

## Female photojournalist discrimination during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia

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**Abstract** The development of news about Covid-19 that hit almost the entire world, was conveyed massively by the mass media. The work process of journalists in reporting makes them vulnerable to infection. Photojournalists have to rack their brains to keep sending news. During the pandemic, female photojournalists experienced more obstacles and discrimination than before the pandemic. A strong patriarchal system gives rise to gender discrimination in the male-dominated photojournalist profession. This research is qualitative research with a critical paradigm. Researchers want to see the extent of discrimination against three female photojournalists in Indonesia during the pandemic. This research used qualitative methods, with semi-structured interviews, to explore the experiences of female photojournalists during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings of this study are the existence of double burden gender discrimination, maternal discrimination, and layoff for those who have high salaries (discrimination based on pay) from the media where they work.

**Keywords:** female; photojournalist; covid-19

### INTRODUCTION

The spread of Covid-19 (*Coronavirus Disease*), which began in Wuhan, China, in 2019, spread throughout the world and caused a global economic recession. World Bank noted in 2020 that the recession due to Covid-19 hit 92.2 per cent of countries worldwide. Various global uncertainties that emerged before the pandemic also exacerbated this condition. Since President Joko Widodo announced the first case of Covid-19 in Indonesia in March 2020, everyone has been confused and has begun to adjust to strict health protocols. Almost all sectors were affected until many companies laid off employees because they could no longer afford to bear the company's operations (Faqir, 2020).

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The chaos experienced by many media companies has impacted changing the way journalists work. If previously they were free to do coverage when the pandemic was just the opposite. Reporting is carried out on a limited basis in online spaces, waiting for press releases from the government about updates on the number of infected, cured, and dead patients and information related to virus characteristics for prevention efforts and vaccines. Reporters can work online, while photojournalists cannot perform their professional duties. During the pandemic, the context of "no picture, no news" is a major obstacle in reporting news photos.

At the same time, the media is also trying to protect journalists from exposure to the virus. Various policy changes related to news production were made. Previously, journalists had to cover the news in person. During the pandemic, almost all journalists did their jobs from home. They were producing news and reporting from home. For example, they must also do coverage outside and follow strict health protocols. Many media in Indonesia have carried out training and outreach for reporting during the pandemic, but the number of journalists who have died from Covid-19 is also not small. Based on data released by The Press Emblem Campaign (PEC), a non-profit organisation in press freedom, in March-December 2020, 600 journalists worldwide died from Covid-19. The data states that more than half came from Latin America, with 303 deaths.

Meanwhile, around 145 deaths were recorded in Asia, 94 in Europe, 32 in North America, and 28 in Africa (Adiyanto, 2021). The exact number of journalists who died due to Covid-19 in Indonesia during the pandemic is unknown. However, several mainstream media sources, such as [www.sindonews.com](http://www.sindonews.com) (Hariyanto, 2021) and [orangmerdeka.id](http://orangmerdeka.id) (Rosyidi, 2021) wrote that many media workers have died due to Covid-19 without mentioning the number. In the same year, ANTARA Maluku released an article entitled "*Journalist versus Covid-19, When the Journalist Fails in the Middle of a Pandemic*" (Yakub, 2021). The article notes that 38 East Java journalists died during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The problems journalists face during a pandemic are not only news sources but also the invisible ferocity of the virus. At that time, the reporter can confirm the event by phone or video call to the source and write it down. However, for photojournalists, there is no way but to do live reporting from the field. The risks faced by photojournalists tend to be higher than reporters. At the pandemic's beginning, media policy did not allow photojournalists to report in red zones such as hospitals, government-provided isolation homes, or covid funerals. However, the high need for photo news forces them to consider how to keep working and prioritise personal safety. A ban on reporting in the red zone of the media where they work and obeying health protocols is a key requirement.

The majority of photojournalists in Indonesia and even the world are male. Hadland and Barnett (Hadlan & Barnett, 2018) conducted a study of 545 female photojournalists from 71 countries collected between 2015 and 2016. Their study indicates that female photojournalists face more demanding circumstances than their male counterparts, despite having the same higher education and even more often receiving photography training. Similar data were collected from interviews with former Deputy Chairperson of the Indonesian Photojournalist (PFI) Francis Simbolon and searches on several media in 2018, and there were 17 female photojournalists working full time in Indonesia. However, this number decreased to 15 people in 2021. One has been laid off, and another person has been transferred from a photo reporter to a photo researcher. The editor moved her position because she had just given birth and felt working from home while caring for children during a pandemic would be safer.

Female photojournalists can compete with their male counterparts, but they still receive much discrimination. Melki and Mallat's research (2016) suggests that women journalists in Arab countries continue to be marginalised due to gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and lack of a legally and socially supportive environment, working together to systematically prevent and block women's entry into the news field. The stereotype that states that the photojournalist profession is a hard job and is the realm of men's work is still deeply entrenched in society. When reporting, photojournalists carry heavy equipment in their backpacks. Cameras, multiple lenses, tripods, and laptops are the bare minimum they carry on their backs every day wherever they go. The demands are a race against time because they have to chase the moment, plus the heavy burden on the back, and the challenges at the location of coverage, coupled with the gender, ethnicity, race, and religious discrimination they experience while carrying out their duties.

In line with this, Lee and Kim's research in (2022) South Korea on the high number of female journalists leaving newsrooms shows that traditional gender factors, including predominantly masculine newsroom culture, discrimination in assignments and promotions, and work-family conflicts became the main reason they left this profession. Kompas Daily Senior Photographer Danu Kusworo said many applicants were women when opening a journalist recruitment or photojournalist at Kompas (interview on 02 June 2018). During the selection process, women tend to be able to complete assignments better than male applicants. However, this condition changed when they were married and had children. Their work productivity decreases due to child or family matters, so their male colleagues become superior. Mosista Pambudi, Photography Instructor at the ANTARA School of Journalism and Head of the LKBN ANANTARA (Indonesian Official News Agency) Workshop Gallery, conveyed the same thing. She said there were many women applicants for the ANTARA photojournalism school, and they were

superior when working on the final project. However, when working professionally, many failed (interview on 04 April 2019).

Working as a photojournalist has challenges and high risks, especially for women. They have to compete with male journalists to get news professionally. Many have also experienced online harassment, as Goyal, Park, & Vasserman reported (n.d.) that online threats are still common in India and Malta. The number of female journalists who experience online harassment is higher than those who often highlight women's issues and injustice.

This research focuses on Prevention, Monitoring, Crisis, and Recovery, from designing tools to documenting evidence of harassment and making reports. In line with this research, online violence is also often experienced by journalists in Finland. Kantola and Harju examine how journalists address (2023) address online harassment through liaison practices that involve concerted action with fellow journalists and editors that are effective in addressing the emotional effects of harassment. The effectiveness of this liaison practice stems from the ability of journalists and editors to provide emotional support. Problems related to online journalist violence are also common among journalists in Portugal (Sampaio-Dias, et al., 2022), which, theoretically, the article bridges research on online harassment, mass censorship, and gender in journalism.

In Pakistan, controversial comments about female journalists are rife. Through quantitative and qualitative content analysis, Husain, Bostan, & Qaisarani's research (2022) found that female journalists received offensive comments in which trolls mocked their gender, profession, and personal lives. The findings show trolls target conservative cultural values to exert social pressure on journalists to prevent women journalists from exercising their democratic rights.

Discriminatory treatment or harassment of women journalists based on gender remains a central issue in many countries. Kim and Shin conducted in-depth interviews with ten journalists working for (2022) Korean news organisations, complemented by an analysis of self-reflection articles. The study investigated how journalists experienced violence and harassment from audiences, how they coped with it, and its influence on them. The analysis revealed that the influence of misogyny narratives from journalists covering topics such as politics and gender was more likely to be targeted by anti-press violence. In line with this, Miller (2023) presented the study's results using theoretical concepts of sensemaking and affective event theory to analyse and interpret the harassment events experienced by journalists from readers, viewers, and strangers, as well as their emotional responses. Its findings show that journalists experience three forms of workplace harassment. From external to the newsroom, women not only receive more sexual harassment than men, but they experience more harassment overall from viewers, readers, and strangers.

The role of women journalists, especially female photojournalists in Indonesia, even though the number is small, is quite recognised for its existence. Until now, there are still problems that still require attention. For example, many of them are unaware of their rights as professionals and various ways to protect themselves from gender discrimination. Research on gender discrimination against journalists in Indonesia has been widely conducted. Among them were written by Ashaf and Kartika (Ashaf & Kartika, 2019), who found that women journalists are divided into two typologies: women journalists who are hegemonised and women journalists as actors of resistance.

Furthermore, in line with the study, Asnaura, Zahrani, and Suryadi (Asnaura et al., 2021) conducted research on gender discrimination in the digital media industry in Indonesia. Her research findings stated that women journalists experienced gender discrimination through wage differentiation, positioning, inadequate facilities for the needs of women journalists and harassment experienced while reporting. Nasution (Nasution, 2022) also found results that were not much different. Her research found that women journalists generally experience gender injustice even though their numbers continue to increase. In research on sports journalists in a French-language Swiss daily, Schoch (Schoch, 2022) analysed the allocation of sports news among female and male journalists. The results showed that male journalists covered more prestigious subjects and produced larger amounts of match reporting. While women are restricted to covering less prestigious sports, women's sports, and soft news. This article explores the careers of female and male journalists. The security conditions of female journalists when reporting are also often risky.

The Erkmen, Ataman, & Çoban B (2022) study investigates the life experiences and gender-based security issues of female journalists working for alternative media in Turkey. Evaluate the impact of the professional and personal lives of Islamism, populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism that intersect in this patriarchal autocracy. The result is that most security threats against alternative female journalists stem from security forces on the ground and arbitrary judicial sanctions in the courts. In this study, women journalists remain encouraged to continue journalism, which is an important empowerment tool. An academic report on the actions or inequalities experienced by women journalists on the ground was also submitted by Luqiu (Luqiu, 2022) that Journalists have been targeted by demonstrators, counter-demonstrators, and police covering nationalist, xenophobic, and anti-government protests in democratic and non-democratic countries.

All of these studies address the workplace discrimination experienced by women journalists. No research has addressed discrimination, more specifically against female photojournalists in Indonesia. However, they do coverage with photographic tools on their backs. The total weight of the equipment varies, in the range of 10-15 kilograms. It is coupled with chasing time to get the *moment* and the

technical ability to operate the camera well. A series of abilities that require physical, technical, good self-management and time are very important. This study seeks to fill the gap, to enrich research on gender discrimination that occurs among female photojournalists.

Some of these photojournalists stated that despite formally working under the same conditions as men, the problem that often arises is the demand for harmonisation of professional and personal obligations. The pandemic exacerbates this condition. Salaries that are not received in full due to policies limiting coverage from the media where they work to higher demands on taking care of the household during the pandemic. When their children and husbands are all active at home, the mother's workload is also higher based on gender construction. This inequality is called discrimination because of the unequal division of roles based on sex.

Next, the only hope of getting out of that circle is to find practical strategies to counter the subject of objectification that masculinism fosters. This study "captures" the discrimination against female photojournalists during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Discrimination in a male-dominated society manifests itself in newsrooms where male-majority editors-in-chief have power over their patriarchal narratives.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of female photojournalists, domestic barriers experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, and changes in their professional work. Understanding gender role inequality during the pandemic will be able to examine the forms of discrimination they receive.

**Table 1.** Informant Information

<b>No</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Media</b>
1	HR	CNN Indonesia
2	FS	ANTARA Palembang
3	WP	Ex. Jakarta Post

Source: Author (2023)

Journalists are attractive candidates for qualitative interviews. They possess unique knowledge and can communicate their experiences meaningfully and reflectively (R Thomas & Taylor, 2011). This study was designed according to the criteria of a qualitative research report, which focuses on understanding the research question as a humanistic or idealistic approach (Punch, 2013). This method was used to understand female photojournalists' beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviours, and interactions during the pandemic. Here are the Informants in this study can be check at Table 1.

All of them are female photojournalists who have been working for more than five years. This length of work time is used to see the consistency of work patterns as a photojournalist. Post-interview, the

data was sorted and checked again using triangulation and then analysed.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Every photojournalist has a different experience when carrying out their professional duties. The results of research on three female photojournalists in this study showed that the discrimination they received first was in the form of double burden gender discrimination, maternal discrimination, and layoff based on employees who have high salaries. The discrimination that occurred in the three informants in the study appeared to be neutral, not as obvious as inequality that harmed either party. However, it puts informants at a disadvantage and is disproportionate.

One of the photojournalists' biggest challenges when covering a pandemic is limited space. In addition, the health crisis caused by this pandemic also creates financial challenges for photojournalists due to the limited coverage. Journalists face a cash shortage and a potential drop in pay as media organisations' revenues dwindle. For example, sales of newspapers have decreased because people fear catching COVID-19 from touching newspapers (Sweney, 2020). Subscription-based media models are considered slow in generating revenue. More than 200 news-related organisations worldwide are laying off their workers.

In April 2020, about 36,000 workers from various media lost their jobs or had their positions reduced due to the outbreak. In a study during the COVID-19 pandemic, Poynter Institute stated that (McCluskey, 2020) *freelance* journalists (contributors) are the most affected in journalism. (Tompkins & Tompkins, 2020) The Jakarta Post, a 39-year-old Indonesian English-language media, cannot be separated from financial problems during the pandemic, which laid off 70-80% of its employees. One of them is WP, the resource person for this research, who has worked for five years (2015-2020). WP experienced mental health issues because layoffs were carried out during the pandemic, which caused limited meetings of people and difficulty getting new jobs. Before this layoff decision, WP's workload at The Jakarta Post was relatively high compared to before the pandemic. She said she did not believe the layoff was because the company was losing money. After all, she contributed high income from her performance precisely after the pandemic.

In addition, it also creates ethical challenges for photojournalists (Holland & Blood, 2012). They are looking for solutions to cover the pandemic ethically and accurately. These challenges have implications for both physical and mental health. They worked under pressure and with new routines during the pandemic. For female photojournalists, the pressures faced are quite diverse. FS, a photojournalist of the ANTARA Palembang news agency, said that during the pandemic, the coverage system became a day in and a day off. As a photojournalist, she can still

carry out the mechanism of reporting two days into one day so that income is not reduced due to restrictions on working days. However, precisely the obstacle comes from the family. As a mother, she must prepare and attend her child to online school before leaving for coverage. She will go to the coverage when her son's affairs are over. FS's husband works as a journalist, works out of town, and returns to Palembang on weekends. So on weekdays, she becomes a working mother while caring for children. FS interprets the demands of gender-based roles by being a good mother to maintain and prepare her children's needs fully.

Furthermore, HR, a photojournalist at CNN Indonesia, was pregnant when the pandemic occurred. Several times during coverage, she fell because she was pushed by other photojournalists while hunting for pictures. Not long after that, her content had problems, and the editor transferred her to be a photo researcher. The dynamics of a photo researcher are certainly not as high as photojournalists. Photo researchers work from the office or home. Her task is to select the photos needed for the editor. For example, when editors need illustrative photos or photos of certain characters, it is the job of photo researchers to find them. In addition, she is also a photojournalist facilitator to uploads photos in CNN Indonesia's photo gallery. Editors see the position of photojournalists to be vulnerable to HR because they are pregnant. Therefore, the editor decided to move her to be a photo researcher.

### **Double Burden Gender Discrimination for Female photojournalists during the Pandemic**

Before the pandemic, family members had diverse activities that made them spend much time outdoors. However, during the pandemic, everyone was forced to isolate at home and limit interaction with others to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. In the early period of the entry of Covid-19 in Indonesia, the news revolved around the number of victims, and there was no bright spot on how to prevent it. At that time, what the government could do was limit human interaction. Increasingly, the news of Covid-19 is getting more and more troubling. It ranges from the high mortality rate to the number of people infected to the number of patients recovered. The work pattern of photojournalists also did not find a bright spot at that time. They can only wait for information or a Press Conference from the government about the development of the virus figures. Coverage of the field that has the potential to meet people or crowds is severely restricted.

FS is a photojournalist for ANTARA news agency based in Palembang – South Sumatra. She has been fascinated with journalism since college and decided to become a photojournalist when she graduated and returned to Palembang. She said that changes in work patterns during the pandemic had already begun when the first case of Covid-19 was found in Indonesia in 2020:



*"Starting in 2020, we will be reduced because we had to go to the office. I think friends from other media are too... The decision has already passed through WA. I have started to walk away from the pandemic... But if the policy for a day off, a day in, has only started in the last three months when Palembang is already a red zone, then events have started a lot, and Covid began to come"* (FS, Interview 21 August 2021).

The duration of coverage has decreased since the pandemic, making FS spend much time at home. She still does household chores because of social demands as a woman who still has to do domestic work well even though she is already working. Before leaving for coverage, she had to set up her children's online school in advance and work after her children's affairs were over. Double burden means that the workload received by one sex is more than the other gender (Kemenpppa.go.id, n.d.). Women's reproductive roles are often considered static and permanent. Although a woman has worked in the public sphere, it is not accompanied by a reduction in their burden in the domestic area. Their maximum effort is to substitute the work for other women, such as domestic servants or other female family members.

Nevertheless, the responsibility still rests on the shoulders of women. As a result, they experience a double load. In this condition, reproductive and nurturing roles based on sex are constructed by the culture in which women's task of doing household work, now called the domestication (Roger, 1980), begins to strengthen. Almost everyone does activities from home. Work, school, and shopping for daily necessities are done from home. The inequality of the division of labour in the household eventually became a new problem.

The concept of domestication is closely related to numbering or subordination, also "ibuism (motherism)," which is a concept of subordination (the position of women below men) (Asyraf & Hazimah, 2020), which is part of discrimination against women. This conception is like what FS and HR experienced during the pandemic. FS has to prepare meals, her child's online school, and all the needs of household members in the morning. All she did was sole because of her role and responsibility as a mother. While HR, pregnant with her first child during the pandemic, had a fear of infection and a strong desire to protect the child in her womb, making her willing to be transferred from the photojournalist position to photo researcher. Even after her son was born, his mother said she was happier to see HR working from home than being a photojournalist because she had more time to care for her newborn. Such a conception confirms the reproduction of patriarchy that women belong in the domestic sphere to care for children and do all household affairs. Their voices as women, which accommodated their desires, were ignored. HR said that her mother and husband left the decision to her to become a photojournalist or photo researcher. In line with this, her mother also said that she would rather see her working

from home as a photo researcher. With this kind of view, in the end, HR accepts the conception of the role of motherism confirmed by its environment. She feels more comfortable at home, protects her children, does not report in the field, and can spend more time accompanying her children's growth and development.

### **Maternal Discrimination: Giving Up Being a Photojournalist**

Despite the fact that equality has been more massively echoed in recent decades, the forms of discrimination that occur remain diverse. In the most straightforward definition, discrimination is the unequal treatment of individuals in the same situation but treated differently in some characteristic, such as race, ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, or another categorical status (Fibbi et al., 2020). In this study, HR shared why she was transferred from photojournalist to photo researcher, *"Yes, why I kept moving in the office, I was talking to the photo researcher before. So she was in charge of coming out. I got in that position."* She continued that before the change of position, she had dropped twice when she was six months pregnant. The incident occurred after covering the meeting between Jokowi and Prabowo. "I do not think about girls on the field. Guys do not think about girls, mockery or anything they do not pay attention to. I got pushed, teased, then the next day came out spotted." After the incident, the head of Multimedia immediately told HR that she was transferred to work in the office as a photo researcher. Forms of discrimination in pregnant women, for example, are considered unable to work optimally, so they are not much involved in the work they should. (Qibtiyah, Aminah, Hutabarat, Iswarini, & Yentriyani, 2022) Unfair treatment because women are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have just given birth, is a form of maternal discrimination. The Equality Act 2010 calls this pregnancy and childbirth discrimination. ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), 2010)

Maternal discrimination is closely related to the conception of female domestication discussed earlier. HR said that after giving birth and getting three months' leave, she was reluctant to return to being a photojournalist. At that time, Covid-19 cases were still very high, and she felt comfortable being a photo researcher because she could work from home while caring for her baby. HR said, "My baby is still two months old, *right?* Then I was made a photo researcher. It continues until now." The dilemma that occurred in her, between the desire to continue to be a photojournalist and the reality that she must be faced as a pregnant and giving birth woman, made her reproduce the meaning of working women who still have to be able to take care of children and be good mothers. Reflecting on this, maternal female workers are part of human rights that are part of economic, social and cultural rights. In the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Article 11 paragraph (1) affirms the right to work as a human right. In the case of HR, work choices based on individual wishes need attention, for example, building communication and

discussion between HR and editors before deciding to move her work from photojournalist to photo researcher.

In 2021, HR was infected with Covid-19. Starting from her, who felt symptoms, her husband, and finally, her baby. They are self-isolating at home. HR said she was no longer reporting after switching duties to become a photo researcher. However, when the pandemic and all family members work from home, HR still goes to the market to shop for family needs. She admitted she was afraid to leave the house, let alone imagine coverage during a pandemic. Nevertheless, the fact that she, her husband, and her infant child were infected made her feel guilty.

"At that time, what I told you about having covid was... So I got hit first, my husband and my baby son. Because I still often go to the market, so I got infected in the market. So far, even though I was afraid to go out, I wanted to meet people still. I was afraid of it, uh, but I still got infected. The three of us self-isolated." (HR, Interview 20 August 2021).

This condition solidified HR to become a full-time photo researcher finally. This kind of discrimination arises from rules or procedures that appear neutral but disproportionately harm certain individuals or groups (Harton & Dirth, 2010), as experienced by HR. This kind of discrimination arises from the culture of the organisation or society, which has been rooted in the experience and understanding of individuals based on the social and cultural reality surrounding them. As in this research, the system of maternal discrimination is legally banned, and a more subtle form of exclusion in the workplace media remains a reality that requires resistance.

### **High Salary: Employment Layoff Discrimination**

In Indonesia, research and information were found related to the issue of layoffs carried out by the mass media during the pandemic. Agatha, in her research report entitled "*Termination of Employment (PHK) for Journalists in the Covid-19 Era*," revealed that from March-November 2020, 150 complaints were submitted to the LBH (Legal Aid Institute) Press and AJI (Alliance of Independent Journalists) Jakarta (2021). Specifically, 50 special complaints of layoffs were submitted to LBH Pers and AJI. Other cases that occurred to journalists during the COVID-19 pandemic were being laid off, delays and salary deductions, delayed THR payments, mutations, unpaid wages, and being forced to retire early.

*The Jakarta Post* is one of the media that made a massive layoff during the pandemic. WP, one of the former female photojournalists at *The Jakarta Post*, was the resource person for this research.

*"There was an issue at first. Yes, it was quite reluctant. In the sense of who is ready to receive news, 90% of you will be layoff for one reason. I think if you say it is a factor that makes the company lose money, I do not think so. I was so shocked at the time. I was really shocked."* (WP, Interview 18 August 2021).

WP started her career as a photojournalist in 2015. Then she was promoted to Deputy Managing Editors Online at The Jakarta Post. Before joining the last media, she had professional experience as a photojournalist in several media in Yogyakarta and Jakarta. The issue of layoffs has been widely heard even before the pandemic. The outbreak of Covid-19 has worsened the financial condition of many media, especially those with print products such as The Jakarta Post. An article titled "Pandemic and Layoffs: Indonesian Journalism Loses Some of Its Best Journalists" (2020) was written by Evi Mariani, a senior journalist for The Jakarta Post who has worked for 18 years. In her writing, Evi said that the condition of the media where she works has experienced an unstable situation since 25 August 2020. On that day, The Jakarta Post Company chairman told the Employee Council that the company would fire two-thirds of employees or around 120-130 people and around 70-80 people from the editorial. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the economic conditions of many media in Indonesia and even the world messy. Reducing employees is a decision that harms many parties from this media economic downturn.

As an employee at the middle management level, the salary received by WP is quite large. There is an assumption that this layoff starts from employees with a high average income. Companies often lay off employees because they are eligible for retirement or earn the highest salary (DeSimone, 2020). When WP and some of her colleagues received an official letter of termination of employment, the dismissal decision seemed discriminatory. Their salaries are in almost the same range. In her article, Mariani (Mariani, 2020) said, "the layoff decision was taken because there was no development on the new investment plan that the company was working on following the Covid-19 outbreak." Similar conditions also occur in almost all countries affected by the pandemic. Thailand's Nation Multimedia, for example, in April 2020 cut salaries and began laying off employees. Malaysia's Media Prima, in June 2020, laid off 300 employees. Singapore Press Holdings and publisher of The Straits Times, announced in September 2020 that it was laying off 140 employees due to the impact of the pandemic on advertising revenue (Natalegawa, 2020).

WP conveyed her inner struggle after receiving the layoff letter:

*"Yes. Niskala, the PT is called Niskala Media Tenggara (NMT). Niskala's son made The Jakarta Post lose money. The cost is too high. I am trying to prove that I brought money to the company. I am not letting this company win. We do have the data. One denial keeps going in my head: how can I be laid off like that? Finally, at the end of time, I had to leave JP in December (2020). If you say, did you finally accept or not? Until then, no."* (WP, Interview 18 August 2021).

Post-layoff mental health issues during this pandemic happen to many people, as written by Tu, Li, and Wang (Tu et al., 2021). The study found that layoffs caused by COVID-19 increase stress, leading to decreased performance on the last days at work. In an article titled *Is Discrimination Hidden in Company Layoffs During the Pandemics?* (2020) It was stated that one of the indications of job discrimination was that employees who were layoff had a good performance, but the reason for the termination of work was centred on the company's financial decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **CONCLUSION**

Discrimination among female photojournalists varies. There is a strengthening of the double burden based on gender, especially for those with family. Other family members, such as parents, have a hand in the decision of the photojournalist woman to make choices in her professional role. Furthermore, maternal discrimination still occurs in the media work environment. This position makes female photojournalists have no choice in the field of work according to their capacity and desire. Discrimination also occurs in the media that layoffs heavily on those with high salaries. The absence of hearings and mental health assistance from the media where they work made these journalists overcome their mental problems during the pandemic.

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