

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Press supervision of local election (*Pilkada*) transparency in South Sulawesi

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Abstract

This study analyzes the role of press supervision in encouraging transparency and accountability in the implementation of the local elections in South Sulawesi. With a qualitative approach based on literature studies, this study explores how the press contributes to uncovering potential violations, supporting information disclosure, and improving people's political literacy. South Sulawesi, with its complex political dynamics, faces significant challenges in press scrutiny, including political pressure, low media literacy, and the rise of hoaxes. The results show that the press plays an important role as an external supervisor that bridges the government and society, although its effectiveness is often constrained by various factors. Strategic recommendations include strengthening media regulation, increasing public literacy, and cross-sector collaboration to ensure better integrity of the local elections. This research emphasizes the importance of independent media in maintaining the quality of democracy at the local level. This highlights the need for continuous efforts to empower the press as a pillar of democracy, ensuring it remains a reliable watchdog against electoral malpractices and a promoter of informed civic engagement.

Keywords

Press Supervision, Transparency, Local Elections, South Sulawesi, Media Literacy

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Local elections, or Regional Head Elections (*Pilkada*), are a democratic mechanism for electing leaders at the provincial, district, and city levels (Talitha et al., 2020). This process is an important place for the community to determine the direction of their regional development through the election of governors, regents, or mayors. In Indonesia, the constitutional provisions regarding elections and local elections are contained in Article 18 paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that "*Governors, Regents, and Mayors as heads of provincial, regency, and city regional governments are democratically elected.*" This article has covered both election models, both directly and indirectly, and is considered to be in line with the values contained in the fourth precept of Pancasila (Mietzner, 2020).

In the implementation of the local elections, the press plays a strategic role as an independent supervisor. The press functions as a mass communication medium that aims to meet the public's needs for information, entertainment, and insights about various events, both local and global (Hansen, 2018; McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020). In the context of the local elections, the press is expected to be able to monitor every stage of the election, report alleged violations, and convey factual and accurate information to help the public make rational political decisions. South Sulawesi, as one of the provinces with a high level of political participation, has complex socio-political dynamics. With 24 districts/cities, this province is often a barometer of local politics in the eastern region of Indonesia (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2023). Local elections in South Sulawesi often attract national attention due to the high intensity of political competition and the complexity of issues such as money politics, identity politics, and conflicts between candidate supporters.

The main challenges in press supervision of the local elections in South Sulawesi include political pressure, the spread of hoaxes, and low media literacy among the public (Higdon, 2020; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022). Political pressure on local media often affects the independence of the press, while the rise of hoaxes disrupts the democratic process by spreading inaccurate information and affecting public perception. Low media literacy exacerbates this situation, as people find it difficult to distinguish valid information from false information. Similar phenomena can also be found in various other countries. For example, in the Philippines, the media often faces similar challenges, especially during election times. Political pressure from influential candidates and the spread of hoaxes on social media have disrupted the quality of the democratic process. Studies show that in the US, social media algorithms are often used to spread false information to influence public opinion, while journalists face legal and physical threats for covering sensitive issues related to elections (Howard et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, in Brazil, disinformation is one of the biggest challenges in elections, especially through platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook (Santini et al., 2021). Hoaxes designed to undermine certain candidates or spread false narratives about the electoral process have created polarization in society. Local media in Brazil often struggle to fight this wave of disinformation due to a lack of institutional support and low public trust in independent journalism. In India, political pressure on the media has also become a critical issue, especially in state elections (Schroeder, 2018; Subrata, 2017). The media is often used as a propaganda tool by major parties, while hoaxes and hate speech are widespread on social media. Low media literacy among rural communities exacerbates this impact, leaving communities vulnerable to political manipulation (Guess et al., 2020). The case of Indonesia, especially South Sulawesi, has global relevance because similar challenges arise in different parts of the world. This dynamic shows the importance of strong press supervision in supporting the democratic process. In this context, this research contributes to supporting this analysis, with the aim of producing recommendations that are not only applicable in Indonesia, but also relevant to other countries facing similar challenges.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Press supervision

The role of the press as a watchdog in democratic processes is a cornerstone of transparency and accountability. According to Stier (2015), media freedom directly correlates with the level of democratic governance, as an independent press can investigate, report, and critique governance without fear of retribution. Press supervision provides a platform for exposing electoral misconduct, such as vote-buying and manipulation, thereby upholding the integrity of the electoral process. In contexts with heightened political competition, like South Sulawesi, the press acts as an intermediary between the public and government institutions, ensuring that voters are well-informed (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020).

Despite its pivotal role, the press faces significant challenges in maintaining its independence. Political interference often hampers its ability to provide unbiased reporting. Research by Bruns & Himmler (2016) highlights that in many local elections, the media is subject to coercion by influential political figures, leading to biased news coverage. Such dynamics are exacerbated in regions where political elites exert control over media ownership, limiting journalists' autonomy. This structural challenge requires robust regulatory frameworks to safeguard press freedom and ensure accountability.

Additionally, the rise of digital platforms has reshaped press supervision in elections. Digital media, while expanding reach, also presents risks, such as the amplification of disinformation. According to Guess et al., (2020), media literacy levels significantly impact the effectiveness of press supervision, as misinformation can easily sway public opinion. Press institutions must therefore adopt strategies that counteract these challenges, including partnerships with fact-checking organizations and the implementation of rigorous editorial policies.

Cross-sector collaboration can bolster the press's ability to function effectively in electoral contexts. Collaboration between press institutions, civil society, and academia can strengthen investigative journalism and enhance the credibility of reporting. For example, in Brazil, partnerships between local media and NGOs have successfully uncovered electoral fraud, serving as a model for other regions (Santini et al., 2021). These cooperative efforts underscore the importance of collective action in addressing systemic challenges to press supervision.

2.2 | Transparency at local election

Transparency is a fundamental element of credible and fair electoral processes. It ensures that all stages of the election, from candidate nomination to vote counting, are conducted openly and fairly. Research by Mietzner (2020) indicates that electoral transparency enhances public trust and participation, particularly in contexts where electoral systems are prone to manipulation. In Indonesia, the principle of transparency is enshrined in electoral laws, mandating that processes be open to scrutiny by the public and independent observers.

However, achieving transparency in local elections often encounters institutional and systemic barriers. Political elites may obstruct information disclosure to protect vested interests, as highlighted by Ernst et al., (2019). This lack of openness can erode public confidence in the electoral process. In South Sulawesi, issues such as the opaque use of campaign funds and limited public access to election-related data have been identified as significant obstacles. Addressing these issues requires stricter enforcement of transparency regulations and the establishment of independent monitoring bodies.

Technology plays a crucial role in promoting electoral transparency. Digital platforms enable real-time reporting of election activities, enhancing public oversight. For example, blockchain technology has been successfully implemented in some countries to ensure the immutability of election results (Dennis et al., 2023). In South Sulawesi, leveraging technology for transparent reporting and data sharing can significantly improve accountability, provided that digital literacy among stakeholders is adequately addressed.

Public participation is also integral to fostering transparency in elections. Active engagement by voters, civil society, and the media ensures that electoral processes remain under constant scrutiny. Studies by Krawczyk & Davis-Roberts (2020) emphasize the importance of community involvement in monitoring elections to deter misconduct. Empowering citizens through education and access to information strengthens democratic resilience and ensures that transparency principles are upheld across all levels of the electoral process.

3 | METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach based on literature studies to explore the role of press supervision in encouraging transparency in the implementation of the local elections in South Sulawesi. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth analysis of socio-political phenomena involving the media, based on relevant and valid secondary data (Gehman et al., 2018). Data were collected through a review of various sources of literature, including scientific articles, research reports, related regulations, mass media news, and relevant policy documents. These sources were selected based on their relevance to the research theme, reliability, and contribution in explaining the context of the local elections in South Sulawesi. A literature review was conducted to understand the role of the media in supporting transparency and accountability, as well as the challenges faced by the press in conducting supervision.

The collected data was analyzed descriptively with content analysis techniques to identify key themes, such as the role of the press as a supervisor, structural and political challenges, and strategies for strengthening press supervision. This analysis is carried out by placing the results of the study in a theoretical framework about the role of the media in democracy and media literacy. The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation, where various literatures are compared to ensure consistency and validity of the information. With this method, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contribution and obstacles of the press in ensuring the integrity of the local elections in South Sulawesi.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 | The role of press supervision in the local elections

The press, as one of the pillars in the democratic system that guarantees freedom of access to information, has created an increasingly powerful press (Stier, 2015). Syahputra in Dianto (2018). stated that the condition of the press in the democratic era has now entered the phase of the media regime that controls various aspects of human life (Carr et al., 2020). This phase is known as the "media regime," popularized by Bruce A. Williams and Michael X. Delli Carpini in their book, *After Broadcast News, Media Regimes, Democracy, and The New Information Environment* (Watson, 2012). In this media regime, not only the public is affected, but government policy discourse can also be influenced. This is in line with the role of the press as social control, as stipulated in Article 3 of the Press Law Number 40 of 1999. However, the abuse of freedom in conveying information in the democratic era has given birth to a press culture that tends to be free without control (Liu et al., 2023).

Jack Snyder, a professor of political science at Columbia University, in his work *From Voting to Violence*, highlights the important role of mass media in supporting the political transition from authoritarian regimes to more democratic systems (Snyder, 2000). However, Snyder also emphasized the existence of various obstacles that have the potential to hinder the formation of a solid democracy, especially during the electoral process (Bob-Milliar & Paller, 2018; Tomini et al., 2023)

Elections are an important element that cannot be separated from the system of government based on community participation, because elections are the main foundation for the creation of a legitimate government (Mackenzie, 2024). The same applies to the local elections, which have a significant historical role in supporting the strengthening of government based on community participation at the local level. Previously, this process was

carried out through representatives in the DPRD, but it was often accompanied by the practice of manipulation and political negotiations that were not transparent between elites. To overcome these challenges, the mechanism of direct election by the people who have the right to vote is seen as a more effective step than the representative system (Talitha et al., 2020). Direct elections are believed to be able to reflect the will and aspirations of the people more accurately (Talitha et al., 2020).

Based on a survey released by The Asia Foundation in 2024, more than 90% of people rely on the media as a source of information about elections. This figure shows the high potential for media abuse between media owners and regional political elites (Ernst et al., 2019). In the local elections in South Sulawesi, the media functions as a bridge between the government and the community, conveying information related to regional head candidates, the election process, and the policies carried out. Furthermore, the media also acts as an external supervisor who oversees the implementation of the local elections, ensuring that all stages are carried out in accordance with applicable regulations. One of the main roles of the press is to provide objective and accurate information to the public (Flynn et al., 2017; McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020). The media must present unbiased news, reveal various sides of every issue that develops in the local elections, and educate voters about their rights. In the South Sulawesi local elections, the media can raise important issues, such as the use of campaign budgets, violations of the code of ethics by candidates, and potential fraud that can damage the credibility of the election. Through transparent reporting, the media plays a role in encouraging the public to be more critical of the *Pilkada* process, while ensuring that all parties carry out their roles honestly and responsibly.

For example, in the 2018 South Sulawesi Governor Election, the media played an active role in supervising the ongoing campaign process. One interesting case example is the alleged money politics that occurred in several regions, which was reported by a number of local media. Several journalists from print and online media such as *Tribun Timur* and *Makassar Terkini* revealed reports on the practice of giving money to voters that have the potential to influence the election results, the latest findings of the Soppeng Regency Election Supervisory Agency (*Bawaslu*) examining six people involved in alleged money politics practices in the 2024 Regional Election contest. They are allegedly involved in efforts to give money to residents as part of a campaign to win the pair of candidates for regent and deputy regent number 1 known as *Siap-Ada*. This news includes the examination process by the Soppeng *Bawaslu* and the steps taken to overcome the practice of money politics in the local elections (Detik.com., 2024). Despite pressure from some quarters to silence these reports, the reports prompted the authorities to conduct further investigations. As a result of active media supervision, such practices have come into the public spotlight and accelerate the law enforcement process against the parties involved.

In addition, the media also revealed issues regarding the transparency of the campaign budget. Some media criticized candidates for not reporting the use of campaign funds clearly, triggering public discussions about the importance of transparent financial reports in each election as reported by several media outlets such as IDN Times South Sulawesi, Sindomakassar, and *Tribun Timur*. The media also reported on various findings of violations of ASN neutrality which also helped the investigation carried out by *Bawaslu*. This shows that the media not only functions as an informant, but also as a control tool against abuse of authority that can damage the integrity of the local elections.

However, it is important to note that press supervision did not run smoothly. In South Sulawesi, the press often faces various challenges, such as political pressure from various parties, both from competing candidates and their supporters. Nevertheless, the role of the press as a supervisor remains very important in maintaining the integrity of the local elections, by ensuring that the media remains independent and conveys correct information to the public.

4.2 | Challenges by the media in South Sulawesi

Karpp (2016) mentioned various possibilities of misusing the strategic position of the media in a political context. One form is an agreement between the media and the political elite, which can include political advertising,

coverage of activities, and publications aimed at increasing the impact of the election campaign. This kind of agreement shows the potential for irregularities in the role of the media as the supervisor of democracy. However, the role of the media in supervising the *Pilkada* is not running without obstacles. One of the main challenges faced is the political pressure that is often experienced by the media. This pressure can create partisanship in the news, which has an impact on the inequality of coverage portions during political processes such as the *Pilkada*. This inequality is often seen in the frequency of news, the tone of reporting, or the placement of news that tends to highlight certain parties. For example, the media can give greater attention to certain candidates or groups, either positively or negatively, which ultimately affects the public's perception of the candidate or the issue raised (Karpf, 2016). Political pressure on the media can be understood through the theory of "Agenda Setting," in which the media is often used by political elites to shape public opinion (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020). In the context of South Sulawesi, the influence of local elites on media reporting is a reflection of the power asymmetry between political actors and press institutions, it reduces media independence.

This media partiality has the potential to reduce public trust in the credibility of the media itself. Ideally, the media serves as a neutral and balanced source of information. However, when one party gets greater exposure than the other, the media's function as a supervisor of democracy is disrupted. As a result, the media risks being perceived as a tool for political imagery for certain groups. To avoid this, the principles of objectivity and balance in journalism are very important. These principles ensure that the media continues to carry out its functions in a credible, fair, and impartial manner, in accordance with its main duty in supporting democratic transparency and accountability (Bruns & Himmler, 2016).

South Sulawesi has long been known for its highly competitive political dynamics, the 2024 South Sulawesi Regional Election shows fierce competition between gubernatorial candidates, with Andi Sudirman Sulaiman and Muhammad Ramdan Pomanto being the two main figures. The pressure on the press is increasing, especially related to the independence of the media in reporting this contest (Lanosga & Martin, 2018). The press strives to maintain objectivity, avoid the spread of hoaxes, and continue to provide transparent information in the midst of heated political dynamics. All of this takes place in the midst of political transformation that affects the strategy and electability of candidates. In some cases, when the media seeks to expose the practice of money politics or violations of campaign rules, they often face threats or intimidation. This pressure comes not only from candidates who feel threatened, but also from support groups who want to dominate the narrative. In the 2018 gubernatorial election, for example, several journalists and media institutions faced efforts to silence news that criticized money politics, with threats against journalists or restrictions on access to information.

In addition, the rise of hoaxes and disinformation circulating on social media has become a big challenge for the media in supervising the local elections (Meel & Vishwakarma, 2020). Hoaxes and fake news often spread faster than news from verified mainstream media. Hoaxes that are widespread, especially on social media, are a serious threat to democracy. Utami (2019) shows that 60% of the content of election hoaxes is related to identity politics issues and false claims about election results. By using a content analysis approach, the media can play an important role in neutralizing the negative impact of hoaxes by highlighting data-driven facts (Khalyubi & Perdana, 2021). In many cases, unverified information, especially one that harms one of the candidates or defames a local official, can be easily spread in the community. In South Sulawesi, social media plays a big role in the spread of disinformation, and the mainstream media must work hard to counter such disinformation with proper clarification. For example, in the previous local elections, a number of false claims circulating on social media such as the spread of surveys or vote counts that were not verified for their truth created tension and even clashed in the community. One real example is that in Jeneponto Regency, where two pairs of candidates (*paslon*) claimed their victory against each other, which then triggered a clash between the supporters (Kompas.com. 2024) This incident illustrates how much impact misinformation and unaccountable information can have, which circulates so quickly without clear confirmation.

This challenge is further exacerbated by the viral nature of information on social media. The viral phenomenon on social media has now spread to online news platforms, even traditional mass media have begun to use information that is going viral as a source of news (Denisova, 2023; Wihbey, 2014), which is not uncommon for this viral news to be not true news but fake news. This fake news contains inciting or provocative narratives, which can exacerbate political polarization in society. In some cases, these false claims focus on lies related to survey results, allegations of fraud, or defamation against certain candidates that tarnish their image (Dennis et al., 2023; Rastogi & Bansal, 2023). For this reason, the mainstream media has a very vital role in maintaining the integrity of the Regional Election process. The media must ensure that the information they convey to the public is not only accurate but also accountable. However, with the rapid spread of hoaxes on social media, mainstream media often find it difficult to compete with narratives that have already been widely spread. The speed of responding to false claims is a determining factor whether a media can prevent the negative impact caused by hoaxes.

In addition, the role of the media in providing clarification is crucial, especially in responding to news that cannot be ascertained. For example, the media must quickly correct misinformation about the results of the vote count or claims of victory that are not supported by valid evidence. Without adequate clarification, the community could be caught up in confusion and tension, which could lead to further conflict. In some cases, the media must be firm by revealing the true facts, as well as educating the public to be more critical of the information received. However, the biggest challenge for the media in dealing with hoaxes is how they can maintain editorial independence amid increasingly strong political pressure. The media is often faced with the threat of pressure from various parties, be it from certain candidate support groups or parties who feel disadvantaged by the existing news. In this context, the media must adhere to the basic principles of objective and independent journalism, without being influenced by external pressure (Hardy, 2014; Puppis, 2010).

In some situations, social media has even become a battlefield for supporters of candidates. These groups often use social media as a tool to spread narratives that support their candidates while also attacking opponents. Frequently, the information disseminated contains elements of hatred, slander, or manipulation that have the potential to worsen the political situation. Therefore, even though social media provides a wide platform for sharing information, a lot of information circulating there is not guaranteed to be true. The impact of hoaxes and disinformation is not only limited to the local elections themselves but also affects the level of public trust in the democratic process (Ayih & Asemah, 2024; Colomina et al., 2021). If people feel that the information they receive is difficult to account, or if they are constantly misled by fake news, then this will reduce voter participation and damage the quality of elections. The uncertainty and confusion caused by hoaxes can prevent citizens from making rational decisions based on accurate and reliable information.

Limited resources are also a significant problem for many local media in South Sulawesi. Many print and online media in the area lack trained journalists and adequate equipment to conduct in-depth investigations. Limited funds make it difficult for local media to conduct intensive monitoring of all stages of the local elections. Without adequate resource support, the media can only report on events that have occurred or are already in the public spotlight at large, while in-depth investigations that require time and money are often hampered. In addition, budget constraints also reduce the ability of media to reach the field directly, which can hinder them from obtaining more accurate and more detailed information from authentic sources. As a result, coverage carried out by local media is limited to information that is publicly available or delivered by parties who have wider access, thus risking ignoring various important aspects that need to be known by the public.

In many cases, under-resourced local media also face pressure to produce content quickly, which often leads to less in-depth and less accurate reporting. This is also triggered by the demand to compete with large media that have larger budgets and more complete resources. Local media, with limited capacity, tend to focus more on quantity than report quality, which can affect their journalistic integrity. The impact of this limitation is that it is increasingly difficult for the media to adequately check facts, especially when dealing with various claims that arise

during the Pilkada process. In addition, this limitation also hinders the ability of the media to respond to or counter disinformation that can be easily spread through social media or other channels. Thus, the ability of the media to function as an independent supervisor of the Pilkada process is severely hampered, which ultimately reduces the effectiveness of supervision by the press.

Dependence on advertising as the main source of income is one of the major obstacles faced by many local media in carrying out their ideal function as independent supervisors. As an institution that should provide a neutral and fair discussion space for the public, the media also has an educational role that aims to help voters make decisions based on objective information. However, budget constraints make local media vulnerable to the influence of parties with certain political or economic interests (Jangdal, 2019). This reliance on advertising often impacts media editorial priorities. Instead of producing investigative news or critical in-depth reports, the media tends to present light or popular content to maintain a good relationship with advertisers. The implication of this approach is a decrease in the quality of supervision in the local elections, which should prioritize balanced, sharp, and fact-based reporting. This situation worsens the ability of the media to carry out its duties as a credible pillar of democracy.

In addition, local media in South Sulawesi often face challenges in maintaining their independence. Many media outlets are owned by individuals or groups with certain political or economic affiliations, which often creates bias in reporting. Media owned by local political figures tend to give greater support to candidates or groups they are affiliated with, while other candidates are often reported with unfavorable narratives. This practice not only affects the public perception of the Pilkada process, but also damages the function of the media as a neutral guardian of democracy. Although various efforts to maintain the objectivity of the media continue to be carried out, this obstacle remains a significant obstacle that reduces the effectiveness of press supervision in the local elections. Therefore, strategic steps are needed to reduce the media's dependence on funding sources that can affect their independence, as well as strengthen their commitment to the principles of professional journalism and journalistic ethics.

Although the media has a very important role in the supervision of the local elections, various obstacles faced by local media in South Sulawesi greatly affect the effectiveness of the task. Limited resources, reliance on advertising, diversity and bias of the media, as well as challenges in dealing with disinformation and inconsistent policies, are all major obstacles that need to be overcome to ensure effective supervision of the local elections.

4.3 | Strategies to strengthen press supervision

Press supervision in the implementation of the local elections in South Sulawesi has significant challenges, which have a direct impact on the quality and effectiveness of the role of the media as guardians of transparency and accountability of democracy. To increase the role of the media in overseeing the regional election process, strategic steps are needed that involve strengthening the internal capacity of the media and collaboration with various relevant parties. One of the top priorities is to increase the capacity of journalists and the media through a comprehensive training program. Media literacy was an important element in helping the public distinguish credible information from hoaxes (Higdon, 2020; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022). In this context, training programs that involve cooperation between the media and educational institutions can create a healthier information ecosystem.

Limited human resources and equipment are also a major obstacle for local media in South Sulawesi. Training of journalists in investigative journalism techniques, understanding of media law, and news ethics is needed to improve their ability to maintain objectivity. This training not only helps journalists face political pressure but also overcomes the spread of hoaxes that are rampant during the local elections. In addition, adequate equipment support is a crucial factor to strengthen the media's ability to conduct in-depth investigations and more accurate fact-checking. With the accuracy of information becoming increasingly important in the dynamics of competitive

local elections, this step can help the media carry out its role optimally as an independent and trusted pillar of democracy.

Meanwhile, social media platforms have a significant role in shaping public views as well as influencing government decisions (Fazal & Aslam, 2023; Mergel, 2013; Zhang & Guo, 2021). Its presence as a virtual discussion space allows various community groups to voice their opinions widely. In addition, social media also accelerates the dissemination of information which can encourage public pressure on policymakers to act quickly and responsively (Gulo, A. 2023). In an era where hoaxes and disinformation are easily spread through social media, mainstream media must be able to utilize technology to increase the effectiveness of their surveillance. One of them is to build an information verification system that allows the public to report dubious claims or news. The media also needs to work closely with fact-checking organizations to ensure that the information they publish is accurate and accountable. With the good use of technology, the media can more quickly respond to false claims that can trigger tension in society.

Furthermore, community involvement in the supervision of the local elections is also very important. The media must play a role as a facilitator that allows the public to more actively report irregularities or lies that are circulating. Educating the public on how to verify information and differentiating between authentic news and hoaxes is essential to reduce the impact of disinformation. Through community involvement, the media will get more input and findings that can be used as a basis for more effective monitoring. In addition, transparency in terms of media funding is also an important factor. Reliance on political advertising as the main source of income for many local media can create a potential conflict of interest that undermines the objectivity of the news. For this reason, the media needs to increase transparency in fund management, especially related to advertisements that come from political parties or prospective candidates. The media also needs to have clear and strict editorial policies to ensure that news coverage is not influenced by specific financial or political interests.

The limitations faced by local media can also be overcome by collaborating with independent supervisory agencies. These institutions can assist the media in checking facts, providing valid data, and supervising the implementation of the local elections. This cooperation will ensure that the information presented to the public is not only based on the interests of one party, but covers a variety of objective perspectives. With the existence of an independent supervisory agency, the media will have wider access and be more valid in presenting quality news. No less important, the protection of journalists must also be a major concern. In some cases, journalists who expose violations in the local elections often face threats or intimidation. For this reason, the media needs to cooperate with journalist organizations and legal institutions to ensure that journalists who perform their duties professionally are not hampered by threats. Legal support and secure reporting mechanisms will help maintain press freedom and journalistic independence.

Finally, the media must improve the quality of the regional election supervision by providing more in-depth coverage, not only limited to the final result, but also in the ongoing process. More comprehensive coverage will help the public understand the dynamics of the local elections as a whole, not just focused on certain aspects. Thus, the media can play a more optimal role in maintaining the integrity of the local elections and helping to increase public trust in the democratic process. With these measures, press supervision in the local elections in South Sulawesi can be strengthened, so that the media can carry out its vital role as an objective, independent, and responsible supervisor, as well as improve the participation and quality of elections in the region.

5 | CONCLUSION

Press supervision plays a strategic role in supporting the transparency and accountability of the local elections, especially in South Sulawesi, which is known to have very competitive local political dynamics. As a provider of information, the media is not only a source of knowledge for the public, but also carries out the function of supervising all stages of the local elections to ensure compliance with applicable rules. In this role, the media

contributes to more informed public decision-making, while educating them about democratic rights in the electoral process. However, the media faces various challenges in carrying out its role optimally. Political pressure, high circulation of hoaxes, limited resources, and challenges in maintaining independence are the main obstacles that reduce the effectiveness of press supervision. These challenges require serious attention so that the media can properly carry out its role as a watchdog of democracy.

To overcome these obstacles, a series of strategies are needed that include increasing media literacy in the community, strengthening media independence, cross-sector collaboration, training journalists, and increasing transparency from the organizers of the local elections. The implementation of this strategy is believed to increase the effectiveness of press supervision, create a more transparent, integrity, and fair local elections, and strengthen the foundation of democracy at the local level. Overall, the role of the media in monitoring the local elections is not only as a conveyor of information, but also as the main pillar in maintaining justice and transparency in the democratic process. Therefore, supporting the existence of an independent media, free from political pressure, and committing to professional journalistic principles is a crucial step to realize a fair, honest, and trustworthy Regional Election for the entire community.

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Disclosure Statement

The author states that there is no potential conflict of interest affecting the research, writing, or publication of this article. All data and information used in this study have been presented in a transparent and objective manner for scientific purposes.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in this article is entirely sourced from literature studies, including articles, reports, and other publication sources relevant to the topic of press supervision in the South Sulawesi Local elections. To obtain further access to the references used, readers may contact the author at the email address listed in this article.

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