

## Causes of Self-Censorship in the Japanese Mass Media

**Andre Yeshammah Wicaksono**

Dian Nuswantoro University  
312201800741@mhs.dinus.ac.id

**Andy Bangkit Setiawan**

Dian Nuswantoro University  
Andy.setiawan@dns.dinus.ac.id

Corresponding author: [andreyeshammah@gmail.com](mailto:andreyeshammah@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** *This study analyzes the causes of self-censorship in the Japanese mass media. Japan is now considered a country that has low press freedom. Approved by PM Koizumi's cabinet in 2002 against a bill banning excessive reporting activities which caused strong protests from newspapers and broadcasters. The purpose of this research is to explain the causes of self-censorship in the Japanese mass media. This study uses qualitative research methods with the Thematic Analysis Approach approach and model of analysis data taken in The Journalist series. The conclusion of this study is that the Japanese mass media exercise self-censorship due to pressure from outsiders which makes it difficult for them to present the news and sources who refuse to be interviewed.*

**Keywords:** *Censorship, Japan, Mass Media.*

### INTRODUCTION

Japan is generally regarded as possessing a liberal press in the context of Asia. The political system of Japan, characterized by its parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy, is considered to be one of the most democratic systems in Asia, if not the most democratic. The multi-party system and opposition to the government are practiced in a substantive manner, in contrast to other Asian countries where these elements might merely serve as cosmetic adornments (Sunarwinadi, 2006).

In Japan, censorship is officially prohibited by the constitution, and freedom of the press is an unquestioned principle. Government interference in the media is a rare occurrence, and any such interference, if it were to happen, would elicit strong protests from both the general public and the media itself. Prime Minister Koizumi's cabinet approval of a bill in 2002 that prohibited "excessive reporting activities" and "privacy violations" by the press sparked vehement protests from newspapers and broadcasting institutions. The year 2002 was marked by numerous events, including the erosion of the unrivaled grasp of political power by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The coalition of three parties led by Koizumi retained control.

In the case of Kitagawa, the founder of the talent agency Johnny And Associates, who was accused of misconduct towards potential male pop stars, the Japanese press appeared to be restrained as mainstream media consistently concealed the case. For instance, an American individual who worked at a Japanese newspaper for 30 years noted that the culture of censorship in Japan runs quite deeply. This journalist chose to remain anonymous out of fear of losing their job. The press rarely questions widespread crucial issues, as journalists are aware that discussing and interrogating such matters can result in punishment.

In conclusion, the Japanese press can be deemed non-objective and inclined towards unfair reporting, which contradicts the principles of press freedom in Japan.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the course of this research, the investigator employed the Prisma method (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Analytics) to ascertain the literature underpinning the study. The researcher availed the Publish or Perish software in the data retrieval phase, employing the search terms "Japan," "Censorship," and "Rules." The initial literature corpus yielded a total of 200 entries. Prior to proceeding to subsequent stages, the researcher conducted an elimination process, removing 190 pieces of literature that were incongruent with the chosen thematic focus, as well as 3 items that were inaccessible for download.

In the ensuing phase, the researcher meticulously selected 3 pertinent pieces of literature in alignment with the designated theme. Rigorous analysis was undertaken, leading to the identification of a singular piece of literature entitled "BUDAYA SENSOR-DIRI DALAM KEBEBASAN PERS DI JEPANG." This particular literature expounds upon the opacity attributed to the Japanese Press in disseminating news, primarily stemming from a self-imposed awareness to constrain the scope of news coverage.

## **RESEARCH METHOD(S)**

This study employs a qualitative research methodology with a Thematic Analysis approach. Thematic Analysis is a method used to analyze qualitative data, involving an iterative process of systematically reviewing data and identifying patterns within the textual data to elucidate overarching themes.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data for this study is derived from the series of films titled "The Journalist." The film portrays the endeavors of a journalist to uncover a corruption scandal involving the government. The protagonist, Matsuda, is a journalist working for the Touto daily newspaper, renowned for his adeptness in investigative journalism. He is known for his tenacity in digging up news stories. However, not all parties admire Matsuda's persistence. In this discussion, we can observe how Matsuda strives to unearth information regarding the suicide case of Suzuki and the falsification of data by the Eishi Academy.

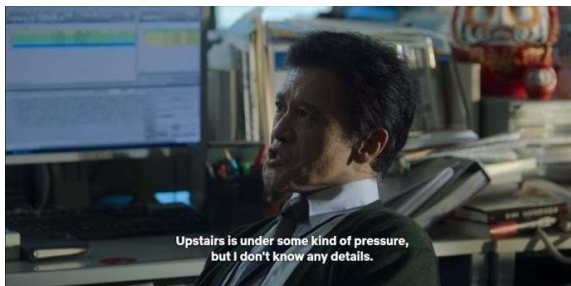
### First Subtitle

From a quote in the series "The Journalist," it is revealed that even within the news organization itself, there are constraints placed on news coverage. The main character, Matsuda, encounters resistance from Iriki, the chief editor, when attempting to report on the news, despite possessing evidence of Suzuki's suicide letter containing information about the data falsification at Eishi Academy. These limitations on reporting stem from pressures exerted by the government onto the newspaper company, as perceived by the company's higher-ups. This is evident from Iriki's statement:

上で何かあったのは事実だそれ以上のことは俺もわからん。

*Ue de nani ka atta no wa jijitsuda sore ijō no koto wa ore mo wakaran.*

The superiors are under pressure, but I don't know the details.



Picture 1 : Iriki

### 1. Subtitle(s)

From the quoted excerpt from the series "The Journalist," it becomes apparent that the government is making concerted efforts to suppress news coverage. Tada, the head of government journalists, disseminates false information about Matsuda and spreads it to sow doubt among the public regarding Matsuda's credibility. These limitations on news reporting occur due to government-imposed constraints on the release of information and exertion of pressure on reporters. As discernible from Tada's statement:

東都新聞の松田記者の兄は東京五輪の際 内閣 参事官補佐 をしていた経歴がある。その後過労で植物状態になったことを 逆恨みした妹の松崎 者が、現政権に対し一方的に敵意を持っているという内容だ。来週の月曜日に発売されるが、事前に 与党ネットサポーターと提携し、SNS で拡散させてほしい。以上

*Tōto shinbun no Matsuda kisha no ani wa Tōkyō gorin no sai naikaku sanjikan hosa o shite ita keireki ga aru. Sonogo karō de shokubutsu jōtai ni natta koto o sakaurami shitaimōto no Matsuzaki-sha ga, gen seiken ni taishi ippō-teki ni tekii o motte iru to iu naiyōda. Raishū no getsuyōbi ni hatsubai sa reruga, jizen ni yotō nettosapōtā to teikei shi, SNS de kakusan sa sete hoshī. Ijō*

The elder sibling of journalist Matsuda pursued a career as an assistant cabinet advisor during the Tokyo Olympics. Subsequently, Matsuzaki, Matsuda's younger sister, nursing resentment due to being rendered unconscious from excessive work, unilaterally takes an adversarial stance against the present government. This information is set to be disclosed starting next Monday; however, I would appreciate your collaboration with the supporters of the ruling clean party first and its subsequent dissemination through social media networks. That is all.

Picture 2 : Tada



**a) Subtitle(s)**

From the quoted excerpt from the series "The Journalist," it is evident that the sources are evading interviews. Mouri himself serves as the head of the team involved in falsifying data at Eishi Academy. Mouri exhibits apprehension when approached for an interview by Matsuda to discuss the data falsification at Eishi Academy. This is discernible from Mouri's statement:

証人喚問で すべて話しまし た官邸の関与はありません 。指示は。。。指示を出したのは すべて 私です。鈴木さんのこと申し訳ありませんでした。すいません。すいません。  
*Shōnin kanmon de subete hanashimashita kantei no kan'yo wa arimasen. Shiji wa... Shiji o dashita no wa subete watashidesu. Suzuki-san no koto mōshiwake arimasendeshita. Suimasen. Suimasen*

"I have testified about everything I know. The Prime Minister is not involved. I am the one who issued all the orders. For what happened to Mr. Suzuki... I sincerely apologize. I'm sorry."

Picture 3 : Mouri



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In the context of the series "The Journalist," the issue at hand is resolved through the efforts of Matsuda as he seeks information. Matsuda persuades Ms. Suzuki to discuss the truth so that he can report on the Suzuki case. Although he faces obstacles when attempting to publish the information, he ultimately succeeds by obtaining substantial evidence and garnering public support.

The conclusion drawn from this research is that Japanese mass media engage in self-censorship due to external pressures, leading to challenges in delivering news and encountering sources that refuse to be interviewed.

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