

Women's leadership in media representation of Srikandi governor candidates

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Abstract

Online media shapes the construction of women's political leadership not only through text narratives, but also through visual symbols that are an important part of political discourse. This research aims to reveal the representation of the Three Srikandi Candidates for East Java Governor 2024 in online media coverage. Using a qualitative approach with Van Leeuwen's multimodal-visual analysis method. Data were obtained through documentation and corpus data (N=30) from 21 online media, considering aspects of 5W 1H, cover both sides, time period, context, and background. The results showed that online media emphasized diversity and women's representation in politics, and displayed seriousness, professionalism, and political support for the three candidates. The findings contribute to the mainstreaming of women's political leadership through the use of superlative and visual symbols in political communication.

Introduction

For the first time in the East Java Governor Election and even in Indonesia, the three candidates are dominated by women and only place men as Vice Governor. This phenomenon is a new herstory in political contestation in Indonesia, as well as clear evidence of the increasing leadership and representation of women in politics (Syamsul, 2024). The three candidate pairs are the incumbent Khofifah Indar Parawansa-Emil Elestianto Dardak, which is carried by 14 political parties, the candidate pair Tri Rismaharini-Zahrul Azhar Asumta or often called Gus Hans supported by 4 political parties, and the candidate pair Luluk Nur Hamida-Lukmanul Khakim who was carried and supported by the National Awakening Party (Kominfo, 2024). These three candidate pairs are contesting the 2024 East Java Governor Election.

The emergence of women's dominance in the East Java Governor Election is a marker for mainstreaming the role of women in politics in Indonesia. Mainstreaming the role of women in politics is not only a normative agenda as contained in the 2017 Election Law which requires 30% representation of women in political contestation. Women's

representation in politics, such as the contestation of the gubernatorial election East Java 2024, does not happen automatically, as several studies explain that women's representation results from a continuous struggle to realize everyone's rights to achieve equality and justice (Hardjaloka, 2012; Mulyono, 2010; Syafputri, 2014). The meaning of Srikandi is not only a cultural symbol, but also a representation of the potential and contribution of women in political leadership in Indonesia. As referring to (Dewi, 2022), and (Sholikhah & Masruroh, 2019), there are several aspects in the meaning of Srikandi, namely, strength, courage, leadership, gender equality, and struggle and resilience. The concept of Srikandi as a leader in Indonesia reflects a combination of cultural representations and feminist values that highlight the potential of women in leadership (Nurcholis & Nur, 2023).

The use of the diction "Srikandi" in online media coverage is a marker of reality construction regarding the potential of women in leadership and politics. The use of diction to construct reality is the implementation of the power of language that is able to determine 'what to believe' or make 'knowledge' for the community known as "Language, Power, and Knowledge" (Foucault, 1980). Therefore, the three women in the East Java governor election contestation in the media are not a neutral reality, but a construction of the media through the instrument of language. The development of new media technology has changed people's political experience (Halim, 2019). The public has access to search for information and uses the media as a source for decision making in politics. Visualization is an important element in reporting, visuals are able to present certain symbols as a production tool the meaning of a desired identity delivered (Kertamukti, 2019).

Etymologically, the diction "Srikandi" has become a label that the origin of the diction "Srikandi" comes from a prominent female character in the Mahabharata, who portrays courage and heroism, especially in her pivotal role against Bhishma. Her character, which challenges traditional gender roles, showcases the strength and courage of women in a male-dominated epic. Srikandi's story not only inspires contemporary discussions on gender roles, but also serves as a symbol for modern women, highlighting the enduring relevance of female power in cultural narratives (McGrath, 2009; Vemsani, 2021). In Indonesia, the diction "Srikandi" became popular as a label representing the mythology of a woman who is tough, brave, and has archery skills. In the Indonesian context, the use of this term gained prominence after three Indonesian female archery athletes won silver medals at the Seoul Olympics in 1988, who were then dubbed as Srikandi (KONI, 2023; Miranti, 2018).

The media can play a dual role as a supporting and inhibiting tool in shaping the image of women leaders in the media public sphere. For example, a study by (Klenke, 2017) found that the media has a tremendous role in shaping the context of women's leadership. The media still emphasizes their physicality, attributes their success to male relationships, and amplifies the challenges they face (Walsh, 2015).

Various findings of previous studies show that mass media still portray women from the perspective of their personal lives, especially regarding leadership and politics. The rejection of women's leadership in East Java is rooted in cultural perceptions, religion, and strong gender stereotypes. Research from (Winda & Yusuf., 2023), for example, shows that the rejection of women's leadership is due to inherent traditional norms and religious interpretations that are considered to place women in domestic roles. Still from a religious perspective, research shows that some Nahdlatul Ulama clerics support female candidates, but some reject them on the grounds of stereotypes that women are considered emotional and less rational (Putra & Hendrarti, 2022).

Whereas the representation of women in the media will certainly affect public perceptions of ability and credibility as leaders (Dewi, 2022). The phenomenon of three

women as East Java candidates in 2024 is a new history and shows progress in women's representation and leadership as well as an interesting news object in the mass media (Attar, 2024). Therefore, this study will fill the research gap and offer novelty by revealing the representation of the Three Srikandi in the 2024 East Java governor election contestation in online media. The representation of women in political communication is strongly influenced by media coverage. Women in the media often face sexism and are used as objects of commodification (Serttas et al, 2023). This research aims to reveal the representation of the three candidates for Governor of East Java in 2024, examining whether there is bias in the news and how the media presents the candidates using visual multimodal analysis.

Method

The research uses a type of qualitative research with the (Kress, 2006) visual analysis research method. This research uses news texts on online media (official online news sites under the auspices of press institutions) regarding the Three Srikandi Candidates for East Java Governor in 2024. There are several elements to sort out the news in this study, namely those that contain 5W 1 H elements, cover both sides, time period August 27, 2024 or during the registration of candidate pairs until November 27, 2024 during the East Java governor election (KPU, 2024), context and background and involvement of data sources. Based on the research corpus that has been formed, 30 news reports were collected from 21 media. The media used are Suara Surabaya, Detik Jatim, Tempo.com, Kompas.com, Jatimtimes.com, Tirto.id, NU online, VOI.id, Beritasatu.com, CNN Indonesia, Liputan 6, Detik.com, Kumparan.com, Tribunnews.com, Metro news, Times Indonesia, Radar Situbondo, TVOne News.com, Beritajatim.com, Katadata.co.id, and Antaranews.com.

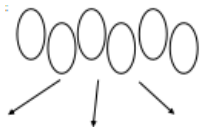

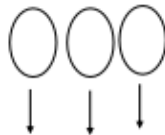

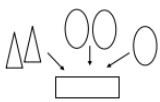



This research will look at the characters of the three srikandi in media portraits using a visual analysis framework developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, known as the "grammar of visual design," which provides a systematic approach to understanding how images convey meaning. Based on socio-semiotics, this framework offers tools to analyze visual texts in a similar way to linguistic analysis, which is broadly divided into two categories: representational and interactive. It is a discourse study that examines text alongside images, colors, symbols and other semiotic resources to represent meaning (Afriliani, 2017). Visual analysis looks at what is depicted in the image, focusing on the participants and the actions or events they participate in. It considers how these elements are organized to convey a specific narrative or concept (Hu, 2019).

While the visual grammar developed by Kress and van Leeuwen offers a powerful framework for image analysis, it is important to note its limitations. A focus on universal rules may overlook cultural and contextual nuances that affect visual interpretation. In addition, the dynamic nature of visual media in contemporary society may require adjustments to the framework to accommodate new forms of visual communication (Forceville, 1999). (Kress, 2006) identify three principles of composition in multimodal texts: information value, salience, and frame (Kress, 2006). The multimodal approach is used to explore the three main metafunctions of ideational, interpersonal, and textual. This research will focus on the visual and textual analysis framework of the news (Putri & Lobodally, 2025).

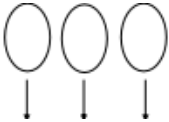
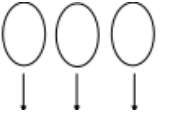

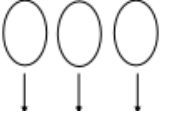


Results and Discussion

The visualization in the news reinforces the image of these three gubernatorial candidates that the news writer wants to show. The images inserted in the news text 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 the way the public perceives their abilities and policies. Table 1 presents the results of the image analysis that interprets 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.

News	Images	Interaction	Contact	Attitude
Three Srikandi Compete in East Java Regional Election, Political Expert Says Women's Leadership is Increasingly Recognized ("Tiga Srikandi Bertarung Di Pilkada Jatim, Pakar Politik Sebut Kepemimpinan Perempuan Makin Diakui," 2024)	 	personal	demand	subjective
East Java One Week: 3 Srikandi in East Java Regional Elections - Partnering with Millennial Male Deputies ("Jatim Sepekan: 3 Srikandi Di Pilkada Jatim-Gandeng Wakil Pria Milenial," 2024)	 	personal	offer	subjective
Three Srikandi Run for East Java Governor Election, Observer: Good for Indonesia ("Tiga Srikandi Maju Pilgub Jawa Timur, Pengamat: Baik Untuk Indonesia," 2024)	 	general	offer	subjective
Duel of Three "Srikandi" in the 2024 East Java Regional Election ("Duel Tiga 'Srikandi' Di Pilkada Jatim 2024," 2024)	 	personal	demand	subjective

News		Images	Interaction	Contact	Attitude
Profile of 3 Srikandi Candidates for Governor of East Java 2024 ("Profil 3 Srikandi Calon Gubernur Jawa Timur 2024," 2024)			social	offer	subjective
East Java Regional Election 2024, 3 Srikandi Compete for Grahadi ("Pilkada Jatim 2024, 3 Srikandi Berebut Grahadi," 2024)			social	offer	subjective
Three Srikandi Fight in East Java for Nahdliyin Votes ("Tiga Srikandi Bertarung Di Jawa Timur Berebut Suara Nahdliyin," 2024)			social	demand	subjective
Observers Map Territorial Political Base of 3 Srikandi in 2024 East Java Governor Election ("Pengamat Petakan Basis Teritorial Politik 3 Srikandi Di Pilgub Jatim 2024," 2024)			social	demand	subjective
Three Srikandi in the 2024 East Java Regional Election Compete for Nahdliyin Votes ("Tiga Srikandi Di Pilkada Jatim 2024 Berebut Suara Nahdliyin," 2024)			general	offer	subjective
Tight Competition Between 3 Srikandi in the 2024 East Java Regional Election, Here are Their Complete Profiles ("Persaingan Ketat 3 Srikandi Di Pilkada Jatim 2024, Ini Profil Lengkapnya," 2024)			general	offer	subjective

News		Images	Interaction	Contact	Attitude
Three Srikandi's Big Homework in East Java Regional Election: Expanding Access to Decent Work to Reducing Poverty ("Kemiskinan, PR Besar Tiga Srikandi Di Pilkada Jatim: Perluas Akses Pekerjaan Layak Hingga Turunkan," 2024)			personal	demand	subjective
Battle of 3 Srikandi in East Java: Luluk and Risma's Efforts to Shake Khofifah ("Pertempuran 3 Srikandi Di Jatim: Upaya Luluk & Risma Goyang Khofifah," 2024)			personal	demand	subjective
The Battle of 3 Srikandi in the East Java Regional Election, Risma and Luluk's Determination to Seize Khofifah's Position ("Pertarungan 3 Srikandi Di Pilkada Jatim, Tekad Risma & Luluk Rebut Posisi Khofifah," 2024)			personal	demand	subjective
Fierce Battle of 3 Srikandi to Fight for the Throne of Grahadi ("Pertarungan Sengit 3 Srikandi Berebut Singgasana Grahadi," 2024)			personal	demand	subjective
East Java Governor Election Final Debate: Fierce Clash of 3 Srikandi Discusses Infrastruktur ("Debat Pamungkas Pilgub Jatim: Adu Sengit 3 Srikandi Bahas Infrastruktur," 2024)			general	demand	subjective

News		Images	Interaction	Contact	Attitude
East Java governor election: 3 Srikandi strong fight (“Pilgub Jatim: Adu Kuat 3 Srikandi,” 2024)			general	offer	subjective
3 Srikandi Compete in the 2024 East Java Regional Election, What are Khofifah, Risma, and Luluk Nur Hamidah’s Moves? (“3 Srikandi Bertarung Di Pilkada Jatim 2024, Apa Jurus Khofifah, Risma, Dan Luluk Nur Hamidah?,” 2024)			personal	offer	subjective
East Java Regional Election, What Do the Three Srikandi Candidates for Governor Have to Offer? (“Pilkada Jawa Timur, Apa Yang Ditawarkan Tiga Srikandi Calon Gubernur,” 2024)			personal	offer	subjective
NU and 3 Srikandi in East Java Governor Election (“NU Dan 3 Srikandi Di Pilgub Jatim,” 2024)			general	offer	subjective
Location of Polling Station 3 Srikandi, Candidate for Governor of East Java, Luluk Nur Hamidah, Khofifah, and Tri Rismaharini (“Lokasi TPS 3 Srikandi Calon Gubernur Jawa Timur, Luluk Nur Hamidah, Khofifah, Dan Tri Rismaharini,” 2024)			personal	demand	subjective

News		Images	Interaction	Contact	Attitude
Implications of 3 Srikandi in East Java Governor Election for Future Female Presidential Candidates (“Implikasi 3 Srikandi Pilgub Jatim Pada Capres Perempuan Di Masa Depan,” 2024)			personal	offer	subjective
Officially Registered, Three Srikandi Ready to Fight in the 2024 East Java Governor Election (“Resmi Mendaftar, Tiga Srikandi Siap Tempur Pada Pilgub Jatim 2024,” 2024)			social	offer	subjective
The Battle of 3 Srikandi in the 2024 East Java Governor Election (“Pertarungan 3 Srikandi Di Pilgub Jatim 2024,” 2024)			personal	offer	subjective
Followed by 3 Prospective Female Governor Candidates, Here are the Profiles of the Srikandi in the 2024 East Java Governor Election (“Diikuti 3 Bakal Calon Gubernur Perempuan, Ini Profil Para Srikandi Di Pilgub Jawa Timur 2024,” 2024)			social	demand	subjective
Three Srikandi Ready to Fight in East Java Governor Election (“Tiga Srikandi Siap Bertarung Di Pilgub Jatim,” 2024)			social	offer	subjective

News		Images	Interaction	Contact	Attitude
A Glimpse of the Role of the Three Srikandi Candidates for Governor of East Java 2024 ("Sekilas Peran Tiga Srikandi Calon Gubernur Jawa Timur 2024," 2024)			general	demand	subjective
Three Srikandi Candidates for Governor Deliver Ideas at LDII Gresik for a Better East Java ("Tiga Srikandi Calon Gubernur Sampaikan Gagasan Di LDII Gresik Untuk Jawa Timur Lebih Baik," 2024)			personal	offer	subjective
("3 Srikandi Bertarung Di Pilgub Jatim, Bukti Kepercayaan Publik Pada Perempuan," 2024)			personal	offer	subjective
3 Srikandi Compete in East Java Governor Election, Proof of Women ("Pertarungan Tiga Srikandi Di Pilgub Jawa Timur: Adakah Kans Menggoyang Khofifah?," 2024)			personal	offer	subjective
Three Srikandi will compete on ideas to develop East Java ("Tiga Srikandi Akan Beradu Gagasan Untuk Membangun Jawa Timur," 2024)			personal	offer	subjective

Table 1 Summary Visual Analysis (Source: Processed by Researcher)

The visual analysis portrayed Khofifah Indar Parawansa as a leader with strong interpersonal skills, often shown interacting with the community and attending cultural events. The media emphasized her closeness to the people, professionalism, and diplomatic

abilities. Tri Rismaharini was depicted as a dynamic, action-oriented leader, frequently shown overseeing projects and responding to crises. The media highlighted her innovative approach and ability to turn challenges into opportunities. Luluk Nur Hamidah was represented as an empathetic leader focused on grassroots communities, sustainability, and gender equality, with visuals emphasizing her commitment to empowering local communities and addressing environmental issues. The images from the 2024 East Java Governor Election showcased the diversity and strong representation of women candidates, highlighting their unity despite different poses and emphasizing their political identities through clothing and interactions.

The 2024 East Java regional election is a historic moment in the governor election competition because all the governor candidates are women. This reflects voters' openness to female candidates and shows that track records and leader character are the main considerations for voters (Erianto, 2024)(Wahyu, 2024). In addition to openness to female candidates, there has been an increase in political participation among women. (Budiardjo, 1981) states that political participation is the involvement of individuals or groups in political activities, such as electing state leaders and influencing government policies, either directly or indirectly. Women's political participation is influenced by their level of education and access to media (Siswanto, 2020; Yanti et al, 2023). Meanwhile, women's political preferences are significantly influenced by candidates' backgrounds and their ability to address issues such as gender equality and sexual violence (Rusta et al, 2024).

The media not only acts as an information tool but also as a key actor in shaping political discourse and power dynamics, especially in relation to women's representation in politics (Louise, 2018). There was in line with the definition of political communication according to several experts, namely political communication aims to influence public opinion and political decisions facilitated through media channels (Harahap et al, 2024; Kamal, 2024). Political communication includes the exchange of information between political actors, institutions, and society by utilizing various media both electronic and print (Kamal, 2024; Lee, 2022).

Media is key in communication through the flow of information. In a modern democratic system, the media has two functions, namely as a messenger by journalists to political actors and as a messenger in political communication (McNair, 2011) McNair continued her explanation that the function of mass media in political communication is to inform the public about activities that occur, a forum for accommodating political problems, as a medium for publishing public issues, and as advocacy for political institution programs (McNair, 2011). In the process, the media is very important because it will determine public perceptions and opinions. Women who have positions in government and organizations will certainly become actors in the political communication process. According to Lips in (Umar, 1999) the position of women is more worrying than men so that inequality in gender relations patterns still often occurs. The gender role inequality certainly appears not without reason. There was due to various limitations and perceptions according to structural functionalist theory, namely that men are superior and it is found that women are considered less skilled (Zamroni, 2013).

The media highlighted Khofifah with recognition of her proven achievements during her tenure as Governor of East Java, such as her success in winning various awards for innovation and public service, which cemented her image as an experienced and successful leader. Meanwhile, Tri Rismaharini is portrayed as a strong figure with a successful track record as Mayor of Surabaya, especially in the controversial closure of the Dolly prostitution area. The media also portrayed Risma as a symbol of urban innovation and a bold leader.

On the other hand, Luluk Nur Hamidah is often portrayed as a champion of women's rights and the environment. Although the media highlights her dedication to sustainability issues, Luluk still receives less attention than Khofifah and Risma. It is not surprising that these three candidates are dubbed Srikandi in the media, which is in line with the conception in East Javanese culture derived from female characters in the Mahabharata and have strong, brave, and intelligent characters, and are able to fight male domination with extraordinary courage and prowess. There are several core findings in this research:

Khofifah Indar Parawansa Known as Experienced Leader

Online media highlighted Khofifah Indar Parawansa as a gubernatorial candidate who has extensive experience in government and public service. The emphasis is on her policy successes and her experience while serving in various government positions. Evident in the 12 articles analyzed, Khofifah's visual images depict her in religious and social events, accentuating the image of harmonious and strategic leadership. For example, the article from Kompas entitled "Duel of Three Srikandi in East Java Election", focuses on Khofifah's successful track record of winning awards and innovative public policies.

Tri Rismaharini Featured as an Innovative and Responsive Leader

Tri Rismaharini is portrayed as a leader who is responsive to urban and infrastructure issues, with an emphasis on innovation and social change-oriented policies. In Detik Jatim and Suara Surabaya, Risma is more often depicted in visual images that emphasize her assertive and active side in handling city projects and social policies.

Luluk Nur Hamidah Known as a Champion of Sustainability and Women's Empowerment

Luluk Nur Hamidah is mostly associated with the fight for women's empowerment, as well as policies that focus on the environment and sustainability. However, she has received less media attention than Khofifah and Risma. Visual images of Luluk, such as those featured in Suara Surabaya, often show her in the context of discussions or events highlighting environmental issues and women's rights. However, these visualizations do not create a strong emotional connection with the audience, which results in limited representation in the media.

The Use of the Term "Srikandi" in the Media Has Positive Connotations

The use of the term Srikandi in media coverage shows positive connotations that elevate the role of women in politics as tough and brave leaders. As in the Kompas article, the phrase "Duel Tiga Srikandi" was used to describe the healthy competition between the three female gubernatorial candidates which shows that women's leadership is now recognized and accepted in politics, although there are still challenges related to public perception.

Visual Depictions that Emphasize the Diversity of Women Leaders' Characters

Visualizations in online media highlighted the different characters possessed by each candidate, showing Khofifah as a harmonious and strategic leader, Risma as a responsive innovator, and Luluk as an empathetic and sustainability-focused leader. As evidenced by the coverage in Suara Surabaya (October 15, 2024), Khofifah is depicted against a traditional backdrop that shows her closeness to the people of East Java, while Risma is shown against the backdrop of urban development projects, and Luluk is shown in social events that focus on empowering women and the environment.

Conclusion

The media plays an important role in shaping narratives about women's leadership in politics. The representations of the three gubernatorial candidates, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, Tri Rismaharini, and Luluk Nur Hamidah, emphasize seriousness, professionalism, and diversity in politics. The visuals displayed in the media not only attract attention but also create an emotional closeness with the audience, presenting them as competent and serious leaders. Nonetheless, the media also plays a role in normalizing the presence of women in politics, by promoting gender equality and showing that women can play an active role in political leadership. These findings are important in understanding how the media can support or even limit gender representation in Indonesian politics.

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