

COMPLIMENT STRATEGIES ACROSS GENDER OF INDONESIAN FEMALE POLITICIANS: NETNOGRAPHY APPROACH

Shanty A. Y. P. S Duwila¹, Ari Astutik², Erika Ardyanti³

^{1, 2, 3}Universitas Wjjaya Putra, Jl. Raya Benowo 1-3, Surabaya, Jawa Timur, Indonesia
Email: Shantiduwila@uwp.ac.id

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Abstract. This article aims to shed light on the compliment strategies employed by men and women towards Indonesian female politicians, using a netnographic approach to uncover implications of these interactions. By exploring the intersection of gender, communication, and politics, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender equality and empowerment in the political sphere. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method. Data consists of comments from netizens on the Instagram posts of five Indonesian female political figures. Documentation techniques are used for data collection, while Content Analysis is employed to data analysis. The steps include: selecting political posts, extracting top-liked compliments, identifying types of compliments, categorizing compliments, presenting data, interpreting the, and drawing conclusions. The results show that the compliment types that the women receive from men are in the forms of evaluations or appreciations. While women tend to give admiration and request. The patriarchal system in Indonesia does not serve as a barrier for Indonesian women to actively participate in politics. Men will appreciate and respect women who demonstrate competence and good traits.

Keywords: Compliment, Female, Gender, Indonesian, Politician

Abstrak. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan strategi pujian yang digunakan oleh pria dan wanita terhadap politisi wanita Indonesia dan untuk mengungkap implikasi dari interaksi ini melalui pendekatan netnografi. Dengan mengeksplorasi persimpangan antara gender, komunikasi, dan politik, studi ini berkontribusi pada wacana tentang kesetaraan gender dan pemberdayaan di ranah politik. Studi ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data terdiri dari komentar netizen laki-laki dan perempuan pada postingan Instagram dari lima tokoh politik wanita Indonesia. Teknik dokumentasi digunakan untuk pengumpulan data, sementara Analisis Konten digunakan untuk analisis data. Langkah-langkahnya meliputi: memilih postingan politik, mengekstraksi pujian yang paling disukai, mengidentifikasi jenis pujian, mengkategorikan pujian, menyajikan data, menginterpretasikan data, dan menarik kesimpulan. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa jenis pujian yang diterima wanita dari pria berupa evaluasi atau apresiasi. Sementara wanita cenderung memberikan kekaguman dan harapan. Sistem patriarki di Indonesia tidak menjadi penghalang bagi wanita Indonesia untuk berpartisipasi aktif dalam politik. Pria akan menghargai dan menghormati wanita yang menunjukkan kompetensi dan sifat baik.

Kata Kunci: Gender, Indonesia, Perempuan, Politisi, Pujian

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INTRODUCTION

Recently number of Indonesian women participate in political world compared to those in five years back (Elizabeth et al., 2023). This phenomenon can be seen through social medias which broadcast women participations in Indonesian government cabinets in which they hold

significant authority, especially within government administrations. Society can see this breakthrough how women are able to elevate their positions in an area in which was previously dominated by men. In addition, Government shows profound support to Indonesian women by issuing the Government Policy through Presidential Instruction number 9 of 2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development. This policy aims to eliminate discrimination against women. This policy promotes gender equality and women's empowerment. In the vibrant and evolving landscape of Indonesian politics, female politicians are increasingly stepping into the spotlight, navigating a complex web of social and political dynamics (Evi Novida Ginting Manik & Fredick Broven Ekayanta, 2024). As these women rise to prominence, the ways in which they are complimented by their male and female counterparts become a fascinating area of study.

Compliments, as a form of positive politeness, serve multiple functions in communication. They can express admiration, reinforce social bonds, and establish solidarity among interlocutors. Compliments are expressions of praise and admiration, typically conveyed through polite phrases or sentences. As a verbal act, a compliment explicitly or implicitly acknowledges someone other than the speaker (Yuan, 2022). Praising someone involves recognizing their positive attributes or actions. Compliments can pertain to a person's appearance, skills, or traits. For instance, 'You look stunning in that dress!' (appearance), 'Your presentation is outstanding!' (skills), and 'I appreciate your kindness.' (character). The aim of compliments is to highlight the recipient's positive qualities, ownership, skills, or characteristics. The framework for compliment strategies includes two macro levels: direct and indirect compliments, each with its own subcategories (Dilek, 2020a).

In the political context, compliments can be strategic tools for building alliances, gaining support, and enhancing one's image. However, the effectiveness and reception of compliments can vary significantly based on the gender of both the speaker and the recipient. Gender dynamics in communication have been extensively studied, revealing that men and women often employ and interpret compliments differently (Gao et al., 2017). Gender plays a pivotal role in how compliments are given and received. Men and women often have different communication styles, and these differences can be particularly pronounced in a high-stakes environment like politics. Understanding these gendered nuances is essential for comprehending the broader implications of compliment strategies in Indonesian political discourse.

The netnography approach has been adopted to guarantee the study's validity and reliability. Netnography qualitative research method adapted from ethnography, involves the systematic study of online communities and interactions. This method is particularly suited for examining the digital communication practices of politicians, as it allows for the observation and analysis of authentic interactions in their natural online environments (Ferreira & Chimenti, 2022). By employing netnography, this study captures the real-time compliment exchanges of Indonesian female politicians on social media platforms, providing rich insights into their communication strategies.

Research on the topic of women in politics has been conducted extensively, employing various focuses and approaches. For instance, Extensive research has been conducted on women in politics, utilizing various focuses and methodologies. For example, studies by (Maula, 2016) and (Hara et al., 2018) examined how women's status within cultural and social frameworks affects their political participation. These studies often employ documentation methods, gathering references and policy documents. The findings indicate that women are still underrepresented in public and political institutions in Indonesia. The ongoing struggle for gender equality faces obstacles due to cultural and religious factors. (Hara et al., 2018) found that women aiming for political success often conform to established political norms, sometimes abandoning their original ideals. Interestingly, these female politicians not only forsake feminist aspirations but also reinforce the notion that politics is a male-dominated field.

Similarly, research on compliments has been approached from various perspectives. Some studies, such as those by (Dilek, 2020b), (Deveci, 2023), (Yang et al., 2020), and (Čikara & Pintarić, 2023) who studied about connection of compliments to educational contexts. Others, like (Culpeper & Pat, 2021), (Bibi & Sartini, 2023a), (Deveci, 2023), and (Keshavarz et al., 2020) explore compliments through pragmatic approaches. Additionally, (Devlin & Marnane, 2021) investigated compliments in relation to gender. Their study used politeness theory to examine how Irish men and women aged 18-25 give and respond to compliments, specifically regarding appearance and performance. The research, based on questionnaires, revealed that the reception of compliments by both genders is influenced by cultural and gender factors.

This research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of gendered communication in politics by exploring how compliments are used by men and women towards female politicians in Indonesia. It seeks to uncover the types of compliment strategies and cultural influences shaping these interactions. By examining the intersection of gender, communication, and politics, this study offers valuable insights into the ways in which female politicians navigate their roles and relationships in a predominantly male-dominated field. Hence, the

main purposes of this present study are to find out types of compliment strategies used by men and women when giving praise to female politician and how Indonesian culture affects this phenomenon.

METHODS

The research focuses on positive comments in the form of compliments across genders, expressed as phrases and sentences in the comment sections of the Instagram profiles of five Indonesian female politicians. The data source for this study is the comment sections on the Instagram pages of five female politicians. These politicians were selected as they have made notable contributions in various fields and have firmly established themselves in Indonesian politics. The data collected consists of phrases or sentences containing compliments shared by man and women followers of these politicians. Specifically, comments were selected from posts related to their political activities, such as photos or videos. The data collection period spans from June 2023 to February 2024. This research uses the documentation technique for data collection. Documentation is a method used to obtain data and information from sources such as books, archives, documents, numerical records, and images in the form of reports and information that support research (Jones, 2023). The data was deeply analysed and interpreted to draw conclusions. The steps involved in data collection are as follows: a) visiting the Instagram profiles of the five Indonesian female politicians, b) selecting ten comments from their men and women followers from each politician, c) capturing screenshots of comments from netizens containing compliments, and d) compiling the screenshots into a word document.

This study employs qualitative content analysis, a research method that systematically and objectively derives specific messages from data (Pohontsch, 2019). The data analysis process includes: a) identifying types of compliments, b) categorizing these compliments into strategies, c) presenting the data in tables based on the compliments, d) interpreting the data using netnography approach to reveal cultural factors influencing the man and women deliver their praises, and e) drawing conclusion. The method starts with assumptions, examines relevant theories, and then formulates the research problem. In this study, theories related to compliments and gender are used to analyse data in the form of phrases or sentences from the comment sections on the Instagram pages of Indonesian female politicians. The collected data is thoroughly analysed, studied, and interpreted.

RESULTS

Topics and types of compliment strategies for praising female politicians

Praising someone means recognizing their positive qualities or actions. A compliment is a verbal act that explicitly or implicitly acknowledges someone other than the speaker, and it relates to appearance, skills, or traits (Yuan, 2022). In line with the previous description above, the data are categorized based on the topic and types of compliment strategies presented in tables. Table 1 and Table 2 display topics of compliment and types of compliment strategies expressed by men while Table 3 and Table 4 display topics of compliment and types of compliment strategies expressed by women.

Table 1. Topics of compliment from men to female politicians

No	Politicians	Topics		
		Competence	Beauty (Looks)	Trait
1	Sri Mulyani	7	-	4
2	Retno Marsudi	3	-	9
3	Grace Natalie	6	-	4
4	Puan Maharani	6	2	3
5	Megawati Soekarno Putri	7	-	9
Total		29	2	29

In line with Table 1, male netizens frequently comment on the competence of female politicians when they share their activities on social media platforms like Instagram. For example, Sri Mulyani is commended for her role in forest management and efforts to reduce deforestation, showcasing her capability in governance. Similarly, Megawati Soekarno Putri is lauded for her leadership and resilience as the head of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P). In addition, male netizens not only praise the competence of female politicians but also their traits and behaviours. Male netizens evaluated pictures or videos shared on social media, focusing on the impact on those around them. Table 1 also reveals that Retno Marsudi and Megawati Soekarno Putri receive more compliments regarding their traits and behaviours compared to other politicians. For instance, Retno Marsudi is admired for her respectful and egalitarian treatment of others, while Megawati is acknowledged for her toughness and persistence as Indonesia's first female president.

Table 2. Types of compliment strategies from men to female politicians

No	Politicians	Types					
		Ad	R	E	Ap	P	As
1	Sri Mulyani	1	3	2	2	4	1
2	Retno Marsudi	-	5	4	5	-	-
3	Grace Natalie	1	1	8	-	-	-
4	Puan Maharani	3	-	6	1	-	-
5	Megawati Soekarno Putri	5	1	2	-	-	-
Total		10	10	22	8	4	1

Abbreviations: **Ad**=Admiration; **R**=Request; **E**=Evaluation; **Ap**=Appreciation; **P**=Pleasing; **As**=Assumption.

Table 2 shows that there six types of compliments given by men to five female politicians, namely: admiration, request, evaluation, appreciation, pleasing, and assumption. Men most frequently give compliments related to evaluation, followed by admiration and request. Male netizens often evaluate and appreciate the performance of female politicians. For example, Retno Marsudi is praised for her duties as Foreign Minister, Grace Natalie for empowering local communities through recycling, and Puan Maharani for initiating international humanitarian cooperation. Compliments also express admiration, with men viewing these politicians as role models. Megawati Soekarno Putri is admired as a Patron of Indonesia, and Puan Maharani is praised for her qualities as a female politician.

The study challenges the notion that politics is a male-dominated field, showing that women can excel and be valued for their competence and traits. Men appreciate female politicians for their contributions to society, with less than 1% of compliments focusing on their appearance. This indicates that women are respected for their abilities and impact, rather than being seen as mere objects of entertainment

Table 3. Topics of compliment from women to female politicians

No	Politicians	Topics		
		Competence	Beauty (Looks)	Trait
1	Sri Mulyani	10	-	-
2	Retno Marsudi	10	-	-
3	Grace Natalie	10	-	-
4	Puan Maharani	5	1	4
5	Megawati Soekarno Putri	10	-	-
Total		45	1	4

The data from the Table 3 indicates that majority of women praise female politicians for their competence and traits rather than their looks or beauty. This is evident from the high number of compliments related to the politicians' abilities, leadership qualities, and positive

behaviours. For instance, women often commend the politicians for their effective governance, resilience, and dedication to public service. These compliments highlight the respect and recognition female politicians receive for their professional achievements and personal attributes, rather than their physical appearance. This trend underscores the importance of competence and character in the political sphere, reflecting a shift away from superficial judgments based on looks.

Table 4. Types of compliment strategies from women to female politicians

No	Politicians	Types					
		Ad	R	E	Ap	P	As
1	Sri Mulyani	6	2	4	1	-	-
2	Retno Marsudi	4	4	2	1	1	-
3	Grace Natalie	1	3	5	1	2	-
4	Puan Maharani	7	2	2	1	-	-
5	Megawati Soekarno Putri	4	6	2	1	1	-
Total		22	18	15	5	4	

Abbreviations: **Ad**=Admiration; **R**=Request; **E**=Evaluation; **Ap**=Appreciation; **P**=Pleasing; **As**=Assumption.

Table 4 illustrates the distribution of compliments strategies given to female politicians by female netizens. The data reveals that female netizen predominantly express admiration with a total of 22 compliments. This is followed by 18 compliments categorized as requests, 15 as evaluations, 5 as appreciations, and 4 as pleasing. The high number of admiration compliments suggests that female netizens hold these politicians in high regard, recognizing their qualities and achievements. The requests indicate a desire for continued engagement or action from these politicians. Evaluations reflect an assessment of the politicians' performances, while appreciations and pleasing compliments highlight gratitude and satisfaction with their actions.

DISCUSSION

Gender differences and compliment strategies in political context

Female politicians often receive a variety of compliments from their supporters. These compliments can range from admiration for their leadership skills to appreciation for their dedication to public service. Social media platforms, especially Instagram, have become a popular venue for expressing such praises. Interestingly, the nature of these compliments varies significantly between male and female netizens. Based on the results presented on the tables above, it has consistently shown that men and women employ compliments differently.

Men tend to utilize compliment to praise female politicians' competence and traits but looks or appearances. Men employ direct compliment strategies in the areas of evaluation. When men deliver comments on IG posted by female politicians, they analyze the pictures, videos, and captions. They comment by evaluating the female politician's works, ideas, and policy they made. This result is contradictory with research conducted by (Rees-Miller, 2011). In his research, he found that men gave more compliment on women performance. However, it does happen as women are in different situation. In the present research, men are conscious the present of women as a politician so that men analyze and evaluate the female politician works, while in prior research, women are in normal situation. It seems men evaluate women's achievement to find out whether these women deserve and capable in doing such work. Men seem affair enough to give support to female politicians in their capability by admiring them and pray for the future success.

Women tend to use compliments more frequently and in a more supportive manner compared to men (O'Neil et al., 1995). Women often use compliments to create solidarity and build rapport, while men may use them more strategically to assert dominance or build alliances. (Tannen, 2021) further elaborates on these differences, suggesting that women's use of compliments is often aimed at fostering positive social interactions, whereas men may use compliments to negotiate status and power. In line with the present study, women compliment other politician women for their competence and showing admiration. The female netizen directly telling them that they admire and pray for their health and bless. The comment show their solidarity and support to other women who gain achievement and contribute to community.

Cultural influences on compliment strategies in political context

Cultural norms and values significantly influence compliment strategies. What is considered a compliment in one culture may not be perceived the same way in another. For instance, a study by (Yu, 2005) on Chinese and American compliment responses found that Chinese speakers are more likely to downplay or reject compliments, reflecting a cultural emphasis on humility. In contrast, American speakers are more likely to accept compliments, reflecting a cultural emphasis on individual achievement and self-promotion.

In the Indonesian context, compliments are often used to reinforce social hierarchies and assert power. A study by Indah (2017) on Indonesian learners highlighted that compliments are often used to acknowledge social status and reinforce hierarchical relationships. Compliments employed by Indonesians reflect cultural values of modesty and social harmony, display a

preference for acceptance and amendment strategies (Bibi & Sartini, 2023b). This finding aligns with the broader cultural emphasis on respect for authority and harmony in Indonesian society.

In the political context, understanding how compliments are used to navigate power dynamics can provide insights into the communication strategies of politicians. A study by (Mokoginta, 2023) on compliments in Indonesian cultures found that compliments are often used to reinforce social hierarchies and assert power. This finding is particularly relevant for female politicians, who must navigate complex power dynamics in their interactions with male colleagues and constituents. Despite the potential benefits of using compliments as a communication strategy, female politicians in Indonesia face several challenges and barriers. Gender stereotypes, a predominantly male political culture, and lack of support from political parties are significant obstacles. Hajad et al. (2024) emphasize the need for collective efforts in political education, public awareness, party support, and network-building among female politicians to effectively overcome these challenges.

CONCLUSION

In brief, both men and women use direct compliment strategies when commenting on female politicians' pictures, videos, and captions on Instagram. Men are more likely to praise female politicians for their competence and traits rather than their appearance, showing respect by evaluating their achievements. Women, however, tend to focus on complimenting the competence of female politicians, often expressing admiration and hope for their success. These insights challenge the traditional Indonesian cultural belief that men dominate women and that women should not participate in political governance. The acceptance of women in politics is growing among both men and women, as far as female politicians demonstrate their capabilities and positive traits in their roles. By examining the intersection of gender, communication, and politics, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender equality and empowerment in the political sphere. The netnographic approach provides valuable insights into the real-time compliment exchanges on social media platforms, while the consideration of cultural influences adds depth to the analysis.

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