teams working in shifts in the newsroom, while the entire BBC Indonesia team worked from home. However, digital journalists value the newsroom as the centre of news production, and for pragmatic reasons, a physical newsroom is seen as essential for fostering a productive working environment (Usher 2019). Journalists from the three observed newsrooms express their preference for retaining their jobs in the newsroom, highlighting the importance of communication, collaboration, and a sense of community (Robinson 2011; Schmitz Weiss 2015). Usher's studies (2014) in US newspaper newsrooms further confirm the importance of the newsroom for journalists. Here, the centrality of the newsroom remains significant for the news-making process.

My findings also indicate that the reconfiguration of both television and digital newsrooms poses challenges for journalists. The shift to online editorial meetings changes how newsrooms operate, but the findings of this study highlight a significant drawback. While the convenience of virtual collaboration is apparent (e.g., García-Avilés 2021), the depth of meaningful and constructive communication among practitioners seems to be lost in the process. It shows that spontaneous exchanges, nuanced discussions, and the vibrant energy of a traditional newsroom are often casualties of the move to online platforms. The absence of physical presence diminishes the quality of interactions, impeding the organic flow of ideas that once characterised face-to-face meetings.

This finding highlights the professionalism of journalists during the reconfiguration of the place. This involves a set of consistent practices that both the news organisation and journalists adhere to, encompassing specific practices and attributes (Deuze 2008). The

evidence above demonstrates that journalists maintain professionalism despite the physical place changes. Journalists discover ways to establish connections and engage in new practices while transitioning from the physical newsroom to the remote newsroom system.

Another key finding is that the place relates to the symbol of journalist authority. In this study, many television journalists consider a newsroom as a place of power. Prior to the pandemic, the newsroom was a thriving place for interaction between journalists, guests, and other media people. This indicates that the symbolic significance of a newsroom is not only tied to its physical location, architecture, and layout, as these factors remain the same during the pandemic. The symbolic power of a place is also influenced by the people who inhabit it. When these dynamics are significantly disrupted, a place can quickly lose its unique atmosphere (Couldry 2000; Papacharissi 2015).

My research has shown that television journalists place a high value on being present in the locations from which they report. This is in contrast with the two digital newsrooms, where journalists can work from anywhere. The findings suggest that live field reports are gaining more importance than pre-recorded packages or in-depth analyses, especially during major events or crises, where the real-time aspect of television reporting is highly valued. Previous research supports this, emphasising the significance of ‘liveness’ in establishing television’s unique status within the news media industry (Berkowitz 1992; White 2004).

Facing various professional, commercial, and practical challenges when broadcasting live, television journalists navigate temporal, material, and normative aspects of changes in their routines that warrant further discussion. They consider being live at crucial pandemic-related locations essential, positioning themselves as connected to the national community they serve. Given the nature of the pandemic—lacking a physical epicentre and visible spectacle, and with events unfolding relatively slowly—although journalists were live reports from a specific location, they were not witnessing an actual live event.

In this context, criticism might arise that journalists failed to fully comprehend the places they reported from (see Usher 2019). Some scholars contend that live reporting locations often symbolise journalists’ efforts to vividly portray and personify abstract issues as eyewitnesses to establish credibility and authority (Huxford 2007; Scannell 2014). However, when a reporter goes live from a location not coinciding with an unfolding event, Huxford (2007) argues that this amounts to nothing more than a perception of proximity, perpetuating a sense of placelessness.

In sum, examining the dynamics of the newsroom before and during the pandemic highlights significant changes in the newsroom; however, it remains the central hub of the

news organisation. The newsroom serves as a focal point for communication between reporters and editors, and this study discovered that this dynamic becomes disrupted when the newsroom undergoes changes. The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a reconsideration, perhaps even a fundamental change in journalists' relationships with the place, strengthening their ties to the place.

Chapter 6

Objects of Journalism During the Pandemic

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the reconfiguration of the newsroom as a consequence of the pandemic in which I argued that an attachment existed between journalists and ‘place’ during the crisis. This chapter aims to investigate another dimension of this attachment further how shifting journalism objects affected journalistic practices during the pandemic. Objects of journalism are implicated in the institutional, organisational, and individual routines, rituals, and relationships within journalism (Moran and Usher 2020). This chapter explores how journalists have responded to the pandemic as their access to the objects in newsrooms is limited. Disruption in the conventional newsroom provides a background to understand how journalists experience news objects and their implications for journalism.

This chapter discusses the role of digital-enabled objects and the relationship between journalists and digital-enabled objects, a topic that has received little empirical research. Using the socio-materiality framework (Anderson and De Maeyer 2015; Boczkowski 2015), this chapter shows how digital-enabled objects play a role in news-making and how journalists negotiate the necessity for objects in three news organisations in Indonesia during the pandemic. This inquiry addresses the third research question: How did objects of journalism contribute to the news-making process during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The chapter begins by exploring how journalists rely on objects within the newsroom. I outline the reasons behind the attachment between journalists and objects of journalism. The reliance on objects creates tension among journalists because they depend on specific digital-enabled objects. The second part of this chapter unpacks the objects in a virtual environment, as journalists had to leave the newsroom and adapt to remote work. It will examine the range of communication with soft objects that facilitate remote collaboration, as well as the challenges of transitioning to a virtual newsroom because of the demands of the digital infrastructure. The third section scrutinises mobile journalism during the pandemic by focusing on the significance of mobile objects as they become relevant for independent work during social distancing. This is followed by the capabilities of multi-skilled journalists during a pandemic while shedding light on the ongoing resistance to embracing multi-skilling. Lastly, the section discusses the creative solutions and innovations employed to

maintain news production and foster the audience despite the pandemic hurdles. Through this analysis, this chapter assesses how objects have shaped the approaches taken by journalists in a crisis environment.

6.2 Journalists' Reliance on Objects as Attachments to the Newsroom

This study shows that despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, journalists in the three observed newsrooms still relied on hard objects and soft objects, particularly digital-enabled objects such as hardware equipment and software for newsroom production. The news gathering, production, and distribution process involves using both types of digital-enabled objects. For journalists, the objects are part of their culture in their daily routine to carry out their professional work and produce high-quality news. Therefore, most journalists persistently maintained their work routines and insisted on going to the newsroom for better news production quality despite the Indonesian government imposing restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.

While all three news organisations in this study relied on various objects, television journalists were found to be highly dependent on specific objects- these included newsroom production systems and digital video production. These objects are not easy to substitute with simpler models and need a centralised workplace due to the complexity of their systems. Technical TV production equipment encompasses hardware (hard objects) and software (soft objects), requiring a centralised setup for seamless connectivity (see Hemingway 2007). These findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has not completely changed the reliance on these objects, particularly in broadcast organisations. Television journalists, for example, used to work in a connected and controlled work environment where they could oversee and manage all content originating from the field (e.g., Gans 2004; Barnett 2011; Cushion 2011).

Rey, the Deputy Chief Editor at SCTV, stated that broadcasting news entirely from home during the pandemic was not feasible. While the technology allows for some degree of remote control, it cannot be fully operated from a distance. Additionally, a senior manager at SCTV explained that online access to media assets, such as videos, audio, and graphics, was restricted due to security concerns. The newsroom production system is intentionally designed as closed, aiming to minimise unnecessary connections with external systems.

Our newsroom production networks operate in a closed system that's strictly regulated and monitored. The equipment we use in the newsroom is limited to this

space because of safety concerns related to our editorial work. That's why we can't broadcast the news entirely from home. The system has some technological features but can't be fully controlled remotely.

Unsurprisingly, television producers repeatedly insisted on the importance of digital production equipment to facilitate smooth communication among the newsroom, the gallery and the studio. The television team showed me that some news objects were only available in the newsroom and could not be replicated in their home office, such as the production control room and the newsroom system. The gallery for controlling the on-air system is an object that consists of hard and soft features and requires a centralised place. It includes monitor screens for managing visuals from within and outside the newsroom, as well as specific digital objects for audio control. A senior producer, Dede, stated that while replacing some computers in the newsroom is possible, it is not enough to just broadcast from outside the studio. Most of the equipment in the control room is still necessary.

As a result, TV journalists insisted on returning to the newsroom in the first wave of the pandemic in March 2020. They also returned in 2021 during the second wave of COVID-19 in Indonesia, which was more severe than the initial wave of 2020. They did so in order to access various objects that were only available in the newsroom and could not be replicated in their home offices. SCTV maintained a skeleton team in their newsroom, with approximately 17–18 people working on a day shift on the 9th floor of the SCTV headquarters in central Jakarta; some worked in the newsroom and some in the control room. The photo below shows the production team in the gallery, where the station centralised objects to monitor video and control audio.

Figure 6.1 Production Control Room SCTV, August 2020



Similarly, the BBC Indonesia radio team returned to the newsroom to broadcast their morning show since they needed the on-air equipment. In the early stages of the pandemic, in March 2020, all team members worked remotely as a safety measure, and the radio platform team attempted to broadcast from home. However, concerns about audio quality prompted the radio team to return to the office and broadcast their morning show and Global News program from the newsroom. Rosali, the News Service Editor, explained this:

We tried doing it from home but just couldn't deliver that satisfactory audio quality. At first, we explored various dubbing techniques at home, and we even tried hiding under a table draped with a blanket to minimise the noise, but it didn't work out. Our morning programme is live, and it's got all this banter and chit-chat, so the equipment we have in the studio outperforms anything we could set up at home.

To ensure that the audio quality met BBC standards, the management obtained permission to allow the radio team to use the digital-enabled objects in the newsroom on the 15th floor of a building in the centre of Jakarta. Broadcast journalists, both TV and radio, were frequently eager to return to their studios because technological infrastructure fully supported their work (see Cherubini et al. p.10). My research finds that a purpose-built studio is the best place because the advanced technological infrastructure fully supports broadcasting operations. The photo below shows the BBC Indonesia broadcaster airing the morning program from the studio using a mixer console and audio equipment.

Figure 6.2 BBC Radio Indonesia, March 2021



Meanwhile, the online news organisation Liputan6.com attempted to return to their central Jakarta building in 2020. The multimedia team required access to their studio to produce multi-platform content, mainly video. While digital newsrooms may not be as equipment-dependent as television studios, which require complex technology for live broadcasts, they still require complex technical equipment. For example, Liputan6.com generally relies less on equipment in the newsroom, but their multimedia team still prefers to produce online video or live streaming from the studio rather than remotely. Nugra, the Managing Editor of Multimedia Liputan6.com, explained:

Setting up from home is not easy. It can be challenging to make sure that hardware and software are compatible with each other. And sometimes, we can't replicate the system. It was designed specifically for the newsroom, so the quality wouldn't be the same even if we tried to duplicate it.

This illustrates the practical implications of their workspace on news production. It echoes findings in the literature, such as Weiss and Domingo's (2010) emphasis on the role of both soft and hard objects in the evolution of online news organisations. Boczkowski's (2015) study, which explores the material turn, also found that news objects play a pivotal role in the evolving landscape of online news production. The trend of employing video news as an

approach to generate content in digital news organisations is exemplified in the study by Kalogeropoulos and Nielsen (2018). The research explored the enterprising digital media approaches of 19 cross-national news organisations. This research found that the decision to invest in online video news is mainly driven by a perception of audience preferences and the priorities of platforms such as Facebook and Google/YouTube. For the same reason, Liputan6.com gradually returned to its studio in August 2020 with a small team.

Figure 6.3 Multimedia Studio Liputan6.com, March 2021



6.3 Authority Beyond the Objects

Such objects of journalism symbolise power in news production to maintain journalists' authority claims. The reliance on objects goes beyond mere physical attachment to hard objects and signifies the embodiment of authority within different media platforms. The three newsrooms researched in this study use technological preferences to represent their professional identity. SCTV, Liputan6.com, and BBC Indonesia implemented a range of objects to enhance their workflow and used several of the same objects to create news videos. These include digital-enabled objects such as cutting-edge hardware, advanced software

applications, and various online systems to manage news gathering, editing, and producing. The pandemic, however, brought about a transformation in the use of these objects.

All three newsrooms use almost the same equipment for news gathering in normal situations to produce video content. There is a difference, however, between the cameras used by television and digital journalists. Television journalists mostly use ENG (Electronic News Gathering) cameras, while digital journalists often use DSLRs (Digital Single-Lens Reflex Cameras) and mobile phones. The two online news organisations, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia prefer mobile phones because most of their video journalists work independently (see Blankenship 2016; Bock 2011). A television journalist who moved to online media shared his experience of feeling uneasy when he first started using simpler equipment. Initially, he felt uncertain and less like a professional journalist as he used smaller equipment, which made him feel more like an amateur. The journalist explained to me: “When I moved to online media without my regular TV equipment, I felt uneasy. Using a larger camera before, I then switched to a DSLR, a digital photo camera, somewhat feeling less confident. It was like stepping back, feeling more like an amateur than a pro journalist.” The sentiment is understandable, as Sjøvaag’s (2011) study, which discusses amateur images, modern technology and global news, emphasises amateur images in contrast to those produced by professional journalists in mainstream media related to journalistic authority. The difference also normally happens in live field reporting. All three news organisations use live-streaming equipment. Yet, when it comes to covering major events, television journalists typically have a cameraperson operating an ENG camera and a reporter conducting live reports, or they use a satellite truck (see also Hemingway 2007).

While SCTV, Liputan6.com, and BBC Indonesia used similar digital-enabled objects for news gathering before the pandemic, they employed different tools for news production. Specifically, while all three newsrooms produced videos, SCTV was the only one to broadcast them live on a daily basis, whereas the two online newsrooms only live stream on special occasions. This distinction in the objects used for news production can be attributed to the different mediums through which each newsroom disseminates its content. SCTV, as a television broadcaster, places a greater emphasis on live broadcasts, which necessitates a different set of objects and equipment compared to online newsrooms. Multimedia is just one of the many divisions of Liputan6.com, while in BBC Indonesia, the video is considered one section. Both of them produce video content that can be consumed online, but they have the flexibility to determine when and how their content is created and published. Therefore, their equipment is less complicated than television technology.

Table 6.1 shows the technological preferences and objects used by three news organisations before and during the pandemic. The objects include video production equipment for news gathering, production, and broadcasting. During the outbreak, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia, except for radio, could operate their news equipment remotely. They replaced some equipment with simpler models that could be operated from a distance (highlighted in green). Meanwhile, TV newsrooms and BBC radio, with their closed integrated production systems, retained their original equipment (highlighted in yellow). Objects not highlighted in green or yellow were used before and during the pandemic.

Table 6.1 Video Production Equipment Used by Three News Organisations Before and During the Pandemic

Objects	SCTV	Liputan 6.com	BBC Indonesia
News Gathering Equipment	-ENG (Electronic News Gathering) camera -DSLR camera -Mobile phone (occasionally) -Drone	-DSLR camera -ENG (Electronic News Gathering) camera -Mobile phone -Drone	-DSLR camera -ENG (Electronic News Gathering) camera -Mobile phone
Live Report Equipment	4G live streaming+ ENG camera	4G live streaming+ mobile phone	4G live streaming+ mobile phone
Live Streaming	N/A	-Studio box -livestream -Social media	Social media
News Editing Software	-Avid (News Programme) -Final Cut Pro (Long Form Programme)	-Final Cut Pro -Adobe premiere	Final Cut pro
Apps			Apps: -Stitch -Jupiter -Project-O-Matic
News Production	Video wall Virtual Reality	Green screen	Green screen
Newsroom Production System	INews server Quantel digital production	iCloud server	iCloud server
Broadcast System	Studio and broadcast television production	Mini studio and simple broadcast television production	Studio Mixer console
Outside Broadcast	Satellite News Gathering (SNG)/ Satellite truck	N/A	N/A

The growth of digital news organisations calls for utilising software-based tools or soft objects, such as content management systems and various applications. For instance, video journalists from BBC Indonesia employed many apps on their devices. Some of these include ‘Stitch,’ a database of BBC videos; ‘Jupiter,’ a cloud-based library for footage; and ‘Project Automatic,’ which automatically adapts video formats (vertical, horizontal, square) and incorporates text. Iko, a Senior Video Journalist at BBC Indonesia, stated:

I’m comfortable with various software because it really assists in preparing content for multiple platforms. The content I created was broadcast on television, our digital platform, and social media. I can work remotely since most of these technologies are software-based.

The BBC Indonesia radio team, however, encountered some challenges related to the objects they used during the pandemic. Unlike television broadcasting, which involves both audio and video, radio broadcasting solely relies on audio, making it a simpler process. Still, radio requires several hard objects in the newsroom, such as mixing consoles and other equipment, which created difficulties in adapting to remote working. Likewise, SCTV struggled to replace certain digital-enabled objects with simpler, remotely operated models. SCTV newsroom production systems use AVID iNews Server and Quantel Digital Video Production systems, which are widely used in television stations. The AVID iNews Server is a newsroom content management system that facilitates story writing and editing, rundown management, and team collaboration. The Quantel Digital Video Production system is a high-end broadcast system offering a range of editing, effects, and compositing tools.

SCTV producers also depend heavily on certain hard objects, such as a massive video wall display system surrounding the entire television studio. The video wall is designed to display complex content and show it with immersive technology during normal times. Schudson (2015) points out that hardware is not easily changed, and this was evident as this object became inaccessible in March 2020 and could not be replaced in remote settings. Cinta, one of the senior producers, expressed disappointment when they could not access the newsroom to take advantage of this technology. In March 2020, they were only able to create simple graphics from their computers. Cinta told me at the time:

We have a compelling story about the COVID vaccine. The video wall is supposed to display complex content because it is equipped with immersive technology. We can’t

replace it with any other equipment because it has its own unique features and complexities.

The dependence on objects goes beyond physical attachment; it also symbolises the embodiment of authority within journalists. For example, in television production, the Satellite News Gathering (SNG) truck transcends its role as a hard object for achieving high-quality audio and visual output and seamless connectivity. The outside broadcast van, a mobile vehicle that can go anywhere, is the object that represents a TV signature to maintain television's unique live reporting and becomes a symbol of power and professional status (Saptorini et al. 2021). The Satellite News Gathering (SNG) truck in the photo below represents the television team's professional esteem and identity.

Figure 6.4 The Satellite News Gathering (SNG) Truck



Due to social restrictions during the pandemic the use of SNG trucks was severely limited. As an alternative, television pools were established for shared coverage, which included several important areas for COVID-19 news coverage, such as hospitals, testing centres, the President's palace, and government briefings. This kind of practice is not common in a highly competitive environment of TV news (see Ilan, 2021). Deputy Chief Editor SCTV, Rey, told me that, "TV pooling means that all TV stations use the same material, and if we always use the same sources, we might end up with poor-quality content". Diva, an SCTV reporter, added that "I cannot stand beside the SNG truck because the logo is not always our TV station logo. It's important for viewers to identify our channel." When a

news crew arrives on the scene with their SNG equipment, it's not just about reporting; it is a declaration of their authority.

As a substitute, SCTV journalists turned to 4G live streaming equipment for live reporting, a digital-enabled object that has become commonplace among non-professional journalists, such as bloggers. Some TV journalists fondly recalled their experiences of being present on-location with their prominently branded large broadcast trucks. Many participants mentioned that the presence of SNG trucks from different news organisations at news event locations serves as a form of validation for television journalists working in the field (see Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011). Alex, who usually serves as a field producer responsible for the SNG, had to join the assignment editors' team and refrain from fieldwork during the pandemic. He said:

It's not just about the quality of live reporting. Of course, SNG is stable and live streaming sometimes has connection issues. But it's more than that; it's about our pride, our identity as TV people.

Having SNG trucks signifies the presence of television professionals at major events. I found that some television journalists experienced an identity crisis when they found themselves unable to use specific objects, which, for a long time, had been representative of their power and professional authority (see Cushion et al. 2014). This happened during the COVID-19 pandemic when social distancing measures were being strictly enforced. Meanwhile, Lotz (2014, p. 54) notes that "live broadcast has long been perceived as an inherent technological attribute of television." It represented both a professional judgment and a technological imperative before the digital era (Tuggle and Huffman 2010). In today's digital era, the advancement of technology has continued to keep live news reporting as a defining characteristic of professional television news broadcasting (Ilan, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic, however, disrupted this traditional model of broadcasting. Lotz's (2014) point becomes relevant here, not only because of the long-standing importance of live broadcasting but also because it demonstrates how external disruptions can affect the relationship between objects and journalism, leading to a decline in journalists' sense of pride in their profession.

It was unsurprising that SCTV journalists still attempted to utilise certain physical objects. In my field notes, I documented meetings that discussed preparations for a special program celebrating Indonesia's Independence Day in August 2020.

A bulletin producer in the newsroom is asking the news leaders attending the meeting virtually about the potential of deploying their SNG truck. There seems to be no guarantee that the truck can be used. The meeting is quickly growing tense as one manager raises the possibility of resorting to TV pool sources. The team is expressing dissatisfaction; using the TV pool would mean receiving identical footage to all other TV stations and possibly not being able to operate their own truck (Field notes, 3rd August 2020).

These field notes underline the significance of physical objects, such as the SNG truck, in defining the operations and identity of a broadcasting team. The team was uneasy about relinquishing control over their unique objects. Overall, the extent of dependency on specific objects during the pandemic was important in determining why the virtual newsroom model was not smoothly implemented across all newsrooms. Digital newsrooms continued to rely on particular objects in the newsroom when moving online, and television newsrooms faced even greater challenges in attempting to transition to a hybrid model.

6.4 Digital-enabled Objects and Challenges in Virtual Environments

Transitioning to a virtual newsroom posed several challenges. As traditional newsrooms were compelled to shift to a virtual environment due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the availability of digital-enabled objects for journalistic routines became challenging. The three newsrooms under study encountered different challenges when adapting the objects in remote work. Television and digital media employ different tools and applications, and the impact of working from home varies between them. In my observations, journalists in digital newsrooms were more adaptable to the virtual environment when they had to transition from the object-centric newsroom, possibly because their type of news production does not necessitate complex physical objects. The seamless interaction between hard and soft objects in the newsroom did not translate smoothly into a remote working environment. Despite the availability of equipment for content production at home, many journalists reported that home internet connectivity - crucial for transferring video and audio files - did not always meet their needs.

Several TV producers highlighted the differences in equipment requirements between television and other media platforms. Rey, the Deputy Chief Editor of SCTV, detailed the challenges of fostering a new culture and remote work within her team.

Since the outbreak began, our technical team has had to configure systems to facilitate remote connections. Sometimes, the solution felt inadequate for most newsroom members. However, we equipped our team with the best possible tools for remote work.

Some TV producers said the process was not as straightforward as the Deputy Chief Editor suggested. SCTV senior producer Cinta provided an example of how she could accomplish only 60% of her work remotely, which is still insufficient to broadcast a newscast. Routine tasks in the newsroom, such as video previews and graphic checks, became nearly impossible or excessively time-consuming in a remote setting. She depended on her newsroom system's web clients to create rundowns and could only access media assets through an FTP (File Transfer Protocol) server. As per a technical staff member, an additional server was established to bridge the gap between the newsroom and remote workers. Cinta voiced her disappointment:

We can only view media assets from the field but not preview the final edited videos before going on air. It's so frustrating. What is considered simple, everyday tasks in the newsroom, like previewing videos and checking graphics, become almost impossible, if not take longer. It's more time-consuming.

Conversely, the advent of digital technology has rapidly propelled digital equipment in journalistic practices, with journalists increasingly leaning on digital technology for news production, as Boczkowski (2004) noted. This trend was evidenced in two digital newsrooms despite initial hiccups in adapting to the virtual environment. The BBC Indonesia, for instance, encouraged its staff to work from home. Ayu, the Deputy News Service Editor of BBC Indonesia, stated:

Our initial plan was to carry out all tasks remotely in accordance with regulations. However, we experienced some technical difficulties. Therefore, after thoroughly

evaluating the situation and potential risks, we decided to allow one producer to use the equipment in the newsroom for our live stream.

Meanwhile, the Liputan6 multimedia team returned to their studio to produce live-streaming content using digital-enabled objects in the newsrooms. They faced the digital infrastructure challenge during remote work. Nielsen and Sambrook's study (2016, p. 21) found that many broadcasters have struggled to attract audiences to their streaming platforms, with daily news programs receiving little attention. Liputan6.com, one of Indonesia's pioneers of live streaming media, however, could captivate audience interest with its live streams. Therefore, when the pandemic hit and adjustments to the virtual environment were necessary, they frequently added live streaming through social media platforms. The transition to a virtual newsroom presents several challenges due to the digital infrastructure requirements. The infrastructure within the newsroom, where hardware and software seamlessly interact, does not translate as smoothly to a remote working environment. For example, even though the necessary equipment for content production may be available at home, stable internet connectivity - a key requirement for transferring video and audio files - often proves inadequate. Several participants shared their struggles:

We suppose we can do live streaming from Facebook or Instagram, but in my location, the 4G connection often drops to 3G (Reporter, Liputan6.com).

Whenever I host a program from home, my producer tells me that my audio sometimes drops out, and the visuals freeze (News presenter, SCTV).

My internet is slow and sometimes unstable, even though I've upgraded the service (Video Journalist, BBC Indonesia)

Another challenge relates to telework - a crucial component of the pandemic driven shift to remote working. Platforms like Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp, and Slack have become globally dominant tools for video conferencing and messaging (Garcia-Avilés 2021). All three examined newsrooms employed Zoom and WhatsApp, largely because of their popularity among Indonesians. Although telework has been found to "increase efficiency, reduce the risk of burnout, and weaken ties with colleagues and employers" (Baert et al., 2020), this study found that software designed to facilitate remote work often did not meet

efficiency expectations, as many senior participants took some time to adapt to managing a virtual newsroom. The software designed to facilitate remote working often falls short of efficiency. Many of the participants had difficulties managing a virtual newsroom. The same challenges are found in many newsroom studies (e.g., Arafat and Porlezza 2023; Matsilele 2022; Santos and Mare 2021). Editor in Chief of Liputan6.com, Irina, shared about the initial hurdles:

The first week was not smooth. We faced some technical issues every step of the way. We used to have online discussions for coordination before the pandemic. But it was difficult when we had to coordinate with the whole team.

Unlike Garcia-Avilés et al.'s (2022) research findings that journalists quickly incorporated teleworking in response to the disruptions caused by the pandemic this study shows that the television newsrooms took some time to embrace remote work as journalists needed to adjust to some news production objects. As observed in this study, the technical challenges associated with remote work remained a constant hurdle for most newsroom members. Factors like inconsistent home setups, limited technical support for problem-solving, and difficulty establishing an efficient remote workflow heightened frustration among the newsroom team. This situation mirrors Hoak's (2021, p. 855) study, which reported that journalists in the US were confronted with an atypical and continually evolving norm. This norm included using new technology with minimal or no training, disseminating news outside traditional newsrooms, and conducting online interviews. While journalists in the three observed newsrooms attempted to adjust to working from virtual newsrooms, they also adapted by using mobile objects, which is a fundamental part of this transition.

6.5 Leveraging Mobile Objects

Using mobile objects became a vital means to optimise news gathering during the pandemic. These portable objects allowed journalists to work independently to maintain a safe distance from others while maintaining social distancing guidelines. These objects, including cameras (DSLR, smartphone, action cameras) and accessories (tripods, microphones, stabilisers), along with mobile journalism tools like smartphones, wireless microphones, and editing apps, enhance news gathering capabilities. As Hjorth (2009) articulates, the capabilities of these objects facilitate mobility, co-presence, and interconnection. Journalists from three studied newsrooms consistently referred to digital-enabled objects such as smartphones, DSLR

cameras and other lightweight, compact objects to produce their news during the pandemic which is consistent with previous studies conducted in varying crisis environments (e.g., Tandoc and Takahashi 2016; Zafra 2018). They also employed various soft objects like applications as the most functional mobile objects throughout the outbreak. In the photo below, journalists operate two different digital-enabled objects. The ENG (Electronic News Gathering) camera (on the left) was replaced with a simple hard object, a DSLR camera (on the right), for news gathering.

Figure 6.5 ENG versus DLSR



Mobile objects, with their utility in news gathering, provided solutions to the dilemmas of continued work and field reporting without a physical presence in the newsroom. Iko, a BBC Indonesia senior video journalist, said the tradition of operating mobile objects is very helpful in situations during the outbreak. Echoing Iko, Managing Editor of Liputan6.com, Nugra, said that the adaptability of mobile objects ensured team members' safety and allowed for agile and responsive reporting. He said, "Our multimedia team is not big, but with simple equipment, we can stay connected with our audience in real-time during the pandemic."

This relates to Chadwick's 2014 study in the US that discovered online and mobile technologies have transformed how television journalists work daily. Television journalists suggest that having a strong web presence and mobile apps is becoming increasingly important. Other study shows that TV media are not necessarily reluctant to adopt digital technologies because they have constantly been evolving and experiencing the "challenges of

embracing” new tools during disruptive times (Braun 2015, cited in Garcia-Perdomo 2020, p. 6). In contrast, this study found that television journalists still rely on traditional objects in the newsroom, suggesting limited progress in embracing new objects at remote work.

Moreover, a study of the development of mobile journalism in Indonesia during the pandemic revealed that mobile journalism puts forward the ability of journalists to have digital multi-tasking skills (see Sukmono and Junaedi 2021). Online and mobile technologies are gaining significance for journalists in local or regional areas, owing to the independent nature of their work, often conducted far from headquarters. My research, however, revealed that some television journalists hesitated to adopt mobile journalism fully and were reluctant to develop multi-skilling. This reluctance may arise from working in environments with sizable teams and diverse roles.

6.5.1 The Indispensable Role of Multiskilled Journalists

The adoption of multiskilling practices, particularly in the role of video journalists (VJ), became crucial during the pandemic’s challenging times. This approach facilitated journalists in sustaining their work while also safeguarding the health and safety of both the reporters and their subjects. All of the three newsrooms observed in this study employed individuals designated as video journalists (VJ), also referred to as mobile journalists (MOJO) or solo journalists (SoJo). These professionals used digital-enabled objects like digital cameras and software applications to capture events and edit their visuals.

BBC Indonesia, in particular, is well-established and familiar with the concept of video journalists (VJs). Typically, their video team operates independently as VJs, mainly focusing on feature stories rather than time-bound daily news stories, which is the responsibility of the article team. Senior Video Journalist at BBC Indonesia, Iko, explained:

The video team is responsible for creating features, current affairs or sidebars stories to generate more interesting story ideas. We are free to explore different technologies, mobile hardware, and software because our focus is not on speed. In video production, we go beyond just delivering news quickly. We are given the liberty to be the first to tell the story as comprehensively as possible and create quality content.

As described by Iko, their tasks include capturing video footage, conducting interviews, writing, editing, and distributing stories on the web or through social media. Align with this,

Burum's (2017) study, refers to these comprehensive approaches as a "holistic form of multimedia storytelling". As VJs, BBC Indonesia journalists are mainly responsible for news stories on their digital platform, but sometimes they create content for different platforms. Dwimar, another VJ at BBC Indonesia, shared his experience:

For example, I received an order from London to create a TV news package. So, I produced one package for TV and another for our digital platform (BBC Indonesia). The visual treatments I do are different for TV and digital. Although the basics are the same, we need additional skills to approach the same story differently, such as using a fast-paced style for digital content. My equipment is mostly simple: camera DLSR and then editing them on a laptop.

The BBC's long-standing recognition of Video Journalists (VJs) and their role in shaping journalistic practices is well-documented. Studies have investigated the effects of multiskilling on BBC national and regional newsroom practices. Over two decades ago, Cottle's (1999) study addressed the ongoing debate about the benefits and drawbacks of multiskilling, especially as it pertained to specialist skills. Some considered the advent of multimedia and multi-skilled work at the BBC Newscentre to render single-skilled specialists outdated. However, a subsequent study has suggested that the BBC's policy of encouraging but not mandating multiskilling was likely to create two categories of journalists: single-skilled specialists known for their journalistic standards and multiskilled journalists prized for their versatility (Saltzis and Dickinson 2008).

At Liputan6.com and SCTV, the practice of multi-skilled journalism is more a matter of choice than an obligation. Despite the convergence era prompting the emergence of multi-skills, not all journalists in these converged newsrooms are multi-skilled. There is no management directive necessitating journalists to diversify their skills across platforms. This approach does not align with Western studies on news convergence (e.g., Quandt and Singer, 2009; Quinn, 2015) but is rather influenced by practical considerations (e.g., Ambardi 2014). Nugra, Managing Editor Multimedia Liputan6.com, provided insights into their approach:

For simple stories that can be captured using basic devices like smartphones or light cameras, we can operate as VJs. Some of us create video demands and video stories called Liputan6 Plus, all using simple technology.

At SCTV, Video Journalists are typically assigned to specific beat reporting, such as covering events at the presidential office. Andy, for instance, works independently with a lightweight camera and uses a smartphone as a backup. He mainly focuses on VJ work for hard news stories. He sends the footage first, then writes the script, and the producer handles the editing. Although he can also edit visuals, the video editor takes care of it for daily news due to time constraints caused by the need to cover other events. However, he collaborates with a reporter instead of working as a VJ for in-depth or long stories.

I don't remember when I officially was a VJ. First, I was a cameraperson, but since I'm interested in writing, I don't mind going to the field alone sometimes. There are moments when I enjoy working alone, but there are also times when I feel tired and prefer to go with a reporter.

Other SCTV journalists, mostly involved in the daily news, follow traditional roles, with reporters and camerapersons in the field handing their material to visual editors to edit their stories. The news manager clarified that this was not due to a lack of proper tools or advanced technology but rather that a single person handling all aspects of news production can be more time-consuming and less efficient for everyday reporting. I observed where the team was still gathering content in the field as the story was broadcast.

6.5.2 The Gap in Digital Technology Skills

Despite simple and diverse mobile objects facilitating news production during the pandemic the concept of being multi-skilled is not universally accepted. Perreault and Stanfield (2018) noted that mobile journalism is one of modern journalism's most rapidly expanding areas. Yet, mobile journalists often find themselves in a challenging position, balancing the demands of traditional print and broadcast journalism with the emerging dynamics of digital journalism. This study seems to have an ongoing debate about whether multi-skilling and versatility in handling mobile objects are necessary to produce effective news during a pandemic.

In the era of media convergence, multi-skilled journalists may experience significant stress due to the time-consuming demands of multi-platform work and multi-tasking, coupled with competitive pressures (Saltzis and Dickinson 2008; Singer 2004). This situation is exacerbated during crisis periods such as the pandemic. Some participants argued that

journalists might not be suited for additional tasks as VJs during such a crisis. An SCTV reporter said: “Not everyone can cope with the amount of work we endure during the pandemic.” Another reporter pointed out, “This is not within my job description, and I am not compensated for this extra work.” While a camera person stated, “There should be a balance between our efforts and what we receive from the company.”

The opinions expressed by TV journalists can be understood in the context of television being a traditional medium. A study on print journalists in Egypt (Arafat and Porlezza, 2023; p.9) during the pandemic shows that “most journalists still lack essential technology skills, and some older journalists find it difficult to use basic digital tools.” In Indonesia, the technological skill set of TV journalists seems to be diverse. While some veteran journalists struggle to keep up with modern technology and digital tools, it is not just the older generation. Surprisingly, some younger journalists were reluctant to learn these skills for various reasons. Based on interviews and observations, it became evident that journalists have a wide range of reasons for their resistance. The limited availability of training opportunities presents challenges for both older and young journalists. However, resistance to change is prevalent in both groups. Veteran journalists who are used to traditional methods and older equipment may be hesitant to adopt modern tools due to their comfort with the practices they have been using for a long time, while younger ones feel overwhelmed by the constant need to adapt, paradoxically favouring traditional methods. Workload constraints pose challenges as well, with seasoned journalists juggling busy schedules while entry-level counterparts struggle to balance demands with skill development.

As digital skills in television are varied, I found that some senior journalists are multi-skilled and operate different digital-enabled objects. For instance, Karunia, who has been with SCTV for 25 years and enjoys his role as a VJ for a weekly news program. In his work, he handles a variety of equipment, ranging from large, heavy devices to those that are small and lightweight. Dede, another multi-skilled journalist, understands that not every journalist needs to be multi-skilled. Dede is a news anchor, senior producer, and video journalist who has covered several major international events solo. SCTV often sends him because of his multitasking abilities, which include live reporting. He also gathers feature stories. However, in his role as a news talent coordinator, he prioritises recruiting individuals with strong presenting skills, even if they are not multi-skilled journalists. He explained:

Being on camera and engaging an audience isn't for everyone, and not all of us have that broadcast-ready voice. Of course, if someone can handle mobile equipment and

multi-talent, that's a plus, a bonus. But finding a person who is genuinely good at TV presenting? That's a real challenge.

On the other hand, Dimar, a VJ who began his career in digital TV, moved to a television station and then joined BBC Indonesia, feels that multi-skilling is crucial to enhance the quality of his work and foster creativity. He explained that,

I do this work for personal satisfaction and with a future-oriented perspective. Regardless of the outcome, I take pride in my work, and it might someday set a standard for other media organisations.

Similarly, Fanno, another VJ at BBC Indonesia, who had experience with four national television stations in Indonesia before joining BBC Indonesia, has participated in numerous training programs to refine his skills. He acknowledged that mastering these skills helped him maximise the use of technologies. During the pandemic, he integrated hardware and software tools to replicate the newsroom environment and create simple technology solutions at home to facilitate his remote work.

6.6 An Experiment to Foster Audience Engagement

When existing digital technologies became unavailable due to the pandemic restrictions, journalists experimented with other digital technology. First, to ensure continued news production and second, to foster audience engagement. For instance, Fanno, a video journalist from BBC Indonesia, decided to experiment with innovative techniques for producing news. Faced with limitations in accessing his usual newsroom equipment, Fanno purchased a portable green screen, LED lighting, and additional graphic software to set up a home studio in his flat. All these compact devices fit into his studio flat, which was no bigger than 3 x 3 meters. The green material covered the walls, with frames to the left and right. Fanno expressed his satisfaction with this setup, stating:

It took some time to establish my mini-studio, but now I can appear on camera using the green screen and change the background whenever I want, creating a 'piece to camera' as if I were on location.

Another video journalist from BBC Indonesia, Dimar, also established a basic home studio. This allowed him to continue creating stories, including several explanatory pieces for the public to explain the complexities of COVID-19. In his independent production, he employed technical techniques such as pieces-to-camera and other production techniques to create an explanatory piece. Dimar then conducted a story using a video conference, interviewing four governors in Indonesia about the large-scale social restrictions and the forthcoming Eid holiday travel story. He shared his experience as follows:

At first, I wasn't so sure; I had to do everything myself from home, trying to recreate a studio for online interviews with limited equipment. But in the end, I managed to do it all from home, and somehow, I felt like I became more creative.

Driven by the uncertainty over journalistic labour and the increasing need for programming experience, digital technologies have been used to build a sense of community with audiences. For example, journalists from Liputan6.com previously relied on the studio box for live streaming before the pandemic. Then, they were forced to adapt their operations to a home setting and leverage social media platforms for broadcasting live events. Owing to the necessity of remote work for the entire multimedia team, the previously used studio box was no longer feasible. As a result, the team turned to social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to conduct their live streams. According to Nugra, Liputan6.com, this transition entailed a series of trial-and-error processes.

We experimented with audio and visual treatments for live streaming, especially during the pandemic. Even so, the remote streaming system needed backup hosts to avoid technical issues.

Liputan6.com also developed a live broadcast to host virtual classes using simple objects. This interactive format enabled them to share facts about the coronavirus and insights from various experts with their audience. This endeavour further emphasised the critical role of digital technologies in maintaining audience engagement during unprecedented times. The lack of mobility and in-person interactions during the pandemic led many journalists to explore new approaches to reporting and producing news. For some, this involved multitasking to develop news stories. Even in the absence of established news objects, certain journalists managed to generate explanatory pieces, utilising basic resources in a solo

production manner. Such resourceful experimentation was observed across all observed newsrooms. Some television journalists mentioned that the pandemic facilitated the production of practical stories that did not require the services of a cameraperson or video editor. Yet, compared to the two digital newsrooms examined, television was considered a more traditional medium with less experimentation in using digital-enabled objects (see Lotz 2014; Guevara 2022).

Ultimately, the pandemic opens new avenues for journalists to craft their work. Technological adaptation and inventive methods for news gathering and production have flourished from these circumstances. The study observed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, some journalists adopted diverse and more creative approaches, ranging from employing mobile objects for gathering information to adjusting digital-enabled objects to work from home and fostering the audience.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the objects of journalism and how journalists' relationships with them shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic. I argue for reconsidering the role of objects of journalism in times of crisis, like the pandemic, as certain digital-enabled objects hold particular meanings for journalists. Previous studies have explored hard or soft objects in news production (e.g., Moran and Usher 2021; Weiss and Domingo 2010; Westlund 2008 2011). However, research has yet to investigate how objects of journalism carry out their function in the context of the pandemic. The coronavirus outbreak, which forced social distancing practices, has reshaped the relationship between journalists and the objects of journalism.

In this chapter, I argue that the pandemic contributed to reshaping what journalism objects were during the crisis. This research found that the COVID-19 pandemic changed the context of the relationship between journalists and the objects. First, journalists are attached to digital-enabled objects, and the reconfiguration of the physical place has significant uncertainty implications, with television journalists cannot abandoning hard objects. Second, the preferences of objects go beyond technological things as they symbolise power in news production to maintain journalists' authority claims. Third, digital-enabled objects have changed how journalists work, with mobile journalism and multi-skills transforming the relationship between journalists and objects during the pandemic. Fourth, in response to the growing need for programming experience, journalists experimented with new digital-

enabled objects to preserve a sense of relevance and develop a sense of community with their audiences.

As digital-enabled object advancements have transformed journalism practices, examining broader socio-cultural contexts and the cultural factors that influence these practices becomes important. The findings underline the relationship between journalists and objects of journalism within news production. The pandemic led journalists to grapple with different technologies or deal with remote work challenges. For example, a heavy reliance on certain objects in the newsroom can generate professional insecurity. In this context, digital-enabled objects remain associated with the physical place in the newsroom.

Television journalists showed a strong attachment to digital-enabled objects, where specific news objects held functional significance and deep symbolic meaning. For instance, TV journalists prefer using SNG trucks equipped with editing facilities, advanced cameras, and company logos emblazoned on the side, perhaps revealing a particular occupational ideal of broadcast journalists. Even though this study found that television journalists were demonstrably able to produce news reports using 4G streaming equipment, which is considered state-of-the-art by non-broadcast journalists creating video content. For television participants, SNG trucks held significant meaning as symbols of power in news production. The access to unique material objects, such as professional broadcast cameras, set television journalists apart from other journalists. When they are required to use the same news-making tools as non-broadcast specialists, it negatively impacts their professional esteem. Additionally, when they lose the attachment to hard objects in the newsroom and gallery, television journalists may experience a sense of disorientation and diminished confidence in their news production capabilities. This study has revealed that when the significance attributed to particular legacy news objects is disrupted, it can negatively impact the professional identity of journalists.

While digital-enabled objects are crucial for broadcast journalists to fulfil their professional work, Moran and Usher (2021, p. 2) stated, “Affect and emotion are hard to measure and can be implicit rather than explicit, but nonetheless serve to structure action and discourse”. Drawing from Raymond Williams’ (2015) concept of the ‘Structure of feelings,’ Moran and Usher (2021) acknowledged that objects in journalism studies inherently “rightfully include emotion” (p. 2). As such, this study highlighted the significance of emotional aspects. There were emotional aspects tied to returning to the studio that represented more than just a place with news objects; it is a professional environment that

offers familiarity, support, collaboration, and opportunities for journalists to deliver their professional work.

The objects of journalism provide valuable insights into the culture of journalists during the pandemic. The study observed that all the newsrooms faced challenges adapting to the new working culture. Given the differences in news production between television and online newsrooms, broadcasters preferred returning to their studio. These findings are consistent with studies that found broadcast journalists' dependency on certain news objects. This difference in approach sheds light on a more significant observation: digital news organisations showcased more adaptability toward the objects of news-making during the pandemic.

Furthermore, my findings shed light on the complexities surrounding adopting remote work practices in journalism. The outbreak forced news organisations to leave their physical workplaces and required journalists to work from home, leading to remote teleworking (Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés, 2020; Garcia-Avilés, 2021). This research demonstrates that transitioning to a virtual newsroom is challenging. Findings revealed that the shift to remote work caused anxiety and tension and brought forth many emotional challenges for journalists, which resonates with previous research findings (e.g., Hoak 2021; Jukes et al. 2022; Šimunjak 2022). However, while other studies have identified connections between trauma and mental health, this study reveals that journalists experience uncertainty when navigating unfamiliar digital objects and collaborating remotely, especially as they transition from news objects in traditional newsroom settings. This study demonstrated the attachment to newsroom objects runs deeper than mere practicality; it is intricately tied to journalists' emotions.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, mobile objects like cameras, smartphones, and editing apps have become essential for independent reporting while keeping safe. This shift made it clear that journalists needed to be versatile and skilled in using these objects. Even newsrooms that used to rely on traditional methods had to adapt. This study suggests that the pandemic has transformed journalism practice, underlining the need for adaptability in acquiring multiple skills and embracing news objects outside the newsroom. Nevertheless, the findings found time constraints have compelled journalists to adopt 'tech-driven' practices, as Carroll and Conboy (2020) noted. Journalists have turned to new digital technologies to maintain relevance and engage with their audiences despite the existence of unavailable objects. As a result, journalists with digital skills were better equipped to deploy

innovative objects during the pandemic. The acceptance of innovation among journalists depends on whether digital tools can be integrated into existing routines (Ekdale et al. 2015).

My findings lead to an argument relating to materiality theory to explain how objects can influence journalistic culture in a long-term crisis such as a pandemic, particularly as digital-enabled objects are used beyond their utility. Journalism studies can be extended beyond traditional newsrooms through object-oriented study, encapsulating news-making activities as mentioned in several previous studies (Anderson and De Maeyer 2015; Boczkowski 2015; Zelizer 2017). The chapter concluded by discussing how the pandemic has accelerated the relationship between journalists and objects, with implications for journalism practices and an embrace of new newsroom culture. The objects of journalism go beyond mere materiality that primarily focuses on the digital technology of news production; they also provide a nuanced knowledge of journalists' social and cultural lives, changing journalism practices during and after the outbreak.

Another aspect exacerbated during the pandemic in news-making is sourcing and verification. While the COVID-19 pandemic created a challenge to source access, will this transform journalism practices and reshape the relationship between journalists and their news sources? The detailed analysis of these findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 7

Accessing Sources During the Pandemic

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated how the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges to accessing certain objects of journalism, particularly access to digital-enabled objects. This chapter explores the challenges of accessing news sources during the pandemic, focusing on the difficulties and limitations of journalists as gatekeepers in establishing relationships with their sources. The pandemic ushered in social distancing protocols, presenting journalists with the dual challenge of accessing and validating news sources. And thus, during the crisis, there was an extraordinary surge in the demand for reliable information, delivered in an up-to-date manner. This, in turn, underscored the crucial significance of reliable information, placing substantial pressure on news organisations to adapt their gatekeeping practices.

This chapter analyses the consequences of the evolving relationships between journalists and news sources. Despite this shift, scant attention has been directed towards the practical aspects of gatekeeping that elucidate how journalists establish contact with their sources amid crises. The first part of this chapter examines the role of journalists as gatekeepers during times of crisis. By considering the disruptions that crises introduced and the resulting challenges in source accessibility, this chapter analyses journalists' gatekeeping practices throughout the pandemic. Furthermore, the chapter unpacks the dynamics of the relationship between journalists and the government in the face of this crisis. It scrutinises the restructuring of this relationship against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying social distancing measures. Using the frameworks of gatekeeping theory and press-state relationship theory, this chapter addresses the fourth research question: How did the pandemic impact the gatekeeping process and change journalists' relationships with their sources?

I organise this chapter by focusing on four themes. The first section presents the obstacles encountered in the gatekeeping process due to limitations imposed on available sources. It explores the significance of gatekeeping within the context of mainstream media during the crisis. The second section analyses the emergence of virtual sourcing as a transformative gatekeeping process, reshaping the traditional methods of gathering. It delves into the repercussions of virtual communication, initially intended to streamline interactions

but ultimately resulting in an amplification of official voices. This trend hindered journalists' capacity to interrogate and challenge government narratives.

The third section unpacks source verification, presenting the distinct approaches journalists employ to validate their sources and ensure the accuracy of information. The journalists in this study navigated new methodologies for fact-checking in a landscape dominated by online resources, including social media. This section examines the complexities in validating official sources due to restricted access. The fourth section focuses on the censorship of journalists and their capacities for autonomy. I analyse the nuanced interactions between journalists and the Indonesian government amidst the outbreak. The primary emphasis lies on the significant challenges press freedom faces and the gradual erosion of journalists' autonomy. This erosion becomes apparent through the discernible increase in self-imposed control exercised by journalists.

7.2 Gatekeeping Challenges Amid Sources Restrictions

The unprecedented circumstances caused by the pandemic made the process of news gathering more challenging than ever before. This study identified source access challenges arising from the absence of real-life interactions. Participants from the three observed newsrooms, SCTV, Liputan6.com, and BBC Indonesia, recognised the pivotal hurdles they confronted in the gatekeeping process: sourcing and verification. Amidst the crisis, professional journalists in mainstream media retained their distinct role as public informants. Their function as gatekeepers has gained significance due to their responsibility to deliver legitimate information, as underscored in previous studies (e.g., Manning 2000; Vos 2019).

Journalists from selected newsrooms stated that the challenges in upholding their professionalism involved sourcing accurate information from reliable and credible channels while rigorously fact-checking their news reports (see Franklin and Carlson 2010). However, the news leaders of the three newsrooms reaffirmed their commitment to upholding the gatekeeping process despite facing significant challenges. Particularly, the participants acknowledged that there have been negative sentiments towards both the media and media professionals due to the overwhelming amount of information and disinformation circulating during the pandemic. Irina, the Chief Editor of Liputan6.com, emphasised the enduring significance of this role in the pandemic situation.

Social media puts us in a steady race with each other every day. But we don't just want to be the first; we want to be the first with correct news. And, of course, we have to put accuracy and accountability at the top of our list, even though it can be hard to find trusted sources, and we must go through a verification process.

This crisis thrust all journalists in this study into a complex situation. They realised that they had the responsibility to provide accurate and reliable information, which is one of the crucial pillars of democracy and a vital force in civil life, as argued by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014). For instance, BBC Indonesia struggled to provide comprehensive and accurate news posed by the pandemic. Ayu, the Deputy News Service, stressed the criticality of accessing credible and reliable sources within this evolving context.

Besides the access, the problem in the pandemic in 2020-2021 is that expert sources are still learning to understand the pandemic. At the same time, as official sources, the government lacked a clear direction on handling it.

For the television team, challenges emerged when credible sources were difficult to reach and could not appear on camera. Dinno, the SCTV Executive Producer, explained the nature of TV journalists' challenges to me as follows:

We need soundbites, statements that make us as credible as news television. We don't have many expert people to talk about the COVID-19 pandemic, so when the source is difficult to reach, that's the challenge.

This study found that the pandemic disrupted the conventional flow of information within all the studied newsrooms, prompting a reimagining of the traditional gatekeeper role. Under ordinary circumstances, journalists heavily lean on their established routines to select sources (see Shoemaker and Vos 2009; Van der Meer et al. 2017). During moments of crisis, however, these routines face partial challenges. In Indonesia, accessing reliable sources became increasingly difficult during the early stages of the pandemic, particularly since the Indonesian government officially announced it in March 2020. Satrio, the Health Managing Editor at Liputan6.com, explained the challenges reporters face when obtaining news from government offices.

Since the pandemic, there has been a lot of unofficial information out there. This made it hard for us to sort through it all, check the facts, and stop the spread of false information. We have a check facts team here, but we are overwhelmed with the load of fake news. The government was slow to respond to our interview requests and was mostly difficult to access, while the information spread quickly.

The challenge for television journalists arose due to the new regulations implemented by the Indonesian Presidential Palace. Following the first reported COVID-19 case in Indonesia on March 2, 2020, the government announced limited journalists' access to the President's and ministries' offices. Rey, the Deputy Chief Editor of SCTV, explained the new regulations, including television station restrictions:

At the Presidential office, the Press Secretary introduced a series of modifications to coverage protocols. Under these new guidelines, broadcasters can no longer dispatch their independent crews to press conferences involving the President, cabinet members, or other officials. Instead, we must organise a television pool for coverage. The pool means all news organisations use the same source and footage. So, one material is shared for all television.

My study revealed different dynamics compared to the research titled 'Protocol Journalism Practice in the Indonesia Presidential Palace during the Covid-19 pandemic' (Alvin 2023). The mentioned study noted that obtaining news from the palace became easier because journalists were not actively involved in disseminating news; instead, the process was fully facilitated by The Bureau of Press, Media, and Information. Deputy Chief Editor Rey asserted that she was disappointed with this decision, but all editors-in-chief invited to the palace were asked to comply with these rules due to restrictions during the pandemic. Rey also admitted her team was unhappy with the palace's regulation about the TV pool policy. In Indonesia, there is intense competition among TV stations to attract viewers and increase their audience ratings. A study conducted on the three major stations in Indonesia, namely SCTV, Indosiar and RCTI, revealed that these stations strive to satisfy the audience's needs to establish themselves as the leading station in the country (Dewi 2001).

One of the major concerns for participants in this study is that certain important news sources are no longer accessible to most journalists. Due to remote communication through phone calls, text messages and social media platforms, journalists' ability to oversee public

officials and institutions has been compromised, which is particularly problematic in crisis situations where oversight is crucial. According to senior journalists in the three newsrooms, accessing government officials or representatives was challenging, particularly after the government initially denied that the coronavirus was present in Indonesia. All the observed newsrooms reported in February 2020 that the government claimed some tests showed the nation was still free from the virus. The three newsrooms in this study also covered some controversial statements made by the government. For example, the Indonesian Health Minister, Terawan Agus Putranto said that the power of prayer would spare Indonesia from the virus outbreak. Senior television producer Ferdinand commented with scepticism, “It frustrates and confuses us. Sometimes, I prefer to make a funny story rather than stories from the government.” These comments demonstrate how journalists resist the government’s attempt to suppress the truth and reassert their authority to hold those in power accountable.

The pandemic was a turning point that triggered a transformation of news sourcing. The feasibility of physical interactions, in-person interviews, and on-site press conferences significantly dwindled due to health safety concerns. As a result, the processes of sourcing, verifying, confirming, and cross-checking data became more difficult, in line with the shifts in news production. Many journalists in the three newsrooms expressed their frustration at the challenge of obtaining government sources. Even though they were able to rely on experts as one of the sources, the absence of official sources in some critical news content resulted in unbalanced stories. These developments contradict the democratic purpose of the news media, which is to provide citizens with accurate information and to reflect a wide range of perspectives and voices in the public sphere (see Broersma 2013; Franklin and Carlson 2010). While journalists remained committed to balancing their news stories, those in the three newsrooms faced challenges regarding the diversity of news sources. The following section explores this phenomenon during the pandemic.

7.3 Balanced Stories: Challenges in Diverse Sourcing

In order to achieve balanced stories during the pandemic, SCTV, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia attempted to diversify their news sources. The journalism standard of source diversity is fundamental in attaining news balance, accuracy, and impartiality (Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2017). Many journalists informed me that it was hard to get access to official sources. The journalists shared their common experiences and discussed the Indonesian Minister of Health, a key figure expected to provide insights related to COVID-19. He

retreated from the public spotlight after making controversial statements in the early stages of the pandemic between February and March 2020. The Health News Coordinator at Liputan6.com, Satrio, expressed this situation:

Nothing is more authoritative than the Minister to discuss these policies with the public, including the issue of handling a pandemic. Usually, journalists are easy to meet in person, but suddenly, getting him, even online, is difficult.

Journalists in the three newsrooms sought out sources from various organisations. They engaged with health experts, incorporating academic research into their reporting. These included local and international health entities, emphasising institutions like the World Health Organization (WHO). Van der Meer et al. (2017) observed that entities that are normally not considered noteworthy quickly rise to prominence as news sources during times of crisis. For Indonesian journalists, the Eijkman Institute, a molecular biology research centre based in Jakarta, became a popular source for expert opinions and neutral information. Before the pandemic, this institution rarely gained attention. Nadia, an SCTV assignment editor, admitted she had never sent a reporter to interview the experts from this institution until the pandemic. During the outbreak, they became central and emerged as one of the main sources of reliable, clear and scientific information on the virus. Since SCTV and BBC Indonesia do not employ specialised health news journalists like Liputan6.com, they place reliance on scientists and researchers to verify the information and provide a balanced perspective for their stories. This is consistent with research showing that choosing which sources to include in news stories is critical to gatekeeping practices (Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Shoemaker and Vos 2009).

Prior to the pandemic, the three newsrooms used to interact with the public to gather additional information from sources such as citizens, eyewitnesses, and social media platforms. They interviewed regular people to get their personal stories and perspectives in order to provide a viewpoint from the general public. This practice, however, became difficult due to social distancing measures as they could not engage with people. Sonny, head of assignment editor at SCTV, informed me, “We usually asked reporters to gather vox pop from citizens because we need their opinion or share their experience,” Sonny explained that in television tradition, vox pop (vox populi) involves gathering opinions or experiences directly from citizens to capture and present the diverse public perspectives. In line with Dimitrova and Strömbäck's (2009) research, news sources like grassroots perspectives, vox-

pops, or incorporating personal narratives to humanise issues or events can serve as valuable resources for offering eyewitness accounts. However, the earlier literature refers to normal situations, while during the pandemic, journalists needed to adapt their approach and consider the restrictions imposed by the crisis.

To obtain diverse sources, newsrooms were more open to receiving source contributions. Dimar, a BBC Indonesia video journalist, acknowledged that journalists had to be creative in seeking out various angles for their stories. The media landscape facilitated the incorporation of more citizen journalism and public-driven narratives, and remote work during the pandemic drove them to rely on citizen stories. BBC Indonesia, however, was more cautious in selecting sources from ordinary people. Dimar said they mainly featured citizens sharing their experiences. He endeavoured to prevent sowing confusion regarding the pandemic. He explained to me,

We aim to reduce the risk of spreading false or misleading information during the pandemic. To do this, we have a strict process for checking the source of information that comes from the public or social media, especially when it comes to videos. This includes validating the source's authenticity and the presented narrative's accuracy before selecting it for use. We take extra care in ensuring that any information we share is accurate, reliable and trustworthy.

The pandemic led to the exploration of new gatekeeping methods. SCTV, for example, in the first few months of 2020, asked journalists to seek information and conduct interviews via digital platforms, such as video-call applications. Plus, they encouraged sources to contribute by submitting responses through self-recorded videos. TV newsrooms became more tolerant of variations in content quality as they collaborated with the public, particularly in video submissions. Fostering active engagement represents a practice encouraged within the newsroom. Indira, the News Gathering Manager at SCTV, highlighted this:

We have increased our efforts in the news gathering team, starting from the coordinator level and going upwards, to request all of our news sources, particularly during the pandemic, to conduct interviews. We are encouraging them to respond to our inquiries through their social media platforms, such as their official YouTube channels or even through WhatsApp.

Amidst the surge in news and information dissemination throughout the outbreak, Indira underscored the importance of strong journalistic skills within the team. “I have emphasised to my team the necessity of enhancing their competencies in verification, clarification, and confirmation,” he stated. Certain TV journalists believe that the television medium serves as ‘the ultimate recourse’ for the audience seeking clarification on the received information. Indira expressed his confidence and said that while audiences might prefer online platforms for various content, when it comes to essential news or looking for final confirmation, it is the TV. Whether it is the TV viewers or those following them digitally, they often inquire whether a particular piece of information has been aired on TV.

Approaching sources to become more participatory in news production became a common practice during the pandemic. Both SCTV and Liputan6.com adopted this approach by sending questions to news sources. The news sources voluntarily recorded their answers on their devices and sent the videos with the answers back to journalists via chat apps. However, some journalists said that, in some cases, they preferred to use official sources and rely on first-hand information to mitigate potential risks. Thus, one of the best practices would be to obtain materials from official accounts or channels, and the source needs to come from prominent or authoritative individuals. For example, the news sources sent materials through the chat application. As the materials were sent directly from their WhatsApp number, they were regarded as being verified. All the reporters I engaged with admitted that they also relied on social media as a way of finding sources. Indeed, this was a common and established practice prior to the pandemic. This approach requires a two-fold verification process: ensuring the account’s authenticity and validating the content’s accuracy. Kartini, Liputan6.com reporter shared her experience, noting,

Firstly, we aim to establish confirmation. If a source provides their name or other details on social media, we will contact them through DM (direct message). I have done this in the past. I sent a DM requesting their phone number, and then we arranged a meeting for an interview.

Journalists in the three newsrooms increasingly relied on social media as a source of information during the outbreak. This correlates with previous studies that indicate that in situations where official sources are lacking, journalists tend to turn to online platforms, such as blogs and social media (see Bruns 2013; Lecheler and Kruikemeier 2016). For instance,

Fanno, a video journalist at BBC Indonesia, used social media to identify and engage with his primary source in crafting a story about the shortage of oxygen in hospitals. In Indonesia, hundreds of COVID-19 patients in hospitals died because of the lack of oxygen. Fanno said, “It took me some time to find someone willing to share their experience in the struggle for oxygen. Fortunately, social media was a big help, solved the problem of finding the sources.”

Study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that social media information may be perceived as being unreliable (Newman et al. 2020). In this study, SCTV, Liputan6.com, and BBC Indonesia assert that they could carefully verify social media sources. They attempted strategies for fact-checking to prevent the propagation of false information. Liputan6.com, for example, expanded its fact-checking program to counter misinformation and disinformation. The outlet was among eight news sources worldwide to receive the Coronavirus Fact-Checking Grant, which is a joint initiative by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN). The fact-checking programme aims to promote accurate and reliable information about the pandemic while countering false claims and rumours. Kristi, the Deputy Chief Editor of Liputan6.com, explained the approach:

Our strategy involves direct community engagement through multiple WhatsApp groups. These groups have been operational since February 2020 across six regions, totalling seven WhatsApp groups. We established a straightforward system allowing the public to verify whether a piece of news or a video is a fact or a hoax. To verify the validity of circulated information, individuals can send a message to the Liputan6.com Fact Check number on WhatsApp. Based on the data, this approach has proven effective in curbing the dissemination of false news during the pandemic.

The observation found that besides using organisations and the public to source news during the pandemic, they also relied on the government or official sources.

7.4 Reliance on Official Sources

This study revealed that the three newsrooms heavily rely on official sources despite efforts to maintain organisations’ sources and seek public voices for diverse perspectives. Following the initial wave of the pandemic in Indonesia in 2020, the dependence on official sources increased compared to normal situations. According to the participants in this study, official sources were the most frequently cited since the Indonesian President established a task force

on April 13, 2020. This source became even more crucial as, during that time, the task force updated the development of coronavirus, including the number of cases throughout the country. There was not a single day without a statement from the task force in every media outlet in Indonesia, including the three newsrooms studied. Consequently, news organisations extensively drew from government data and summarised presidential statements and information disseminated by government agencies.

Besides the Indonesian Task Force, the Ministry of Health and the National Disaster Management Agency provided information regarding COVID-19. Under their authority in addressing the direct implications of COVID-19 on public health and disaster management, these agencies became dominant contributors to news sources. Leveraging their authoritative position, both institutions disseminated official announcements and statements through their website channels. The government website operates on a one-way communication model, which has caused issues as the media cites these materials as encapsulating the government's perspectives on the pandemic. Kartini, Liputan6.com reporter shared an illustration where she juxtaposed both websites, demonstrating how the conveyed messages adopted a normative tone, following a systematic and directive approach. The National Disaster Management Agency tends to accentuate the imposition of movement restrictions, offering normative directives. Journalists voiced their concerns over this matter. They pointed out that the challenge with online communication is not so much about the technical aspects but rather the content itself. Kartini, shared with me:

What substantial value can we expect from online communication if we all receive repetitive statements? For example, they keep hammering on about sticking to health protocols, even though we've been dealing with this pandemic for months – you would think we would have it down by now.

Nonetheless, with the government's control of information during the pandemic, some journalists believed that using the government as the main source was the best option in some news cases. For example, Carlo, the Executive Producer of SCTV, preferred to cite the Head of the Task Force on Natuna Island as a reliable source of information. Carlo explained his decision to interview a government agency.

It was February 2020, not long after the pandemic started, and we knew little about COVID-19. Because there were differences in government policies, we needed to talk to the person in charge of sending people from Wuhan, China, to Indonesia.

My research has found that journalists sought diverse sources, including citizens, social media, and organisations, but still rely to official sources. To illustrate, consider the data in the table below, which focuses on the first pandemic in Indonesia in March and April 2020. Throughout this period, numerous critical issues concerned the public. Journalists heavily relied on the government as their primary source for reporting on these matters. The table underscores that all crucial news stories drew upon official voices as main sources. Although journalists attempted to balance their stories through other sources, the government as the primary source was dominant in many news stories. Most information remained from official perspectives, from the President, ministers, and central and local government. All the news stories listed in the table were covered by SCTV, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia.

Table 7.1 Sources in News Stories During the Pandemic
March-April 2020

News Stories	Issues	Main Sources	Other Sources
Presidential Decree on the national public health emergency COVID-19 (13 March 2020)	Government policies Government controversial statements	President Ministry of Health	Member of Parliament Political Opposition
Number of COVID-19 cases and victims (19 April 2020)	Data transparency Denial number of cases	Central Government Local government	Non-Government Organisations Health Organisations
Lockdown policies versus large-scale social restrictions (23 April 2020)	Health versus economic policy Quarantine policy	President Ministries	Non-government Organisations Economic Experts Public
Vaccination and COVID tests (12 June 2020)	Lack of number of tests Vaccination controversy	Ministry of Health Indonesian Council of Ulama (Indonesian: MUI)	Health Organisations Non-Government Organisations Member of Parliament Health Experts Public

Source: SCTV, Liputan6.com, BBC Indonesia

The first news item in the table highlights the announcement of a national public health emergency on March 30, 2020. This declaration, albeit somewhat belatedly, came following the emergence of the first case in Indonesia on March 2, 2020, which involved two individuals testing positive. The announcement followed some controversial statements by the Minister of Health, who initially denied the presence of the coronavirus in Indonesia. Drawing from official sources, the three observed newsrooms also cited statements such as “flu is more dangerous than coronavirus” (*“flu lebih berbahaya daripada virus korona”*), “we are not afraid of diphtheria; of course, we are not afraid of COVID-19” (*“difteri saja kita tidak takut apalagi korona”*), and “masks are only for sick people” (*“masker itu hanya untuk orang sakit”*). Indonesia’s delay in responding to the health crisis while COVID-19 spread in neighbouring countries in January–February 2020 has been costly for the health of the population (Olivia et al. 2020). The government utilised media platforms to downplay the seriousness of COVID-19’s impact on public health through their official statements.

One of the prominent challenges faced in Indonesia related to the official documentation of COVID-19 statistics, as indicated by the second news item in the table. By February 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) expressed apprehension due to the absence of any reported confirmed cases in Indonesia, a country with a population of approximately 270 million people. This absence of reported cases raised concerns over data transparency. A significant difference in numerical data became evident between the central and local governments. This inconsistency was mirrored in how the three examined newsrooms and the broader media industry depended on information originating from government sources.

Furthermore, the third news item presented in the table highlights the evident dependence of the three newsrooms on official sources while addressing the deliberations surrounding the potential implementation of either a complete or partial lockdown. This scenario underscores a clear contrast in approaches between local and central governing bodies. While some regional authorities advocated for a lockdown, the central government favoured large-scale social restrictions.

The final item in the table shows the debated topic of COVID-19 vaccines. Within this context, the three examined newsrooms reported official figures primarily sourced from governmental entities, and this, leading to a certain level of scepticism. Journalists sought diverse viewpoints amid ongoing discussions about the vaccines’ compatibility with Islamic principles. There was debate about whether the vaccines were ‘halal’ (permitted) or ‘haram’ (forbidden) according to Islamic guidelines. Nevertheless, the final decision rested with the

Indonesia Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI), a governmental organisation. This reflects the recurring motive of government authorities to be the primary source.

Findings showed that official sources dominate media coverage, and the government assumed a central role in media coverage during a crisis, including during the pandemic. This reliance on official sources, especially during crisis events, corresponds with previous studies that have extensively identified the news industry's substantial dependence on governmental and official sources (see Price and Harbisher, 2021; Van Aelst and Blumler, 2021). Official sources assumed a more proactive role in disseminating information about COVID-19 through government channels, while journalists were sometimes passive, merely relaying information to the public in order to meet deadlines.

For example, Andy, a video journalist with SCTV who covered President Joko Widodo's activities, shared his experience with me. He mentioned that the Press Bureau distributed daily press releases through a WhatsApp group and broadcasted President Widodo's activities on YouTube. Rather than holding press conferences, the President's office often used live streams and social media, resulting in limited interaction with journalists. Similarly, several ministries restricted media access to news events and instead established official channels on platforms or disseminated press materials through online platforms. Newsrooms were flooded with one-way official information. Despite the fact-checking initiative being important for correcting news and information, as Graves and Cherubini (2016) point out in their study, several journalists argued that it is difficult to implement during a crisis such as a pandemic.

While the Indonesian government conducted numerous press conferences and distributed many press releases, they were seldom available to speak directly with journalists. Some journalists expressed concerns regarding the challenges of obtaining responses that met their expectations.

It's easy to get access to online Zoom or Skype interviews with government officials to talk about their policies or publish their campaigns. But it's difficult to approach them regarding a sensitive or controversial issue, and we need to be persistent. We can only wait for the government to respond from WhatsApp; sometimes, we're nervous when it comes to the deadline (Carlo, Executive Producer SCTV).

As online news, it's normal for us to interview by phone. We did it a lot before the pandemic, but mostly for confirmation. In such a situation as a pandemic, we want to

get deep insight, we need to cross-check some controversial issues, and when we talk online, it tends to be a rush (Satrio, Health Managing Editor Liputan6.com).

The absence of direct physical interaction between journalists and their official sources led to the dissemination of untested and unchallenged information. Moreover, according to journalists, in an effort to prevent the spread of fake news, misinformation, and conspiracy theories, the government established a one-way communication channel. This resulted in government officials becoming the main source of information. For instance, the spokesperson of a special task force and committee for COVID-19 established by President Joko Widodo disseminated updates on each outbreak, encompassing regulations, treatments, and policies, through one-way communication. Interviews with journalists often occurred through written questions sent in advance, allowing ministers and spokespeople to choose whether to respond to or disregard the questions during their live briefings. The health reporter from Liputan6.com expressed her frustration, “I submitted some questions. I’m sure they only picked the question they were comfortable answering.” At the same time, journalists from BBC noted that sometimes there was no opportunity to hold a question-and-answer session. Another journalist expressed frustration when the interviewee did not take the online interview seriously. Several sources engaged in multitasking during online meetings, resulting in unproductive interview sessions. Moreover, for a time, press conferences could only be watched online.

Before the outbreak, it was a common practice among journalists to pursue their news sources actively, even literally down the street and engage in face-to-face interactions until obtaining the desired information. During press conferences, journalists used to challenge official statements with field data or factual information gathered from investigations. Even if sources avoided questions, door-step interviews allowed journalists to ask questions and insist on answers. The pandemic, however, brought about significant changes in journalistic practices, resulting in increased press releases and press conferences at the expense of genuine on-the-ground reporting. SCTV’s Assignment Editor Nadia said, “Now we have more press releases and more press conferences but less real reporting.” She showed a long list of webinars, Zoom meetings and several web-links received from numerous ministries and government agencies. A TV producer, Ferdinand, described the outbreak as a ‘comfortable time’ for the government to not communicate with journalists in person.

Journalists are expected to achieve balance in their reporting, even when they rely on official sources (McQuail 2010). This study revealed that many news materials sent to

journalists came from official sources. The findings raised concerns that certain materials published on Liputan6.com may lack originality and were presented as-is without independent investigation. Additionally, in SCTV, anchors presented official materials as voice-overs without being packaged with multiple sources. Responding to this, the Executive Producer at SCTV, Dinno, explained:

The data problem has an impact on media coverage. We tend to report straight news and cannot provide in-depth reports due to the lack of data. We are looking for an information counter, which is quite difficult because other institutions do not have sufficient competence to speak. Some research institutions, such as Eijkman, exist but only for certain news. So, with limited data, we decided to produce straight news.

Several journalists mentioned that they relied on official sources, mainly because government data was the only daily updated data available throughout the pandemic. Consequently, materials from official accounts were considered the most suitable choice for producing news content. This practice is particularly noticeable when citing daily updated COVID-19 data on a daily basis. In response to this dynamic, Satrio, Head Managing Editor of Liputan6.com, conveyed his viewpoint:

As journalists, we often rely on government sources as our main data when there is a lack of alternative information available. However, this poses a challenge since we don't have enough comparative data to conduct an in-depth analysis. In the current COVID-19 scenario, media coverage mostly involves presenting statistical data, which means reporting what is already available.

The access to sources and loss of physical presence on news reporting sites when covering governmental and official issues limit opportunities for verification.

7.5 Challenges in Verifying Official Information

As the dependence on official sources surged during the pandemic, journalists in the selected newsrooms encountered significant hurdles in verifying their information. Verification is a crucial step in gatekeeping to ensure accuracy (see Ekström and Westlund 2019; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). During the pandemic, journalists continued to verify, especially with public

sources. When it came to official sources, however, journalists were challenged by the absence of transparent data from the government. While the three newsrooms attempted to verify the accuracy of government-provided information, they faced challenges due to the centralised and selectively curated data. This situation led to ongoing disagreements regarding the accuracy and reliability of the information.

For instance, the limited scope of COVID-19 testing initiatives in Indonesia resulted in an underestimation of the actual prevalence of the disease. The three newsrooms, SCTV, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia, reported that many people who were infected with the virus were not officially recorded as victims of the virus. Some journalists from the three newsrooms shared their comments on the data accuracy.

The government has not been open about ongoing pandemic cases nor provided data transparency. A lack of numbers and data confused us and our audience. (Cinta, Senior Producer, SCTV)

The government's communication policy during the COVID-19 pandemic affects our news by presenting case data differently between local and central governments. (Hamzah, Regional Managing Editor, Liputan6.com)

We used some data from several sources, not only local but international. Something feels wrong when the disparity of the data is big. (Iko, Senior Video Journalist, BBC Indonesia).

The inconsistency in reporting between central and local authorities was evident through references to "*Kawal COVID-19*" (Guard against COVID-19). BBC Indonesia revealed that the central government reported fewer deaths than regional governments, with a disparity of up to 19,000 cases as of July 2021 (BBC Indonesia, 2 July 2021). Journalists emphasised the inconsistency in the government's figures on victims, complicating the data verification process. Further complicating matters were the differing policies implemented by local and central governments. An example of this tension was reported by Liputan6.com in April 2020, detailing the friction between Jakarta's Governor and the Minister of Transportation over COVID-19 containment policies.

In some instances, journalists faced challenges securing credible sources. Despite their efforts to directly engage with reliable sources, prevailing circumstances often

compelled them to rely on online statements. Ayu, the Vice News Service Editor at BBC Indonesia, articulated this challenge: “Since the pandemic, establishing contact with government officials, even at the ministerial level, has been difficult. Thus far, the BBC has had to rely on responses from the spokesperson.” Echoing similar sentiments, Cinta, Senior Producer at SCTV, expressed her frustration: “We are not public relation, but most of the time, we end up with a spokesperson as our source.” In most cases, the verification process culminated in responses from spokespersons. Some participants conveyed a sense of powerlessness in these circumstances. Ferdinand, an SCTV producer, said, “Our aim is not to convey the government’s message. We are disappointed, but what can you say?” According to Edo, the Managing Editor at Liputan6.com, monthly meetings took place between national media editors and designated ministers via the Zoom platform. It is worth noting, however, that these ministerial interactions mainly convey normative or broad policy declarations. The phrase “off the record” is consistently invoked with sensitive data disclosure.

The government often plans news conferences a day or even just a few hours before sharing a Zoom link. Sometimes there is a short Q&A session, and sometimes there is none at all. It’s hard for us to check the data thoroughly. Most of the time, we don’t have the chance to learn more about the information. If we put off writing the whole story and looking for more sources, we can’t be sure that those sources will be easy to find. At the same time, other media outlets might already publish it. Since we’re online, we must publish on time, or our competitors might get ahead of us.

Meanwhile, BBC Indonesia adopted a different story treatment. As a public media entity, they diverge from commercial counterparts in their approach and are not bound by the same stringent deadlines. They release stories only after comprehensive development, incorporating inputs from various sources and complemented by accompanying data. Ayu, Deputy News Service Editor, stated:

We craft our stories based on our agenda and do not simply take statements or press conferences from the government as standalone pieces. We know that a press conference alone does not make a complete story, so we try to incorporate other voices to make the story comprehensive. However, I do understand that not every media outlet has the same advantage that we do – being able to wait until the story is fully developed and balanced.

The differing approaches of SCTV, Liputan6.com, and BBC Indonesia highlight their distinct positions as private, commercially-driven media organisations operating nationally, in contrast to public media institutions with an international scope. These discrepancies became more prominent during the pandemic, especially when journalists covered controversial stories or sensitive government-related topics.

7.6 Self-Censorship and Journalists' Autonomy

This study found news organisations refrained from producing critical news content, especially two national media, SCTV and Liputan6.com. This was indicative of a tendency towards self-censorship. This practice contradicts the core principles of professional journalism, which emphasise a journalist's responsibility to act as a vigilant watchdog (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014). For instance, during the first year of the pandemic in 2020, a significant issue surrounding regional elections amidst the COVID-19 outbreak emerged. Concerns were raised about the potential of such elections to exacerbate the spread of the disease throughout the country. The anticipated participation of over 100 million individuals, roughly a third of the nation's population, in voting for leaders across nine provinces, 270 regencies, and 37 cities prompted substantial tensions (Liputan6.com, December 2020). In this context, three newsrooms noted the risks of holding regional elections during the pandemic, citing sources like Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 dashboard. The provided data illustrated that the pandemic continued to pose the most pronounced impact in Southeast Asia, with Indonesia recording the highest number of cases.

The Indonesian government, however, insisted on holding regional elections, with two candidates being President Joko Widodo's son and son-in-law.¹¹ In connection to the notable news involving the presidential lineage, both SCTV and Liputan6.com senior journalists admitted they took a less critical approach in their reporting. This was the first time in Indonesian history that two family members of the incumbent President participated

¹¹ At the time of writing, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the eldest son of Indonesian President Joko Widodo, currently serves as Mayor in Surakarta and was elected Vice President of Indonesia in February 2024 despite controversy. He managed to avoid scrutiny of his "legally, morally, and ethically defective" candidacy after the election body confirmed his eligibility to run in the Indonesian general election in 2024. Meanwhile, Jokowi's son-in-law, Bobby Nasution, serves as the Mayor of Medan, one of the major cities in Indonesia, and is also expected to run for governor in the future (Jakarta Post, January 2024).

in an election. During my conversation with a senior TV producer, his dissatisfaction with his station's treatment of this significant development became evident. Expressing his opinions while awaiting a COVID vaccination, he commented:

I can confirm that we are currently silent. Two crucial issues need to be scrutinised and criticised as they are related: first, what it means to hold a massive election during a pandemic and second, our standpoint on the existence of a political dynasty in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, a senior television producer stated that they had produced several news pieces about candidates from families of current political leaders but had to take precautions. Drawing from 15 years of experience overseeing special election broadcasts at SCTV, the senior producer stated:

It's not easy to change our special programmes to fit the pandemic. Even if we were able to do it, we don't know for sure if we'd be permitted to look closely at the President's family. I think we need to talk with management first.

One managing editor of Liputan6.com was concerned about the owner. He told me, "We are in a delicate situation. The Chief Editor and management have agreed that we must be cautious in handling any issues with the government. We also understand the owner's position. It is difficult, but we must be careful with sensitive issues." The managing editor acknowledged that concerns about owners being displeased with certain news were not something new. Even before the pandemic, they sometimes received indirect messages from owners, although not explicitly. However, they believed the pandemic situation differed because certain decisions might be made based on pandemic reasons. As happened at SCTV, the pandemic was one of the reasons for management to discontinue all long-form programmes, including in-depth and investigative programmes (see Chapter 5). The lack of long-form programmes limited the media's capacity to be critical, as both in-depth and investigative programmes provide journalists with more opportunities for critical analysis in their news creation. This also highlighted how journalists in SCTV and Liputan6.com engaged in self-censorship and diminished their autonomy.

On the other hand, BBC Indonesia took a different approach, producing several articles following an article before the pandemic titled: "Political dynasty: Jokowi's sons and

son-in-law plan to run in regional elections, ‘the temptation of power. (*Dinasti politik: Putra dan menantu Jokowi berniat ikut Pilkada, ‘godaan kekuasaan sulit ditepis’*). BBC Indonesia wrote on 19 October 2019:

Kemunculan Joko Widodo di kancah politik nasional pada mulanya diyakini bisa mendobrak dinasti politik Indonesia. Tapi sekarang, satu per satu anggota keluarganya mulai berniat mencalonkan diri sebagai kepala daerah.

The emergence of (President) Joko Widodo on the national political scene was initially believed to be able to break through Indonesia's political dynasties. However, one by one, his family members began to express their intentions to run for regional leadership positions.

According to BBC Indonesia, it was the first time in Indonesia’s history that the children, in-laws, and offspring of high-ranking officials directly participated in regional elections. The examination of press-state relations in this study accentuates the cultural distinctions among the national media outlets SCTV, Liputan6.com, and BBC Indonesia. It became evident that cultural factors influence journalists’ interactions with their respective contexts. Within the contexts of SCTV and Liputan6.com, journalists showed a tendency toward self-censorship, revealing a heightened consideration for the political interests of their ownership in contrast to direct state censorship (see Haryanto 2011; Tapsell 2012).

SCTV and Liputan6 both belong to a conglomerate that is not affiliated with any political party, but whose owner serves as a presidential advisor and is known for close relations with major political players. Many media owners in Indonesia are tycoons who have become politicians or are actively involved in Indonesian national politics (see also Sen and Hill 2011; Tapsell 2015). This situation hints towards the propaganda model (Herman and Chomsky 1988), which argues that media function within the capitalist economic system serves the interests of dominant elite groups. Embedded in ownership concerns, this behaviour pattern gives rise to significant limitations for journalists within these news organisations, a prevalent practice at SCTV and Liputan6.com, reflecting broader journalist tendencies in Indonesia. This interaction highlights how self-censorship is a crucial part of their professional approach. The findings of this study align closely with several others, suggesting that journalistic autonomy is eroded and self-censorship is encouraged when news

content aligns with the interests of the owner (e.g., Kwanda and Lin 2020; Pintak and Setiyono 2011; Sen and Hill 2011).

Several television reporters from SCTV mentioned that from the time they joined the organisation, experienced colleagues would informally pass on the company's values, which often reflected the owner's preferences. This usually happens during editorial meetings or through direct conversations. One reporter, Diva, recounted, "We essentially followed the guidance that our supervisors provided." Similarly, journalists at Liputan6.com conveyed that senior members advised them to avoid news that contradicted the business objectives or the owner's political inclinations. This prevailing traditional hierarchy system manifests in both newsrooms, with a top-down approach that predominantly shapes the assignment process. In many cases, team leaders or senior personnel determine the agenda-setting, and assignments are subsequently distributed to journalists under their supervision. This framework mirrors the operational structure in SCTV and Liputan6.com, which aligns with the broader framework in Indonesian newsrooms (Tapsell 2015, 2017).

In this scenario, economic factors such as media ownership and advertising influence the relationship as media becomes anchored in the domain of the economic system. Western scholars discuss how ownership structures can shape media content, influence public discourse, and impact democratic processes (e.g., Bagdikian 2004; Herman and Chomsky 2010; McChesney 2008). However, ownership is particularly problematic as a limited number of wealthy individuals or corporations' control most of the media in newly democratic countries such as Indonesia (Haryanto 2011, Sen and Hill 2011; Tapsell 2015). Several studies on Indonesia also underscore that media ownership and control are crucial to the argument that oligarchs continue to exert much political power (e.g., Aspinall and Warburton 2018; Lim 2012).

Some SCTV journalists began their careers before the fall of President Suharto's authoritarian regime in 1998 and now hold influential positions, often as senior or executive producers. They acknowledge their familiarity with one of the concepts of developmental journalism, which, in Indonesia, advocates for nation-building in collaboration with the government, an authoritarian-benevolent style of development journalism. Certain senior producers still hold to the concept of 'responsible journalism', aligning with the findings of studies by Hanitzsch (2005) and George and Venkiteswaran (2019). These studies expound on how Indonesian journalists play an important role in advancing social stability and reverence for authority to strengthen and improve the country's national growth (see also Hanitzsch 2005, 2006).

The concept of media functioning as a fourth estate model, serving as a watchdog and a critical entity, was challenged in a controversial case during the pandemic. Several senior journalists at SCTV and Liputan6.com discussed that the Indonesian House of Representatives was on the verge of passing a revised Criminal Code, which garnered widespread criticism for its potential to curtail press freedom and hinder access to information. The discussion happened in April 2020 but remained mostly informal. They expressed concerns that the elite could exploit the pandemic-related lockdown in Indonesia to limit press freedom by implementing penal code amendments. However, during the editorial meeting, the topic received little attention and was treated as hard news. It can be seen that it may highlighted the presence of self-censorship among journalists.

Several non-governmental organisations consistently urged the government to avoid exploiting the pandemic to infringe on civil rights, such as freedom of expression and press freedom. Meanwhile, SCTV and Liputan6.com demonstrated a cautious approach to shaping their editorial policies. Dinno, SCTV Executive Producer, clarified, “We don’t address this issue in every news bulletin, excluding our noon bulletin, but some coverage is featured in our morning bulletin. Currently, our primary focus remains on the pandemic.” A producer admitted, “During the pandemic, we were advised by our chief editor to exercise caution when addressing political matters. Although there were no specific reasons, we focused on stories related to the pandemic as the direction.” As a result, the majority of news content was presented as straightforward reporting of field events.

Both SCTV and Liputan6.com showed a cautious approach when handling contentious news items. For instance, they carefully considered the coverage of a series of new laws proposed by the House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR*). These laws received significant attention due to their tendency to criminalise critical expressions and infringe upon human rights. While interviews with parliamentary members were conducted, there was not always an equitable inclusion of voices from civil rights advocates and experts to balance the representation. Some journalists within these organisations reported exercising self-censorship due to concerns arising from anti-blasphemy and Electronic and Information Transactions Laws (see Steele 2021).

Some journalists in different newsrooms voiced concerns about the potential impact of the new criminal code bill on press freedom. However, it’s important to note that certain journalists, especially those from two national media outlets, seemed reluctant to explore how ownership influences their editorial decisions. This reluctance could potentially be attributed to the prevailing political atmosphere within which journalism practitioners operate, thus

impacting their autonomy—the professional entitlement of journalists and an essential characteristic of the journalist profession (Waisbord 2013). A senior journalist who recently rejoined SCTV after working for news organisations affiliated with multi-national companies for several years shared her perspectives in an informal interview. She highlighted that in environments where ownership is closely tied to political interests, journalists might be hesitant to discuss ownership's impact on editorial decisions openly. She shared with me that “I think concerns about advertising revenue and corporate relationships could influence my colleagues to address these issues.” Other editors cited practical reasons, mainly job security. One editor mentioned job instability if they openly critiqued ownership, potentially jeopardising their positions.

Indonesian journalists, similar to counterparts in Southeast Asia, have long been operating in an environment characterised by decades of political suppression, self-censorship, harassment of journalists, and other methods of control. It has continued to this day, most of which are shifting into digital forms and spaces (see, e.g., Hadiz and Robison 2004; George and Venkiteswaran 2019). Although Indonesia has become the world's third-largest democracy since the fall of the authoritarian regime in 1998, press control continues to exist, casting a shadow over the country's media and hindering journalists' independence (Tapsell 2012, 2017).

The journalist's challenges include self-censorship, where concerns of backlash or pressure from influential sources often lead to withholding information. In the case of the pandemic, this was evident in statements from news leaders on SCTV and Liputan6.com. They acknowledged the challenging situation created by the pandemic and advised their teams to exercise caution, particularly when producing political news or government policies that could stir controversy. Rey, the Deputy Chief Editor of SCTV, underscored the importance of being careful, stating, “This doesn't mean they can't be critical, but they must still exercise caution.” Rey did not provide further details on the specific caution aspects emphasised.

The pandemic has added a layer of vulnerability, making journalists more susceptible to political and ownership influence. The challenges show the intricate relationship between politics and journalism and underscore the importance of preserving press autonomy in Indonesia. Some participants acknowledged that managing such challenges could have been feasible for a month or two, however, the unclear timeline of the pandemic posed a significant barrier to effective communication with the government. Journalists described the

pandemic as a relay race rather than a sprint or marathon; as Carlo, SCTV Executive Producer, stated, "We don't know when the pandemic will end. When it does, things might be different. Perhaps more regulations will impact us, as the government and parliament are catching up with several bills." This challenge is further intensified by the government's pragmatic inclination to steer journalists towards becoming instruments of propagating the politicisation of COVID-19. As also found in Posetti et al. (2020) study, the future of media and journalism hinges on public trust, which, especially in times of crisis, depends on delivering accurate and comprehensive news.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the gatekeeping process and news sourcing during the pandemic. I have examined two primary areas: first, the gatekeeping process and source verification, and second, the relationship between journalists and the government as an official source. Journalism, as a source-driven practice, relies on sourcing and verifying information from various channels. However, the disruptive nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, compounded by social distancing measures, posed a challenge for journalists in selecting credible sources. The findings suggest that journalists remained crucial gatekeepers during the COVID-19 pandemic despite facing challenges in source verification. Additionally, the findings reveal a shift in the dynamic between journalists and news sources during the outbreak, particularly in the relationship between the press and the government.

Earlier studies indicate the critical role of gatekeeping during a crisis, with journalists serving as key gatekeepers (e.g., Manning 2000; Van der Meer 2017), the function that is often disregarded as an outdated concept, seen as less relevant in the context of the digital age (Vos and Thomas 2019). The role of mainstream media as gatekeepers in the digital environment has been studied extensively, with journalists having the authority to select sources for crisis coverage (e.g., Berkowitz and TerKeurst 2006; Carlson and Franklin 2010; Vos 2019). Therefore, questions surrounding the relevance of journalists' function as gatekeepers in the digital media era (Singer 2008b; Thorson and Wells 2015; Williams and Delli Carpini 2004) may necessitate reevaluation in the context broader impact of the pandemic.

This study argues for reconsidering the perceived decline in the relevance of the gatekeeping concept. It found that gatekeeping in news production became more significant during the pandemic, revealing shifts in news consumption and heightened public

information-seeking to understand the ongoing developments of COVID-19. This result is supported by several previous studies indicating that, during the pandemic, people increasingly relied on legacy news media (Casero-Ripollés 2020; Newman et al. 2021; Van Aelst 2021). The argument that news media as gatekeepers are no longer relevant can be challenged, particularly in crises like the coronavirus pandemic. The news media might not consistently perform gatekeeping roles and align with audience expectations. Nevertheless, this study offered evidence of widespread support for the gatekeeping principles, evidenced by SCTV's increased airtime in response to the demand for news. In a similar vein, Olsen et al.'s (2022) study also suggests that the gatekeepers' roles have been revitalised due to the pandemic's information needs. The practice of gatekeeping in the news media, which is deeply embedded in journalists' professional identity and ethical guidelines, remains still relevant.

This research, however, has also identified the challenge of the diversity of news sources in the gatekeeping process. In response to physical constraints during the pandemic, journalists turned to virtual sourcing as an alternative means to access their sources. As gatekeeping shifted from in-person to online meetings, significant challenges persisted with the distance between journalists and news sources. The transition to online sourcing did not completely resolve the access challenge. Throughout the crisis, journalists relied mainly on familiar sources. While certain research findings have suggested that during crises, journalists tend to rely heavily on news agencies (Lewis et al. 2008; Van der Meer 2016), this study found that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, journalists mainly relied on official sources. Most journalists turned to the government's voice in their attempt to address public scepticism about information as the public became more distrustful of misinformation and propaganda surrounding the pandemic. Studies during the pandemic also highlight the dominant official sources (e.g., Litvinenko et al.; Mellado et al. 2021).

In this study, the shift in source dynamics, combined with the governmental measures during the pandemic, resulted in a more controlled information flow with less critical scrutiny. The government has exclusive authority over the data designated as official, including COVID-19 updates, political policies, and economic developments. Often, this data reflects the government's agenda. Findings found depending heavily on official sources could potentially diminish the quality of reporting. This situation might also curtail journalism's capacity to serve the public interest, particularly when the government dominates information with limited communication avenues.

The COVID-19 pandemic also initiated a shift in journalists' relationships with governments. Previous studies have recognised the influence of the dominant elite on media coverage during crises in Western media and acknowledged the news sector's considerable dependence on governmental and official sources, owing to elements such as news procedures, censorship, and time limitations (e.g., Livingston and Bennett 2003; Thorsen and Jackson 2018). Similar studies have also been found in Southeast Asia (e.g., George and Venkiteswaran 2020; Romano 2013). This study contributes to the theory of press-state relations by highlighting how dependency is particularly tied to physical proximity. Social distancing measures brought about through the pandemic change journalists and government dynamics. It demonstrates that reducing the physical presence and lack of interaction had profound implications for press-government power relations.

The absence of journalists from locations where they report on governmental and official issues significantly weakened the Fourth Estate role of Indonesian journalists – a situation over which they appeared to have little control. These findings underscore the delicate and finely balanced nature of these power dynamics. They also pose additional troubling questions for potential exploration in future research, particularly whether the dynamics of press-government power relations in Indonesia fully reverted to their pre-pandemic state or suffered a genuine setback due to the pandemic.

As Aspinall and Warburton (2018) have indicated an inclination but also regression toward democratic trends in Indonesia, the findings of this study unveil a concerning undercurrent of restricted press freedom. This became evident as two national newsrooms in this study engaged in self-censorship. These revelations raise questions about the durability of democratic support in Indonesia during times of crisis. The pandemic, anticipated as a pivotal juncture for journalists to assume their role as government policy watchdogs, encountered hindrance due to self-censorship influenced by the prevailing corporate and ownership culture. Within Indonesia's journalistic history, relying on the government has been a part of its journalism culture. This study affirms that the influence of political power has never been entirely free from the shadow of political power in the past. This highlights how senior journalists in television uphold the principles of authoritarian-benevolent development journalism, aligning with the government for national advancement. Exploring the extent to which other countries have received similar shifts towards increased government control over information in the aftermath of the pandemic is a possible avenue of further investigation.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant transformations in journalism due to the implementation of strict preventive measures such as lockdowns and social distancing. During the pandemic, newsrooms experienced various kinds of disruption as journalists navigated transitions amid an unexpected and prolonged crisis. This study has shed light on how news-making changed during the pandemic and its implications for journalism practices. Through ethnographic studies of three newsroom organisations in Indonesia—SCTV, a television station, and two digital platforms, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia—during 2020–2021, this study has demonstrated the impact of the pandemic on the news-making process and reveals several complexities and contradictions in practice. The evidence presented in the chapters on findings shows how the pandemic influenced journalists’ engagement with various elements of news production. My research has conveyed the broader impact on traditional news-making processes, specifically noting changes in the relationship between journalists and place, objects of journalism, and news sources.

Prior to the pandemic, journalism faced a wide range of news crises, including global crises, unexpected events, and circumstances crisis events requiring news crisis coverage (e.g., Cottle 2009; Olsson 2010; Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis; however, this study suggests that the conventional approach of viewing the pandemic as a standard public health crisis in a news-making context might not be effective. The distinctive nature of the COVID-19 context, characterised by unprecedented disruption and prolonged impact on news production processes, sets it apart from previous pandemics. Current knowledge of news production during public health crises is limited to situations where newsrooms remain unaffected.

In Indonesia, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived at a time when many newsrooms were implementing technological convergence but grappling with the challenge of how new media technologies brought about greater media freedom (see Tapsell 2015; Lim 2013). Two observed newsrooms, SCTV and Liputan6.com, were still in the process of establishing initiatives to present their products across diverse platforms. Meanwhile, the BBC was prepared to close its radio service in Indonesia as part of plans to discontinue broadcasts in 10

languages, aligning with its strategy to create a “modern, digital-led, and streamlined organisation” (Bushby 2022). This study found that the pandemic forced the three newsrooms studied to reevaluate news-making by adjusting their routine practices, reconfiguring the newsroom as a place, reconsidering the role of objects of journalism, and overcoming their news sources.

This final chapter summarises the research findings and concludes the study. It reviews the theoretical framework presented in the literature, methodological considerations, and empirical data collected through newsroom ethnography during 2020 and 2021. It is presented in three sections. The first part summarises the key findings and discusses the results by revisiting research questions. The second part presents the theoretical contribution and significance of existing newsroom studies. Finally, the last section discusses the research limitations and how those limitations may have impacted the findings and propose recommendations that deserve to be explored in future research.

8.2 Main Findings

Through observations and interviews with journalists from three newsrooms, this study revealed four key findings concerning routines, places, objects, and sources in the news-making process. First, news production evolved as social distance measures changed routine practices. The changing newsroom routines have significantly impacted journalism culture as the newsroom stands at the core of news production and fosters a communication culture among journalists. Second, as the newsroom was reconfigured, meaningful and constructive communication among journalists was lost despite the availability of online editorial meetings. For most journalists in this study, making news in the newsroom was synonymous with their professional journalistic identity. Third, this research found that the pandemic reshaped the relationship between journalists and objects of journalism. It shows how journalists professionally and emotionally connect through technology. The disruption of certain news objects can adversely affect journalists’ professional identities. Fourth, the findings also highlight the critical role of place in shaping press-source relations. Due to limited mobility, journalists encountered difficulties finding and verifying their sources, resulting in untested and unchallenged official sources. In this study, losing physical proximity to government sources had major consequences for power relations between journalists and authorities.

8.2.1 Changing Routine Practices in Disrupted Newsrooms

The first research question explored in this study is whether the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant changes in routine journalistic practices and news-making: “How did the COVID-19 pandemic crisis impact journalism routines and change news-making?” Foremost among the identified challenges is the disruption of newsroom routines. This study has highlighted the complex interaction between media organisations, newsroom cultures, and wider socio-economic and political factors in routine practices in the face of a global crisis. In Chapter 4, the analysis of three newsrooms revealed distinctive routine practices unfolded across three newsrooms in response to the crisis. However, a nuanced picture emerged from the study, indicating that each newsroom responded uniquely to adapt its routine practices to the evolving situation. Upon synthesising the findings, it is evident that the consequences resulting from the pandemic were not universally experienced by the three newsrooms. The findings, as Schudson’s (2005) insights in news production study, highlighted the influence of four distinct approaches to the sociology of news: the economic organisation of news, the political context of news making, the social organisation of news work, and cultural perspectives. This diversity in responses emphasises the complex dynamics of various factors shaping how newsrooms adjust their practices during times of crisis.

The examination of three newsrooms showed different routine practices on each platform in response to the crisis in news production. This study found mixed results as the journalists of two digital newsrooms, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia, left the newsrooms and adjusted their work remotely. Particular attention was drawn to SCTV journalists’ challenges when adjusting their routines, especially compared to their digital news counterparts. SCTV, interestingly, endeavoured to maintain their established routines. For instance, around 70-80% of their content was gathered from the field, meaning they constantly sent reporters to the field to gather stories from event sites. The station also increased the airtime for every newscast. Based on Nielsen’s report, around 77% of Indonesian viewers returned to watching TV in the early stages of the pandemic in March 2020. TV journalists argued that disseminating information to their audience was their responsibility.

As shown above, the finding reveals that SCTV, driven by the imperative of securing favourable ratings, sought to sustain viewership as a measure of popularity and a crucial factor influencing advertising revenue. Simultaneously, Liputan6, dependent on digital metrics, faced the challenge of securing clicks and views, essential for user engagement and

advertising appeal. Tapsell's (2015) study affirms that the Indonesian media operates in a free market-driven environment, where audience and readership largely determine what and how news is produced.

The findings correspond to Schudson's (2005) study that changing routines posed significant challenges for legacy media as the vast majority of daily news on television or in newspapers comes from planned, intentional events, press releases, press conferences, and scheduled interviews. This implies that TV, as a conventional media form, heavily relies on predetermined agendas and organised sources, making it resistant to spontaneous or impromptu programming, particularly during times of crisis that may arise from routine changes. In this context, there might be a hesitancy to alter established routines, as outlined in Ryfe's (2013) study. Journalists often face challenges in adapting, displaying a degree of reluctance or apparent difficulty in embracing innovation. This can lead to a preference for traditional practices, even in the face of a dynamic and evolving media landscape, which, in this case, is the adjustment to the pandemic crisis.

Meanwhile, the two digital newsrooms sought to address the shifting dynamics during the pandemic, including adjustments in news production within the altered remote environment. While journalists in digital newsrooms have undergone significant adaptation, establishing remote work setups, this study reveals an additional dimension. Working from home not only marked a notable shift in their operational landscape but also impacted their creativity and overall well-being. This indicates that the transition, while necessary, has introduced challenges that extend beyond logistical considerations.

Chapter 4 showed that the three newsrooms sought to address the shifting dynamics during the pandemic, including adjustments in news production within the altered environment, active engagement with audiences facing unprecedented news demands, and experimentation with different approaches to news creation. Both Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia continued to engage with audiences by experimenting with different approaches to news creation, such as digital storytelling. These findings indicate that digital media has the potential for innovation due to its inherent flexibility and adaptability (see Hermida and Young 2021; Lopezosa et al. 2023; Paulussen 2016). This allowed them to break free from the traditional confines of a physical newsroom and enabled them to navigate the unprecedented circumstances brought about by the pandemic (see Bunce 2018; García-Avilés 2021).

In many ways, these findings resonate with Schudson's (2005) argument that, in the digital era, the production and consumption of news have undergone significant changes over

the past twenty decades. However, on the production side, work habits and professional ideals remain largely recognisable from the past. In the face of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, this routine tradition persisted and underwent substantial adaptations. The results indicate that, despite the significant disruption caused by lockdown measures to the news gathering and processing cycle, news organisations responded by intensifying the adoption of digital media technologies. Journalists had to transcend the confines of the traditional newsroom, establishing a new remote newsroom.

On the one hand, examining data analysis in relation to routine practices aligns with insights derived from prior ethnographic studies conducted in newsrooms. For a long time, newsrooms have adhered to established routine practices, a tradition observed from classic ethnographic studies (e.g., Gans 1979; Tuchman 1978) to contemporary studies conducted in the digital era (e.g., Boczkowski 2004; Usher 2014). On the other hand, while previous research traditionally emphasised newsrooms as the focal point of daily routine practices (e.g., Robinson 2012; Zaman 2013), this study highlighted a notion from this conventional understanding. It showed that the pandemic had transformed the newsroom, reshaping it into a place that did not entirely function as a centre for news production. In Chapter 5, the findings demonstrate how the culture of newsrooms has evolved as a consequence of newsroom reconfiguration.

8.2.2 Reconfiguration of Place

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent social distancing measures have provided an interesting context to analyse the evolving relationship between journalism and place. To address the gaps in news-making in the context of the pandemic, this study explores ‘place’ in news production using Usher’s framework (2019, p. 91). The second key question that my research addressed is: “How did the value of a physical place affect journalistic professionalism during the pandemic? What were the consequences of the reconfiguration of the place on the symbolic power of journalism?” Throughout Chapter 5, the findings demonstrate that the pandemic significantly impacts the newsroom—a place where journalists foster communication and professional culture (see Robinson 2011; Tuchman 1978; Usher 2019; Wahl-Jorgensen 2009).

One main finding is that this study found that the established material settings of news production underwent reconfigurations to ensure the journalist’s safety from contracting COVID-19. In two digital newsrooms, Liputan6.com and BBC Indonesia, journalists crafted

news packages from their homes. Meanwhile, at the SCTV newsroom, the newsroom operated with reduced staff and small teams on shifts. Despite this, the newsroom continued to serve as a resource hub for some journalists during the pandemic. The findings related to the place of news-making suggest that journalists were challenged to adapt to the reconfiguration of their workspace. During the pandemic, both TV and digital newsrooms faced challenges, but to different extents in their reliance on the newsroom environment. TV newsrooms generally required more on-site presence due to the nature of their work, while digital newsrooms demonstrated flexibility in adapting to remote work conditions.

This study found that TV journalists strongly preferred to work in the newsroom even during a crisis like the pandemic. This finding was also similar to Usher's (2014) research on newspapers, reflecting the tradition of legacy media. While the attachment to place is the character of traditional media, most journalists, both TV and digital news organisations, felt a strong connection to the workplace and found the newsroom environment conducive to their work. For most journalists in this study, being in the physical place of the newsroom helped foster creativity and collaboration. Here, the newsroom is not only a place that facilitates the production of information but also serves as a symbol of power, professionalism, and authority (e.g., Carlson 2017; Couldry 2000; Usher 2019). This observation also affirms Bourdieu's (1989, p. 16) study, which posits that newsrooms and news gathering sites constitute the "field of power," shaping the power dynamics in society.

These findings may serve as an example to address questions regarding the centrality of the newsroom as a site for journalistic work and the subject of academic study (e.g., Boczkowski 2015; Zelizer 2017). Despite debates on the centrality of the newsroom, the study emphasises that, for broadcast journalists, there are no viable alternatives to the newsroom, which is deemed essential for fostering a productive working environment. Considering the importance of newsroom culture (Anderson 2013), the newsroom—where journalists 'live and breathe'—is not easily replaceable (Le Cam 2015). Previous research has established that physical proximity to power is crucial for journalists, and throughout history, news organisations have sought to position themselves among influential individuals and institutions (Schmitz Weiss 2020; Usher 2019). What emerges from these findings is that broadcast journalists value the physical newsroom more than digital media journalists. For broadcast journalists in this study, the newsroom is seen as the best place for making news, and there is no substitute place for it. On the other hand, whether working in television or digital media, for many journalists, engaging in newsroom production is synonymous with

their professional identity. In practical terms, having a physical newsroom is considered essential for a productive working environment.

My findings show that although editorial meetings could be conducted online, meaningful and constructive communication among journalists was compromised in the process. The drawbacks of displaced news-making also carry symbolic significance. They conveyed how the newsroom lost its vibrancy when it was no longer bustling with journalists, guests, and other media personnel. This observation implies that the symbolic power of a newsroom does not solely emanate from its physical settings, such as location, architecture, and physical layout, because these aspects remained unchanged during the pandemic. Instead, it emphasises that the symbolic power of places is shaped by the people who inhabit them, and when these dynamics undergo significant disruption, a place can quickly lose its allure (see Couldry 2000; Papacharissi 2015).

A similarity interesting finding is the meaning of the place where television journalists show their identity to do live reports from a certain location. Despite the limited newsroom capacity, there was a significant increase in the number of live field reports on SCTV. Live reporting from places where news events happen met a number of professional, commercial, and practical standpoints. With an increased reliance on live reports from the field, it would be argued that this resulted in more news content but less journalism (see Cushion et al. 2014; Tuggle and Huffman 2010). For TV journalists, being live at important locations relating to the pandemic was important as the closer the reporter was to the event location, the more poignant and immediate the impact on the audience was. ‘Going live’ also makes SCTV journalists more credible due to the virtue of on-site presence, as the physical presence of the journalists on the site makes the journalists become eyewitnesses. Television journalists prioritised live reporting due to concepts such as ‘liveness’, ‘eye-witnesses’, and ‘proximity’ (see Usher 2019; Zelizer 2017).

Nevertheless, due to the unique characteristics of the pandemic—with no physical epicentre, no visible spectacle, and unfolding events at a relatively slow pace—journalists, even when broadcasting live from a specific location, were not experiencing witnessing live events. In this context, journalists may be criticised for not fully comprehending the places they are reporting from. The places of live reporting often serve as journalists’ efforts to visually represent and embody abstract issues as eyewitnesses, aiming to establish credibility and authority (Huxford 2007; Scannell 2014). However, if a reporter is situated in a location where no actual unfolding event is taking place, this merely creates an illusion of proximity, contributing to the perpetuation of a sense of placelessness.

This study shows that the pandemic reconfigured the relationship between journalism and place. It accelerated the place-based realignments of journalism practices. This research, drawing on the theory of place-based journalism (Usher 2019), adds to our understanding of the evolving dynamics of place realignment within television newsrooms. It highlighted that during the reconfiguration of places in times of crisis, the concept of place remains significant, emphasising a work culture that values physical proximity. What runs through these findings is how profound the consequences of some of these reconfigurations were for journalistic routines, professional identities, and perceptions of journalistic authority.

8.2.3 Reshaping the Objects of Journalism

One of the main findings of this study, as discussed in the previous section, indicates that ‘place’, where news is made, can foster a sense of professionalism (Robinson 2011; Usher 2019) and suggests that the role of physical spaces in journalism is not only practical but also personal (Usher 2015; Zaman 2013). This insight extends to the objects of journalism, the third theme addressing how objects of journalism contribute to the news-making process during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter 6 presented the findings derived from the third research question: “How did objects of journalism contribute to the news-making process during the COVID-19 pandemic?”

This study suggests a transformation in the dynamic between journalists and objects brought about by the pandemic as it has accelerated the evolution of the relationship between journalists and objects of journalism, significantly influencing journalism practices. Objects of journalism in this study refer to digital-enabled objects in news production, covering both hard and soft objects. The investigation of objects and the relationship between journalists and the objects of journalism remains an unexplored aspect, particularly within the context of the current pandemic.

Initially, journalists maintained a strong tie to objects in the newsrooms, particularly digital-enabled tools for news production. However, the pandemic compelled a shift away from traditional newsroom settings and forced journalists to leave their newsrooms for safety reasons. The findings underscore the significant reliance of broadcast journalists on specific news objects, particularly digital-enabled objects used in the newsroom for production and broadcasting. Broadcasters heavily depend on hard objects in the newsroom, and Schudson (2015) notes the challenge of replacing these objects. For instance, SCTV journalists rely on

newsroom system technology and audio-video equipment in the control room, while BBC Indonesia radio broadcasters depend on essential tools like audio mixers and control panels.

What emerged from this study is that even though the pandemic compelled journalists to move from the newsroom and leave behind digital-enabled objects, broadcasters tend to return to their studio environments and use the same objects. However, in some cases, such as live stream events, both digital newsrooms also encountered the dilemma of being attached to digital-enabled objects and found it challenging to abandon certain objects. The findings align with Pavlik's (2000, 2019) assertion that technology has always affected constrained and structured journalism.

While all three newsrooms faced challenges adapting to the new working culture, given the differences in news production between television and digital newsrooms, this study's two digital news organisations showed more adaptability toward the digital-enabled objects. For example, the two examined newsrooms were more flexible using mobile objects, particularly in news gathering. Mobile objects such as cameras, smartphones, and editing apps have become essential digital-enabled objects for independent reporting while prioritising safety. Previously, video journalists used these mobile objects, with BBC Indonesia and Liputan6.com implementing daily coverage, while SCTV increasingly recognised their suitability for adhering to social distancing practices since the onset of the Pandemic. This shift highlighted the need for SCTV journalists to be versatile and skilled in using mobile objects.

In light of mobile objects and multi-skilled journalists, I would argue that the long-standing debate about multi-skilled journalists using digital mobile objects will still continue in legacy media. Multimedia journalists are known as 'mojos'/mobile journalists (Salzmann et al. 2021; Westlund and Quinn 2018), 'sojos' /solo journalists (Martyn, 2009; Smith, 2011) or VJs/ video journalists (Blankenship 2016; Messineo 2015). In the early 2000s, there was a long debate about whether journalists should possess new skills and adopt new technology to become multi-skilled (e.g., Dupagne and Garrison 2006; Filak 2004; Singer 2007). The pandemic acted as a catalyst to hasten the adoption of mobile journalism, allowing journalists to work solo while maintaining social distancing. However, this study found that some television journalists were reluctant to work as video journalists. This may reflect Ryfe's (2009, p. 198) study that, in some cases, the culture of professionalism in newsrooms is resilient and resistant to change.

The other key findings show a heavy reliance on certain digital-enabled objects in news production that can generate professional insecurity. It shows how journalists

professionally and emotionally connect through technology, akin to a ‘security blanket’ they typically rely on. Television journalists showed a distinct attachment to digital-enabled objects, where specific news items held not only functional significance but also deep symbolic meaning. For example, a hard object, such as trucks for live reports, held significant meaning for them as symbols of power in news production. When they lose attachment to certain objects, television journalists may experience a sense of disorientation and diminished confidence in their news production capabilities. This study reveals that when the significance attributed to particular legacy news objects is disrupted, it can negatively impact the professional identity of journalists.

Changing digital-enabled objects from a newsroom to remote work also increased professional insecurity for journalists in three studied newsrooms. These findings shed light on the complexities surrounding adopting remote work practices in journalism. The outbreak forced news organisations to leave their physical workplaces and required journalists to work from home, leading to teleworking in virtual newsrooms (Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés, 2020; Garcia-Avilés, 2021). This research demonstrates the challenges of transitioning to a virtual newsroom, as the shift to remote work presented not only technological hurdles but also caused anxiety and tension among the observed journalists.

Overall, the findings on objects of journalism indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has not only brought about pragmatic changes in newsroom operations but has fundamentally reshaped the context of the newsroom as a workspace. Evidently, the attachment to newsroom objects runs deeper than practicality, reflecting a sense of belonging within the newsroom—a finding similar with earlier research (Steensen, 2018). This transformation is marked by the profound connection between journalists and objects of journalism, especially considering the centralised workspace requirements for specific news production. As Anderson and De Maeyer (2015) emphasise the importance of studying journalism objects and materiality more than discussing technological aspects, my study offers nuanced knowledge of social and cultural dimensions in journalism practice. More specifically, changing the culture in a time of crisis. These findings indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has not only brought about pragmatic changes in newsroom operations but has fundamentally reshaped the context of the newsroom as a workspace. Here, digital-enabled objects go beyond the materiality of digital technology in news-making processes during the pandemic.

8.2.4 Gatekeeping Challenges and Press-State Relations

The fourth research question explored the gatekeeping process and news sources as formulated as follows: “How did the Pandemic impact the gatekeeping process and change journalists’ relationships with their sources?” Chapter 7 highlighted two crucial findings: first, the gatekeeping process and source verification, and second, the relationship between journalists and the government as an official source.

One of the key findings suggests that journalists remained crucial gatekeepers during the COVID-19 pandemic despite facing challenges in source verification. The role of mainstream media as gatekeepers in the digital environment has been studied extensively, with journalists having the authority to select sources for crisis coverage (Carlson and Franklin 2010; Manning 2000; Van der Meer et al. 2017). In the digital era, however, where everyone can produce news, the gatekeeping function is considered an outdated concept (Vos and Thomas 2019) and the relevance of journalists as gatekeepers is often overlooked and challenged (Singer 2008b; Thorson and Wells 2015; Williams and Delli Carpini 2004).

This study has challenged the notion that the gatekeeping concept is losing relevance and argues that it gained importance during the COVID-19 pandemic. My research indicates a significant increase in the gatekeeping process, driven by the heightened demand for information as the public sought crucial updates, similar to other studies during the pandemic (e.g., Nelson and Lewis 2022; Van Aelst 2021). Due to public interest in understanding pandemic developments, studies indicate a return to traditional news media (Casero-Ripollés 2020; Newman et al. 2021). Contrary to the notion that news media as gatekeepers are no longer relevant, the study offers evidence supporting the ongoing importance of gatekeeping principles based on these findings. It highlights how during crises like the pandemic, the newsrooms observed, such as SCTV, responded to the increased demand for information by extending airtime while Liputan6.com attempted to increase its news production and BBC Indonesia maintained its content to meet audience expectations. My study underscores the ongoing relevance of the practice, aligning with Olsen et al.’s (2022) findings suggesting the revitalisation of gatekeepers’ roles due to the pandemic’s information needs.

Another key finding is that during the pandemic, access to diverse sources and verification process was challenging. Earlier studies emphasise that journalists tend to rely more heavily on specific sources during crises, as these sources offer greater assurance in times of hectic time (Berkowitz and Liu 2016; Van deer Meer 2017). The three newsrooms in this study continued to disseminate their content by attempting to access regular sources, such

as organisations, experts, the public, and authorities, including the government. However, the constraints imposed by social distancing limited the ability to gather information. While virtual sourcing using technology facilitates source access, interviews present challenges due to technical issues or the sources' unfamiliarity with virtual platforms. Most of the journalists in this study noted a preference for in-person interviews, citing them as more effective. The absence of physical contact limited journalists' access to their sources and challenged them to verify information.

The primary challenge was verifying information from the government, a crucial information source. All journalists in three observed newsrooms said that the pandemic has exacerbated communication difficulties with the government. The communication flowed in one way direction. For instance, the Indonesian President, ministers, and other official sources generated their own news on social media channels and shared it with journalists. Meanwhile, television was not allowed to be aired directly from the President's palace and government offices (see Alvin 2023); instead, all broadcasts had to be part of a TV pool. The two digital newsrooms only received press releases or attended virtual press conferences with limited opportunities to actively participating in question-and-answer sessions. Journalists attempted to balance and diversify their sources, but the voices of officials still gained prominence for certain content related to the pandemic. Other studies have similarly pointed out the challenging context for source verification and gatekeeping during the global crisis (e.g., Perreault and Perreault 2021; Mellado et al. 2021).

The findings are equally interesting because the pandemic shifted journalist-government relationships. This study showed how the dependency is particularly tied to physical proximity. Due to social distancing and the lack of interactions, the press became more reliant on official sources as data and the important policy came from the government. At the same time, social distance measures have transformed into a practice allowing untested and unchallenged official information. The lack of in-person interactions with the government during the coronavirus outbreak raises the power balance issue as the relationship becomes less mutually reliant due to pandemic restrictions. Furthermore, when news organisations have implemented physical distance between journalists and governmental institutions, often for economic reasons, scholars have expressed concerns about the potential repercussions for democratic accountability (McChesney 2015; Usher 2015). The significant reliance of the news industry on governmental and official sources has been broadly recognised in earlier research, considering factors such as news routines, time constraints, and censorship, especially amid crisis events (e.g., Thorsen and Jackson 2018). In accordance with other studies, the findings

of three newsrooms suggest that not only did the pandemic serve as a convenient pretext for controlling information flow, but it also led to some misinformation being propagated by the government (see Posetti et al. 2020).

Consequently, the crisis has been exploited to threaten journalists' autonomy and curtail press freedom. A year after the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Indonesia was ranked 113th out of 180 countries based on the World Press Freedom Index 2021. During the Pandemic, the Indonesian government revised the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law. This revision suppressed and limited freedom of opinion, including freedom of the press. When the government exerts pressure on the press or attempts to control media content, it can lead to self-censorship and a restriction on the free flow of information (see Arceneaux et al. 2020; Jung 2022; Papadopoulos and Maniou 2021).

This study has also demonstrated that the prolonged pandemic gave illiberal political forces more room to challenge journalists' independence. While Indonesia's democracy before the pandemic is described as its stable, vibrant civil society and press freedom (Aspinall and Warburton 2018), this study revealed the government has used the pandemic to control information, as found in several studies during the pandemic in Indonesia (Masduki 2020; Mietzner 2020; Mujani and Liddle 2022).

Indonesian journalists have navigated an environment marked by decades of political suppression and self-censorship (e.g., George and Venkiteswaran 2019; Tapsell 2015). SCTV and Liputan6.com both demonstrated a cautious approach to managing contentious news items. As press-state relations reflect journalists' cultural perspectives, this study also highlights the cultural differences between the two national media outlets, which are tied to the state's political interests, whereas BBC Indonesia journalists are less dependent on the government. Findings reveal several differences influenced by cultural, political, and historical factors. Western newsrooms often have a tradition of editorial independence and maintain investigative reporting, which is reflected in BBC Indonesia's practices. Non-Western newsrooms may face challenges such as government censorship, restrictions on press freedom, and cultural norms influencing media content, as shown in two observed newsrooms. Economic factors, technological advancements, and audience preferences also contribute to variations in media landscape dynamics.

8.3 Implications for the Study of the Newsroom

Recent studies in journalism have shown tremendous growth during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, few empirical studies have examined news production in disrupted newsrooms. These findings demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacts news-making and brings consequences to journalism practices. During the pandemic, relationships between journalists, places, objects and sources changed, as evidenced in this study.

This study contributed towards the discussion regarding routines in disrupted newsrooms. However, this research does not intend to provide a general theory of the routine transformation in the news-making process. Instead, more modestly, this thesis has aimed to contribute to a better understanding of routine practices within the newsroom during a crisis. The concept of routine practices in journalism can be approached from two perspectives: the routine mechanism, where journalists adhere to ‘patterned, repeated practices’ (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, p. 105), and the unusual routine that disrupts the typical news production process (Ryfe, 2018). In the context of this study, I argue that during a crisis, routine practices can fall somewhere in between these two extremes, and their nature may depend on the organisation’s culture. Looking beyond the pandemic, this nuanced understanding of routine practices holds important implications for the study of newsrooms. It suggests that the experiences and adaptations made during the COVID-19 crisis may leave a lasting impact on journalistic practices. Researchers examining newsroom dynamics post-pandemic should consider the enduring effects on routine mechanisms and how news organisations evolve in response to unprecedented challenges.

Second, the pandemic affected news-making in a unique way, which is why this study is particularly noteworthy. I have argued that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to understanding the changing relationship between journalism and place. The pandemic accelerated place-based reconfiguration in journalistic practice, professionalism and authority. While previous studies have explored the dynamics place of online and print newspapers during normal times (Robinson 2011; Usher 2014, 2015), this research underscores the significance of investigating various types of newsrooms during a crisis by demonstrating that broadcast news still maintains unique relationships with physical places. Examining how newsrooms are continually reshaped as physical places and how the professional culture changes in a crisis will offer practical insights and, more broadly,

contribute to our understanding of their evolving nature. It will also offer an opportunity to explore the long-term effects of external disruptions on newsroom dynamics.

Third, a significant contribution of this study has been to increase our understanding of objects of journalism in the crisis period. The pandemic has reshaped the relationship between journalists and news objects. My findings lead to an argument relating to materiality theory to explain how objects can influence journalistic culture in a long-term crisis such as a pandemic. As previous studies discussed how objects of journalism participate in news production (Bounegru, 2019; Weiss and Domingo, 2010), research has yet to investigate how the journalist's practices were significantly changed by the limitations on the use of objects during the COVID-19 global pandemic. This study extends beyond the technical materiality and explores the socio-material context to provide an understanding of the news objects during a crisis. It contributes to the broader discourse on the role of objects of journalism related to journalism identity and authority.

Fourth, this study contributes to the understanding of press-state relations by showing that a diminishing physical presence in press-state relations poses a threat to press freedom. The prolonged pandemic gives illiberal political forces more room to challenge journalists' autonomy and threaten press freedom in the long run. This study contributed to an enhanced understanding of the relationship between journalists and news sources during a crisis, especially press-state relations. Particularly evident in the pandemic, most news sources became unreachable, leading to a lack of accountability in the government (e.g., Mellado et al., Papadopoulou and Maniou, 2021). Notably, the pandemic changed relationships between journalists and the government in the context of the emerging democratic country. Several cases in this study demonstrate elevated levels of self-censorship compared to previous studies (e.g., Tapsell 2012), indicating that self-censorship is more prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings prompt us to raise questions about the resilience of journalism in emerging democratic systems during times of crisis.

Since there is no comprehensive study in Indonesia related to news-making during the COVID-19 pandemic, this research has pioneered research on Indonesia's newsroom crisis and provided a new media perspective on Indonesia. This thesis does not aim to universalise all journalist's experiences in Indonesia. Instead, I emphasise various experiences and ways journalists deal with challenges they face that open up opportunities for change. This study was necessary to understand how non-Western newsrooms responded to the digital media challenge during the pandemic. Therefore, this empirical study will contribute to the Global South media studies. It can be used as a reference to enrich the public's knowledge and for

further studies in media and journalism in Asia. Empirically, the study contributes to a better understanding of the legacy newsroom and digital newsrooms within a rapidly changing field of journalism from a Global South case study.

Beyond journalism, some findings from the study of newsrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic are relevant to several aspects of industries. In routine practices, newsroom adaptation to cope with news workflow restrictions and organisational crises provides a model for other industries in developing crisis management. Research on organisations' management of the COVID-19 pandemic (Boiral et al. 2021), parallel with journalism adaptation to prepare better for future disruptions and organisational resilience (Gečienė 2021). Meanwhile, newsroom reconfiguration, shifting editorial meetings online, and managing teams remotely also became the norm in other industries, aligning with the study "remote work revolution" (Neeley, 2021) that offers flexibility in work arrangements. In terms of technology, adaptability and technology adoption in objects of journalism brought lessons on how different industries used digital technology to maintain operations during the crisis (Vargo et al. 2021). In this sense, such journalism research can help any industry identify new ways to develop organisational resilience during crises such as COVID-19 and beyond.

8.4 Limitations and Future Research

The media landscape has been rapidly changing since the outbreak of COVID-19, and as a result, the research findings on newsroom studies may not be up-to-date with all the recent developments. Nevertheless, the insights provided by the findings presented here are valuable in understanding the news production processes of Indonesian media organisations. It also offers insights into how journalists adjusted to changes in production, work systems, and 'new' newsroom culture. This study highlights some limitations that should be addressed in future studies of newsrooms during crises.

Given social distancing measures and limited newsroom access, this study was conducted online and offline during the pandemic. The data from online observations, which are less reliable than on-site observations, is mainly based on editorial meetings. While providing valuable access to the experiences and practices of journalists in digital newsrooms amid lockdowns, online ethnography may still be influenced by selection bias. This bias could arise because the online behaviours and interactions of journalists that emerged during the pandemic may only partially represent the broader pre-pandemic journalistic culture and

practices. On the other hand, offline ethnography faced significant challenges due to restrictions on physical interactions and limited access to specific offline spaces. Future research should consider the evolving cultural dynamics in the context of a pandemic, exploring how these extraordinary circumstances impact journalists' online and offline behaviour and how they may shape our understanding of culture in a post-pandemic.

The study also had the limitation of focusing on two platforms: television and digital media. This limited scope means that the findings may only be broadly applicable to some of the media landscape in Indonesia, as they do not include other significant players like newspapers. Future research could aim for a more diverse sample of media platforms to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Indonesia's media ecosystem. Additionally, although radio was briefly mentioned as part of the BBC Indonesia newsroom, it was not extensively examined. Radio remains a vital source of information for many Indonesians, therefore further research into its practices and challenges would be valuable. Further empirical research should explore these dynamics in other under-researched news settings like radio.

Another limitation relates to the financial aspect of media organisations during the pandemic. The three newsrooms in this study were well-funded and, although affected by the global economic situation, they did not fully experience the severe workforce reductions that most media organisations faced due to the pandemic. A study conducted in Indonesia recently stated that perhaps some journalists who work in reputable media companies did not experience this condition (Kalaloi et al., 2023). This specific focus limits the applicability of the findings, as they might not necessarily extend to media outlets grappling with financial instability or emotion related to labour. Therefore, future research should encompass a more diverse array of newsrooms, including those navigating financial constraints, to comprehensively understand Indonesia's media industry.

Finally, the limitation is related to the scope of this study. Although this study has expanded our understanding of journalism and its relationship to places beyond Western newsrooms, there is hesitation about generalising broadly to other contexts. Instead, further exploration is encouraged, particularly in Global South settings where this study area still needs to be explored. The disruptions caused by the pandemic have emphasised the growing importance of conducting further research. This is of particular importance given the unique challenges facing newsrooms worldwide today.

Future post-pandemic research could be expanded to investigate journalists' attachment to the physical newsroom and whether it can continue operating as a hybrid

newsroom or transition to a virtual one. Moreover, the findings on press-state relations demonstrate these power relationships were delicate and finely balanced. They also pose further questions for potential exploration in future research. Future research may also focus on the long-term relationship between journalists and the government to examine the dynamics of the press-state relationship, whether the setback of press expression can be recovered, or whether the relationship will change to a permanent one.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview List

Research Question 1:

What changes in news production routines/work have you experienced during the Pandemic?

1.1 Where do you gather information during the outbreak?

Do you gather from online, from the field or both? How is that?

What is the composition of the news you get online and collected from the field?
Could you explain what the meaning is?

How difficult have you been collecting the information from the field since the
Pandemic?

1.2 How do you cover the news when the Pandemic happens?

How do you cover your story during the outbreak?

Could you explain the way you changed your coverage?

Do you make pre-assignment preparations, travel planning, and post-assignment
precautions? Please describe.

1.3 How do you create a news story during the outbreak?

How does the workflow change the flow of information in making news changes
during the Pandemic?

The COVID-19 pandemic is a long-term developing story; how do you keep the news
balanced and objective?

1.4 How do you feel about the changes in how you cover your stories?

What challenges have you faced in making a story during the Pandemic?

How do you respond and adapt to changing the coverage of news stories?

How do you adapt to the changes in physical interactions with other journalists in
producing the news?

How do you interact with a team member during the Pandemic?

Have you had some difficult circumstances in your relationship with other teams in daily routines?

Would you like to describe your personal/ emotional challenges?

Research Question 2:

In what ways has the Pandemic and the reconfiguration of the places affected journalism practices?

2.1 Do you think the newsroom is still safe during the Pandemic?

How important do you think it is to produce news from the newsroom?

Do you think the newsroom is just a place where you work? How about when the newsroom, as a physical place, moves to another place?

2.2 Have you made news stories from other locations instead of newsrooms?

Please explain the specific places where you find the information, whether offline or online.

What are the differences between producing the news in and outside the newsroom?

Do you have experience controlling (covering/producing/presenting) news from outside the newsroom? How is that? Please describe it.

Do you mind doing your news production outside the newsroom? If yes, why? If not, would you explain the reasons?

How effective is producing news outside of the newsroom? How do you feel about this?

In your opinion, how important is the newsroom to you? (For reporters/video journalists and assignment editors: What do you feel you must move away from the newsroom during the pandemic?)

2.3 Does a change in the newsroom layout modify work routines/ activities?

What do you think is the function of the newsroom when the pandemic happens?

What are the impacts of the newsroom disruptions changes on your roles?

2.4 Questions about live news/ live reports

Question for Producers: Do you include 'live news' as one of your news stories? Do you think it is necessary to do live news during the pandemic? Why?

Question for Assignment Editors: Do you send your reporter to do a 'live event' from the field? How?

Question for Reporters: How many times a week do you get assignments for ‘a live’?
Where is a live event taking place?

Research Question 3:

How does digital technology contribute to news-making during the outbreak?

3.1 Please explain your technical challenges during the Pandemic

How do you adapt to technological changes to make news during the outbreak?

3.2. Do you use new technology to do your job outside the newsroom? If yes, what kind of digital media that you use to create news?

Is there any technological innovation that helps you speed up your work inside or outside the newsroom? Please explain this.

3.3. How often do you use virtual technology when the pandemic happens? What issues have you experienced when it comes to digital technology?

3.4 What do you think of the idea of using technology to broadcast television news from everywhere?

Research Question 4:

How do journalists get the sources during the Pandemic? What is the relationship between journalists and news sources during the outbreak?

4.1 How do you connect with your sources? What is the challenge of finding your sources during the outbreak?

How has communication with the sources changed? Explain, please.

How often do you talk to people and gather their voices as your sources? What story?

Which sources do you rely on for the information? How often do you use medical experts as opposed to the government? How about political sources, do you rely on them?

Do you send a beat reporter to get exclusive information?

Do you use the story from citizen journalists/ UCG? How often?

Do you assign additional stories to freelancers to cover the news? If that is the case, why?

4.2 Please describe how your relationship with the government has been going on during the Pandemic.

As the government is an important source for the media, how do you talk to them to get confirmation?

How difficult is it to talk to the government? If it is hard to reach the government, do you ever think the government has been trying to brush up on important details and limit access to data?

Has the government decided to set out the way to talk to the journalists? If so, how?

If you have an agenda-setting story, have you had the chance to get important information from the government about your stories?

Does the government provide information on a daily basis through press releases, conferences and briefings? How do you verify this information?

4.3 What is the difference between getting information from face-to-face and online sources?

As your sources have moved online and can mostly be accessed online, how do you verify the information?

How do you avoid misinformation/disinformation, as communication is one way from your sources?

Do you think that meeting in person and talking directly with the sources is one element of a good story?

Do you think it is enough that your story comes from online sources only? If not, how will you make your story good enough to be broadcast/published?

4.4. Questions about an in-person interview

(Questions for Producers/ Editors) How important is meeting the sources in person and doing the interview face-to-face? What kind of news sources do you need, and why do you need face-to-face interviews with the sources during the pandemic?

(Question for Assignment Editors) How often do you send a reporter to meet and interview the sources during the outbreak? Why do you assign your reporter to go into the field for face-to-face interviews with the sources? Would you think the area you send reporters to is a safe place? How do you anticipate it?

(Question for Reporters) How many times a week do you get assignments to meet the sources in person and to do face-to-face interviews? Where is the interview taking place? How do you feel when you are doing this assignment? What do you think about the places you are reporting during the outbreak?

Appendix B: Initial Codes

No	Code
1	Describing COVID-19 pandemic
2	Refers to physical distancing and restricted mobility
3	Mentioning lockdown policy
4	Newsroom disruption
5	Mentioning safety
6	Defining news crisis
7	Refers to inaccurate news
8	Mentioning hoax and fake news
9	Defining news making
10	Discourse gatekeeping
11	News programming
12	Type of news
13	Describing news production
14	Refers to news output
15	Negotiating news from the field
16	Rating and news viewers performance
17	Refers to news routine
18	Refers to journalism practices
19	Defining professionalism
20	Defining authority
21	Refers to power
22	Defining news sources
23	Reliable and credible sources
24	Source verification
25	Mentioning check facts
26	Relationship between journalists and sources
27	Mentioning democracy
28	Involving freedom of press
29	Social media sources
30	Defining place
31	Discourse space and place
32	Place realignment
33	Place reconfiguration
34	Rely on asynchronous communication
35	Online meeting
36	Work from home
37	Lack of real-life interactions
38	No direct supervision
39	Requires good internet connection
40	Distraction at home
41	Long hours work
42	Difficult to stay motivated
43	Fear to get infected

44	Covid vaccinated
45	Trauma
46	Mental health
47	Unpleasant experiences
50	Defining objects news
51	Refers to digital technology
52	Access to technology
53	Lack of digital technology skills
54	Requires skills in using technology
55	Innovation, refers to replacing existing technology