



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND MEDIA ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF AUTHORITARIAN, LIBERTARIAN, AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PRESS SYSTEMS

Ilham Irawan ¹, Afriansyah Hasibuan ², Sayuti Andhira ³

^{1,2,3} Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia
Corresponding author: ilham101242145@uinsu.ac.id

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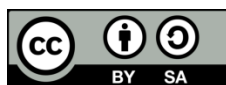
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ABSTRACT

The press functions as an essential component of mass communication systems that shapes public opinion, disseminates information, and supports social and political life. Differences in political ideology and systems of government have resulted in diverse press systems across countries. The Authoritarian Theory, Libertarian Theory, Social Responsibility Theory, and Communist Theory provide a theoretical framework to explain the relationship between the press, the state, and society. Using a qualitative literature-based approach, this study analyzes the characteristics and practical implementation of each press theory. The findings indicate that each theory reflects distinct levels of media freedom, state control, and social responsibility, which influence how the press operates within a particular political context. Understanding these theories is important for evaluating the role of the press in supporting democratic values, political stability, and public accountability.

Keywords: Press System, Social Responsibility, Authoritarian.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The press is one of the most important pillars in social and political life, functioning as a medium for disseminating information, educating the public, shaping public opinion, and exercising social control (Dunaway & Graber, 2022; Wolfsfeld, 2022). As an institution of mass communication, the press plays a strategic role in connecting the

state and society. Through news and information, the press influences how social realities are understood and interpreted by the public (Naeem & Ozuem, 2022; Suhendar et al., 2023).

In practice, the role and position of the press are closely related to the political system and ideological orientation of a country. Different forms of government apply different levels of control and freedom over media institutions (Dalimunthe et al., 2024; Uzar, 2023). In some political systems, the press is expected to support government policies, while in others it is encouraged to act independently and critically toward those in power (Khanal et al., 2025; Suhendar et al., 2024).

These differences lead to variations in press systems across countries. Press freedom, media ownership, and journalistic responsibility are regulated in diverse ways depending on the relationship between the state and the media (Maniou, 2023; Milosavljević & Poler, 2024). As a result, the same function of the press may be interpreted differently in different social and political contexts (Amsalem & Zoizner, 2023; Lee et al., 2022).

To understand these variations, mass communication scholars have developed several theoretical frameworks. One of the most influential is Four Theories of the Press, introduced by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (Susanto et al., 2024; Yakova & Volkova, 2023). This framework classifies press systems into four main theories: Authoritarian Theory, Libertarian Theory, Social Responsibility Theory, and Communist Theory (Fuchs, 2025; Salman & Aleem, 2024). Each theory reflects specific assumptions about the role of the press, the limits of media freedom, and the responsibilities of journalists toward society.

Although formulated in the mid-twentieth century, these theories remain relevant in contemporary media studies. The development of digital media, globalization, and rapid information flows has made the discussion of press systems increasingly important (Msughter et al., 2023; Thussu, 2022). Understanding these theories provides a foundation for analyzing modern press practices and evaluating the role of the media in supporting democratic values, political stability, and social responsibility.

In addition, the application of press theories helps explain current challenges faced by media institutions, such as political intervention, economic pressure, misinformation, and ethical dilemmas. By understanding how press systems operate

under different theoretical perspectives, media practitioners and scholars can better assess the position of the press in responding to social change and technological development.

2. RESEARCH METHODE

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature-based method. The qualitative approach is applied to obtain an in-depth understanding of press system theories and their practical implementation in different socio-political contexts (Creswell, 2021). Data are collected from academic books, peer-reviewed journals, and reputable scholarly articles related to mass communication, media systems, and press theories.

The literature reviewed focuses on classical and contemporary works discussing the Authoritarian Theory, Libertarian Theory, Social Responsibility Theory, and Communist Theory of the press (Graham & Hoffman, 2022). The selected sources are analyzed descriptively to identify the main characteristics, principles, and implications of each theory in shaping press systems. Data analysis is conducted by comparing similarities and differences among the four press theories, particularly in terms of media freedom, state control, and social responsibility. This method allows for a systematic interpretation of how press systems operate under different ideological frameworks and provides a comprehensive foundation for the discussion and analysis presented in this paper.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Organizational Communication

In the context of press systems, organizational communication is shaped by the ideological orientation that governs the relationship between the media, the state, and society (You et al., 2024). Under the Authoritarian Theory, communication within press organizations is highly centralized and controlled by the government (Kurmanov & Knox, 2022). Media institutions are expected to support state policies,

and organizational communication primarily functions as a mechanism to maintain political stability and authority rather than to encourage public debate.

In contrast, the Libertarian Theory views organizational communication in press institutions as an independent and open process. Media organizations operate with minimal government intervention, allowing journalists and editors to communicate freely within their organizations (AlAashry, 2022). This internal freedom supports critical reporting, investigative journalism, and diverse viewpoints, enabling the press to function as a watchdog over political power.

The Social Responsibility Theory emphasizes a balanced model of organizational communication (Iqbal & Parray, 2025). While press organizations enjoy freedom, they are also expected to maintain ethical standards and prioritize public interest. Communication within media organizations is guided by professional norms, accountability, and self-regulation to ensure accuracy, fairness, and social relevance.

Overall, these three theories demonstrate that organizational communication within press institutions varies significantly depending on the level of state control and ethical responsibility. Understanding these differences provides insight into how media organizations structure communication processes and fulfill their roles within different political and social systems. Several relevant theories in the study of organizational communication include.

Organizational Communication Systems Theory

From a systems perspective, organizational communication within press institutions operates as an interconnected structure that links media organizations, the state, and society (Reese, 2022). Communication systems theory explains that the press functions through continuous interactions between internal organizational components and external political and social environments (Watson & Romic, 2025). The nature of these interactions differs significantly depending on the press theory applied.

Under the Authoritarian Theory, the communication system of the press is centralized and hierarchical. Decision-making authority is concentrated at the top level, often under direct government supervision. Communication flows

predominantly in a one-way direction, from the state to media organizations and then to the public. This system limits feedback and restricts the role of journalists to transmitting official information rather than engaging in critical analysis (Thier & Namkoong, 2023).

Types of Organizational Communication

Organizational communication has two general types: internal and external.

1. Internal Organizational Communication

Refers to communication that occurs within media organizations, including interactions among journalists, editors, management, and owners. Under the Authoritarian Theory, internal communication is highly centralized and controlled, with decisions dominated by government influence or political authority (Koeswayo et al., 2024). In contrast, the Libertarian Theory allows internal communication to operate freely, encouraging open discussion, collaboration, and editorial independence. The Social Responsibility Theory emphasizes structured internal communication guided by professional ethics and editorial standards to ensure accuracy and accountability.

2. External Organizational Communication.

Involves interactions between media institutions and external parties such as the government, the public, and other social institutions (M. Zhang et al., 2022). In authoritarian systems, external communication is restricted and mainly serves to transmit official information. In libertarian systems, external communication is open and interactive, allowing public feedback and diverse opinions. Meanwhile, social responsibility systems promote external communication that is transparent, ethical, and responsive to public interests.

Organizational Communication Process

1. Vertical Communication

Vertical communication occurs between different hierarchical levels within an organization, including communication from top management to journalists (downward communication) and feedback from journalists to management (upward communication) (Y. Zhang et al., 2022).

Under the Authoritarian Theory, vertical communication is strictly top-down. Government authorities or senior management dictate editorial policies, while journalists are expected to follow instructions without questioning. Upward communication is limited, and feedback rarely influences decision-making. This process reinforces control and minimizes dissent within media organizations.

In the Libertarian Theory, vertical communication is more flexible and interactive. While organizational structures still exist, journalists are allowed to provide feedback, propose ideas, and challenge editorial decisions (Van Dalen, 2024). Upward communication plays an important role in improving content quality and supporting press freedom. This open vertical communication process encourages innovation and accountability.

The Social Responsibility Theory combines authority with ethical oversight (Osei et al., 2025). Vertical communication allows guidance from editors and management, but also values feedback from journalists. Communication processes are structured to ensure that editorial decisions align with professional standards, public interest, and social values.

2. Horizontal Communication

Horizontal communication refers to communication among individuals or departments at the same organizational level, such as collaboration between journalists, editors, and production teams (Dodds et al., 2025).

In authoritarian press systems, horizontal communication is often limited and closely monitored. Collaboration exists primarily to ensure consistency with government directives rather than to encourage creativity or debate.

Under the Libertarian Theory, horizontal communication is open and dynamic. Journalists freely exchange information, discuss perspectives, and collaborate on investigative reporting (Ritonga et al., 2024). This communication process strengthens teamwork and supports diverse viewpoints within media organizations. In the Social Responsibility Theory, horizontal communication emphasizes professional cooperation and ethical discussion. Media professionals engage in dialogue to ensure balanced reporting, accuracy, and social relevance. This process supports collective responsibility and maintains public trust in the press.

Functions of Organizational Communication

Quoting from Sendjaja's book *Theories of Communication* (2022), there are four functions of communication within an organization (Adiprasetyo, 2022). Here are the explanations:

1. Informative Function

The informative function refers to the role of communication in delivering accurate and relevant information to both internal members of media organizations and the public. Under the Authoritarian Theory, information is selectively distributed and primarily serves state interests. Media organizations act as channels for official narratives rather than independent sources of information.

2. Regulatory Function

The regulatory function involves controlling behavior and maintaining order within media organizations. In authoritarian systems, this function is enforced through strict rules, censorship, and legal restrictions imposed by the state. Communication serves as a tool for enforcing compliance and limiting dissent.

3. Persuasive Function

The persuasive function of organizational communication aims to influence attitudes, opinions, and behaviors. In the Authoritarian Theory,

persuasion is often used as a form of propaganda to maintain political legitimacy and public obedience. Media content is designed to support government ideology. In the Libertarian Theory, persuasion occurs through open debate and competition of ideas, allowing audiences to evaluate different perspectives. The Social Responsibility Theory recognizes persuasion but expects it to be ethical, transparent, and aligned with public interest rather than manipulation.

4. Integrative Function

The integrative function focuses on fostering unity and cooperation within media organizations and society. In authoritarian systems, integration is achieved through uniform messaging and ideological conformity. In libertarian systems, integration emerges from pluralism and voluntary public engagement. Under the Social Responsibility Theory, organizational communication seeks to integrate freedom with social cohesion by promoting mutual understanding, cultural values, and public trust. This function strengthens the relationship between the press and society.

By understanding the four functions of communication in an organization, the expected work within the organization can run smoothly. On the one hand, maximizing the communication function within an organization can support the organization's success in achieving its vision and goals.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of organizational communication in understanding the operation of press systems under different ideological frameworks. The Authoritarian, Libertarian, and Social Responsibility theories demonstrate that communication processes within media organizations are not neutral, but are shaped by political power, ethical standards, and societal expectations. Each theory influences how information flows, decisions are made, and public communication is conducted.

The findings show that authoritarian press systems rely on centralized and controlled communication to maintain political stability, while libertarian systems

promote open and decentralized communication to support freedom of expression and democratic discourse. Meanwhile, the social responsibility model offers a balanced approach by combining press freedom with ethical obligations and accountability to the public.

Overall, understanding organizational communication within these press theories provides valuable insight into the role of the media in society. As media environments continue to evolve, especially in the digital era, these classical theories remain relevant as analytical frameworks for evaluating press freedom, media responsibility, and the relationship between the press, the state, and the public.

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