



## EFFICIENCY OR EXCLUSION?, A CRITICAL STUDY OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION IN MASS LAYOFF DECISIONS IN THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY

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### Abstract

*This study examines corporate communication related to the decision to make mass layoffs in the television industry using a critical discourse analysis approach. The main focus of the study is to understand how the narratives of efficiency and social exclusion are framed and constructed in print and online media discourse. Data were collected from various news reports and official corporate statements during the period of mass layoffs. The results of the analysis show the dominance of the efficiency narrative used by companies to legitimize the decision to make layoffs, with an emphasis on restructuring and business optimization. However, alternative discourses emerging from the media and trade unions reveal the reality of social and economic exclusion experienced by affected workers, which is often hidden from the official corporate narrative. This study confirms that corporate communication functions as a tool for legitimization and image management, but tends to ignore the crucial social dimension of exclusion. These findings reinforce the importance of a critical approach in understanding the dynamics of power through language in the context of mass layoffs. This study also highlights the role of the media as an arena for discourse battles between corporate interests and workers' rights.*

**Keywords:** Efficiency, Exclusion, Critical Discourse Analysis

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji komunikasi korporat terkait keputusan Pemutusan Hubungan Kerja (PHK) massal di industri televisi dengan menggunakan pendekatan analisis wacana kritis. Fokus utama penelitian adalah memahami bagaimana narasi efisiensi dan eksklusi sosial dibingkai dan dikonstruksi dalam wacana media cetak dan online. Data dikumpulkan dari berbagai pemberitaan dan pernyataan resmi korporat selama periode PHK massal berlangsung. Hasil analisis menunjukkan dominasi narasi efisiensi yang digunakan perusahaan untuk melegitimasi keputusan PHK, dengan penekanan pada restrukturisasi dan pengoptimalan bisnis. Namun, wacana alternatif yang muncul dari media dan serikat pekerja mengungkap realitas eksklusi sosial dan ekonomi yang dialami oleh para pekerja terdampak, yang sering kali tersembunyi dari narasi korporat resmi. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa komunikasi korporat berfungsi sebagai alat legitimasi sekaligus pengelolaan citra, tetapi cenderung mengabaikan dimensi sosial eksklusi yang krusial. Temuan ini memperkuat pentingnya pendekatan kritis dalam memahami dinamika kekuasaan melalui bahasa dalam konteks PHK massal. Studi ini juga menyoroti peran media sebagai arena pertarungan wacana antara kepentingan korporat dan hak pekerja.

**Kata kunci:** Efisiensi, Eksklusi, Analisis Wacana Kritis



## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the television industry in Indonesia has experienced structural pressure due to the development of digital technology, shifting audience preferences, and competition from online media platforms. As a result, various television stations have carried out internal efficiency, one of which is manifested through the mass Termination of Employment (PHK) policy. This decision is often conveyed through the company's official narrative that emphasizes efficiency and restructuring as the main reasons, with the aim of maintaining competitiveness and business sustainability. However, behind the efficiency narrative, a critical question arises: are these mass layoffs purely an effort to be efficient, or do they reflect a form of exclusion of workers?

Corporate communication built in a crisis situation such as layoffs cannot be separated from the dynamics of power and efforts to legitimize. The language used in official company statements not only conveys information, but also shapes public perception, regulates emotions, and negotiates the image of the institution. In this context, critical discourse analysis is an important approach to examining how the efficiency narrative is constructed, and to what extent aspects of exclusion are hidden or ignored in corporate communication.

The global television industry has undergone significant transformation due to the development of digital technology. Changes in audience behavior, which now prefer digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and other streaming services, have led to a significant decline in the number of conventional television viewers. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is reflected in the decline in television station ratings and the shift in advertising spending to digital platforms. For example, television advertising spending in Indonesia fell 22% throughout 2023, while digital advertising rose 31%.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technology, forcing television stations to adapt quickly. However, many have failed to carry out digital transformation effectively, resulting in financial difficulties and ultimately mass layoffs (PHK)

In December 2024, PT Visi Media Asia Tbk (VIVA), the parent company of ANTV, carried out mass layoffs of all employees in the production division. This step was taken as part of an operational efficiency strategy to reduce the fixed costs of the media company .

Previously, in September 2023, NET TV also laid off around 30% of its employees. This decision was taken in response to the financial challenges faced by the company due to declining advertising revenue and increasing competition with digital platforms .

In addition, public broadcasting institutions such as Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) and Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) were also affected by the government's budget efficiency policy. The operational budget cuts resulted in the termination of employment of around 1,000 media workers, including contributors, freelance broadcasters, and other technical personnel.

Mass layoffs not only impact the financial condition of employees, but also have significant social and emotional impacts. Employees who are laid off often feel a loss of professional identity and are isolated from their work community. In addition, uncertainty about the future and difficulty in finding new jobs can increase stress and anxiety levels among media workers.

In this context, corporate communications play an important role in managing the social impact of layoffs. However, this communication is often carried out in a non-transparent manner and is insensitive to the social impact. For example, layoff announcements are made through virtual platforms without a personal touch, which can worsen the emotional impact on employees who are laid off.

Corporate communications play an important role in the layoff process. However, this communication is often carried out in a non-transparent manner and is insensitive to the social impact. For example, layoff announcements are made through virtual platforms without a personal touch, which can worsen the emotional impact on employees affected by layoffs. In addition, the narratives built in corporate communications often focus on efficiency and digital transformation, but ignore the social and emotional impacts of layoffs. This can create perceptions of exclusion and injustice among employees and the public. This study aims to critically examine corporate communication practices in mass layoff decisions in the television industry, by tracing the narratives that develop in print and online media. This study will reveal the tension between efficiency as a structural reason and exclusion as a social impact that is often unheard.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with the Critical Discourse Analysis (AWK) method which is defined as an effort to provide an explanation of a text by a dominant person or group whose tendency is to have a certain goal to obtain what they want. According to Eriyanto (in Wardani, 2019:61), critical discourse analysis (CDA) is not understood solely as a language study. Critical discourse analysis here does use language in the text to be analyzed, but the language analyzed here is somewhat different from language

studies in the traditional linguistic sense.

According to Van Dijk (in Widiastuti, 2019:89), critical discourse analysis is a critical discourse analysis study that studies the abuse of social power and injustice that is reproduced, validated, and opposed by texts and speaks in social and political contexts. AWK takes a clear position to understand, expose, and ultimately oppose social injustice.

This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for studying corporate communication practices in depth, especially in the context of power inequality, corporate ideology, and its impact on employees affected by mass layoffs.

Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on how power, ideology, and social dominance are represented, maintained, or challenged in discourse. In this context, corporate discourse related to mass layoffs can reflect a communication strategy that builds a narrative of efficiency and digital transformation, which may ignore the social and emotional impacts on employees affected by layoffs.

For the data source in this study, it is by using secondary data in the form of Company Documents to analyze official company documents related to layoffs, such as official announcements, annual reports, and internal policies. There are also media news by collecting news articles reporting mass layoffs in the television industry to understand how the media presents information and shapes public opinion and through academic literature in the form of studies and academic publications related to corporate communication, media, and efficiency, to provide a strong theoretical foundation.

This approach includes three dimensions of analysis, namely:

1. Text Analysis (Microstructure): Examining the linguistic structure of corporate communication texts, such as diction, metaphors, sentence structures, and language styles.
2. Analysis of Discursive Practices (Mesostructure): Seeing how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed by actors in communication (eg Public Relations, media, employees, the public).
3. Social Practice Analysis (Macrostructure): Analyzing the social, economic, and ideological contexts that influence discourses of efficiency and layoffs in the media workforce.

Through this approach, the study aims to uncover how corporate communication shapes perceptions and responses to mass layoffs, as well as their impact on employees and the public.

### III. RESEARCH RESULTS

This study examines 15 discourse documents from print and online media (news, opinion, and corporate press releases) discussing mass layoffs in five national television companies, finding three main patterns in the construction of corporate and media communication:

#### **Dominance of Efficiency Narrative**

The results of the analysis show that television corporations use a framing strategy that emphasizes efficiency as the main reason for mass layoffs. Terms such as "business strategy adjustment," "operational optimization," and "cost reduction" appear repeatedly in official statements reported by the media. This is in line with the findings of Brown and Smith's (2021) study which emphasized that efficiency narratives are often used by companies to justify workforce reductions as rational actions for business continuity (Brown & Smith, 2021).

Most corporate statements emphasize efficiency as the main basis for layoff decisions. Terms such as "restructuring," "resource optimization," and "business adjustment" are often used to frame layoffs as a rational and unavoidable step. This can be seen in official quotes delivered by television management in various media. Social and Economic Exclusion as Neglected Impacts

On the other hand, alternative discourse analysis from the perspective of workers and labor unions shows the existence of social and economic exclusion arising from mass layoffs. Articles and opinions containing workers' voices raise the theme of injustice, loss of income, and difficulty finding new jobs. This is in line with a study conducted by Putra et al. (2023), which revealed that layoffs often lead to social marginalization and a decrease in the quality of life for affected workers (Putra et al., 2023).

Although the official narrative emphasizes efficiency, alternative discourse from the perspective of workers and labor unions shows that layoff decisions also contain elements of social and economic exclusion. Several media articles and opinions highlight the negative impacts of layoffs in the form of loss of livelihood, social stigma, and difficulty reintegrating into the world of work. This discourse emphasizes that corporate communication tends to obscure aspects of exclusion for the sake of legitimacy of decisions.

#### **Corporate Communication Strategy: Legitimacy and Image Management**

Corporations tend to use legitimacy discourse to maintain a positive image in the eyes of the public and stakeholders. This discourse highlights the aspect of "corporate social

responsibility” even though in practice there is often a neglect of workers’ rights and welfare. This refers to the concept of organizational legitimacy according to Suchman (1995) which states that organizations seek to maintain social legitimacy by managing public perception through communication (Suchman, 1995). The analysis shows that companies use legitimizing discourse-oriented communication strategies. In this context, management seeks to shape public perception that layoff decisions are the best solution in facing business challenges and industry changes, while managing the image to remain positive. However, this strategy often ignores the voices of affected workers.

### **The Role of Media as an Arena for Discourse Contestation**

Print and online media serve as a battleground between corporate narratives that focus on efficiency and critical narratives that highlight exclusion. Critical articles featuring worker and academic perspectives provide space for counter-discourse that reveals the social realities behind layoff decisions (Haryanto, 2022).

Print and online media serve as a battleground for discourse between corporate and worker interests. Articles with a critical perspective on layoff decisions play a role in opening up discussion about the social consequences of efficiency, challenging the dominant narrative presented by the company.

Based on the results of the description above, it can be concluded that corporate communication in the television industry's mass layoff decisions is dominated by an efficiency narrative that serves to legitimize workforce reduction actions. This approach is in accordance with Fairclough's (2013) perspective in critical discourse analysis which states that corporate language is often used to form and maintain power through certain ideological framings (Fairclough, 2013).

However, this strong focus on efficiency ignores the dimensions of exclusion experienced by workers, who not only lose income, but also experience a decline in social status and difficulty reintegrating into the labor market. This phenomenon is reinforced by the research results of Kurniawan and Wijaya (2021) which highlight how mass layoffs often lead to systematic social exclusion, especially in the creative and media industries (Kurniawan & Wijaya, 2021).

Furthermore, a corporate communication strategy oriented towards legitimacy becomes a tool to manage public perception so that they continue to accept the decision. This is in accordance with Suchman's (1995) view that legitimacy is an important aspect in maintaining the sustainability of an organization in the eyes of the public. However, the legitimacy built

through this efficiency discourse has the potential to cover up the structural injustice experienced by workers.

The role of the media as an arena for discourse battles is very important to open up space for critical dialogue. Media that raises the voices of workers and other critical perspectives can influence public perception and put pressure on companies to pay more attention to social aspects in decision making (Haryanto, 2022).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that corporate communication in cases of mass layoffs is more directed at building legitimacy through efficiency narratives. This narrative functions as a symbolic strategy to appease stakeholders (investors, regulators, the public), while covering up the exclusionary and social suffering experienced by workers.

The short duration and weak substance of the dialogue between management and employees also reinforce the pattern of structural exclusion. This shows that layoffs are not only about economic efficiency, but also about who has the power to define 'crisis' and 'solutions'. In the organizational framework, as described by Brown & Smith (2021), corporate communication is often used to reduce crises to purely technical issues, not ethical or social issues.

The media, in this case, plays a dual role: as a retransmitter of corporate discourse, but also as a space for articulation of resistance to discourse. Opinion and investigative articles that raise workers' voices are an important point in opening up alternative narratives that balance the dominance of efficiency discourse.

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