

THREE “SRIKANDI” CANDIDATES IN THE 2024 EAST JAVA GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION: MEDIA FRAMING AND THE FUTURE OF WOMEN’S POLITICAL ROLES IN INDONESIA

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Submitted: 15 January 2025, Reviewed: 11 November 2025, Published: 31 December 2025

ABSTRACT

This research aims to reveal the media imaging in framing the Three Srikandi Candidates for East Java Governor in 2024 with three stages of analysis, namely transitivity, assessment, and visual. At the same time, based on the analyses that have been conducted, this article also aims to assess the future of women's political roles in Indonesia. This article uses a multimodal discourse analysis method with a qualitative approach. The results showed that the media recognized the leadership capacity of the three women candidates for the 2024 East Java Governor. First, transitivity analysis in the news about the 2024 East Java governor election shows three female candidates as key actors in political contestation. Second, appraisal analysis shows that positive attitudes dominate, highlighting the competence and courage of the candidates. However, some perspectives also reveal the challenges faced by women, such as cultural stigma and double burden. Third, Visual analysis in the news reinforces the image of candidates through images that highlight personal and professional characteristics, thus creating closeness with the audience. For this reason, the media needs to take proactive steps in building a fairer narrative by minimizing stereotypes and focusing on women's professional achievements. By doing so, the media can contribute to a more equal and inclusive political future for women in Indonesia.

Keywords: Three Srikandi; East Java 2024 Governor Candidates; Media; Women's Political Role; Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

The 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election, which placed three women as candidates, while men only became Cawagub, received attention from the mass media. As the researcher's initial exploration of the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election found, the mass media highlighted the appearance of three women contesting. For example, by using the diction “Srikandi” as found in the news on Tempo.co 'Followed by 3 Female Candidates for Governor, This is the Profile of the Srikandi in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election' and on Detik Jatim, namely 'Implications of 3 Srikandi in the East Java Gubernatorial Election on Future Women Candidates'. Etymologically, “Srikandi” is a label that represents the mythology of a woman who is tough, brave, and has archery skills. In fact, in the Indonesian context, the diction “Srikandi” was popular when it was used to dub three Indonesian female archery athletes during the 1988 Seoul Olympics who won silver medals (Miranti, 2018; Koni, 2023).

Statistically, women's participation has fluctuated from 2015-2024, but the positive trend in the quality of women's roles in politics is part of the success of mainstreaming women in Indonesian politics (Cakra Wikara Indonesia, 2021; Komnas Perempuan, 2024). Previous studies mention that women's leadership is proven to support more inclusive, gender-sensitive public policies and improve governance. Women's leadership also has the potential to provide positive change, primarily through sustainable advocacy and reform efforts (Baharudin, 2024; Khan, 2024; Sikarwar et al., 2024; Artaç & Ogurlu, 2024). It is supported by other studies that increasing women's participation in politics changes the political landscape and promotes gender equality and empowerment (Sikarwar et al., 2024).

The ability of the mass media to construct the reality of three women in the contestation of the East Java governor election through language is part of technological determinism that can change people's perspectives according to the content produced and reproduced (McLuhan, 1964; Eriyanto, 2012; Heryanto, 2018; Berger & Luckman, 1998). The construction of mass media reality in highlighting three women in the contestation of the 2024 East Java Regional Head Election cannot be separated from its various interests. As some literature reveals, the construction of political reality from the media is inseparable from the economic, political, and ideological interests that are intertwined in these media institutions (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016; Tapsell, 2018; Sujoko et al., 2020, 2023). This also legitimizes the role of the media in political communication, which not only functions as a political medium but also as a political element that is equal to political institutional actors and society (McNair, 2018).

The 2024 East Java gubernatorial election represents an unprecedented political moment in Indonesia, as three women simultaneously contested the gubernatorial race in a context traditionally dominated by male leadership. This study is particularly relevant in examining how the mass media framed these candidates through the culturally loaded label "Srikandi," which both symbolizes female leadership and risks reinforcing gendered stereotypes. The significance of this research lies in the media's influential role in shaping public perception and the political legitimacy of women leaders. Using a multimodal discourse analysis that integrates transitivity, appraisal, and visual analysis, this study aims to examine how the media positions female candidates as political actors, evaluates their leadership capacities, and constructs their visual representation, while assessing the implications of such framing for the future of women's political roles in Indonesia.

Previous studies in political communication highlight the complex relationship between media and women politicians. Sazali et al. (2020) demonstrate that both traditional and online media often frame female politicians through negative gendered perspectives, manifested in objectification, stereotyping, and patriarchal narratives. At the same time, other studies reveal the media's dual role as both a constraining and enabling arena for women's political participation. Yoteni et al. (2023), for instance, show that mass media can also function as a platform that encourages women's aspirations and engagement in political contestation by providing visibility and discursive space. Furthermore, women politicians actively appropriate media for strategic political communication. Musdalifah et al. (2022)

find that female politicians use Instagram not only to display feminine attributes but also to communicate political activities, legislative work, religious identity, and nationalist values. Taken together, these studies illustrate that media representations of women in politics are neither uniform nor neutral but operate within a dynamic tension between gender bias and political empowerment, religious attributes, nationalist attributes, and socialite lifestyles.

Several studies have also highlighted that women in politics receive less attention, which can affect their effectiveness and weaken their legitimacy in society (Andrich & Domahidi, 2023; Tahsini & Duci, 2022; Leicht, 2024; Chawla, 2023; Villasanta et al., 2022). Similar findings were also revealed by Tahsini & Duci, who showed that in addition to the lack of spotlight and media coverage, women are often more associated with aspects of personal life, such as physical appearance, than their professional abilities (Tahsini & Duci, 2022). Fixmer-Oraiz (2019) states that the media views the physical appearance of female politicians as more attractive than that of male politicians. This research trend shows that there is a media assessment of the personal side of women in politics; the assessment of women is not focused on their abilities and policies. This research will reveal how the media portrays the phenomenon of the three Srikandi Cagub Jatim in 2024 with multimodal analysis, both in text and image. Transitivity analysis (Halliday, 1994) and assessment (White, 2015) will explain in terms of text, while visual analysis (Leeuwen, 2006) will explain in terms of images in the media. Concurrently, these analyses will be used to assess the future of women's political roles in Indonesia.

Women's Political Discourse in the Media

Political discourse has a crucial role in shaping public opinion and advancing the political agenda (Al-watefi, 2024). Political discourse is a form of social and political communication related to political action, such as conveying information, motivation, or even manipulation. The effectiveness of this discourse is determined by the quality of delivery, the skill of the orator, the strategies applied, and the political culture of the intended audience (Larisa, 2022). According to Mamirbaeva, political discourse is a form of communication that is influenced by the speaker's social position; besides that, other elements are also taken into consideration, such as purpose, relationship with the audience, ideology, and delivery style (Mamirbaeva, 2022). Corresponding with Zyubina, political discourse is communication by politicians in political contexts, such as media messages and public discussions (Zyubina, 2023).

Not only a form of communication by politicians, but political discourse is also a discourse that reflects socio-political and cultural life that serves to inform, persuade, and legitimize politics (Kornelaieva, 2023). The purpose of political discourse is to persuade audiences, set agendas, shape identities, and form public beliefs disseminated through media and social platforms (Cherikbaeva & Musaeva, 2024). Women's political discourse includes issues such as women's representation, political participation, gender-based barriers, inclusive policies, and the struggle for women's rights in the political context (Tahsini & Duci, 2022; Islam, 2023; Neskovska, 2022; Amin et al., 2024).

Tahsini & Duci's study found that women's political discourse in the media reflects gender bias and framing that affects public perceptions of female politicians (Tahsini & Duci, 2022). This emphasizes how important the role of the media is, which can certainly have both positive and negative impacts in this case, namely the political power system, and can reach a wider audience (Louise, 2018; Kornelaieva, 2023).

This study is interesting because it examines an unprecedented political phenomenon in Indonesia, where three women simultaneously contested the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election. Its significance lies in analyzing how mass media framing through the culturally loaded label "Srikandi" shapes public perceptions and the political legitimacy of women leaders. The purpose of this research is to examine how the media positions female candidates as political actors, evaluates their leadership capacities, and constructs their visual representation using a multimodal discourse analysis approach.

Transitivity Analysis

Transitivity analysis is a linguistic tool for evaluating how language structures represent actions, events, and states of affairs, as well as revealing underlying ideologies and meanings. This theory is called Halliday's theory, referring to the Language Function theory developed by Michael Halliday, a functional linguist. This analysis focuses on the types of processes, participants, and indirect elements in clauses (Halliday, 1985). This method helps identify implicit ideologies, power dynamics, and thematic elements in a variety of texts, ranging from historical documents to modern song lyrics.

Transitivity analysis is used in this study to examine how media texts linguistically construct female candidates as political actors. Based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, this analysis identifies dominant process types, participants, and actions in news clauses related to the three female candidates in the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election. The findings show a dominance of material processes such as registering, competing, and presenting ideas, which position the candidates as active agents in political contestation. In contrast, mental and relational processes depict their motivations and leadership legitimacy. Thus, transitivity analysis reveals how media discourse ideologically shapes representations of women's political roles.

Halliday categorizes language functions into three broad categories called metafunctions (Halliday in Afriliani, 2017). First, the ideational function relates to the use of language to express experiences and ideas about the world, describing events, circumstances, and relationships between entities. This function helps convey information. Second, the interpersonal function focuses on the social relationship between speaker and listener or writer and reader. It includes the use of language to influence, question, or express attitudes and emotions, as well as aspects such as modality and word choice. Thirdly, textual functions refer to the way the text is built coherently and cohesively, helping the organization of information so that the message is conveyed clearly. This includes paragraph structure, use of hyphenation, and connections between sentences or ideas.

Appraisal Analysis

Appraisal theory was first developed by Martin and White from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. It analyzes the meaning of texts through positive and negative appraisals, which can be reinforced or weakened by communicators in terms of intensity and continuity. This analysis is part of meaning evaluation, which focuses on how language expresses attitudes and constructs ideological spaces. It is an important tool in understanding emotional development and textual analysis (White, 2015). The theory is applied in various fields, such as emotion research, literary analysis, and translation studies, to explore the way individuals and texts convey evaluative meaning. The purpose is to understand how judgment affects emotional responses and their development over time (Walle & Özden, 2024).

In addition to explaining and influencing emotional responses, judgment analysis can explain individual and cross-cultural differences in emotional expression. In literary studies, Appraisal Theory is used to analyze the way authors express attitudes and judgments in texts, as applied to José Saramago's novel "Blindness" to uncover the novel's genre as well as the author's dominant attitudes (Kareem & Farhan, 2022; Walle & Özden, 2024). Martin and White (2015) explain that appraisal theory offers a framework related to the interpersonal function of conveying the feelings, tastes, and opinions of the speaker or writer to varying degrees in the context of communication.

Visual Analysis

Visual analysis, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen, is based on the concept of visual "grammatics, which is similar to the structure of language. Kress and Van Leeuwen explain that design is the process of selecting and organizing semiotic resources to achieve specific communicative goals. Modes refer to the sources used in communication, such as language, images, music, gestures, etc. It develops the concept of visual grammar to analyze the visual elements that create meaning. This includes the study of composition, color, point of view, and awareness in images (Megiyatri, 2022). Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) divide metafunctions into three, namely representational, interactional, and compositional. Representational refers to visual resources for the representation of interactions and conceptual relationships between people, places, and things depicted in images, and how language interprets experiences of the external world. Interactional refers to resources, which establish relationships between the viewer, the image producer, and the people represented in the image. Compositional refers to the way patterns of representation and interaction combine to form a meaningful whole.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses the multimodality discourse analysis method, which is divided into three stages: transitivity analysis to examine material processes, judgment analysis to understand the meaning of clauses in the text, and visual analysis to identify image elements in the data. This method is supported by a qualitative approach to obtain in-depth and meaningful data. As explained by Abdussamad (2021), qualitative research focuses on

meaning rather than generalization. This approach is used to explain the political discourse related to the Three Srikandi Candidates for Governor of East Java 2024 more comprehensively. This research uses data mining techniques through news analysis to reveal the representation and political discourse of the Three Srikandi Candidates for Governor of East Java 2024. The news sorting process is based on the 5W 1H elements, which cover both sides of the principle, time period, context, background, and the involvement of data sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results in this article illustrate how the mass media build representation and political discourse related to the Three Srikandi Candidates for Governor of East Java 2024. The analysis focuses on elements of multimodality involving text and visuals to understand the construction of meaning produced by the news. The data obtained through an online search process using the keyword “Tiga Srikandi Calon Gubernur Jawa Timur” has been selected based on specific criteria, such as theme relevance, completeness of news elements, and time period. Through this analysis, the research results will explain how aspects of transitivity, judgment, and visual elements in the news describe the dynamics of political discourse as well as the position of the three female candidates in the contestation of the 2024 East Java governor election.

The process resulted in 10 news articles that met the research criteria. The news covered various media and titles, including: “Implikasi 3 Srikandi Pilgub Jatim pada Capres Perempuan di Masa Depan,” published by Detik Jatim on September 21, 2024; “Resmi Mendaftar, Tiga Srikandi Siap Tempur pada Pilgub Jatim 2024,” from Berita Satu on August 30, 2024; and “Pertarungan 3 Srikandi di Pilgub Jatim 2024,” from Metro News on August 29, 2024. In addition, there are also news such as “Diikuti 3 Bakal Calon Gubernur Perempuan”, “Ini Profil Para Srikandi di Pilgub Jawa Timur 2024” from Tempo.co which was published on August 30, 2024, and “Tiga Srikandi Siap Bertarung di Pilgub Jatim” from Times Indonesia.co.id which was released on August 28, 2024.

Other news is “Sekilas Peran Tiga Srikandi Calon Gubernur Jawa Timur 2024” from Radar Situbondo published on November 5, 2024, “Tiga Srikandi Calon Gubernur Sampaikan Gagasan di LDII Gresik Untuk Jawa Timur Lebih Baik” from TVOneNews.com on September 25, 2024, and “3 Srikandi Bertarung di Pilgub Jatim, Bukti Kepercayaan Publik pada Perempuan” from Beritajatim.com on September 18, 2024. The last two news articles are “Three Pertarungan Tiga Srikandi di Pilgub Jawa Timur: Adakah Kans Menggoyang Khofifah?” from Katadata.co.id, published on October 2, 2024, and “Tiga Srikandi Akan Beradu Gagasan untuk Membangun Jawa Timur” from Antaranews.com on August 31, 2024.

As an extension of the findings from this research article search, it is important to explore more comprehensively how the media portrays the activities, abilities, and characters of the three female candidates in the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election. The following discussions will outline the results of multimodality analysis, including transitivity, judgment, and visuals, to identify how these representations are constructed. This focus not only

provides an overview of the media's role in shaping political discourse but also reveals the dynamics underlying public perceptions of the Three Srikandi on the regional political stage.

Activities of Three Candidates for Governor of East Java 2024 in the Media: Transitivity Analysis

Transitivity analysis of the three East Java gubernatorial candidates in the media shows that they are positioned as key actors in political contestation. The media portrays these three women through various processes that reflect their actions and active roles in the 2024 gubernatorial election. In this context, transitivity analysis identifies the types of processes used to describe their actions, namely material processes that show real actions in the campaign, as well as mental processes that describe the thoughts and motivations behind their political decisions. This creates a strong narrative of their leadership abilities, while emphasizing the importance of women's presence in politics as drivers of change. The use of language in the news creates a more complex picture of the political reality faced by women.

Thus, transitivity analysis serves not only to understand individual actions but also to explore the power dynamics and ideologies underlying the representation of women in the media. This suggests that the media plays an important role in shaping public opinion regarding women's leadership capacity and the challenges that still exist in the political context in Indonesia. Therefore, the mapping of transitivity analysis results that researchers present in Table 1 will provide a clearer picture of the pattern of women's representation in the media, especially in the context of leadership capacity and the influence of ideology on public perception.

Table 1. Transitivity Analysis ResultsTable

News	Transitive Active	Intransitive Active	Passive	Ergative Passive
Implications of the Three Female Candidates in the East Java Gubernatorial Election for Future Female Presidential Candidates	10	1	0	1
Officially Registered, Three Female Candidates Ready to Compete in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election	6	2	0	0
The Battle of the Three Female Candidates in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election	8	1	0	0
Followed by the three female gubernatorial candidates, here are the Profiles of the Female Candidates in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election	10	0	1	0

Three Female Candidates Ready to Compete in the East Java Gubernatorial Election	4	1	0	1
A Glimpse of the Roles of the Three Female Candidates for Governor of East Java in 2024	5	3	0	0
Three Female Governor Candidates Present Their Ideas at LDII Gresik for a Better East Java	6	0	0	0
Three Female Candidates Compete in the East Java Gubernatorial Election, Proof of Public Trust in Women	7	0	0	1
The Battle of the Three Female Candidates in the East Java Gubernatorial Election: Is There a Chance to Unseat Khofifah?	4	2	4	0
Three female candidates will compete with their ideas to build East Java	8	0	0	0

Sources: Processed by researchers

Srikandi's ability to become Governor of East Java in the Media: An Assessment Analysis

The ability of the three East Java gubernatorial candidates in the media shows significant recognition of their leadership capacity. Based on appraisal theory analysis, the media generally gave positive appraisals, highlighting each candidate's expertise and experience in various fields, as well as their ability to advocate for important issues related to society. The results showed that there were 27 affections, 35 judgments, and 26 rewards, noting that each category had both positive and negative values. However, behind these positive assessments, the media also does not ignore the challenges faced by women in politics, such as cultural stigma and the double burden they often have to bear as leaders. Furthermore, Table 2 presents the results of the assessment analysis that reveal how the media portrays these challenges through the categories of affection, judgment, and appreciation, thus providing deep insights into the dynamics of women's representation in politics.

Table 2. Appraisal Analysis Results

News	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation
Implications of the Three Female Candidates in the East Java Gubernatorial Election for Future Female Presidential Candidates	2	4	6
Officially Registered, Three Female Candidates Ready to Compete in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election	4	3	1

The Battle of the Three Female Candidates in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election	3	3	3
Followed by the three female gubernatorial candidates, here are the Profiles of the Female Candidates in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election	3	6	2
Three Female Candidates Ready to Compete in the East Java Gubernatorial Election	3	3	1
A Glimpse of the Roles of the Three Female Candidates for Governor of East Java in 2024	3	4	1
Three Female Governor Candidates Present Their Ideas at LDII Gresik for a Better East Java	2	2	2
Three Female Candidates Compete in the East Java Gubernatorial Election, Proof of Public Trust in Women	2	4	2
The Battle of the Three Female Candidates in the East Java Gubernatorial Election: Is There a Chance to Unseat Khofifah?	3	4	3
Three female candidates will compete with their ideas to build East Java	2	2	4

Sources: Processed by researchers

Srikandi Characters of East Java Governor Candidates in the Media: Visual Analysis

From a visual analysis perspective, the coverage of these three women not only highlighted their political abilities but also constructed a broader narrative about the role of women in leadership. The media plays an important role in shaping public opinion and providing space for women's representation in politics. However, despite this support for representation, there is still the potential for bias that could affect people's perceptions of the candidates' abilities and policies. The depiction of interaction is shown from the screen capture distance in the close-up image, namely personal, medium distance, namely social, and long distance, namely public. The meaning of contact is the presence of eye contact between the reader of the text and the subject or object in the picture. If there is direct contact, then it is interpreted as asking, while if there is no direct contact, it is interpreted as offering.

Visualization in the news reinforces the image of these three gubernatorial candidates by displaying their personal and professional characteristics. The images used in news reports not only serve to attract attention but also create emotional closeness with the audience. Through this visual element, the media plays a role in building a narrative that supports the representation of women in politics, despite the potential bias that can affect how the public perceives their abilities and policies. Table 3 presents the results of image analysis that interpret how visual elements in the news are used to build narratives, strengthen images, and create emotional closeness with the audience, while also revealing potential biases in the representation of women in politics.

Table 3. Image Analysis Results – Interpretation

News	Interaction	Contact	Attitude
Implications of the Three Female Candidates in the East Java Gubernatorial Election for Future Female Presidential Candidates	personal	offer	subjectif
Officially Registered, Three Female Candidates Ready to Compete in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election	social	offer	subjectif
The Battle of the Three Female Candidates in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election	personal	offer	subjectif
Followed by the three female gubernatorial candidates, here are the Profiles of the Female Candidates in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election	social	request	subjectif
Three Female Candidates Ready to Compete in the East Java Gubernatorial Election	social	offer	subjectif
A Glimpse of the Roles of the Three Female Candidates for Governor of East Java in 2024	general	request	subjectif
Three Female Governor Candidates Present Their Ideas at LDII Gresik for a Better East Java	personal	offer	subjectif
Three Female Candidates Compete in the East Java Gubernatorial Election, Proof of Public Trust in Women	personal	offer	subjectif
The Battle of the Three Female Candidates in the East Java Gubernatorial Election: Is There a Chance to Unseat Khofifah?	personal	offer	subjectif
Three female candidates will compete with their ideas to build East Java	personal	offer	subjectif

Sources: Processed by researchers

Three Srikandi Candidates for East Java Governor 2024 in the Media Frame: Measuring the Future of Women's Political Role in Indonesia

In political discourse, the media has a significant role in shaping public opinion and advancing the political agenda (Al-watefi, 2024). Political discourse is a form of social and political communication related to political action, such as information delivery, motivation, or manipulation, which is influenced by the quality of delivery, strategy, and the political culture of the audience (Larisa, 2022). Based on transitivity analysis, the media portrayed three female gubernatorial candidates as active actors in the political contestation of the 2024 East Java Pilgub. Material processes dominate media narratives, underlining concrete actions such as registration, campaigns, and career achievements. This is in line with the concept of political discourse that aims to shape public identity and beliefs through the media (Cherikbaeva & Musaeva, 2024).

Furthermore, the media not only conveys information but also shapes social construction regarding the role of women in politics. According to Fairclough, media

discourse is an ideological tool that creates dominant narratives, often affirming existing social norms (Fairclough, 1995). In the context of the East Java Pilgub, the media acts as a “gatekeeper” that determines which aspects of the candidates are considered worthy of publication. This provides both opportunities and challenges for women to demonstrate their political capabilities.

The media-dominated material process confirms the role of female candidates as active political actors but also presents other challenges. As revealed by Entman in his framing theory, the way the media chooses to frame news can reinforce stereotypes or, conversely, deconstruct gender bias (Entman, 1993). For example, focusing on concrete actions such as campaigning and career achievements will undoubtedly give the impression that female candidates are able to compete in the political arena. However, if juxtaposed with narratives that disparage or highlight irrelevant personal aspects, this can be detrimental to public perception. In transitivity analysis, too, political actors are not only positioned as active subjects but also as objects in broader social construction. According to van Dijk, the media has an important role in the reproduction of power and social control (van Dijk, 1998). In this context, female candidates are often faced with portrayals that focus on their “womanhood, such as style of dress or family life, which can distract from their political competence. This emphasizes the need for a fairer and more balanced approach in media discourse.

The political discourse presented by the media is also influenced by the political culture of society. As stated by Almond and Verba, political culture is an important element that shapes people's perceptions of political actors (Almond & Verba, 1963). In Indonesia, a strong patriarchal culture is often a barrier to women's involvement in politics. The media, as one of the pillars of democracy, has the responsibility to not only reflect but also change these norms in favor of gender equality. A study conducted by Tahsini and Duci (2022) revealed that women's political discourse in the media often reflects gender bias that affects public perceptions of female politicians. In the context of the East Java Pilgub, the media not only highlighted the leadership abilities of the candidates but also presented the structural bias that is still inherent. These biases are seen in candidate representations that sometimes portray women as “limited” leaders in terms of strategic decision-making, which contradicts positive narratives about their courage and capacity.

The assessment analysis showed that the media generally appreciated the candidates' competencies through 27 affections, 35 judgments, and 26 rewards, reflecting the dominance of monogloss evaluations. These monogloss evaluations portrayed a more homogenous narrative, where women's courage, empathy, and leadership were promoted as superior qualities. However, deeper analysis shows that these appreciations tend to be tokenistic, giving recognition to female candidates without changing the male-dominated political framework.

Conversely, heteroglossic evaluations also emerged, highlighting the barriers women face in politics, such as cultural stigma and double burden. This double burden includes domestic and professional responsibilities, which are often seen as significant challenges for women to take an active role in politics. Cultural stigma is also a significant

factor, where female candidates are often judged based on their traditional roles in society rather than on their professional abilities or political vision. Thus, gender bias in women's political discourse often stems from patriarchal social structures, as revealed by Connell's study on the hegemony of masculinity. In this context, the media serves as a means of reproducing patriarchal culture, where women are often given subordinate roles in political narratives (Connell, 1995). This creates a gap between the symbolic and substantial representation of women in politics, which needs to be bridged through affirmative action policies and changes in political culture.

Furthermore, visual analysis strengthens the image of the candidates by showcasing their personal and professional characteristics. Visualizations in the news not only attract attention but also build an emotional connection with the audience. The use of close social distance in the images creates a sense of intimacy with the audience, emphasizing their representation as adaptive leaders who are close to the people. The careful use of shooting angles, such as the "eye-level angle, certainly gives an egalitarian impression, while the bright lighting accentuates the aura of leadership. This refers to Barthes' theory of visual myth, implying that visual elements in the media create ideological narratives that influence audience perception (Barthes, 1977).

However, in line with Louise and Korneliaeva's findings, visual bias in representation can "salientize" specific candidates, thus influencing public perceptions of gender equality in politics. Such bias can arise through an imbalance in the frequency of coverage, physical attributes highlighted, or visual choices that direct the audience's focus on specific aspects that may favor or disadvantage the candidate. For example, candidates with visual backgrounds that highlight traditional elements are often associated with local values but may obscure their professional competence in a modern context. This resonates with Rose's analysis of how media visuals often reproduce gender stereotypes (Rose, 2016).

In addition, visual representations that support female candidates often face challenges from society's implicit biases. Visualizations that show female candidates in professional settings, such as debate rooms or public forums, help emphasize their abilities as leaders. However, if those visualizations are not balanced with male coverage, audiences may perceive them as the "exception" rather than the norm. Erving Goffman, in his theory, also reinforces the idea that the way candidates are portrayed in the media will either reinforce or challenge traditional gender norms (Goffman, 1959).

At the same time, Fairclough, through his critical discourse analysis theory, provides a view that the media not only reflect reality, but also shape and reproduce power relations in society. This is certainly relevant in analyzing how the media frames the role of women in politics, especially in the East Java governor election. Habermas also emphasized the importance of an inclusive public space in supporting a fair and egalitarian political discourse (Habermas, 1984). This approach strengthens the argument that the media should act as a facilitator of constructive dialogue, not just a reinforcer of gender stereotypes.

The link between the importance of an inclusive public space and the role of the media as a facilitator of constructive dialogue can be seen in the agenda-setting theory

proposed by McCombs and Shaw. According to them, the media has the power to determine issues that are considered important by the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In this context, the representation of women in the media has direct implications for the level of women's political involvement. Ross also added that media discourse that focuses on personal attributes rather than professional abilities can reduce the credibility of female candidates (Ross, 2010).

In this case, women's political discourse includes issues such as women's representation, political participation, and the struggle for women's rights in the political context (Tahsini & Duci, 2022; Islam, 2023). This discourse is not only important in understanding the position of women in politics, but also as an effort to explore the social dynamics that influence women's access to power. In the context of the East Java Pilgub, analysis of transitivity, valuation, and visuals in the news shows that the media has a significant role in framing narratives about women's involvement in politics.

The media has the capacity to shape public perception through word choice, text structure, and visual representations presented. In the news, there is an effort to give appreciation to women's leadership capacity, which can be seen from the spotlight on their ability to make decisions, strategic leadership, and contributions to regional development. This indicates a recognition of the role of women as active actors in politics. However, this appreciation is often accompanied by hidden structural biases in the form of gender stereotypes, such as the depiction of personal attributes that tend to reinforce the traditional role of women as figures who emphasize tenderness or warmth.

In addition, visualizations in the news often portray women in an unequal position, whether through image composition, point of view, or selection of visual contexts that accentuate non-professional aspects. This bias reinforces the discourse that women must meet certain expectations to be considered worthy in politics. These challenges become even more complex when these visual representations are also influenced by the social norms that underlie media preferences in conveying messages to audiences.

Nevertheless, there are positive developments worth noting. This analysis shows that the media is beginning to recognize the role of women in politics by highlighting their abilities as competent and relevant actors. However, the persistence of gender bias, both explicit and implicit, is an obstacle to creating a fully inclusive discourse. To overcome this challenge, the media needs to take proactive steps in building a fairer narrative by minimizing stereotypes and focusing on women's professional achievements. By doing so, the media can contribute to a more equal and inclusive political future for women in Indonesia. A more balanced narrative will, at the same time, help foster public understanding of the importance of women's involvement in politics, while encouraging other women to participate more actively in public and political spaces.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the theoretical significance of multimodal discourse analysis in advancing political communication and gender studies by showing how linguistic

and visual elements jointly construct women's political leadership in media discourse. Through transitivity analysis, the findings reveal that the dominance of material processes positions the three female gubernatorial candidates as active political agents, challenging the long-standing tendency to portray women as passive or symbolic figures in politics. Appraisal analysis further contributes theoretically by illustrating how media evaluations simultaneously promote women's leadership capacities while reproducing subtle gendered constraints through heteroglossic narratives that emphasize cultural stigma and double burden. Visual analysis complements these findings by showing how images function as ideological resources that humanize and legitimize women leaders, yet may also create representational bias through selective salience.

Beyond the specific case of the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election, this research provides a broader picture of how media operate as a crucial arena where gender, power, and political legitimacy are negotiated in contemporary democracies. The findings suggest that increased visibility of women candidates does not automatically translate into substantive gender equality, as symbolic recognition often coexists with persistent structural biases. This dynamic reflects broader challenges faced by women in political participation across patriarchal contexts, particularly in emerging democracies such as Indonesia.

Based on these findings, this study recommends that media institutions adopt more gender-sensitive journalistic practices by minimizing stereotypical framing and prioritizing women's professional competencies, policy agendas, and leadership achievements. For scholars, future research is encouraged to extend multimodal analysis to comparative electoral contexts, digital platforms, or longitudinal studies better to capture shifts in gendered political discourse over time. Finally, policymakers and electoral stakeholders should consider these media dynamics when designing strategies to strengthen women's political representation, ensuring that symbolic visibility is accompanied by substantive legitimacy and equal opportunities in the political arena.

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