



THE IMPACT OF THE MASS MEDIA IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION ON GOVERNMENT POLICIES IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY OF GOWA REGENCY

DAMPAK MEDIA MASSA DALAM MEMBENTUK OPINI PUBLIK TERHADAP KEBIJAKAN PEMERINTAH DI DINAS SOSIAL KABUPATEN GOWA

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Abstract

The mass media, as a means of providing information, plays an important role in disseminating issues that arise in society. More specifically, the mass media has the power to spread public opinion. This study aims to analyze the extent to which mass media exposure can influence the formation of public opinion regarding government policies in the Social Services Agency of Gowa Regency and to determine the extent to which public opinion influences the implementation of government policies in the Social Services Agency of Gowa Regency. This study uses a quantitative approach with a data collection technique, namely a questionnaire, administered to 100 respondents. The focus of this study is the extent to which mass media exposure can influence the formation of public opinion regarding government policies at the Social Services Agency. The data analysis techniques used in this study were simple linear regression, T-test (partial), F-test (simultaneous), and coefficient of determination. The results of the study show that, partially, the mass media has a positive and significant effect on public opinion, while public opinion has a negative effect on the implementation of government policies.

Keywords: Mass Media, Public Opinion, Government Policy, Social Services Agency

Abstrak

Media massa sebagai sarana pemberian informasi memiliki peran penting dalam penyebaran isu-isu yang berkembang di masyarakat. Lebih khususnya media massa memiliki kekuatan dalam penyebaran opini publik atau publik opinion. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk Menganalisis sejauh mana paparan media massa dapat mempengaruhi pembentukan opini



publik mengenai kebijakan pemerintah di Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Gowa serta Mengetahui seberapa besar pengaruh opini publik terhadap implementasi kebijakan pemerintah di Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Gowa. Penelitian ini menggunakan jenis pendekatan kuantitatif dengan Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu Teknik Kuesioner (angket) kepada 100 responden. Fokus pada penelitian ini yaitu sejauh mana paparan media massa dapat memengaruhi pembentukan opini publik mengenai kebijakan pemerintah di Dinas Sosial. Teknik analisis data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan regresi linear sederhana, uji T (Parsial), uji F (Simultan), dan koefisien determinasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa secara parsial, media massa berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap opini publik, sementara opini publik berpengaruh negatif terhadap implementasi kebijakan pemerintah.

Kata Kunci: Media Massa, Opini Publik, Kebijakan Pemerintah Dinas Sosial

1. INTRODUCTION

Media can be understood as a means or intermediary that functions to convey messages from the sender (communicator) to the recipient (communicant) or the wider community. Mass media is a specific form of media used to disseminate messages from information sources to the general public through various communication devices. (ummah, 2022) . Public opinion itself is a social phenomenon that plays a role in determining the direction of public views and ways of thinking about a particular issue. The strategic role of the media is reinforced by the *agenda setting* theory, which emphasizes the media's ability to determine and highlight issues that are considered important to the public. In addition, the framing theory explains how the mass media collects and compiles information in a certain way so that it can influence how people understand and interpret the social reality that is presented. (Yusuf, 2024). . The main characteristic of public opinion lies in the freedom and openness to express ideas, aspirations, complaints, and constructive criticism of the government. Therefore, public opinion can be seen as a reflection of the views and attitudes of the public towards policies that are being implemented or are still in the planning stage. In this modern era, expressing opinions is no longer difficult. Rapid advances in information technology have acted as a catalyst that accelerates the process of dissemination and expands the reach of public opinion. In the realm of political communication, the existence of media or communication channels plays a crucial role. Among the various channels available, the mass media is one of the most influential in shaping public opinion. The mass media not only acts as a conveyor of information, but also has a strategic function in highlighting various social and political issues that are developing in society. More than that, the mass media has great power in influencing the direction of views and shaping public opinion in a broad and profound way. (Aridho, 2024)

Habermas (1984) emphasized that the media acts as a *public sphere* that enables rational discourse between the government and citizens. However, in practice, the power of the media in shaping *the public agenda* often leads to information inequality, where certain issues receive excessive attention, while others are marginalized (Couldry, 2018). In the context of social policy, *framing* by the mass media can determine whether the public supports or rejects a policy. For example, news reports that emphasize the success of social assistance programs can increase public trust and participation, while reports that highlight failures or misuse of funds can cause skepticism. The Gowa District Social Service, as the implementer of social policy, is highly dependent on public opinion for the success of its programs. Therefore, understanding



how the mass media influences public opinion is crucial in designing effective communication strategies.

This research is important because amid the increasing role of digital media and the high dependence of the public on online information, local governments are not only required to implement policy programs, but also to ensure how these programs are communicated and received by the public. Facts show that a number of social policies in Gowa Regency have received media attention. For example, in early 2024, the Gowa Regency Government and Bulog distributed rice food reserves to more than 61 thousand beneficiaries in 18 sub-districts as social assistance in the face of extreme weather (Sulselprov, 2024). Similarly, in 2025, the Gowa Regency Government and Bulog distributed Rice Food Assistance (BPB) to 47,000 residents, ensuring that the distribution was on target (Jawapos, 2025). In addition, the issue of stunting has also become an important concern. The Gowa Regency Government is targeting a reduction in stunting rates to 16.4% by 2025 through a special nutrition program scheme (Jejak Fakta, 2025). This is in line with the achievements of the previous year when the prevalence of stunting was successfully reduced to 17% through a collaborative program involving the Social Service and related regional government agencies (Humas Gowa, 2024). These news stories confirm that online media and official government portals are not only channels of information but also important arenas for shaping public opinion on social policies. Therefore, this study is expected to provide strategic recommendations to local governments, particularly the Gowa Regency Social Service, in constructing a more constructive media narrative that supports public acceptance of policies. From an academic perspective, this study enriches the literature on mass communication and public opinion in a local context, which is still rarely discussed comprehensively. Meanwhile, in practical terms, the results of this study are expected to provide recommendations to the Gowa Regency Social Services Agency in designing a more effective, transparent, and participatory public communication strategy.

In the context of local government, the Gowa Regency Social Service has a strategic role in designing and implementing various community welfare programs, such as the distribution of social assistance, handling the poor, and empowering vulnerable families. These programs are often in the spotlight of local and national media, especially regarding the transparency of beneficiary data, the effectiveness of distribution, and the impact of policies on the poor. Diverse media coverage often shapes public perception of local government performance, both positively and negatively. When the media presents narratives of successful social assistance distribution, the public tends to support and trust these policies. Conversely, if the media highlights weaknesses or inaccuracies in targeting, it can cause resistance and reduce the legitimacy of policies in the eyes of the public. This condition shows the importance of understanding the influence of the mass media in shaping public opinion on the implementation of social policies in the region. Based on the above description, the author is interested in raising the title *The Impact of Mass Media in Shaping Public Opinion on Government Policies in the Social Service Agency of Gowa Regency*. Thus, this study focuses on the influence of public opinion formation related to government policies in the Social Service Agency.

2. RESEARCH METHOD



This research uses a quantitative approach. Quantitative research is a scientific approach that focuses on the collection and analysis of data in the form of numbers or numerical measurements. This method aims to describe, explain, and test the relationship between variables using statistical analysis techniques as its main tool. (Jailani, 2023) with a population of 825,369, which is the community of Gowa Regency that is the responsibility of the Gowa Regency Social Service. In this study, the researcher used a sampling technique using probability sampling with a simple random sampling approach. This technique was chosen because each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected as a research sample, so that the research results could present the population's condition more objectively and measurably. The types and sources of data used by the researcher were primary sources, where in this study the researcher distributed questionnaires to respondents, and secondary sources, where data was obtained from official reports from the Social Services Agency and journals, as well as books.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the results of the data obtained from the research. Hypothesis testing was carried out with the help of the SPSS version 26 program, which included data analysis, classical assumption testing, and *t-testing* to determine the level of significance. The results of the testing can be presented as follows:

Table 1 Results of Mass Media Validity Testing

Indicator	Calculated R	R table	Description
X.1	0.670	0.361	Valid
X.2	0.632	0.361	Valid
X.3	0.688	0.361	Valid
X.4	0.728	0.361	Valid
X.5	0.873	0.361	Valid
X.6	0.762	0.361	Valid
X.7	0.805	0.361	Valid
X.8	0.773	0.361	Valid
X.9	0.787	0.361	Valid
X.10	0.792	0.361	Valid
X.11	0.826	0.361	Valid

Table 2 Results of public opinion validity testing



Indicator	Calculated R	R table	Explanation
Z.1	0.860	0.361	Valid
Z.2	0.815	0.361	Valid
Z.3	0.786	0.361	Valid
Z.4	0.795	0.361	Valid
Z.5	0.683	0.361	Valid
Z.6	0.723	0.361	Valid
Z.7	0.779	0.361	Valid
Z.8	0.766	0.361	Valid
Z.9	0.755	0.361	Valid
Z.10	0.851	0.361	Valid
Z.11	0.784	0.361	Valid
Z.12	0.847	0.361	Valid
Z.13	0.841	0.361	Valid

Table 3 Results of the validity test of policy implementation

Indicator	Calculated R	R table	Explanation
Y.1	0.664	0.361	Valid
Y.2	0.683	0.361	Valid
Y.3	0.722	0.361	Valid
Y.4	0.735	0.361	Valid
Y.5	0.681	0.361	Valid
Y.6	0.751	0.361	Valid
Y.7	0.817	0.361	Valid
Y.8	0.757	0.361	Valid
Y.9	0.511	0.361	Valid

From Table 1 above, it can be seen that each statement item for the mass media variable has a calculated r value greater than the table r value of 0.361. Therefore, it can be concluded that statistically, the statement indicators for the mass media variable are valid.



From Table 2 above, it can be seen that each statement item for the public opinion variable has a calculated *r* value greater than the table *r* value of 0.361. Therefore, it can be concluded that statistically, the statement indicators for the public opinion variable are valid.

From Table 3 above, it can be seen that each statement item for the public opinion variable has a calculated *r* value greater than the table *r* value of 0.361. Therefore, it can be concluded that statistically, the statement indicator for the policy implementation variable is valid

Table 4 Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Rule of Thumb	Description
Mass Media	0.926	0.6	Reliable
Public Opinion	0.948	0.6	Reliable
Policy Implementation	0.870	0.6	Reliable

Based on Table 4 above, it shows that this test was conducted on variables rather than on each statement item within each variable, and the results can be seen, namely that the *Cronbach's Alpha* value is greater than 0.6. Therefore, all variables can be considered reliable.

The normality test

The researcher used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test to identify whether the data obtained was normally distributed or not. The results of the normality test can be seen in the following table:

Table 5 's Normality Test Results

Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Asymp.Sig	Criteria	Description
0.067	0.200	>0.05	Normally Distributed

Based on Table 5, the value produced at *asymp.Sig* is 0.200, which is greater than 0.05, so it can be said that the data is normally distributed.

Linearity test

Table 6 Results of the linearity test for mass media variables and public opinion

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
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PUBLIC OPINION	Between Groups	(Combined)	4950.254	24	206,261	6,596	0.000
* MASS MEDIA							
		Linearity	4,127.479	1	4127.479	131,983	0.000
		Deviation from Linearity	822,776	23	35,773	1,144	0.322
	Within Groups		2,345,456	75	31,273		
	Total		7,295,710	99			

Based on Table 6, the results of the linearity test between the Mass Media and Public Opinion variables above show a *Deviation from Linearity* value of 0.322, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be said that the independent variable has a linear relationship with the dependent variable.

Table 7 Results of the linearity test for the variables of public opinion and policy implementation

			Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
IMPLEMENTATI ON OF POLICY * PUBLIC OPINION	Between Groups	(Combined)	1622,89 5	29	55,962	2,993	0.00 0
		Linearity	937,272	1	937,272	50,126	0.00 0
		Deviation from Linearity	685,622	28	24,487	1,310	0.18 2
	Within Groups		1,308,89 5	70	18,699		
	Total		2,931,79 0	99			



Based on Table 7, the results of the linearity test between the Public Opinion and Policy Implementation variables above show a *Deviation from Linearity* value of 0.182, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be said that the independent variable has a linear relationship with the dependent variable.

Testing Hypothesis

The t-test is used to determine whether an independent variable (X) has a significant partial effect on the dependent variable (Y).

Table 8 t t-test results for equation 1

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	4.63	3.860		1,20	0.233
)	6			1	
MASS	1,05	0.093	0.752	11,2	0.00
MEDIA	2			99	

a. Dependent Variable: PUBLIC OPINION

Based on Table 8, it is known that the significant value for the (partial) effect of X on Y is $0.000 < 0.05$ and the t-value is $11.299 > t\text{-table } 1.984$. Therefore, it can be concluded that H_1 is accepted, which means that there is an effect of mass media (X) on public opinion (Y)

Table 9 t Results of the t-test for equation 2

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
		Error			
1 (Constan	50.732	2.563		19,793	0.00
t)					0



PUBLIC	-0.358	0.053	-0.565	-6.786	0.00
OPINIO					0
N					

a. Dependent Variable: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Based on Table 9, it is known that the significant value for the (partial) effect of X on Y is $0.000 < 0.05$ and the t-value is $-6.786 > t\text{-table } 1.984$. Therefore, it can be concluded that H_2 is accepted, which means that there is a negative effect of public opinion on policy implementation.

Discussion

Based on the results of testing using simple linear regression, it was found that the mass media variable has a positive and significant effect on the formation of public opinion. This is indicated by a regression coefficient value of 1.105 with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), which shows that the effect is strong and does not occur by chance. The empirical results of this study provide strong support for the Agenda-Setting theory developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which emphasizes that the media not only functions as a channel for conveying information but also as an important actor in setting issue priorities in the public eye. These findings reinforce the argument that the media plays a role in shaping the structure of social concern through the selection and emphasis on certain topics.

The results of simple linear regression analysis show that the public opinion variable has a negative and significant effect on the dependent variable, with a regression coefficient of -0.358, a t-value of -6.786, and a significance of 0.000. These findings indicate that the higher the public opinion, the lower the value of the dependent variable in this study tends to be. Thus, public opinion does not always have a positive effect in the form of increased support for policies, but can actually function as a factor that suppresses or reduces public support, or in other words, as social control. According to Lippmann (1922), public opinion is the expression of the collective attitude of the public towards certain issues that arise in the public sphere (Lippmann, 1922). In the context of this study, higher public opinion is negatively correlated with policy acceptance. This is in line with McQuail's (2010) view that public opinion does not always play a role in strengthening the legitimacy of the government, but can be a tool for criticizing policies that are considered inappropriate. In other words, the negative results found in this study reflect the reality that public opinion in Gowa Regency is more critical than supportive.

This finding can also be explained through the *agenda setting* theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972). This theory states that the mass media plays a role in highlighting certain issues, thereby shaping public perception. In practice, news coverage that tends to emphasize the shortcomings or problems of social policies can shape critical public opinion. As a result, the stronger the public opinion formed based on the media agenda, the lower the level of public support or acceptance of government policies. Thus, the negative direction in the regression results confirms the role of the media in shaping critical public perceptions.



These findings can also be linked to policy implementation indicators according to Van Meter & Van Horn (1975) as follows: the first indicator, **Policy Reach**, mass media has been proven to expand policy reach through faster and wider dissemination of information. However, the public opinion that is formed is sometimes critical, so that the policy reach expected by the government can be hampered by negative public perceptions. The second indicator, **Implementation Effectiveness**, shows that the effectiveness of policy implementation depends on public acceptance. Negative public opinion tends to reduce the effectiveness of Social Services programs, as public resistance to policies prevents optimal implementation. The third indicator is **Information Transparency**. The mass media functions as a channel for transparency, but news framing that emphasizes program shortcomings can reduce public trust. This has an impact on the legitimacy of policies, even though transparency continues. The fourth indicator is **Government Responsiveness**. Negative public opinion demands that the government be more responsive. This study shows that criticism from the public through the media encourages the Social Services Agency to respond more quickly to issues, even though this response has not completely silenced critical perceptions. The fifth indicator is **Community Participation**. Public support for policy implementation declines in line with the opinions that are formed. Community participation is low because negative perceptions reduce their motivation to actively participate in social programs. The sixth indicator is **Program Suitability**. The results of the study indicate a gap between the programs implemented and the needs of the community. The mass media reinforces this discourse, so

that public opinion considers the policies to be less in line with the reality of social in the field. The seventh indicator is **Responsiveness to Needs**. Public criticism reflects the unmet needs of the community. The Social Services Agency needs to adjust its programs to real needs so that policies are more targeted and receive positive public support. The eighth indicator is Policy Consistency. Negative public opinion also indicates a perception of inconsistency in policy implementation. The mass media often highlights the differences between program plans and their realization in the field, so that consistency is considered weak by the community

4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the mass media has a strategic role in shaping public opinion, which ultimately has implications for the implementation and formulation of government policies in the social sector. Through the mechanisms of *agenda setting* and *framing*, the media determines the issues that are considered important by the public and influences the way the public interprets the policies implemented by the government. The results of this study show that mass media exposure has a positive and significant effect on the formation of public opinion. The public opinion that is formed then influences the implementation of government policies, whether in the form of support, criticism, or social pressure. Thus, the media is not only a channel of information, but also an instrument of social control that can accelerate or hinder the policy process.

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