

## **Countering Stereotypes: How Female Politicians in Indonesia Utilize Instagram**

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### **Abstract**

This research investigates the role, challenges, and obstacles faced by women in electoral politics in Indonesia, despite the legal stipulation of a 30 percent quota for women's representation in legislative institutions. Predominantly male political culture, gender stereotypes, and lack of support from political parties are significant barriers. Social media, particularly Instagram, has emerged as a crucial tool for challenging these barriers and promoting inclusivity in politics. This study employs a qualitative method, combining social media content analysis and a literature review to focus on women's political participation on Instagram during campaigns. Data collection involved documenting women's political activities on social media and reviewing relevant literature. An in-depth analysis was then conducted to identify patterns and trends, which are presented comprehensively. The findings reveal persistent gender bias among voters but also highlight the growing importance of social media strategies in building a positive image for female politicians and combating stereotypes. The study concludes that to effectively overcome these challenges, collective efforts in political education, public awareness, party support, and network-building among female politicians are essential.

### **Keywords**

Women's electoral participation, Gender stereotypes, Social media strategies, Instagram campaigns, Political barriers

## **Introduction**

Research on the role of women in politics is of interest in global discussions because it reflects the challenges women face in achieving equal representation in the political arena, as well as the strategies they use to overcome these obstacles. Through studies like this, we can provide an understanding of the complex dynamics between gender, politics, and society in different contexts in various specific countries. Interesting examples can be found in other countries where women fight for an equal place in politics. For instance, in the United States, there is intense discussion regarding gender inequality in politics, especially at the legislative and executive representation levels (Schmitt & Brant, 2019). Despite significant progress in recent decades, such as the increasing number of women elected to Congress or even as vice presidents, gender inequality remains a relevant issue (Atkinson & Windett, 2019; Fulton & Dhima, 2021).

Women's political participation is vital to building an inclusive and democratic society. This can create a more inclusive political environment and significantly stimulate women's political participation, which will benefit the entire society. For example, women's political participation in elections significantly impacts the democratization process. Perceived processes related to (1) gender equality, (2) Increasing women's representation, (3) A More Inclusive Policy Agenda, (4) Democratic Legitimacy, (5) Cultural Change, and (6) improving quality of life. To encourage women's political participation in elections, it is essential to take various steps, such as providing inclusive political education, removing legal and cultural barriers that hinder women's participation, strengthening support for women running for office, and promoting awareness of the critical role of women in politics.

The challenges women politicians face can vary depending on a particular country or region's political, cultural, and social context. In the Indonesian context, female politicians often face several challenges, such as gender stereotypes, discrimination, dual roles, public perception, and violence and harassment. The gender stereotypes faced by women in Indonesia mean they have a limited role in politics. The reason is because gender stereotypes narrow society's view of women's abilities and roles, which makes women less trusted as leaders than men. This stereotype is generally formed by cultural factors limiting women's political movements.

Talking about discrimination means talking about women's access to politics, including how women are treated in political institutions due to their gender construction. Meanwhile, women also face dual roles in the domestic and public spheres, which makes them dilemmas between fulfilling the demands of a political career and fulfilling family responsibilities. This dual role condition is generally driven by society's perception that demands women to be perfect and able to fulfill all society's expectations, even though they are unrealistic. Another challenge that makes it difficult for women to survive in the

wilderness of Indonesian politics is the potential for violence and harassment that can occur in their places of work, both verbal and physical.

Women's political participation is greatly influenced by the social, cultural, and religious context in society. This condition occurs because norms and values, education and awareness, access to resources, political mobilization, and filtering of religious interpretations influence it. Norms and values in Indonesia greatly influence society's views on gender roles and responsibilities. For example, in some religious traditions, women are encouraged to play traditional roles in the household and family, which results in their political participation being hampered. Education and awareness are also influenced by religion as a motor of education in society. Religion can create political awareness to empower women and create gender equality, ultimately encouraging women's political participation. Political participation can also open women's access to political resources, such as education, finance, or political networks. In Indonesia, religious institutions can provide support or obstacles to women's political participation by controlling these resources.

Under certain conditions, political mobilization in the form of women's political movements becomes essential in mobilizing or demobilizing women's support and political power for specific issues or candidates. Religion can also be a filter in terms of political interpretation; religion in Indonesia can be interpreted differently depending on political needs. In some cases, conservative or patriarchal interpretations of religion can hinder women's political participation, while more inclusive interpretations can encourage women's political participation. However, the influence of religion on women's political participation is not static and can change with social, cultural, and religious changes.

The relationship between the role of religion, patriarchal structures, and women's political participation in Indonesia is very complex and interrelated. The patriarchal structure, which relies on men's domination and control over women in society, is influenced by patriarchal religious teachings and interpretations. Religion, as a support for patriarchal structures in many religious traditions, plays a dominant role in political and societal leadership. This, then, strengthens the existing patriarchal structure, and places women in a lower position resulting in a loss of access to political power. Some examples of cases that often occur are: (1) religious interpretations that support women's limitations can hinder women's political participation because such religious interpretations tend to define women in so-called traditional roles that are considered an ideal standard by which to measure women; (2) control over access and resources which can hinder women's political participation because they have limited access to resources; (3) religious movements that influence political participation because fighting for gender equality and women's empowerment can help fight existing patriarchal structures and encourage women's political participation; and

(4) the formation of gender identities and roles using a religious approach can influence the way women view themselves and encourage women's participation in politics.

Much research and analysis has been conducted to understand the factors influencing women's electability, public responses to women's leadership, and effective strategies for increasing women's political representation. In Scandinavian countries, such as Sweden or Norway, women's political representation tends to be higher than in other countries (Gwiazda, 2021; Raaum, 2005; Stockemer, 2007). In developing countries such as India or Kenya (Kidd, 2009), women face unique challenges in achieving equal political representation due to patriarchy, unequal access, and non-inclusive political systems (Tinker, 2004). Meanwhile, research on Middle Eastern women in politics has sought to explain the dynamics between religion, culture, and politics in influencing women's opportunities to get involved in the political process (Coffé & Dilli, 2015; el-Husseini, 2016).

In Indonesia, the majority of research on women in politics talks about participation (Jandevi, 2019; Sobari et al., 2018), women's representation (Ekawati, 2018; Sukadi, 2015), and women's access to politics (Cooperman, 2021). The Indonesian government has ratified the Convention on Eliminating Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979) in Copenhagen. It is stated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia number 7 of 1984, which states that the state is responsible for ensuring that political parties do not discriminate—towards women, ensuring equality between men and women in participation, and providing equal opportunities for women and men to occupy public office by participating in the election process (Oktaviani, 2024).

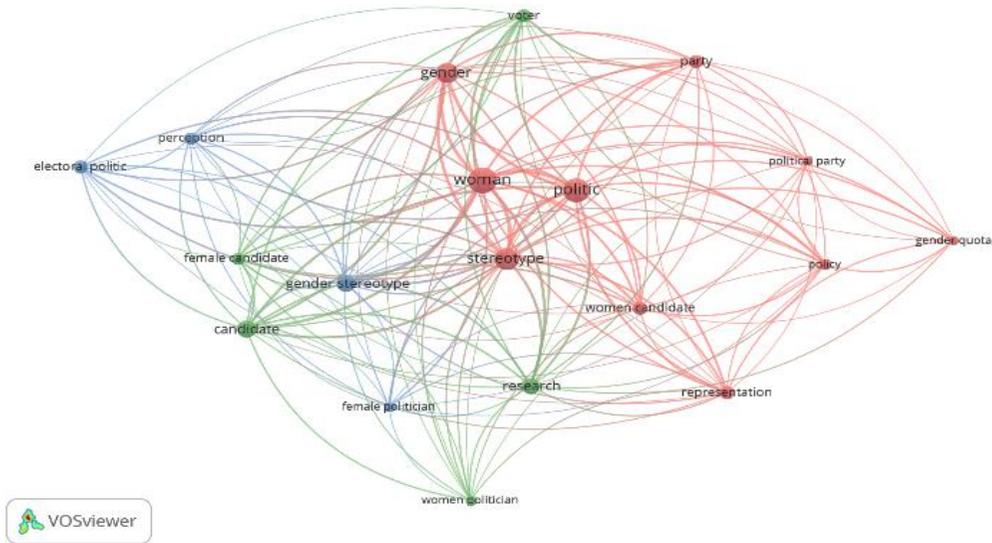
Women's representation in the Indonesian parliament is still small due to the few votes obtained by female legislative candidates in parliamentary election contests. Many academics see this condition as part of gender discrimination and psychological factors that narrow women's political space (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018; O'Brien, 2015). Gender equality and women's political abilities are two things that are based on the preferences of society, which conventionally thinks that women have no right to enter the world of politics (Dingler et al., 2019). Coupled with the stigma of female party cadres who find the world of politics scary, the high degree of motivation required and costs of politics become obstacles for political parties to carry out cadre formation through women's political empowerment (Hajad, 2015; Hasan et al., 2023; Mayrudin et al., 2022).

Research on women in politics in Indonesia is essential for several reasons. First, the low representation of women in national legislative institutions after the New Order era is a serious concern. Even though there have been improvements, the percentage of women's representation in parliament is still relatively low and needs to be increased. For example, based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, women's representation in the Indonesian parliament only reached 24 percent between 2019 and 2024, still below the quota target for

women's political representation of 30 percent. Second, the low representation of women in legislative institutions means an absence of women's voices in public policy-making. Political decisions taken by legislative members tend not to represent the needs and desires of women due to their lack of representation in parliament.

However, research on women in politics in Indonesia has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the difficulty of obtaining complete and comprehensive data on women's political participation can limit analysis. Second, gender bias and stereotypes can influence research design and interpretation of results. Second, abstract concepts such as the impact of gender stereotypes are difficult to measure directly (Calsy & D'Agostino, 2021; Endo & Ono, 2023). Finally, research may be limited to certain aspects, such as representation in legislative bodies, resulting in a limited understanding of women's political participation through social media. By considering these limitations, research on women in politics can continue to develop and make a more significant contribution to our understanding of the role of gender in the political process.

Third, more than the 30 percent quota rule for women's representation in political party management and legislative nominations is needed to encourage political parties and women candidates to formulate effective political strategies for women to win in elections. Many female legislative candidates are seen as mere tools to fulfill quotas without adequate support from political parties and voters. Apart from that, gender stereotypes and negative views of voters towards female legislative candidates also become obstacles in the political process. Women's qualifications and abilities in politics are often underestimated, so women must work harder to prove themselves. One way to prove yourself is by showing a positive image through social media. Instagram is one of them. Figure 1 below shows previous research that discusses women's involvement in politics.



**Figure 1** The Results of Previous Studies on The Involvement of Women in Politics  
**source:** Authors via VOSviewer (2023)

Figure 1 above comes from various international journal articles indexed by Scopus, which were processed using VOSviewer software (Bukar et al., 2023). Figure 1 shows that most writing about women and politics focuses on issues of stereotypes, representation, and female candidates, which are symbolized by the big red dot. There still needs to be more (not even visible in the picture) writing that focuses on political campaigns carried out by women via social media, especially Instagram. This focus is significant in understanding how women are involved in politics through Instagram's social media platform and how this impacts women's empowerment and democratic life.

Therefore, research on women in politics and political campaigns on Instagram is essential to understand how women engage in politics through the social media platform Instagram and how it impacts women's empowerment and democratic life. Although there has been a lot of research on the representation of women in politics, the influence of social media on politics, and women's political campaign strategies has been neglected. There is still room for research on how women manage their image on social media during political campaigns and the impact of different campaign strategies on voters' perceptions of politically active women through interactions between female politicians and their followers on social media platforms. This line of research is particularly relevant within a politically crucial year of 2024 for Indonesia.

## **Literature Review**

The role of women in politics has been extensively studied, with research highlighting various aspects of their experiences and participation (Fox & Lawless, 2011; Gwiazda, 2021; Rai, 2017; Rhoads, 2012; Rosen, 2017; Storie & Marschlich, 2022). This literature review synthesizes existing research on gender stereotypes in politics, the strategic use of social media by female politicians, and the specific context of Indonesia, leading to the research question: "How do female politicians in Indonesia utilize Instagram to counter gender stereotypes and build a positive political image?"

Gender stereotypes often portray women as less capable leaders, impacting their success in electoral politics. These stereotypes are persistent and deeply embedded in many societies, including Indonesia, where traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms dominate (Atkinson & Windett, 2019; Baxter, 2017). Women in politics frequently face double standards and are judged more harshly than their male counterparts. Such biases contribute to the underrepresentation of women in political institutions and hinder their political careers. Additionally, research shows that female politicians are often limited by structural barriers within political parties and financial constraints, making it harder for them to compete on an equal footing with men (Blackburn, 2004).

Social media has transformed political engagement, offering new avenues for communication and campaigning. Platforms like Instagram provide direct access to voters, allowing politicians to bypass traditional media gatekeepers (Farkas & Bene, 2021; Habibie et al., 2021; Maulana & Djuyandi, 2023). Instagram's visual-centric format is particularly effective for personal branding and storytelling, enabling politicians to present themselves authentically and connect emotionally with their audience (Enli & Rosenberg, 2018). This is crucial for female politicians who must build a positive image and counteract negative stereotypes. Through the strategic use of Instagram, female politicians can highlight their achievements, share personal stories, and engage with constituents, thereby humanizing themselves and challenging traditional gender norms (Khamis et al., 2017).

Female politicians in Indonesia face significant challenges, including limited party support, financial constraints, and cultural biases. Religious and patriarchal structures further exacerbate these difficulties, often relegating women to the private sphere and questioning their suitability for public office (Tatar et al., 2024). These barriers make it difficult for women to gain visibility and credibility in the political arena. Research indicates that female politicians in Indonesia must navigate a complex landscape of social expectations and institutional obstacles, which often hinder their ability to participate and succeed in politics fully (Aspinall et al., 2021; Jandevi, 2019).

Recent studies indicate that female politicians increasingly use Instagram to challenge stereotypes and promote their political agendas. Instagram's visual-centric format

is particularly effective for personal branding and storytelling, enabling politicians to present themselves authentically and connect emotionally with their audience (Enli & Rosenberg, 2018). Instagram allows for the dissemination of information, identity building, and mobilization (Weiss, 2012). Female politicians use Instagram to share their professional achievements, personal stories, and day-to-day activities, thereby humanizing themselves and breaking traditional gender barriers. They also engage with their followers, creating community and solidarity. The platform's interactive features, such as stories and live sessions, provide opportunities for direct engagement with voters, fostering a closer connection between politicians and their audience (Holmes & McNeal, 2016).

Key findings from the literature highlight several ways Instagram is a powerful tool for female politicians. First, Instagram provides a platform for direct communication with voters, circumventing traditional media biases. This direct line to constituents allows female politicians to present unfiltered messages and engage in real-time interactions, which can be particularly effective in building trust and credibility (Marozzo & Bessi, 2018). Second, the visual nature of Instagram aids in the effective personal branding of female politicians, showcasing their authenticity and relatability. By sharing a mix of professional accomplishments and personal insights, female politicians can craft a more holistic and appealing public image (Septiani, 2019). Third, by strategically sharing personal and professional content, female politicians can challenge and change public perceptions, countering stereotypes that portray women as less capable leaders (Eliza & Sudarman, 2021; Harirah. MS et al., 2023). Finally, Instagram helps engage a younger, digitally-savvy electorate, increasing political participation and support for female candidates. This demographic is crucial for the success of female politicians, as younger voters are often more open to progressive ideas and gender equality (Siapera & Kirk, 2022).

Based on the insights from the literature, this study aims to address the research question: "How do female politicians in Indonesia utilize Instagram to counter gender stereotypes and build a positive political image?" This research thus focuses on the strategic use of Instagram by female politicians in Indonesia to navigate and mitigate the effects of gender stereotypes, and from this survey suggest whether this strategic use has succeeded in changing perceptions of female politicians or in getting more females elected.

Recent research on women in politics is starting to shed light on the political strategies used by women to overcome these obstacles. This includes campaign strategies, forming political networks, policy advocacy, and participation in social and political movements, and this has included improving image, representation, and voice through social media such as Instagram, Twitter (now X), TikTok, and other social media (Azmi et al., 2023). The presence of women in online politics potentially impacts the political process as a whole, such as influencing the policy-making process, the actual representation of women's interests

in the political process, and changes in local and national political dynamics due to more vocal women's representation. Thus, online platforms provide an essential basis for women to create a more inclusive and representative political system in Indonesia (Harmer, 2021; Storie & Marschlich, 2022).

Research on women's use of social media often consists of certain themes, one being the use of social media by women politicians to convey political messages and interact with voters (Marozzo & Bessi, 2018; Septiani, 2019). This includes analysis of the type of content posted, posting frequency, and interactions with followers. Additionally, scholarship on the formation of political image and identity, has examined how female politicians have used social media to build their political image and identity through discussions about the ways they convey political messages, display political activities, and describe themselves in a political context on social media so that it has an impact on women's representation because it succeeds in influencing public perception, whether by increasing political participation or reinforcing existing gender stereotypes. Apart from that, there is also research on campaign strategies on social media undertaken by female politicians to stimulate political participation and voter mobilization (Subotić, 2022).

Although there have been several articles about women's representation in politics, the influence of social media on politics, and women's political campaign strategies, there is still room to discuss how women manage their image on social media during political campaigns and the impact of the various campaign strategies of female political candidates on voter perceptions. Weiss (2012) argued that social media is the central feature of new media and plays an important role in organizing political power, which as well as creating an online political forum can push society offline and into the real-world public space. There are three new media categories: information media, identity building, and mobilization.

The first category is the most obvious. When the flow of mainstream media is restricted, new media breaks the information blockade, disseminating information that was previously inaccessible to the general public more transparently. The second category is formed by constructing a collective identity through the individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection to the community (Subekti & Mutiarin, 2023). It can shape the 'we' through continuous re-imagining of political women through interactions between female politicians and their followers on social media platforms. The third category is mobilization. Mobilization can occur internally and cross-sectorally and is issue-oriented. New media can provide another arena where political contestation unfolds, and long-standing themes are debated, perpetuated, amplified, and perpetuated. Another arena is cyberspace in the form of social and power relations that are equally active both online and offline, which can ultimately strengthen or exacerbate divisions resulting from heated debates in cyberspace (Darwin & Haryanto, 2021; Yarchi & Samuel-Azran, 2018).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Women's Participation in Politics**

Women's representation in politics tends to increase the advocacy for formal education and a culture that reduces space for patriarchal views, which sees the importance of gender equality as an agenda in a political process designed for social improvement (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). Political communication strategies in women's political participation can change by carrying out the same division of functions that is used to overcome structural, institutional, and cultural obstacles in limiting women's political roles, which impact women's representation in political party management (Hillman, 2018). Increasing women's political participation can be done through empowering women through various policies and programs based on gender equality (Perdana & Hillman, 2020). Apart from that, supported by the vision and mission of a political party that upholds gender equality, it will be easier to respond to gender-based policies (Prihatini, 2019).

Providing opportunities for women to get involved in politics, influencing strategic improvements, and building relationships by realizing women-friendly policies can only normally result from gender equality supporting governments (Mahsun et al., 2021). The need for more political experience and the motivation of women to achieve power could be improved by recruiting female candidates. On the other hand, in terms of demands, where only a few women occupy strategic positions in party management, policymaking in political parties still needs to support the election of women (Wardani & Subekti, 2021). The level of women's political participation can be seen from the number of women who hold public office and political positions. More and more women are taking part in world politics. There is hope for more women-related policy making (O'Brien, 2015).

Women's political participation is women's involvement in influencing changes in the quality of decision-making processes of public organizations. Increasing support for affirmative action policies through socio-cognitive mechanisms can cause distressing changes in consciousness that do not reflect minority groups and cultural differences, feelings, and attitudes (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). Socio-cognitive mechanisms are psychological and social processes that influence how individuals learn, understand, and act based on observations of the environment and other people (Abdullah, 2019). Cognitive abilities support motivation, affection, and action and help create new social systems. Successful female politicians have become important role models in politics, encouraging other women to pursue political careers. Affirmative policies and well-targeted training programs increase self-efficacy, namely self-confidence to succeed, through performance achievements, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and stress management. Women's political challenges originate from gender political culture in carrying out male dominance in political seats, the hegemony of masculine discourse, and the burden of gender in women's

leadership (Oktaviani, 2024). On the other hand, women's political participation is an important thing that is still hampered by androcentric politics, patriarchal culture, and gender, as well as class gaps in the fields (Riantoputra & Gatari, 2017).

Strengthening gender bias in local political culture can prevent the spread of injustice and inequality in women's identity politics towards implementing democracy (Hinojosa & Kittilson, 2020). Women's representation in political parties is significant because the number of women on the political stage is still minuscule, so the position and role of women in the legislature will greatly influence policies that are more responsive to women's interests (Wieringa, 2015). The majority vote system still determines the composition of the number of seats in the legislative body. This impacts the low rate of women winning in elections, thus causing a gross underrepresentation of women in the legislature (Gonzalez-Eiras & Sanz, 2021; Lawless, 2015; Soh, 2021).

## **Research Method**

This research uses thematic analysis within a systematic literature review framework and social media content analysis to examine how female politicians in Indonesia use Instagram to challenge gender stereotypes and build a positive political image. The methodological approach integrates qualitative and quantitative analysis to understand the subject matter comprehensively. This research used a literature review to synthesize select existing scholarship regarding women's political participation, gender stereotypes in politics, and female politicians' strategic use of social media. These sources comprise peer-reviewed journal articles, previous research studies, and reports from related institutions. This comprehensive literature review aims to provide this study with a theoretical framework and contextual background.

After completing the literature review, the researchers proceeded with a detailed social media content analysis specifically designed to examine women's political participation on the Instagram platform, focusing on their activities related to campaigning (Snelson, 2016). This social media content analysis method is aimed at systematically analyzing both the content and interactions that occur on social media platforms. The primary objective is to understand how female politicians effectively utilize social media to promote themselves, influence public opinion, and overcome deeply ingrained gender stereotypes. By examining various aspects, such as the types of content posted, the nature of interactions with followers, and the overall engagement levels, the analysis seeks to reveal the strategic ways these politicians leverage Instagram to enhance their visibility and credibility in the political arena.

Research data was collected by systematically exploring and documenting the political activities of female politicians on Instagram. This includes collecting posts, comments, images, videos, and other content related to their political campaigns. The Instagram accounts of six female politicians who were actively campaigning in the 2024

legislative elections were selected for this research: Rieke Diah Pitaloka ( Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), Desy Ratnasari (National Mandate Party), Tsamara Amany Alatas ( Indonesian Solidarity Party), Arzeti Bilbina ( National Awakening Party), Illiza Sa'aduddin Jamal (United Development Party), and Wanda Hamidah ( Golkar Party). The selection criteria for these six female politicians took into account their active social media activities over the last few years.

Next, a coding and sample selection scheme involved sifting through large amounts of data, systematic cataloguing, and labelling information from relevant Instagram accounts. In the data collection process, the coding scheme used for social media content analysis includes categories such as follower profiles, reach and impressions, engagement, and brand/ account mention. Table 1 describes the categorization of observation findings related to these indicators.

**Table 1** Social Media Analysis

Social Media Analytics	Form	Objective
Follower profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Number of account followers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follower profile (gender, age range, geographic location, and active time of the audience).</li> </ul>	Find out how suitable the content is to the follower's profile
Reach dan impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The number of times a piece of content appears on the homepage.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The number of unique users and reach who viewed and shared the content</li> </ul>	Knowing the audience's knowledge about the women's issue raised (awareness) and the audience's perception of the issue.
Engagement	The number of audiences who interact with content (comments, likes, shares).	Demonstrates sufficient quality or attractiveness of content for the audience (can be seen from the number of (comments, likes, shares).

**Table 1** Social Media Analysis (continued)

Social Media Analytics	Form	Objective
Brand/account mention	How often the account or campaign is mentioned by the audience on Instagram through tags, mentions, hashtags, or keywords.	To see audience sentiment in conversations on Instagram, whether positive, negative or neutral.

**Note:** Snelson (2016)

The collected research data was then analyzed qualitatively by interpreting and understanding the messages, narratives and strategies used by female politicians in their Instagram posts. This process thoroughly examines text, images, videos, and other content to interpret underlying themes and messages. This analysis also considers responses from followers or voters, assessing how the content is received and interpreted by viewers. Quantitative analysis also measures engagement metrics such as the number of posts, comments, likes, shares and trends over time. This approach provides a systematic and objective measure of the political activity of female politicians on Instagram. Through these measurements, researchers can identify patterns and trends in the use of Instagram for political campaigns through in-depth content, interpretation of messages and strategies used by female politicians to fight gender stereotypes.

The results of this analysis are then used to identify patterns, trends and significant findings. This information is interpreted and presented in context, contributing valuable insights into women's political participation in the digital era and its wider implications for politics and society. By integrating social media content analysis with a systematic literature review, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how female politicians in Indonesia use Instagram to navigate and mitigate gender stereotypes, thereby improving their image and political participation.

## Result and Discussion

### Key Findings from Literature and Content Analysis

The candidacy of women in electoral politics is an integral part of efforts to achieve gender equality and inclusive representation in the political system (Prihatini, 2018). However, this process is often hampered by various challenges originating from social norms, gender stereotypes, and systemic inequalities that still exist in society (Dettman et al., 2017; Rhoads, 2012). This paper will explore these challenges from a global perspective and focus on how they influence women's candidacy in Indonesia specifically. Gender challenges

in women's candidacy include several aspects that reflect systemic discrimination and social norms that affect women's political participation.

Systemic discrimination is one of the main challenges faced by women in politics in Indonesia. Although laws and policies are implemented to increase women's representation in legislative institutions, the political structures that men designed and dominate often pose a significant obstacle (Upreti et al., 2020). Lack of access to political resources, such as campaign funds and political party support, makes it difficult for women to compete in a male-dominated political world. Social and cultural norms also play an essential role in inhibiting women's political participation. Gender stereotypes that are still embedded in society often hinder women's political aspirations (Mukarom, 2022). The view that women are more suited to domestic roles and less competent in political matters, while men are considered more authoritative and qualified to lead, often prevents women from making political decisions (Raaum, 2005).

In Indonesia, gender challenges in women's candidacy also reflect a reality similar to that which occurs in other countries. A male-dominated political *culture* also presents a significant obstacle to women's political participation (White & Aspinall, 2019). Women are often considered less competent in politics, making them struggle to gain political support and win elections. Gender stereotypes that are still inherent in Indonesian society also influence perceptions and expectations of women in politics (Jandevi, 2019). Case examples of gender challenges and stereotypes of women in politics in Indonesia include several incidents that illustrate the complexity and obstacles faced by women at various levels of political participation. The following is Table 2 regarding several examples of cases of gender challenges and stereotypes of women in politics in Indonesia.

**Table 2** Gender Challenges and Stereotypes of Women in Politics in Indonesia

Form a challenge	Case	Impact
Lack of political party support	Women face challenges in getting political party support when running for legislative positions. Even though there is a 30% quota, some parties are still reluctant to place women in positions and provide sufficient financial support.	Women who do not receive strong support from political parties and find it difficult to compete effectively in political campaigns, thereby affecting their chances of being elected.
Gender stereotypes in general elections	Voters are still exposed to gender stereotypes that consider women less suitable for a career in politics. Voters are more skeptical of women's qualifications and leadership than men.	Women face more pressure to prove themselves than men. This stereotype can hinder public perception of women's abilities and integrity in the world of politics
Gender-based negative campaigns	In an effort to gain support, political opponents use negative gender-based campaigns. Such as spreading false information or negative depictions of female candidates.	Negative campaigns can damage the reputations of female politicians and make voters hesitant to support them.
Defense Against Cultural Challenges	Female politicians must face resistance from a cultural environment that is still attached to patriarchal norms. They may experience resistance or criticism because they are seen as breaking tradition.	Cultural challenges can make it reluctant or difficult for women to participate actively in politics, especially in areas that are still conservative.
Difficulty creating a balance between personal life and political career	Female politicians are faced with demands to create a balance between political responsibilities and roles in personal or family life and foster stereotypes that women should focus on domestic roles.	Difficulty in creating balance prevents women from being fully involved in politics, because they are faced with double expectations from society.

Source: Authors (2023)

By understanding various examples of gender challenges and stereotypes of women in politics in Indonesia, we can design more effective solutions to increase women's political participation and create a more inclusive political environment. Continuous efforts from various parties are needed to overcome these obstacles and ensure equal gender representation at multiple levels of government. For example, education and public awareness about the importance of women's political participation can help change gender perceptions and stereotypes in society. Educational programs and public awareness campaigns that promote gender equality and women's political participation can **also** significantly boost women's political aspirations.

Several case studies from various countries show similar gender challenges in women's candidacy worldwide. For example, in the United States, although progress has been made in increasing women's representation in politics, gender stereotypes and political discrimination remain significant challenges. Research shows that women are often perceived as less competent in political matters than men, which makes it difficult for them to gain political support and be elected in general elections (Dolan, 2018). In India, a robust patriarchal culture also inhibits women's political participation. Gender stereotypes inherent in society often make it difficult for women to gain sufficient political support. The perception that women are better suited to domestic roles often hinders women's political aspirations (Rai, 2017). In Germany, despite having a more inclusive political system and more significant support from political parties, gender stereotypes are still an obstacle to women's candidacy. The view that women need to be more competent in politics often reduces public support, even though they have the same or even better qualifications than their male counterparts (Horvath & Sczesny, 2016).

Apart from that, support from political parties is also critical in increasing women's political participation. Political parties must adopt policies supporting women as legislative candidates and providing sufficient financial and logistical support. In addition, it is essential to encourage women to feel confident and motivated to get involved in politics. Network building and mentoring among female politicians can also help overcome the obstacles women face in politics, not only in Indonesia but throughout the world. Although there has been progress made in Indonesia in increasing women's representation in politics, much work still needs to be done to overcome the remaining obstacles. With continuous efforts and strong support from various parties, we can create a political environment that is more inclusive and representative of all citizens.

### ***Instagram's Role in Countering Stereotypes: Examples and Data Analysis***

Women's strategies in political campaigns and social media are an integral part of the evolution of modern politics, where information and communication technology are becoming increasingly dominant (Bennett, 2012; Khamis et al., 2017). In many parts of the

world, women have taken an increasingly significant role in politics, and social media has become an essential tool for them to gain support, expand their reach, and influence public opinion (Yarchi & Samuel-Azran, 2018). In this context, the strategies they use in managing their political campaigns via social media become very important and interesting to analyze. Globally, women have faced unique challenges and obstacles in politics such as gender stereotypes, discrimination, and unequal access to political resources have become factors that hinder women's participation in the political arena (Marozzo & Bessi, 2018).

However, with the development of information technology, social media has become a tool that provides new opportunities for women politicians to expand their reach, overcome some traditional barriers, and increase their involvement in the political process (Storie & Marschlich, 2022). One of the strategies women use in their political campaigns is building a solid political image and identity through social media. They use platforms such as Facebook, X (former Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok to showcase their leadership, share stories about their personal lives, and communicate their political vision to voters.

In the Indonesian context, female politicians are also increasingly recognizing the importance of social media in their political campaigns. An example is Rieke Diah Pitaloka, a politician from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), who actively uses social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter to share her political thoughts and views and promote her party's policies. Apart from that, female politicians such as Desy Ratnasari (National Mandate Party), Rieke Diah Pitaloka (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), Tsamara Amany Alatas (Indonesian Solidarity Party), Arzeti Bilbina (National Awakening Party), Wanda Hamidah (Golkar Party), and Illiza Sa'aduddin Jamal (United Development Party) also use social media as a tool to gather support and expand its political reach.

Instagram has become the preferred platform for political campaigns by female politicians, because first, its broad reach, with over one billion monthly active users worldwide, provides direct access to a large, diverse audience. Second, Instagram's focus on visual content allows politicians to convey their political messages through engaging photos and videos, helping to build emotional connections with voters. Additionally, live engagement features, such as comments and Instagram Live, allow politicians to interact directly with voters, creating a more personal relationship and making it possible to respond directly to voters' questions or concerns. Sharing real-time updates is also advantageous, letting politicians keep voters connected and informed about their campaign activities. Female politicians can increase their visibility, expand the reach of their campaigns, and influence public opinion more effectively. The reach of a female politician's campaign can be seen from her follower profile, reach and impressions, engagement, and brand/account mention.

**Table 3** Campaign Reach of Female Politicians on Instagram

Nama	Total Grade	Followers	Increase/ Decrease	Following	Media Uploads	Engagement Rate	Likes (Average)	Comment (Average)
Rieke Diah Pitaloka	B	1.098.194	+246%	7.785	3.011	0.55%	6.048	26
Tsamara Amany Alatas	B	619.215	-45.9%	1.105	685	11.18%	66.347	2.883
Desi Ratnasari	B-	328.892	+240%	321	570	1.67%	5.387	93
Wanda Hamidah	B-	249.242	-74.2%	1.737	4.391	0.2%	441	54
Illiza Saaduddin Djamal	B-	189.100	-17.8%	3.532	9.156	0.37%	688	11
Arzeti Bilbina	B-	77.301	-14.4%	1.026	1.716	0.72%	529	28

**Source:** Social Blade (2024)

Table 3 above shows the SocialBlade appearance of several female politicians from different parties at the Indonesian national level such as Rieke Diah Pitaloka from the Democratic Party of Struggle, Desy Ratnasari from the National Mandate Party, Tsamara Amany Alatas from the Indonesian Solidarity Party, Arzeti Bilbina from the National Awakening Party, Illiza Saaduddin Djamal from the United Development Party, and Wanda Hamidah from the Golkar Party. Established in 2008, the SocialBlade platform is a social media analytics and management platform that provides statistics and metrics regarding the performance of various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), and TikTok. The app helps users track and analyze the growth of social media accounts, see estimated earnings from published content, and monitor trends in the number of followers, impressions, and engagement rates. SocialBlade also provides rankings for creators based on the number of followers, views, or engagement.

From Table 3 above, the reach of female politicians' campaigns can vary depending on the social media indicators used for analysis. Regarding the number of profile followers, Rieke Diah Pitaloka from the Democratic Party of Struggle has the highest number of followers, reaching 1,098,194 followers. 'Reach' and 'impression' indicators mean the number of times a piece of content appears on the Instagram homepage and the number of unique users and the *reach* of those who view and share the content. This can be used to determine the audience's knowledge regarding a women's issue being raised (awareness)

and the audience's perception of the problem. From SocialBlade's analysis, it can be seen that there has been a 240 percent increase in reach on the Instagram platform belonging to Desy Ratnasari from the National Mandate Party, which is inversely proportional to the platform of Rieke Diah Pitaloka from the Democratic Party of Struggle, which, although it has the most followers, has decreased in the last few months relative to Wanda Hamidah from the Party. Golkar 74.2 percent and Tsamara Amany Alatas from the Indonesian Solidarity Party 45.9 percent. The decline in the number of followers on the Instagram platform for both is closely related to the issues raised by them and their parties. For example, before the presidential election, the coalition between the Golkar Party and the Indonesian Solidarity Party was considered to be raising issues that had not previously been popular for women in overcoming cat-calling, harassment, and discrimination against women. The audience's knowledge as voters regarding the matters increased and influenced public awareness and perceptions of the issues and candidates.

Regarding engagement, Tsamara Amany Alatas from the Indonesian Solidarity Party has a reasonably high engagement rate, namely 11.18 percent, far above other female politicians such as Desy Ratnasari from the National Mandate Party (1.67 percent), and other female politicians who are below 1 percent. Engagement rate is measured by the number of the audience who interact with content, which means comments, likes, and shares. In campaigning on the Instagram platform, the engagement rate is significant because it shows the quality or level of attractiveness of the content for the audience, which can be seen from the number of comments, likes, shares. Regarding brand/account mentions, it is possible to observe how often the audience on Instagram mentions the account or campaign through tags, mentions, hashtags, or keywords. Regarding numbers, Illiza Sa' aduddin Jamal's Instagram platform from the United Development Party has few accounts mentions. This is not surprising as Illiza Saaduddin Djamal's profile comes from a regional area and was relatively new to the world of politics. In terms of branding, Illiza Saaduddin Djamal has succeeded in branding herself on Instagram through posts in the form of photos and videos that are shared via stories, feeds, and reels every day and receives an active response from the people in Aceh Province, which is an electoral area.

### ***Evaluating Strategy Effectiveness and Limitations of Instagram in Countering Gender Stereotypes***

The content analysis sheds light on Instagram's pivotal role in countering gender stereotypes and facilitating effective political communication among female politicians. Through a detailed examination of Instagram usage patterns, this study reveals compelling insights into the strategies employed by female politicians to navigate societal biases and engage with voters. One notable strategy observed is constructing a robust political image and identity through visual storytelling on Instagram. Female politicians leverage platforms

such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok to showcase their leadership qualities, share personal narratives, and articulate their political visions to a wide audience. By harnessing the power of visual content and compelling narratives, female politicians can shape positive perceptions of themselves and forge emotional connections with voters.

Direct interaction with constituents emerges as another key strategy in political campaigning via Instagram. Female politicians utilize the platform to engage directly with voters, addressing queries, providing clarifications, and soliciting feedback. This direct engagement fosters closer relationships with voters, builds trust, and offers valuable insights into constituents' concerns. Moreover, the strategic use of multimedia content, including photos, videos, and infographics, enhances the effectiveness of political campaigns on Instagram. Engaging visualizations and inspirational stories captivate audiences, evoke positive emotions, and reinforce political messages. Short videos featuring political activities, narratives of resilience, and policy explanations will strengthen a campaigns' appeal and garner voter support.

Despite the opportunities presented by Instagram, female politicians encounter challenges such as negative perceptions and online harassment. Gender stereotypes continue to hinder their acceptance as competent leaders while cyberbullying and harassment pose threats to their reputations and political participation. However, these challenges underscore the importance of innovative strategies and resilience in navigating the digital political landscape. In the Indonesian context, female politicians increasingly recognize the significance of Instagram in political campaigning. Notable figures such as Rieke Diah Pitaloka actively utilize Instagram and Twitter to engage with voters and promote their party's policies. Female politicians across various parties also leverage social media to broaden their political reach and influence public opinion.

Instagram's effectiveness as a political campaign platform is evident in its broad reach, emphasis on visual content, and interactive features. Live engagement tools enable direct interaction with voters, while sophisticated ad management tools facilitate targeted communication. Furthermore, the platform's role as a primary source of information strengthens its position in political campaigns, enabling politicians to increase visibility and shape public discourse effectively. Despite the challenges faced by female politicians, their strategic use of Instagram has contributed to overcoming gender stereotypes and fostering meaningful engagement with voters. By leveraging social media effectively, female politicians can build positive public images, challenge societal biases, and promote their political agendas with greater efficiency and impact. Table 4 below show the effectiveness and limitations of Instagram in countering gender stereotypes.

**Table 4** Effectiveness and Limitation of Instagram in Countering Gender Stereotypes

Effectiveness	Limitations
<p><b>Positive Image Building:</b> Constructing a positive political image through visual storytelling has proven effective. By sharing personal narratives and showcasing leadership qualities, female politicians can shape favorable perceptions among voters, thereby enhancing their electability.</p>	<p><b>Persistent Gender Stereotypes:</b> Despite efforts to counter gender stereotypes, female politicians still face challenges in being perceived as competent leaders. Deep-rooted societal biases often undermine their credibility and effectiveness, limiting the impact of their campaign efforts.</p>
<p><b>Direct Voter Interaction:</b> Direct engagement with constituents via Instagram fosters closer relationships and builds trust. This strategy allows female politicians to address voter concerns promptly, provide clarifications, and solicit feedback, thereby increasing voter satisfaction and loyalty.</p>	<p><b>Online Harassment and Cyberbullying:</b> Female politicians encounter significant obstacles in the form of online harassment and cyberbullying. Negative comments and malicious attacks on social media platforms can tarnish their reputations, induce stress, and deter them from active political participation.</p>
<p><b>Multimedia Content Utilization:</b> Leveraging multimedia content, such as photos, videos, and infographics, enhances campaign effectiveness. Engaging visualizations and inspirational stories resonate with audiences, evoke emotions, and reinforce political messages, contributing to increased voter engagement and support.</p>	<p><b>Digital Divide and Algorithmic Bias:</b> Access to technology and digital literacy skills pose barriers to effective engagement for some female politicians, particularly those from marginalized communities. Social media algorithms may perpetuate gender biases, resulting in unequal visibility and exposure for female politicians. Algorithmic biases can hinder the dissemination of their political messages, limiting their ability to reach and engage with broader audiences.</p>

Source: Authors (2024)

Comparative examples from international contexts, such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the United States and Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand, highlight the transformative potential of social media in modern political communication. Female politicians worldwide, including Angela Merkel, Tsai Ing-wen, Sanna Marin, and Erna Solberg, have demonstrated

the efficacy of social media in expanding political reach and influencing public opinion. In conclusion, the findings underscore Instagram's pivotal role in contemporary political communication, particularly for female politicians. By effectively employing innovative strategies and leveraging social media, female politicians can challenge gender stereotypes, engage with voters, and advance their political agendas in an increasingly digital political landscape.

## **Conclusion**

Female politicians in Indonesia were countering stereotypes using social media, including Instagram. They build a strong image, political identity, and community network of supporters. Some methods they use include promoting active involvement in social issues through posts on Instagram feeds, stories, and reels. They also mobilize political support in campaigns by utilizing the latest populist issues and forming solidarity from their followers through comments, likes, shares, and direct messages. These activities strengthen their relationships with constituents and their position as leaders who care and are responsive to community needs. Through an in-depth analysis of Instagram usage patterns, it is clear that female politicians are strategically using the platform to overcome social bias and interact with voters. One vital strategy is building a solid political image and identity through visual storytelling on Instagram. Using engaging visual content and narratives, female politicians can shape positive perceptions of themselves and develop emotional connections with voters. Additionally, direct interaction with constituents emerged as another critical strategy, allowing women politicians to answer questions, provide clarification, and solicit input, fostering closer relationships and building trust. Through a detailed analysis of Instagram usage patterns, it is clear that female politicians strategically use the platform to overcome social biases and engage with voters. One of the important strategies observed is building a strong political image and identity through visual storytelling on Instagram. Using engaging visual content and narratives, female politicians can shape positive perceptions of themselves and build emotional connections with voters. Additionally, direct interaction with constituents emerged as another key strategy, allowing female politicians to answer questions, provide clarification, and solicit input, fostering closer relationships and building trust.

Additionally, the strategic use of multimedia content, including photos, videos, and infographics, increases the effectiveness of political campaigns on Instagram. Compelling visualizations and inspiring stories captivate audiences, evoke positive emotions, and reinforce political messages, ultimately strengthening the campaign's appeal and garnering voter support. Despite the opportunities provided by Instagram, female politicians face challenges such as negative perceptions and online harassment. Gender stereotypes continue to hinder their acceptance as competent leaders while cyberbullying and harassment pose a threat to their reputation and political participation. However, these

challenges underscore the importance of innovative strategies and resilience in navigating the digital political landscape.

In the Indonesian context, female politicians are increasingly aware of the importance of Instagram in political campaigns. Prominent figures like Rieke Diah Pitaloka actively use Instagram and Twitter to interact with voters and promote their party's policies. Female politicians in various parties also use social media to expand their political reach and influence public opinion. Instagram's effectiveness as a political campaign platform can be seen from its wide reach, emphasis on visual content, and interactive features. Direct engagement tools enable direct interaction with voters, while sophisticated ad management tools facilitate targeted communications. Additionally, the platform's role as a primary source of information strengthens its position in political campaigns, allowing politicians to increase visibility and shape public discourse effectively.

Despite these successes, limitations need to be considered. Negative perceptions and online harassment are still a big challenge for female politicians on Instagram. Additionally, algorithmic bias and the digital divide pose barriers to effective engagement. In conclusion, although Instagram has become a powerful tool for female politicians to challenge gender stereotypes and interact with voters, further research is needed to explore innovative strategies and overcome existing limitations. By effectively utilizing social media, female politicians can continue to build a positive public image, challenge societal biases, and promote their political agendas with greater efficiency and impact in an increasingly digital political landscape.

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