

# Local Media Hegemony and the Construction of Public Opinion: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Mining Accident Reporting

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## Abstract

The mining industry is highly susceptible to public issues, particularly workplace accidents. Local media coverage of mining workplace accidents plays a significant role in shaping local public opinion. This study aims to examine how local media report workplace accidents in the mining industry, how such reporting influences the construction of local public opinion, and why local media possess the power to shape local public opinion. This research uses a qualitative approach and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method. The research data consists of news texts on workplace accidents at PT Kaltim Prima Coal (KPC) mine published by local media, and interviews with a number of informants. The findings reveal that local media consistently constructed a similar narrative regarding the mining accident. A notable pattern was the uniformity of headlines emphasizing that the information originated from a leaked corporate memorandum. These narratives constructed a local public perception that KPC lacked professionalism and transparency in managing public communication during the crisis. The ability of local media to shape local public opinion is influenced by several factors, including their emotional proximity to local audiences, their capacity to frame events in accordance with local socio-cultural contexts, journalists' rapid access to news sources, and media credibility developed through consistent and reliable news reporting.

**Keywords:** local media, workplace accident, hegemony, public opinion, mining

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Introduce the Problem*

The mining industry is consistently recognized as one of the world's highest-risk industries due to the inherently hazardous nature of its operations. Mining activities involve numerous high-risk tasks, including blasting, heavy equipment operation, underground mining, slope stabilization, exposure to toxic gases and dust, and work under uncertain geological conditions (Cruz-Ausejo, 2024). These operational hazards significantly increase the likelihood of workplace accidents, making occupational safety one of the most critical issues confronting the mining sector.

This phenomenon was evident in the workplace accident at PT Kaltim Prima Coal (KPC), a coal mining company located in Sangatta, East Kutai, Indonesia. The accident, which resulted in the death of a heavy equipment operator on 29 May 2026, rapidly developed beyond an occupational safety issue into a matter of public concern. Local media simultaneously reported the incident, generating widespread public attention and making it a prominent topic of discussion within the local community. The extensive media coverage subsequently contributed

to the construction of public perceptions regarding both the accident itself and the company's crisis communication.

### *1.2 Explore Importance of the Problem*

The construction of public opinion concerning the mining industry is closely intertwined with the role of local media. Lyytimäki et al. (2021) argue that local and regional media play a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of mining activities. The intensity of media coverage and the framing of mining-related issues significantly influence public acceptance or rejection of mining operations. Consequently, local media function not merely as channels for disseminating information but also as influential actors in constructing meanings and shaping public perceptions.

The Amasra mining disaster in Türkiye further demonstrates the relationship between mining accidents and the construction of public opinion through media coverage. Dikbıyık (2026) argues that media shape public discourse by influencing public sentiment throughout different stages of a crisis, including the accident itself, the post-accident period, and subsequent legal proceedings. Public acceptance of mining corporations is therefore influenced not only by the accident but also by the information circulated about the company and the effectiveness of its crisis communication (Muhammad et al., 2024). Gonzales-Torres (2022) similarly argues that local media are more effective than non-local media in shaping social norms because of their close social and cultural proximity to local communities. This argument is supported by Bidzilya (2024), who contends that regional media play a central role in influencing public perceptions of local issues.

Understanding this phenomenon is particularly important because mining companies rely heavily on maintaining a social license to operate. Public opinion can directly affect corporate legitimacy, stakeholder trust, and long-term sustainability (de Haes & Brink, 2025). Therefore, examining the role of local media in constructing public opinion during mining crises has both theoretical and practical significance.

### *1.3 Describe Relevant Scholarship*

The influence of local media on public opinion can be understood through several communication theories. Agenda-setting theory suggests that media influence public attention by determining which issues are perceived as important. As Bernard Cohen famously stated (as cited in McCombs & Shaw, 1972), the press may not tell people what to think, but it is remarkably successful in telling them what to think about. Within the context of local journalism, this influence becomes stronger because local media report issues that are geographically and socially relevant to their audiences.

Beyond agenda-setting, framing theory explains how media construct particular interpretations of reality. Entman (1993) defines framing as selecting certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in order to promote specific problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations. Through framing, local media determine not only which issues receive attention but also how those issues are understood by audiences.

Critical Discourse Analysis further explains that media texts are socially constructed rather than neutral representations of reality. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse functions as a social practice through which reality is produced and reproduced. News texts therefore reflect processes of selection, interpretation, and representation that shape public understanding. Repeated and consistent narratives may eventually become dominant discourses that audiences accept as common sense. This process aligns with Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Simon, 1982), which explains how media contribute to maintaining particular meanings and ideologies through public consent rather than coercion.

Although previous studies have examined media framing, public opinion, and mining communication separately, limited research has specifically investigated how local media construct hegemonic discourse surrounding mining workplace accidents using a Critical

Discourse Analysis approach. This study seeks to address that gap by examining the reporting of a mining accident by local media and its implications for public opinion.

#### *1.4 State Research Objective*

Based on the issues and research gap identified above, this study aims to examine the hegemonic role of local media in constructing public opinion regarding workplace accidents in the mining industry. Specifically, the study addresses three research questions: (1) how do local media report workplace accidents in the mining industry; (2) how does such reporting contribute to the construction of local public opinion; and (3) why do local media possess the power to shape local public opinion. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on crisis communication, media studies, and Critical Discourse Analysis while providing practical implications for mining companies in developing effective relationships with local media during crisis situations.

## **2. Method**

This study employed a qualitative research approach. According to Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 45), "We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored... These are all good reasons to explore a problem rather than to use predetermined information from the literature or rely on results from other research studies." This study adopted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its analytical method to investigate how local media construct discourse surrounding mining accidents and shape local public opinion.

According to Fairclough (1992), discourse constitutes a form of social practice; therefore, media texts should not be understood as neutral representations of reality but rather as socially constructed products shaped by power relations, ideology, and the broader social context. Accordingly, CDA provides an appropriate methodological approach for examining local media coverage of mining accidents. Within this perspective, news reports on mining accidents are understood as discursive practices that have the potential to shape public perceptions and construct local public opinion.

This study was conducted in Sangatta, Kutai Timur Regency, the operational area of Kaltim Prima Coal (KPC). The primary data consisted of news texts reporting a mining workplace accident that occurred at KPC on 29 May 2026, published by five local media outlets in Kutai Timur. Secondary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with four key informants representing different stakeholder groups, namely a community leader, a government official, an academic, and a journalist. According to Streubert and Carpenter (2011, p. 28), informants are "individuals who are selected to participate in qualitative research based on their first-hand experience with a culture, social process, or a phenomenon of interest."

Data analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In this study, the findings were presented in the form of narrative text. According to Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña (2014, p. 13), "the most frequent form of display data for qualitative research data in the past has been narrative text." Accordingly, all interview data were transcribed, synthesized, and presented as narrative accounts to ensure that the essential meanings of the participants' responses were conveyed clearly and comprehensively.

## **3. Result**

### *3.1 Local Media Hegemony in the Discourse of Mining Accident News*

A dump truck operator of a CAT789 was reported to have died in a workplace accident at the Kaltim Prima Coal (KPC) mining site. It was occurred in the early hours of 29 May 2026. The accident came to public attention after an internal memorandum issued by KPC's Head of Mining Engineering circulated widely within the local community (Jufriadi, 2026). Following the accident, the corporation did not issue an official statement through either mass media or its

internal communication channels. The absence of official crisis communication created an informational vacuum, enabling the media to rely on the informally circulated memorandum as the primary source of information. Consequently, several local media outlets published news reports based on a similar narrative. Headlines emphasizing the "leak" of the internal memorandum rapidly became the dominant topic of public discussion in the immediate aftermath of the mining accident.

[Kaltimpost.jawapos.com](http://Kaltimpost.jawapos.com) (Jufriadi, 29/5/2026) published the headline, "*Beredar Memorandum Kecelakaan Fatal di KPC, Operator Dump Truck Dilaporkan Meninggal Dunia setelah Tertimpa Ban*" (A Leaked Memorandum Reveals a Fatal Accident at KPC: Dump Truck Operator Reportedly Dies after Being Struck by a Tire)." The report described the fatal workplace accident and presented a chronological account of the events. Among the local media outlets examined in this study, [kaltimpost.jawapos.com](http://kaltimpost.jawapos.com) was the first to report the accident. The news article attracted substantial public attention, as reflected in its 94,729 page views, indicating a high level of audience engagement with the accident.

The accident quickly became the dominant topic of news coverage across nearly all local media outlets in Kutai Timur Regency. [Bontangpost.id](http://Bontangpost.id) (Redaksi, 30/5/2026) published a similar headline, "*Beredar Memorandum Kronologi Kecelakaan Kerja di Tambang KPC yang Menewaskan 1 Pekerja*" (A Memorandum Detailing the Chronology of a Workplace Accident at the KPC Mine That Claimed the Life of a Worker Has Been Circulated)." Likewise, the narrative surrounding the "leak" of the internal memorandum became a prominent framing device in the coverage of three other local media outlets. [Nomorsatukaltim.disway.id](http://Nomorsatukaltim.disway.id) (Yusri, 31/5/2026) published the headline, "*Memo Rahasia KPC Bocor Bongkar Fakta Pekerja Yang Tewas di Lokasi Tambang* (Leaked Confidential KPC Memorandum Reveals the Facts Behind the Death of a Worker at the Mining Site)." Meanwhile, [kaltim.indeksmedia.id](http://kaltim.indeksmedia.id) (Admin, 31/5/2026) reported, "*Memo Internal Kecelakaan Kerja Bocor PT KPC Tunggu Hasil Investigasi* (Leaked Internal Memorandum on Workplace Accident: PT KPC Awaits the Investigation Results)." Similarly, [Pranala.co](http://Pranala.co) (Said, 30/5/2026) published the headline, "*Memo Internal Bocor PT KPC Buka Suara Soal Kecelakaan Kerja Fatal* (Leaked Internal Memorandum: PT KPC Responds to the Fatal Workplace Accident)."

The use of the expression "leaked memorandum" in the news reports indicates the absence of an official source of information. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2020), a leak is defined as "a deliberate act of giving secret information to reporters." This definition implies the disclosure of confidential information to the public or the media through unofficial channels rather than established institutional communication mechanisms. From the perspective of CDA, the lexical choice of the term "leak" can be understood as representing underlying power relations. Such a lexical choice functions as a representational strategy that shapes readers' perceptions of the legitimacy of information sources and the power dynamics among the media, the corporation, and the public.

The term "leak" in the reporting of the mining accident also illustrates how local media exercise discursive power through framing practices. Beyond merely identifying the source of information, this lexical choice constructs a representation that the corporation's official communication was insufficient. Consequently, internal memorandum is positioned as a more authentic and legitimate source of knowledge. Through this discursive construction, local media reproduce power relations by shaping how the public understands corporate transparency, the legitimacy of information sources, and the meaning attributed to the mining accident.

However, the term "leak," which initially functioned as a framing device and a manifestation of discursive power, subsequently became institutionalized as social reality. This discursive shift occurred after the corporation's spokesperson issued a public statement through the local media as reported by [Kaltimpost.jawapos.com](http://Kaltimpost.jawapos.com) (Jufriadi, 31/6/2026) and [Bontangpost.id](http://Bontangpost.id) (Redaksi, 1/6/2026):

*General Manager External Affairs dan Sustainable Development (ESD) PT KPC, Wawan Setiawan, mengatakan informasi mengenai kecelakaan kerja yang tercantum dalam memo tersebut memang sesuai dengan kejadian yang terjadi di*

*lapangan. "Jadi sudah benar informasinya, sama dengan memo yang bisa saya sampaikan," ujarnya. Meski demikian, perusahaan masih menelusuri asal-usul penyebaran memorandum internal yang seharusnya hanya digunakan untuk kepentingan internal perusahaan. "Itu yang kami lagi cari tahu," katanya (Wawan Setiawan, General Manager of External Affairs and Sustainable Development (ESD) at PT KPC, said that the information about the workplace accident contained in the memo was accurate and matched what had actually happened. "The information is correct. It is the same as what is stated in the memo that I can share," he said. However, the company is still trying to find out how the internal memo, which was intended only for internal company use, was leaked. "That's what we're currently investigating," he added)*

Within CDA framework, the corporation's response constitutes part of the discursive practice through which meaning is produced and negotiated. The statement regarding efforts to identify the individual responsible for disseminating the information should not be understood merely as an administrative action. Rather, it reinforces the media's representation that an information "leak" had indeed occurred. Consequently, the legitimacy of the term "leak" was established not only through the media's lexical choices but also reproduced through the corporation's own communication response.

From a discursive perspective, the company's statement indicates that its communication strategy prioritises the dissemination of information, rather than the substantive issues surrounding the mining accident. From a public communication perspective, information concerning disciplinary measures or investigations into the alleged disclosure of internal documents should be regarded as an internal matter of organizational governance. According to Grunig (2002), effective organizational communication should prioritize the public interest rather than serve only the interests of the organization.

The repeated use of the term "leak" demonstrates that local media did more than simply report the mining accident. The repetition redirected public attention from the technical aspects of the accident to the circulation of internal documents. It also reinforced perceptions of limited corporate transparency. As the term appeared repeatedly across news reports, the association between the mining accident and corporate secrecy became increasingly salient. Within CDA (Fairclough, 1992) framework, repetition is not merely a textual feature. Rather, it constitutes a discursive practice that produces, reproduces, and sustains particular meanings.

### *3.2 Mining Accident News Coverage and the Construction of Public Opinion*

The preceding analyses demonstrate that a mining workplace accident is not merely an occupational safety event. Rather, the news texts surrounding the accident constitute a site where public opinion is constructed through media framing, agenda-setting, and discursive practices. The hegemonic influence of local media in constructing local public opinion is evident in the responses that emerged following the news coverage. The interview findings reveal a high degree of convergence among the perspectives of the participants, including a member of the Kutai Timur Regional House of Representatives (Informant 1), an academic from STAIS (Informant 2), the head of a local media bureau in Kutai Timur Regency (Informant 3), and the chairperson of a religious organization in Kutai Timur (Informant 4).

The participants perceived KPC as lacking transparency and professionalism in its public communication, particularly in relation to the mining workplace accident. They argued that news reports based on the "leaked" internal memorandum indicated that the corporation had failed to communicate openly with the public from the outset of the accident. This interpretation is consistent with information reported by [kaltimpost.jawapos.com](http://kaltimpost.jawapos.com), which stated that *"as of the publication of this report, the company had not issued an official statement regarding the accident. Attempts by journalists to obtain confirmation had also received no response"* (Jufriadi, 29 May 2026). The participants further emphasized that the official statement released by KPC five days after the accident was insufficient to alter the public opinion that had already been formed.

In particular, Informant 1 expressed concern that the initial news coverage was not based on the corporation's official communication. The informant argued that this lack of openness reflected KPC's failure to uphold the principle of transparency in its public communication.

*This reluctance to disclose information represents a serious shortcoming for a company as large as KPC. The company demonstrated a lack of professionalism in communicating information to the public regarding this accident. I deeply regret that an organization of this scale failed to adhere to government regulations on public information disclosure. All relevant information should be communicated accurately, transparently, and in a timely manner. Greater transparency would help prevent the spread of uncontrolled and misleading information (Informant 1, interview, June 25, 2026).*

The statement above employs a strong evaluative strategy to construct a particular representation of the corporation. The expression "a serious shortcoming" portrays the company as an organization that has failed to meet socially expected standards of organizational conduct. Likewise, the phrase "a lack of professionalism" functions as a negative evaluative judgment that reinforces the perception of the corporation's inability to manage its public communication effectively. This interpretation is consistent with van Dijk's (2017) socio-cognitive approach. He said that evaluative language in news discourse and public communication influences the formation of mental models through which audiences interpret social events and institutional actors. Consequently, the repeated use of negative evaluative expressions contributes to the construction of public perceptions that question the corporation's transparency, accountability, and credibility.

A similar perspective was expressed by Informant 2. He argued that the corporation's communication strategy was not well adapted to the contemporary digital information ecosystem. In an era of information transparency, controlling the flow of information has become increasingly difficult. Information now circulates rapidly across multiple media channels and digital platforms.

*News reports based on a leaked memorandum indicate the existence of an information vacuum. When a corporation delays issuing an official statement, it becomes increasingly difficult to correct the information that has already shaped public opinion. In the case of the leaked memorandum, the media should not be blamed. In today's highly mediated environment, it is virtually impossible for a corporation to conceal information. Restricting information channels only reinforces perceptions of corporate negligence (Informant 2, interview, June 26, 2026).*

The statement constructs a causal relationship between delayed corporate communication and the emergence of an information vacuum. This vacuum is subsequently filled by media reports based on the leaked internal memorandum. Within CDA framework, lexical choices such as "information vacuum," "the media should not be blamed," and "corporate negligence" are not merely descriptive. Rather, they represent a redistribution of discursive power between the media and the corporation. Through this discourse, the media gain legitimacy as the primary provider of public information. This interpretation is consistent with Fairclough (1992, 1995), who argues that discourse does not simply reflect social reality. It actively constructs and legitimizes particular representations through language. It also aligns with Grunig (2002), who emphasizes that effective organizational communication requires timely and transparent disclosure of information to maintain public trust and organizational legitimacy.

Informant 3 also expressed concern about the lack of transparency in KPC's communication. He said, news reports based on unofficial sources generated widespread public speculation.

*The emergence of news reports on the workplace accident at KPC based on the leaked internal memorandum indicates that KPC had not fully upheld the principle of transparency. The company should have issued an official statement immediately so that the public could obtain complete and accurate information. When official information is unavailable, the media inevitably seek alternative sources for their reporting. In an environment where information spreads rapidly and*

*misinformation is increasingly prevalent, transparency has become more important than ever* (Informant 3, interview, June 27, 2026).

The statement constructs transparency as a normative principle that determines the legitimacy of corporate communication. Lexical choices such as "the leaked memorandum," "had not fully upheld the principle of transparency," and "complete and accurate information" establish a causal relationship between delayed corporate communication and the emergence of an information space subsequently filled by the media. At the level of discursive practice, the media are represented as actors that fill the information vacuum. This representation simultaneously reflects a shift in discursive power from the corporation to the media in defining the public narrative surrounding the mining accident.

Meanwhile, Informant 4 emphasized that the public is entitled to accurate, balanced, and timely information. The informant stated:

*The leaked memorandum reveals weaknesses in the corporation's crisis communication management. Ideally, the company should have been the first to disclose the accident so that the public received accurate information from the outset. In today's era of information transparency, proactive communication is more effective than reactive communication because information spreads rapidly once it enters the public domain. This accident should therefore serve as an opportunity to evaluate the implementation of transparency principles. Transparency is not determined solely by the existence of an official statement. It also depends on the timeliness, accuracy, consistency, and the organization's ability to provide clear explanations to the public* (Informant 4, interview, June 29, 2026).

Textually, the statement is not merely descriptive. Rather, it constructs a moral position that the corporation failed to manage its crisis communication effectively. It also legitimizes a regime of truth (Foucault, 1980) in which a credible corporation is expected to control the narrative from the outset through proactive, timely, consistent, and transparent communication. Within CDA framework, transparency is represented as a form of symbolic power that shapes organizational legitimacy. When a corporation fails to become the primary source of information, the discursive space is occupied by the media or other social actors. These actors subsequently construct public interpretations of the crisis. As a result, discursive power shifts from the corporation to the media and the public. Consequently, the organization's reputation is no longer determined solely by its official communication.

The participants' views collectively indicate the construction of a negative representation of KPC's communication performance. From a public relations perspective, public perceptions of corporate transparency are a strategic factor influencing organizational legitimacy (Grunig et al., 2002). Such negative representations may undermine public trust. In turn, declining public trust can weaken the company's social license to operate, which is widely recognized as a prerequisite for the sustainability of mining operations. According to Morrison (2014) social license to operate depends not only on regulatory compliance but also on public perceptions of corporate transparency, accountability, and communication credibility.

### *3.3 Local Media as the Mainstream Source of Information in Mining Regions*

The participants' views consistently indicate that local media possess a strong capacity to construct local public opinion. This capacity is supported by several characteristics that distinguish local media from national media. These include their close geographical, social, and cultural proximity to the communities they serve. Most participants regarded local media as the most influential communication channel for disseminating information. They argued that local media have a deeper understanding of community characteristics, local social dynamics, and the socio-cultural context in which events occur (Informants 1, 2, 3, and 4, interview, June 27, 2026).

Beyond their close relationship with local communities, local media benefit from privileged access to information sources because they operate within the same geographical and socio-cultural environment as the actors involved in the event. This proximity enables local media

not only to elevate mining accidents as salient public issues through agenda-setting but also to construct meanings that shape public perceptions and emotional responses through framing practices. The informant illustrated, in reporting workplace accidents, local media may present the perspectives of victims' families. This approach fosters public empathy for the human consequences of the accident. Alternatively, media coverage may focus on corporate accountability. In such cases, local media often quote activists, academics, and civil society organizations that critically evaluate occupational safety practices and corporate governance. (Informant 2, interview, June 27, 2026).

From the perspective of news coverage, Informant 1 argued that local media consistently report issues directly related to the needs, interests, and social dynamics of local communities. According to the informant, this consistency strengthens the relevance, credibility, and influence of local media in shaping local public opinion (Informant 1, interview, June 27, 2026). More specifically, Informant 3, the head of a local media bureau, emphasized that local media possess a deeper understanding of regional issues. This advantage enables them to become the primary source of information on local affairs. As a result, national media frequently cite or expand upon news stories that were first published by local media (Informant 3, interview, June 27, 2026).

These findings suggest that local media function not only as providers of local information but also as agenda builders that influence broader media agendas. According to intermedia agenda-setting theory, media with earlier and more comprehensive access to an event can transfer issue salience to other media, thereby shaping their news priorities (McCombs, 2004; Reese & Danielian, 1989). Consequently, local media occupy a strategic position in directing information flows and constructing public attention toward regional issues, including mining workplace accidents. As the primary source of information for local communities, local media occupy a hegemonic position in constructing social reality and shaping public understanding of mining issues.

#### **4. Discussion**

These findings demonstrate that local media function not only as channels for disseminating information during crises. They also serve as strategic actors in crisis communication by shaping information flows and influencing public opinion. These findings extend the crisis communication literature by highlighting the role of local media in the management of crisis information and the construction of public opinion. The findings further indicate that communication strategies emphasizing the control of internal information may create greater opportunities for media interpretation. In mining regions, this dynamic further strengthens the strategic position of local media as the primary actors in constructing the social reality of a crisis.

Practically, these findings highlight the need for mining companies to recognize local media as strategic stakeholders in crisis communication. Transparent communication, timely information disclosure, and constructive engagement with local media are more likely to foster public trust. By contrast, communication strategies centered on information control may undermine organizational credibility during a crisis.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study focuses on the reporting of a mining workplace accident involving Kaltim Prima Coal (KPC). Therefore, the findings reflect the characteristics of crisis communication and the local media ecosystem within this specific context. They are not intended to be generalized to the broader mining industry or to other organizational settings.

Second, this study employs CDA to examine the discursive construction of news texts, supported by interview data. Accordingly, the conclusions regarding public opinion are derived from the interpretation of discursive practices rather than from direct empirical measurements of audience responses. Future studies should integrate CDA with quantitative content analysis, public opinion surveys, or social media analysis. Such an integrated approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between media discourse, public perceptions, and the effectiveness of crisis communication in the mining industry.

Third, this study focuses exclusively on local media. It does not compare the reporting patterns of local media with those of national media or social media platforms. Future comparative research could provide a broader understanding of how agenda-setting, framing, and media hegemony operate across different communication platforms. Such comparisons would also help explain how different media environments influence the construction of public opinion during mining corporate crises.

## 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that local media do not merely report mining workplace accidents but actively construct the meanings through which such events are understood by the public. The findings indicate that repeated media narratives surrounding the "leaked internal memorandum" shifted public attention away from the technical causes of the accident toward broader questions of organizational transparency and communication credibility. In this sense, public opinion was shaped less by the accident itself than by the absence of timely corporate communication, allowing local media to become the dominant actors in defining the crisis. These findings suggest that organizational legitimacy during crises is negotiated through discourse rather than determined solely by organizational actions.

More importantly, this study questions the conventional assumption that organizations can maintain control over crisis narratives simply by managing the release of information. The findings show that delaying official communication may unintentionally transfer discursive authority to local media, enabling alternative interpretations to become socially accepted before organizations have the opportunity to present their own accounts. Rather than protecting corporate interests, communication strategies based on withholding information may undermine transparency, weaken public trust, and reduce organizational legitimacy. This finding reinforces the argument that effective crisis communication depends not only on the accuracy of information but also on its timeliness and openness within increasingly dynamic digital media environments.

This study is situated within the context of a single mining accident in Indonesia, it highlights the broader significance of local media as influential actors in the construction of public opinion during organizational crises. Future studies should examine whether similar patterns of media hegemony emerge across different industries, cultural settings, and communication platforms, particularly by comparing local, national, and digital media ecosystems. Such research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how media discourse shapes public legitimacy and organizational reputation in contemporary crisis communication.

## Acknowledgements

The author sincerely expresses gratitude to all informants for their willingness to share their experiences, perspectives, and insights throughout this study. Special appreciation is extended to the journalists and local media professionals in Kutai Timur Regency. They are valuable participation as key informants and for sharing their perspectives on journalistic practices and communication dynamics in the mining region. Their contributions were essential to the completion and refinement of this research.

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