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Etiquette in the Malay Archipelago Digital: A Comparative Study of Digital Media Self-Regulation and Cultural Values in Indonesia and Malaysia

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Abstract

This study explores the ethical frameworks, cultural values, and self regulation mechanisms that underpin social media governance in Indonesia and Malaysia. Each country operates within distinct legal, political, and socio-cultural contexts, resulting in varied approaches to regulating digital communication. Utilizing document analysis and in-depth interviews, this research examines how ethics, normative values, and foundational principles of media freedom are operationalized in accordance with the 1984 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which upholds freedom of speech and expression as fundamental rights. Findings reveal that while both countries recognize the importance of media freedom, they also emphasize the need for responsibility and regulation. Self regulation has emerged as a strategic model for aligning state laws, community norms, and platform standards. In particular, the study highlights how religious values, cultural traditions, and institutional frameworks shape ethical media practices in each nation. This research underscores the importance of fostering digital literacy that is deeply rooted in local ethical and cultural values. It recommends a participatory approach that strengthens collaboration among governments, digital communities, and platform providers to ensure a balanced and responsible digital ecosystem in Southeast Asia.

1. Introduction

The proliferation of digital media platforms across Southeast Asia has triggered a fundamental paradigm shift in how individuals communicate and express ideas. While global social media giants operate on Western ideals of absolute freedom of expression and individual autonomy, these concepts often experience friction when applied to collectivist societies. In the context of the Malay Archipelago, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, digital media activities do not exist in a socio-cultural vacuum. Instead, online behaviors are heavily governed by deeply ingrained communal cultural values, religious morality, and localized systems of social accountability. Although Indonesia and Malaysia share historical and cultural roots, their contemporary execution of digital self-regulation varies significantly. Indonesia relies on a stringent state-driven legal framework via the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE), which heavily penalizes digital misconduct. Conversely, Malaysia champions a co-regulation model through the Communications and Multimedia Content Forum (CMCF), pushing for industrial and individual self-regulation guided by a strict 'Content Code'. This study aims to fill the literature gap by comparing how netizens in both nations exercise psychological and social self-regulation when navigating global digital tools, using local wisdom as a counter-narrative to Eurocentric digital ethics. Indonesia and Malaysia face similar challenges in developing ethical digital ecosystems. In Indonesia, common issues include the spread of political hoaxes, religious hate speech, and misuse of personal data (Dewi et al., 2023). In Malaysia, online debates often revolve around balancing freedom of expression with respect for religious and ethnic values (Shukri, 2023). Both countries have implemented policies such as Indonesia’s Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Act and Malaysia’s Communications and Multimedia Act to regulate online behaviour. However, legal measures alone, such as these laws, frequently fail to change individual online conduct (Appazov, 2017), highlighting the need for approaches based on values education, moral guidance, and self-awareness. Social media has

emerged as a transformative medium in contemporary society, playing a crucial role in strengthening democratic expression and advancing socio-economic and cultural development. Over time, the industry has evolved into a powerful digital ecosystem, necessitating increasing oversight from regulatory bodies and legal institutions. In Southeast Asia-especially Indonesia and Malaysia-social media platforms such a s Facebook and Twitter have become central to public discourse and political engagement (Lim, 2024; Willnat & Aw, 2014). As digital users multiply, these platforms not only empower civic participation but also become arenas of ideological confrontation, often operating beyond the bounds of ethical oversight (Ess, 2020). Consequently, there is a growing need for frameworks that promote responsible online behavior through ethical norms and self-regulatory systems. Willnat and Aw (2014) note that social media enhances political expression, particularly in settings where conventional media are restricted. Nonetheless, algorithms on these platforms can entrench users in biased echo chambers, fostering division and misinformation (Lim, 2020). Therefore, this research explores how cultural traditions and religious teachings influence self-regulation as a response to ethical challenges in digital spaces. Social media serves not only as a vehicle for free expression but also as a site of contestation over cultural values, religious perspectives, and political ideologies (Tapsell, 2017). In Indonesia and Malaysia, these platforms significantly shape communication practices and influence democratic participation across diverse social groups. However, despite its democratic potential, social media often becomes a conduit for ethical violations, including hate speech, privacy breaches, and the spread of misinformation. These concerns highlight the urgency for ethical standards and regulatory principles to uphold accountability and respect for diversity in digital interactions (Ess, 2009; Tambini, 2012). Freedom of expression must be grounded in social responsibility. Without ethical constraints, unregulated expression may disrupt societal order and contribute to moral decline. While freedom and independence are inherent human traits, they must be contextualized within social systems that preserve collective well-being, especially when media freedom is often cited as a pillar of democratic life. As Mohd. Safar (2005) explains, the structure of media governance varies across nations, shaped by differing socio-political environments and legal traditions. Although Article 19 of the 1984 Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines freedom of opinion and expression, it does not explicitly address media freedom. Nevertheless, this article serves as the foundation for global efforts to advance press freedom, further reinforced by the Windhoek Declaration in 1991. This study investigates how ethical principles, value systems, and self-regulation practices are manifested in the digital activities of Indonesian and Malaysian social media users. It also examines the existing regulatory mechanisms and evaluates their effectiveness. Specifically, this research aims to: 1. Analyze the role of ethics and cultural values in shaping digital communication practices in Indonesia and Malaysia. 2. Investigate how self-regulation functions as a tool to govern online content. 3. Compare the implementation of self-regulatory approaches in both national contexts.

2. Literature Review and Theory

2.1.Media Systems Theory

This research is framed using media systems theory as its conceptual foundation. The development of these theoretical models dates back to the work of Siebert et al. (1956) and later McQuail (1983), whose ideas have shaped how scholars analyze the relationship between media and state systems. Siebert and colleagues introduced four classical models of media: the authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet-communist models. These frameworks were designed to interpret the media environment of the mid-20th century and remain influential today. McQuail expanded upon these ideas by adding development media and democratic participant models, both of which reflect contemporary concerns around media inclusivity and civic engagement.

2.2.Social Responsibility Theory

The theory of social responsibility emerged in the 20th century, particularly in the United States, as a response to the challenges posed by unchecked media freedom. Influenced by scholars like W.E. Hocking and institutions such as the Commission on Freedom of the Press, this theory asserts that the media must serve not just commercial interests but also public welfare. It highlights the importance of ethical journalism in upholding democratic ideals while protecting the public from harm.

Key principles include:

- Freedom from government censorship.
- Private ownership of media outlets.
- Ethical codes and internal editorial standards.
- The dual function of media to inform and resolve social conflicts.
- Accountability to both audiences and society.
- Support from private funding and advertising.

Under this model, if media actors fail to uphold their obligations, mechanisms must be established to ensure compliance with societal expectations.

2.3.Social Media Ethics

Ethics in the realm of social media refers to moral principles guiding user behavior in digital contexts. According to Ess (2009, 2020), digital ethics must accommodate both universal and culturally specific values. In Indonesia and Malaysia, cultural and religious norms significantly influence what is deemed acceptable online behavior. Ess outlines three dominant ethical frameworks for digital media: deontological ethics, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics-all of which provide interpretive lenses for navigating complex digital interactions. Meanwhile, Lim (2024) highlights the impact of neoliberal structures and algorithmic control in shaping online behavior across Southeast Asia.

2.4. Social and Cultural Values

Social values represent collective moral codes upheld by communities. Hofstede (2010) emphasized how cultural value systems influence communication styles, including digital communication. Indonesia and Malaysia, as high-context and collectivist societies, rely heavily on shared religious and customary norms to guide interaction in online environments.

2.5.Self-Regulation in Social Media

Self-regulation in social media refers to voluntary efforts by individuals or communities to monitor and adjust their behavior without direct intervention by the state. Tambini (2012, 2019) argues that such systems are most effective when supported by strong social norms and digital literacy. This concept has become increasingly relevant in Southeast Asia, where governments encourage self-regulation alongside platform moderation to manage online risks.

Self-regulation includes:

- Community-based codes of conduct
- Digital literacy campaigns
- Reporting tools and participatory moderation
- Shared responsibility among users, platforms, and regulators

In both Indonesia and Malaysia, religious values and cultural ethics play a major role in legitimizing these practices.

2.6. Media and Communication: Concept of Self-Regulation

In communication studies, self-regulation is understood as a voluntary commitment to ethical norms by both media professionals and users. It is operationalized through professional codes, platform guidelines, and communal enforcement. Prior research (Lim, 2020; Tapsell, 2017) shows that Southeast Asian governments often promote self-regulation as a middle ground between censorship and digital freedom.

Religious and cultural frameworks also shape how ethical digital communication is defined. According to Karim & Nasir (2021) and Setiawan (2019), Islamic values and local traditions such as *adat* influence normative boundaries of online behavior. In Indonesia, Pancasila and religious teachings provide a moral compass for digital activity (Haryanto, 2022), while in Malaysia, the Melayu-Islam Beraja (MIB) system upholds traditional values as core to digital ethics (Ahmad & Musa, 2021).

Overall, digital ethics involves not only respecting privacy and avoiding misinformation but also upholding communal values. Self-regulation, in this sense, serves as a preventive and proactive measure to preserve the integrity of digital public spheres.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research paradigm, emphasizing deep understanding, interpretive analysis, and the construction of meaning from collected data (Anom et al., 2024). The qualitative approach is particularly suitable for exploring the processes through which ethical values and regulatory foundations in social media have evolved in Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the contextual factors that shape these developments.

The research examines the period between 1998 and 2023, focusing on how ethical practices, value systems, and digital norms have been internalized in social media activity across both countries. As suggested by Geertz (1973), this methodological orientation enables researchers to capture the complexity of social phenomena by examining their cultural and institutional contexts. In line with McQuail (1987), this approach can be described as community-oriented, reflecting the perspectives of societal institutions and their evolving relationship with the media landscape.

Rather than solely analyzing changes in media systems over time, this study also considers institutional perspectives-particularly those rooted in traditional or royal authority-as an integral component of the broader media ecology. This allows for a more holistic understanding of how media governance and recognition unfold within the larger societal structure.

To achieve its research objectives, the study employs two primary data collection methods: **document analysis** and **in-depth interviews**. This methodological combination is designed to reveal ethical practices, foundational principles of freedom and responsibility, and the underlying values of digital communication in Indonesia and Malaysia, drawing from the normative principles outlined in the 1984 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The **in-depth interviews** were conducted with selected journalists and political elites. Key informants were identified using a **snowball sampling technique**, allowing the researcher to trace interconnected participants with relevant insights into the development of media ethics and regulation.

This research applies a **qualitative descriptive method**, supported by an extensive literature review. The data sources for this study include:

- Official policy and regulatory documents related to social media governance in Indonesia and Malaysia.
- Scholarly literature, including books, academic journals, and international research reports.
- Case studies of social media self-regulation initiatives and communities in both countries.

The analytical process involved several sequential stages:

1. **Data reduction** - simplifying and organizing the collected material;
2. **Data display** - presenting the findings in structured formats; and
3. **Verification** - drawing conclusions through iterative validation and interpretation of patterns.

Supplementary Expert Interviews

Table 1. Participant characteristics in Indonesia

ID	Category	Primary area of insight	Interview period
P01	Senior journalist	Firmly grounded in religious morality and value(e.g.,gotong royong, politeness,communal harmony). Digital ethics in linked to moral responsibility rather than legal compliance.	January 2023
P02	Senior journalist	Collectivisme, social harmony,shame, politeness, communal responsibility.	February 2023
P03	Academic (media studies)	Community monitoring, crowd correction”netezen policing, reputational concern, social shaming, and role modelling by influencers.	March 2023
P04	Policy analyst/Former government official	Communication law and digital regulation	April 2023

Table 2. Participant characteristics in Malaysia

ID	Category	Primary area of insight	Interview period
P01	Senior journalist	Firmly grounded in religious morality and the principle of inter-ethnic harmony, informed by Rukun Negara. Ethical behaviour is framed around maintaining social stability and respect for diversity.	January 2025
P02	Senior journalist	Collectivism, social harmony, respect for authority, sensivity to ethnic and religious boundaries,and face saving behaviour.	February 2025
P03	Academic (media studies)	Digital literacy is framed more as protection against risks(cybercrime, misinformation) and compliance with norms and regulations.	March 2025
P04	Policy analyst/Former government official	Strong institutional regulation through agencies such as MCMC, emphasis on legal enforcement to protect national unity.	April 2025

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Ethics, Values, and Media Foundations in Indonesia

Freedom of expression and press freedom in Indonesia are constitutionally guaranteed under the amended 1945 Constitution, particularly Articles 28, 28E (2-3), and 28F. These provisions confirm the state's recognition of expression and opinion as core tenets of democratic life. However, media practitioners, as citizens, remain fully subject to Indonesia's national laws, including the Criminal Code (KUHP), in accordance with the principle of equality before the law, enshrined in Articles 27 (1) and 28D (1).

Importantly, legal frameworks are not intended to restrict media freedom but to establish balance, professionalism, and accountability between media institutions, the state, and the public. Nonetheless, during the reform era (1998-2023), challenges persist in ensuring responsible journalism, especially given the country's uneven educational landscape. Unregulated media may spread manipulative narratives that disproportionately affect underinformed audiences, underscoring the need for legal safeguards.

Misuse of the media-such as spreading slander, defamation, or false accusations constitutes a criminal offense when it involves intentional harm (*opzet*) and proven culpability (*schuld*). Responsible journalism that makes factual errors without malicious intent should be legally protected, as illustrated by Newsweek's public apology following a retracted false report on Quran desecration.

Law No. 40/1999 on the Press regulates press-related offenses primarily through administrative sanctions (e.g., fines), focusing on violations of journalistic ethics or presumption of innocence. It lacks detailed provisions for addressing criminally harmful media content, creating gaps in media accountability enforcement. Nonetheless, the law provides mechanisms like rights to reply and correction, which remain important safeguards.

4.2.Press Freedom and Regulation

Media freedom is fundamental for democracy, but it must be exercised with responsibility. Legal instruments are necessary to prevent the media from being used for defamation or incitement. Interviews conducted for this study reveal how media licenses (SIUPP) were historically controlled during the New Order regime to restrict opposition voices and centralize ownership among political elites.

Interviewees, including P01(2023), P02(2023), and P04(2023), described the media industry as a profit- and power-driven sector during the authoritarian era. Ownership and publication were tightly linked to regime interests. Media businesses evolved around advertising revenue, which made them market-dependent and aligned with political agendas.P03(2023) emphasized that freedom of expression must be governed by clear legal boundaries, especially in the digital age.

In an interview with P01(2023), he said the application for a new SIUPP had been tightened once only to be given to cronies of the power elite, on the grounds of protecting existing media and limiting the publication of new media.

"…during the New Order regime, the government increased restrictions on freedom of association, assembly and expression. The House of Representatives… supports it…. Every press must have SIUPP…"

Indonesia's leading cronies publish media, magazines and grow television media with the main aim of centralizing ownership of the mass media, namely for profit and power.

In an interview with P02(2023), he said that the cronies of Indonesia's leaders in publishing and growing media are so that the media, magazines and television media do not fall under the control of and become the property of the opposition and the activity media is only in their circle.

"…the cronies of leaders in Indonesia are doing activity in the media so that the media does not fall and is controlled by someone other than them and for that the media must also do business so that they can live normally on advertisements…"

Media in Indonesia are called activity media, because it has something to do with how media are managed professionally. The media are managed by professional experts who focus on aspects of efficiency and expertise, introducing the latest technology.

In an interview with P04(2023), said that for Indonesia to become a media , it must be carried out by the media in that its governance must be oriented towards readers and advertisement owners because in the future the media can live and develop with lots of advertisements that the media gets.

"… the media is oriented towards readers with the hope that there will be advertisements to live a normal life".

In an interview with P03(2023), freedom of speech absolutely must exist and there must be a legal basis for communication activities, and social media, legal regulations in the field of social media are the rules of the game that must be followed.

"....*basis for communication activities, and social media, legal regulations in the field of social media are the rules of the game"*.

4.3. Ethics, Values, and Media Foundations in Malaysia

Interviewees,including-P01(2025),-P02(2025),-P03(2025),-P04(2025),the foundation of media ethics in Malaysia is shaped by the interaction between professional journalism standards, cultural and religious values, constitutional principles, legal regulation, and mechanisms of self-regulation. The rapid development of digital media has made this relationship increasingly complex. Malaysia therefore provides an important case for examining how media ethics operates within a multicultural society. The central challenge is to develop a media environment that protects freedom of expression while simultaneously promoting accuracy, accountability, cultural sensitivity, responsible digital behaviour, and social cohesion.

The Malaysian media landscape is shaped by the interaction between media ethics, cultural values, legal frameworks, political institutions, religious traditions, and technological transformation. As a multicultural and multilingual society, Malaysia presents a distinctive media environment in which freedom of expression must coexist with social responsibility, cultural sensitivity, religious considerations, and the protection of social harmony. The development of digital media has further complicated this relationship. Social media platforms, online news portals, influencers, and user-generated content have transformed the traditional role of journalists and media institutions. Consequently, questions concerning misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, privacy, artificial intelligence, political communication, and digital responsibility have become increasingly important.

Media ethics in Malaysia can be understood as a set of professional and social principles governing the production, distribution, and consumption of media content. Core ethical principles include accuracy, fairness, accountability, independence, privacy, transparency, and the minimisation of harm. Accuracy and Verification Journalists and media organisations have an ethical responsibility to ensure that information is accurate and adequately verified before publication, In an interview with P03(2025).

This principle has become particularly important in the digital environment, where information can circulate rapidly through social media without adequate verification. Fairness and Balance Fairness requires media organisations to present information objectively and, where appropriate, provide relevant perspectives from different parties. This principle is particularly significant in political reporting and reporting on sensitive ethnic, religious, and social issues. Accountability Media organisations are expected to take responsibility for the consequences of their reporting. Accountability may involve correcting inaccurate information, responding to complaints, maintaining editorial standards, and explaining editorial decisions. Privacy The rapid development of digital media has created new challenges concerning individual privacy. Journalists, online publishers, and social media users must consider the ethical boundaries between legitimate public interest and unnecessary intrusion into private life. Minimising Harm Responsible journalism requires consideration of the potential consequences of media content. Reporting involving ethnicity, religion, sexuality, crime, children, and vulnerable groups requires particular sensitivity.

Media Malaysian media operate within a highly diverse cultural environment. The country consists of different ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural communities. Therefore, media ethics cannot be separated from the broader cultural values of Malaysian society. One important principle is respect for diversity. Media organisations have an important role in representing Malaysia’s multicultural population fairly and avoiding stereotypes that could reinforce prejudice or social division. A second important value is social harmony. Media content can contribute to social cohesion, but it can also intensify ethnic, religious, or political tensions. Consequently, responsible media practices should consider the potential social consequences of particular forms of communication. Religious and moral values also influence the Malaysian media environment. Islam has an important position in Malaysian society, while Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religious traditions are also practiced. Media

communication therefore needs to operate within a complex environment of religious and cultural sensitivities.

The Rukun Negara provides an important framework for understanding Malaysian national values. Its five principles are: 1. Belief in God; 2. Loyalty to King and Country; 3. Upholding the Constitution; 4. Rule of Law; and 5. Courtesy and Morality. These principles can provide a useful conceptual foundation for examining responsible media behaviour. In particular, the principles of the rule of law, courtesy, morality, and social responsibility are relevant to contemporary digital communication. From this perspective, media responsibility is not merely a professional obligation but also a component of citizenship and social cohesion. In an interview with P02(2025), *during the regime, the government increased restrictions on freedom of association, assembly and expression. The House of Representatives supports it. Every press must have insntitusional Regulation MCMC.*

Legal and Institutional Foundations.The Malaysian media system operates within a legal and institutional framework that regulates communication, publication, broadcasting, online activities, and other forms of information dissemination.

The Federal Constitution provides an important constitutional foundation, including provisions concerning freedom of speech and expression, while also recognising legal limitations. Other legislation and regulatory mechanisms have historically played significant roles in shaping the media environment .P04(2025). The media environment therefore reflects a continuing tension between two important principles: freedom of expression and social responsibility. This tension has become more complex with the emergence of digital platforms because communication is no longer controlled exclusively by professional media organisations.

Self-Regulation in the Digital Media Environment. Self-regulation is increasingly important because governments cannot control every form of communication occurring on digital platforms. Self-regulation may involve: ● professional codes of ethics; ● editorial guidelines; ● fact-checking procedures; ● correction mechanisms; ● content moderation; ● transparency policies; ● responsible use of artificial intelligence; ● protection of personal information; and ● digital literacy among media users. In this context, self-regulation can be understood as a mechanism that connects ethical principles with actual media behaviour.

In an interview with P02(2025), Digital Media and Emerging Ethical Challenges.The transformation from traditional media to digital platforms has created several new ethical challenges in Malaysia. Misinformation and Disinformation, the speed of social media dissemination makes it possible for false or misleading information to reach millions of users before verification occurs. Hate Speech Ethnic and religious diversity makes hate speech particularly sensitive.

Digital platforms can amplify messages that potentially threaten social cohesion. Political Communication Social media has become an important arena for political communication. Political actors can communicate directly with citizens, but digital political communication may also involve

manipulation, propaganda, disinformation, and micro-targeting. Artificial Intelligence AI-generated content introduces new questions concerning authenticity, accountability, copyright, transparency, and the possibility of manipulating public opinion. Privacy and Data Protection The collection and use of personal data by digital platforms create ethical questions about consent, surveillance, profiling, and commercial exploitation.

A useful conceptual framework for studying Malaysian media can be formulated as follows: Media Ethics + Cultural Values + Legal Regulation → Media Self-Regulation → Responsible Digital Media Behaviour → Public Trust and Social Cohesion This framework assumes that ethical behaviour is influenced not only by formal regulation but also by cultural values and individual or organisational self-regulation. The framework can therefore be developed into five major dimensions: 1. Media Ethics – accuracy, fairness, accountability, transparency and minimising harm; 2. Cultural Values – diversity, morality, respect, religious sensitivity and social harmony; 3. Media Regulation – constitutional, legal and institutional mechanisms; 4. Self-Regulation – individual, professional and organisational responsibility; 5. Social Outcomes – public trust, digital citizenship and social cohesion.

4.4.Insult and Defamation under the New Criminal Code (KUHP)

Articles 511–515 of the revised Criminal Code delineate the criminal boundaries of defamation and insult. Verbal insult (Article 511.1) a nd written defamation (Article 511.2) are punishable when they are public and intentional. However, Article 511.3 provides justifications when such acts are committed in the public interest or in self-defense.

Article 512 expands on this by allowing defendants to prove the truth of their claims. If such claims are verified in court, the act is not punishable. Conversely, unsubstantiated accusations constitute criminal defamation. Articles 513 and 518 further regulate due process and clarify that such offenses are complaint-based-legal proceedings require a formal complaint from the offended party.

Thus, the law upholds freedom of the press but also imposes accountability when media is misused for personal attacks. Journalists may defend themselves by proving the accuracy of their reporting if allegations arise, and courts are tasked with determining whether such expressions serve the public interest or constitute criminal acts.

4.5.Professionalism and Risks in the Indonesian Media

The lack of professionalism among some media organizations leads to the publication of biased or false reports, undermining public trust and ethical standards. When the media is exploited for unlawful political or personal agendas, it becomes a vehicle for misinformation. As such, ethical conduct and legal accountability must co-exist to preserve the integrity of public communication.

While the revised Criminal Code provides stronger mechanisms for addressing media-related offenses, critics highlight procedural inefficiencies. Article 512.2 leaves truth validation at the judge's discretion, which can delay trials and contradict principles of swift and affordable justice.

4.6.Self-Regulation as the Core of Social Media Governance

Findings from interviews indicate that digital actors in Indonesia and Malaysia view value-based digital literacy as essential for sustaining ethical behavior online. In Indonesia, community initiatives like MAFINDO exemplify participatory regulation, while Malaysia demonstrates a state-led model through agencies like MCMC, often rooted in Islamic moral principles (Willnat & Aw, 2014).

As Lim (2020) explains, algorithmic structures amplify affective polarization, complicating ethical governance. Ethical frameworks that harmonize local traditions with global norms are urgently needed.

Self-regulation refers to an individual's ability to manage thoughts, emotions, and impulses in accordance with social norms. It involves emotional control, task focus, impulse inhibition, and responsibility in message delivery. In pluralistic societies like Indonesia and Malaysia, self regulation is fundamental for digital citizenship.

4.7.Comparative Overview: Indonesia vs Malaysia

4.7.1.Indonesia

- Inherited the Dutch civil law media system.
- Media freedom embedded in Articles 28 and 28E-F of the 1945 Constitution.
- Diverse media periods: revolutionary, liberal, Pancasila-oriented, and reform era.
- Media ownership is largely private, even when connected to political parties.
- Regulatory structure combines constitutional, juridical, societal, and ethical components.
- Print media governed by Press Law No. 40/1999; broadcasting under Law No. 32/2003 and ITE Law.

4.7.2. Malaysia

- Inherited the British common law model.
- State-centric control over media ownership and licensing.
- Freedom of speech is protected under Article 10(1)(a) and 10(2)(a) of the Constitution.
- Media is subject to multiple legal instruments: the Printing Presses and Publications Act (1984), the Defamation Act (1957), and Copyright Act (1987).

Heavily monitored by the government, manipulated news causing public misbehavior . the ministry of communication controls everything, if the secondary data analysis from MCMC is questionable (Zamri, 2025).

This research also found the differences and similarities of digital self regulation in Bot countries Indonesia-Malaysia use the following analysis table:

Dimension Analysis	Indonesian Context	Malaysian Context
Base Cultural	The values of mutual cooperation and Pancasila, prioritizing harmony amidst great athnic and religious diversity.(P01).	Malay cultural values regarding character and conduct; sensitivity to racial issues and social hierarchy (Concept 3R: *Race, Religion, Royalty*). (P01).
Social Control	*Shame Culture* (The culture of fearing social scrutity or the prospect of going viral with a negative reputation among netizens) is highly dominant.(P02).	*Shame Culture* community based; fear of bringing shame upon the good name of the family or ethnic group.(P02)
Regulation Approach	*State-Driven Regulation strict through* UU ITE. Censorship and law enforcement tend to be top down approaches from the government. (P03).	*Co-Regulation / Industrial Self-Regulation*. The existence of an independent body CMCF that releases *Content Code* so that the industry filters its own content.(P03).
Role Religiosity	Islamic values and official religions shape moral standarts. internet (eg: massive rejection of online gmbling and strong in limiting digital pornography content).(P04).	As the official state religion, Islam exerts a strong legal and moral influence in restricting unrestricted digital content. (P04).

Table.3.The differences and similarities of digital self regulation(Authors, 2026).

4.8. Ethical and Cultural Dimensions of Social Media

Islamic values significantly shape online ethics in both countries, emphasizing politeness, modesty, and respectful communication. In Indonesia, regulation is enforced via the ITE Law and Kominfo directives, while Malaysia operates under the Communications and Multimedia Act (1998) and the Content Code.

Malaysia enforces stricter institutional oversight, while Indonesia emphasizes community based self-regulation.

4.9. Social and Cultural Mechanisms for Regulation

Cultural norms - such as family values and communal cohesion-serve as informal control systems. Indonesian users tend to be expressive yet sensitive to religious and political content. Malaysians display greater conservatism, especially regarding moral issues. Couldry, N. (2012), regulasi sosial di era digital praktek budaya membentuk aturan-aturan informal dalam ruang media.

4.10. Current Self-Regulation Practices

- **Indonesia**: Initiatives like Mafindo and CekFakta.com emphasize civic monitoring and fact-checking.
- **Malaysia**: Programs like CyberSAFE and MyCERT promote responsible digital behavior under state supervision.

Malaysia's approach is hierarchical and state-driven; Indonesia's is grassroots and community-led.

4.11. Ethical and Regulatory Challenges

Key issues include:

- Anonymity and lack of accountability.
- Proliferation of disinformation.
- Low digital literacy.
- Misalignment between formal laws and lived social norms.

4.12. Strengthening Future Regulation

Strategies proposed include:

- Promoting culturally grounded digital literacy.
- Enhancing collaboration between state actors, platforms, and communities.
- Public campaigns on ethical use of social media.
- Integrating digital ethics education into school curricula.

This study advances the scholarship on digital media ethics by offering a comparative and context-sensitive ethical framework that examines social media practices in Indonesia and Malaysia. Unlike dominant studies that frame digital ethics primarily through Western liberal paradigms such as individual rights, platform governance, and freedom of expression this research introduces a value-based normative perspective grounded in local socio-cultural traditions, Islamic ethical principles, and national value systems, including Pancasila and Malay cultural norms.

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to conceptualize ethics not merely as prescriptive moral rules or regulatory instruments, but as communicative orientations that shape everyday digital interactions and user behavior across platforms. By integrating regulatory mechanisms with self-regulation practices, this research provides a nuanced understanding of how ethical norms are negotiated and operationalized in Southeast Asian digital contexts.

Consequently, the study contributes theoretically to global debates on digital media ethics and empirically to comparative communication research by presenting an alternative ethical lens that is locally grounded yet internationally relevant.

5. CONCLUSION

Ethical principles, cultural values, and self-regulation form the indispensable foundation of responsible media practices and must be safeguarded through appropriate legal mechanisms. While media institutions are central to sustaining democracy, they must uphold professional standards and act with accountability. As critical channels of public information and social oversight, the press contributes significantly to building transparent and law-abiding societies. Thus, freedom in journalistic practice must be protected to ensure that objectivity and accuracy are maintained without fear of political interference.

From an Islamic perspective, freedom of speech is intended to promote justice and oppose oppression. However, this freedom is not absolute-it does not permit indiscriminate verbal abuse or defamation. While religious teachings generally discourage the public exposure of personal flaws, exceptions are recognized in contexts where injustice is present. In such cases, exposing wrongdoing is considered a means of pursuing justice, as highlighted in the Qur'an (An-Nisa: 4:148): *"Allah does not like the public mention of evil except by one who has been wronged. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing."*

To ensure a healthier digital environment, both Indonesia and Malaysia require strong ethical frameworks, rooted in cultural and religious values, supported by effective self-regulatory mechanisms. Despite shared social traditions, differences in legal structures and levels of state control shape distinct regulatory approaches in each country. Moving forward, policy initiatives should prioritize cross-national collaboration, community-led digital literacy programs, and partnerships with social media platforms to enhance ethical and culturally responsive digital practices.

This research finds that self-regulation in Indonesia and Malaysia reflects a nuanced negotiation among global platform norms, national legal standards, and locally embedded socio religious values. Although both nations face similar challenges regarding digital ethics, their respective strategies diverge based on institutional design and cultural orientation. The findings advocate for localized, participatory frameworks involving government bodies, digital platforms, and civil society to foster inclusive, ethical, and democratically governed digital spaces in Southeast Asia.

Future research should examine how Malaysian-Indonesia journalists, media organisations, social media users, and digital platforms negotiate these competing principles. Particular attention should be given to misinformation, AI-generated content, political communication, platform governance, digital literacy, and the relationship between media ethics and public trust.

Declarations

Author Contributions (CRediT Taxonomy)

Conceptualisation: EA, YS. Methodology: EA, YS. Investigation: EA, YS. N.Data curation: EA. HM,DH.FI.Formal analysis: EA, YS. Validation: YS, FI Resources: EA. Writing – original draft: EA, FI.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are not publicly available owing to confidentiality commitments made to interview participants, but they are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All interview participants provided informed consent and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Sensitive data were anonymized during transcription and analysis to protect participant identities, consistent with Indonesia's Law No. 27/2022 on Personal Data Protection. The study received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Esa Unggul, conducted in accordance with Peraturan Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional (BRIN) Nomor 22 Tahun 2022 tentang Klirens Etik Riset (Regulation of the National Research and Innovation Agency Number 22 of 2022 concerning Research Ethics Clearance), Indonesia's national standard governing the ethical clearance of research involving human participants (Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional, 2022). Interviews took place between January and April 2023,Janaury and April 2025 , and all quotations are reported under the anonymized identifiers in Table 1 and 2.

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