

Types of Males' Compliment Expressions for Indonesian Female Politicians

Shanty Anugerah Yuni Puspita Sari Duwila

Faculty Language and Literature, Universitas Wijaya Putra, Indonesia

shantiduwila@uwp.ac.id

Ari Astutik

Faculty Language and Literature, Universitas Wijaya Putra, Indonesia

ariastutik@uwp.ac.id

Erika Ardyanti

Faculty Language and Literature, Universitas Wijaya Putra, Indonesia

21071007@student.uwp.ac.id

Abstract

The belief that politics is a male-dominated sphere remains strong in Indonesia. However, the increasing participation of women in politics has also received positive appreciation from men. Masculine judgments about women's potential can be observed through compliments in social media. Behind these compliments lies an implicit message of how men perceive and value women's presence in the political arena. The purpose of this research is to explore the types of compliments frequently given to Indonesian women involved in politics. 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: 1) selecting political posts, 2) extracting top-liked compliments, 3) identifying types of compliments, 4) categorizing compliments, 5) presenting data, 6) interpreting the, and 7) drawing conclusions. The results show that the compliment types that the women receive from men are in the forms of evaluations or appreciations. 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, Male, Politician

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century women have endured to make significant progress in the political arena. In Indonesia, several women hold important positions, shape policies, and advocate for social justice. For instance, in 2001, Indonesia elected Megawati Soekarno Putri as its first female President, proving that women can successfully

lead the country. Since then, many women have occupied key positions in the government, including ministerial and gubernatorial roles.

Despite greater opportunities for women after the reform era, patriarchal structures and culture still dominate. Women face limitations in accessing political institutions. The noticeable disparity between men and women in politics is evident (Statista Research Department, 2024).

Additionally, some men may still view women as second-class citizens in politics. Ironically, even though more than half of Indonesia's population is female, women are often treated as mere ornaments and not fully recognized as equal leaders. They encounter gender bias, discrimination, and violence (Munggaran, 2023).

The inclusion of women in the political sphere generates both positive and negative responses from society. These responses can be observed through comments on social media platforms like Instagram (IG) where female politicians sometimes share their activities. Their posts are flooded with comments from netizens. Positive comments, such as compliments for their actions, decisions, and roles, are common. Some even compliment their appearance. Behind these compliments lies an implicit reflection of how society, across genders, perceives and values women's presence in politics. Women in politics can empower each other beyond being mere adornments (Basri et al., 2019). Linguistically, compliments are expressions of positive values or goodness toward others. Compliments aim to appreciate appearance, personal qualities, or actions. Competence in a field can be assessed when someone combines brilliant thinking (the mind) with behaviour and appearance (Chairani & Subiyantoro, 2022).

Research on the topic of women in politics has been conducted extensively, employing various focuses and approaches. For instance, studies by (Maula, 2016) and (Hara et al., 2018) have explored how women's status within cultural and social structures influences their participation in political activities. These investigations often use documentation methods, collecting references and policy documents. The findings suggest that women remain underrepresented in public and political institutions in Indonesia. The long struggle for gender equality faces challenges due to cultural and religious factors. Using a feminist approach, (Hara et al., 2018) found that women who aspire to succeed in politics often conform to established political norms, sometimes abandoning their original ideals. Interestingly, these female politicians not only leave behind feminist aspirations but also reinforce the

assumption that politics is a male-dominated sphere.

Similarly, research on compliments has been conducted from different angles. Some studies, such as; (Dilek, 2020a), (Deveci, 2023), (Yang et al., 2020), and (Čikara & Pintarić, 2023), link compliments to teaching contexts. Others explore compliments through pragmatic approaches, as seen in the work of researchers like (Culpeper & Pat, 2021), (Bibi & Sartini, 2023), (Deveci et al., 2023), and (Keshavarz et al., 2020). Additionally, (Devlin & Marnane, 2021) investigated compliments in relation to gender. In this study, politeness theory was used to examine how Irish men and women aged 18-25 give and respond to compliments, specifically appearance and performance compliments. Questionnaire-based research revealed that the reception of compliments by both genders is influenced by cultural and gender factors.

Compliments are comments in the form of polite phrases or sentences expressing praise and admiration for someone or something. A compliment is a verbal act that explicitly or implicitly acknowledges someone other than the speaker (Yuan, 2022). Praising someone means recognizing their positive qualities or actions. Compliments can relate to appearance, skills, or traits. Here are some examples: 'You look stunning in that dress!' (Complimenting someone's appearance), 'Your presentation is outstanding!' (Complimenting someone's skills), 'I appreciate your kindness.' (Complimenting someone's character). The purpose of compliments is to highlight positive qualities, ownership, skills, or characteristics of the recipient. Compliments are categorized into two types: 1) Unbound semantic formulas (Explicit and Implicit compliments), and 2) Bound semantic formulas (Explanation, Information questions, Future References, Contrast, Advice, and Request). The compliment strategy framework consisted of two macro levels as direct compliments and indirect compliments and subcategories (Dilek, 2020b).

In Indonesian society, there persists a belief that certain professions are more suitable for men. Men are often considered the heads of households, leading to the exclusion of women from decision-

making processes. Unfortunately, this perspective places women in less significant positions, particularly in politics (Antari, 2023). Gender equality remains an ongoing challenge, and efforts to challenge these stereotypes are crucial for a more equitable society.

In line with the previous studies about, this research shares common ground with previous studies regarding women and politics. However, it introduces significant differences, including: 1) a theoretical foundation that combines the language of compliments and politics; 2) a research methodology; and 3) data sourced from netizen comments on social media. These distinctions position this study as a state-of-the-art contribution, bridging gaps left by prior research.

This study will explore how men value women's presence in politics and how men view women working as politicians. To answer the research questions, the analysis focuses on compliments from men's comments on Instagram pages. This way reveals the topics and types of compliments used by men to appreciate women in politics.

METHODS

This study uses the qualitative content analysis technique. Content analysis is a research method that systematically and objectively infers specific messages from data (Bengtsson, 2016). The stages of data analysis include: a. Identifying types of compliments. b. Categorizing types of compliments into strategies. c. Presenting data in tables based on compliment. This method begins with assumptions, examines the theories to be used, and then formulates the research problem. In this study, theories related to compliments and gender are used as tools 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.

This research focuses on: a. 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 comment sections on the Instagram pages of five female politicians, namely: 1) Megawati Soekarno Putri (MS), 2) Puan Maharani (PM), 3) Grace Natalie (GN), 4) Retno Marsudi (RM), and 5) Sri Mulyani (SM). These politicians have made significant contributions in various fields and have established themselves in Indonesian politics. The data collected consists of phrases or sentences containing compliments shared by male 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 employs 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 documentation used for data collection is observed and analysed to draw conclusions as research results. 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 each politician that contain compliments. c. Capturing screenshots of comments from netizens containing compliments. d. Compiling the screenshots into a Word document. strategies. d. Describing the data within the tables. e. Interpreting the data and relating it to previous research. f. Drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Topics of compliments given to female politicians

The data presented in **Table 1** shows that most men give compliments in the areas of female politicians' competence, trait, and beauty.

Table 1. Topics of compliments given by men

N	Politicians	Topic		
		Compe- tence	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

The data from the second column indicates that the number of topic compliments for competence equals to that of trait of the female politicians. Sri Mulyani and Megawati Soekarno Putri got the highest score of compliments for their competence compared to others, and it is followed by Grace Natalie and Puan Maharani. Retno Marsudi got the least score of all.

Figure 1 and **Figure 2** are examples of compliments for competence:

arisananlohy 47 menit
Terima kasih 🙏 ibu mentri keuangan Sri mulyani indrawati, ini yang harus disyukuri apa yang disampaikan oleh ibu mentri keuangan Sri mulyani indrawati 🙏 yang menjadi kebijakan dari pemerintah

Figure 1. Compliment of competence for Sri Mulyani

eka_putranurcahyadi 18 mg
Ibu sehat selalu, lahir dari segala tekanan,yg akan selalu di kenang menjaga konstitusi dan dekokrasi 😊

Figure 2. Compliment of competence for Megawati Soekarno Putri

The competence of female politicians draws attention of males. When the female politicians share their activities on social media (IG), males tend to share comments about those activities, such as on **Figure 1** above. The male netizens appreciate the competence of Sri Mulyani when she announced that Finance minister involved in forest management and deforestation reduction. Furthermore, Sri Mulyani also informed that Indonesia collaborated with other countries, such as Norway to reduce deforestation. These activities reveal the ability of a woman to manage a country. At the same time, most male netizens also appreciate the competence of Megawati Soekarno Putri for her abilities and capacities to stand still for many years as a leader of a big party name Partai Demokrat Indonesia-Perjuangan (PDI-Perjuangan) as it can be seen from **Figure 2**. This netizen realizes that being a leader of one of the boiggest parties in

Indonesia is not easy. There are many pressures and challenges that must be faced.

Table 1 shows that most male netizens praise the traits or behaviour of the female politicians. Besides praising competence, male netizens also give attention to the way female politicians behave or interact with people around them. Male netizens seem analyse pictures or videos shared in politicians' social media (IG). They pay attention to the people or society around them affected by the activities. **Table 2** presents that Retno Marsudi and Megawati Soekarno Putri get more compliments about their traits or behaviours compared to the other politicians. **Figure 3** and **Figure 4** are examples of compliments about traits or behaviours of female politicians:

fahmi.sungkar0609 Amazing gesture saat ibu memberi hormat kepada team yg akan berangkat ke Egypt 🇪🇬 🇪🇬 🇪🇬 Such an adorable honor from you to all of them yg menunaikan tugas kemanusiaan ini...Semoga Allah SWT permudah, diperlancar dan di bukakan jalan untuk bantuan bisa sampai kepada yg berhak 🙏 🙏 🙏 So proud to have you as our Foreign Minister karena ibu paling vokal diantara seluruh negara di PBB yang terus menggaungkan untuk selalu tetap membela Negara Palestina 🇵🇸 🇵🇸 🇵🇸 Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart 🙏 🙏 🙏

Figure 3. Compliment of trait for Retno Marsudi

yosefwahyu_91277 18 mg
ibu yang TANGGUH ULET .
Tetap SEMANGAT ibu
@presidenmegawati 🙌🙌🙌🙌

Figure 4. Compliment of trait for Megawati Soekarno Putri

A male netizen praised Retno Marsudi when she shown a polite gesture to Indonesian team which would go to Egypt as described on **Figure 3**. The appreciation from the male netizen regarding this state is obvious. Retno Marsudi is a leader and such an important person who has power and position but she puts herself equal to others. She respects and greet others without considering who they are. Meanwhile, a male netizen praised to Megawati Soekarno Putri for her traits, such as her toughness and persistence as in **Figure 4**. This can be traced back to her past as a first female president of Indonesia.

Types of compliments given to female politicians

There are six types of compliments found in data. **Table 2** presents types of compliments given by men to five female politicians, namely: admiration, request, evaluation, appreciation, pleasing, and assumption.

Table 2. Types of compliments given by men

		Types					
N	Politi- o cians	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

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

Based on data on **Table 2**, men give praises most on evaluation which is followed by admiration and request. Evaluation is the act creating an opinion regarding performances or activities conducted by a person or group of people (Martin & Locke, 2022). **Figures 5-7** are examples of comments from men evaluating works and activities conducted by the female politicians.

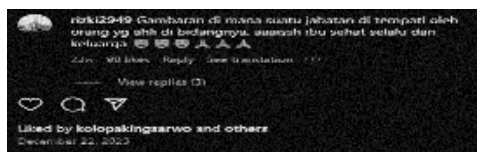


Figure 5. Compliment_Competence for Retno Marsudi

inibudi.psi 28w
alhamdulillah programnya bermanfaat bagi yang membutuhkan, harus lebih ditingkatkan dan disebarluaskan agar dapat membantu orang lain

Figure 6. Compliment_Competence for Grace Natalie

azkanndr_ 29 Mg
Salut sama Mba Puan selalu mengajak negara lain buat kerja sama kemanusiaan dan pasti punya hikmah nyaa

Figure 7. Compliment_Competence for Puan Maharani

Female politicians draft and execute tasks based on the work programs that have been prepared. The public will assess whether these work programs are truly implemented and beneficial to the community. Based on the collected data, many male netizens evaluate and appreciate the performance of female politicians. For instance, male netizen, as in **Figure 5**, commented on the performance of Retno Marsudi as the Foreign Minister who successfully carried out her duties.

Men appreciates Grace Natalie for her activity in empowering local people to increase their incomes through recycling garbage as it can be seen from **Figure 6**. Puan Maharani is praised for she initiated humanity cooperation among countries as it described in **Figure 7**.

It is not only competence that catch men's attention, but men also express admiration to these female politicians through their comments as on **Figure 8** and **Figure 9**.

dul_amq 18 mg
Ibu Mega adalah Patron kami org kecil...merdekaaaa....

Figure 8. Compliment_Admiration for Megawati Soekarno Putri

rnaldyhamrin 25 Mg
Mbak memang beda dr segala hal mantap pokoknya
Balas Lihat terjemahan

Figure 9. Compliment_Admiration for Puan Maharani

Compliments given to the female politicians express admiration from men. Men see the politicians as a role model as in **Figure 8**. The posting communicates of profound admiration to Megawati Soekarno Putri. He describes her as a Patron of Indonesian. Another admiration is directed to Puan Maharani as in **Figure 9**. This posting praises Puan Maharani as a woman having best qualities of all female politicians. Admiration given by men reveals that men respect and recognize female politician. They value women and consider them as role models.

The idea that politics is men area is not valid anymore. Women have proved that they are able to work in this area as well. The politician women chosen in this present study reveal that they are patron of society. Men value them by giving compliments. Compliment is an expression that attributes credit to someone for their goodness (Culpeper & Pat, 2021). When men see women who are immensely competence on a field, they will value them. Women will never be seen as a decoration or as a person for entertaining men if they have capability to put themselves in a decent way. Women must have power to be equal to men (Putri et al., 2022). Data have proven that men value competences and traits of female politicians. The data show that less than 1% of the total score men give compliments to beauty or looks of the female politicians. It means that women are not an object of entertainment. Men truly appreciate them who benefit and give impact to society.

CONCLUSION

Briefly, it can be concluded that there are three types of topics used by most men when giving compliments, namely: the politicians' competence, trait, and beauty. However, the most common topic is the competence and trait of the female politicians. Men seem do not give more attention to the look or beauty of the five female politicians. In addition, types of compliments that men give to Indonesian female politicians is evaluation of the politicians' activities or works. Men tend to give compliments mostly in the form of evaluation of activities conducted by the female politicians. It reveals that the patriarchal system in Indonesia does not serve as a barrier for Indonesian women to actively participate in politics. Women as politicians will never be looked as decorations or as a tool to attract participants in government bureaucracy if they are able to show they competence in that field. Men will appreciate and respect women who demonstrate competence and good traits. The praise or compliments that the women receive from men are in the forms of evaluations or appreciations based on the responsibility they are in charge. The limited data for this present research, access to resources, time, and funding led the results applied on certain circumstances. It is suggested that future studies should focus on exploring big data and considering backgrounds of citizens giving comments on social media.

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