

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND GENDER REPRESENTATION FROM A LOCAL CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

KOMUNIKASI POLITIK DAN REPRESENTASI GENDER DALAM PERSPEKTIF BUDAYA LOKAL

Abdul Rahman

Universitas Mercu Buana

*dr.a.rahman@mercubuana.ac.id

**Corresponding Author*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze how local culture shapes patterns of gender representation in the political communication of political actors in Indonesia. This study synthesizes various literatures from the perspectives of political communication, cultural studies, and gender studies to understand the relationship between local cultural values and the construction of gender representation. The review shows that local culture plays a central role in determining how gender identities are constructed, negotiated, and displayed in political practice. In the Javanese cultural context, gender representation is often tied to patriarchal structures and refined norms, while Minangkabau culture emphasizes the legitimacy of female leadership through matrilineal traditions. In Bugis, the concept of *bissu* demonstrates a more inclusive diversity of gender expressions, while Balinese culture displays a balance of *purusha pradhana* values that still contain gender hierarchies. This study also finds that culturally based political communication strategies through traditional symbols, local rhetoric, and gender imagery are used by political actors to build legitimacy. Furthermore, local and national media play a significant role in framing gender representation according to the cultural context of each region. Overall, this study confirms that gender representation in Indonesian politics is contextual and cannot be separated from the local cultural constructions that exist within society.

Keywords: political communication, gender representation, local culture, political symbols, political identity, Indonesia

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana budaya lokal membentuk pola representasi gender dalam komunikasi politik aktor politik di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan *narrative review*, studi ini mensintesis berbagai literatur dari perspektif komunikasi politik, studi budaya, dan kajian gender untuk memahami keterkaitan antara nilai-nilai budaya lokal dan konstruksi representasi gender. Hasil tinjauan menunjukkan bahwa budaya lokal memainkan peran sentral dalam menentukan bagaimana identitas gender dibangun, dinegosiasikan, dan ditampilkan dalam praktik politik. Dalam konteks budaya Jawa, representasi gender sering terikat pada struktur patriarki dan norma halus kasar, sementara budaya Minangkabau menegaskan legitimasi kepemimpinan perempuan melalui tradisi matrilineal. Di Bugis, konsep *bissu* memperlihatkan keragaman ekspresi gender yang lebih inklusif, sedangkan budaya Bali menampilkan keseimbangan nilai *purusha pradhana* yang tetap mengandung hierarki gender. Studi ini juga menemukan bahwa strategi komunikasi politik berbasis budaya melalui simbol adat, retorika lokal, dan pencitraan gender digunakan aktor politik untuk membangun legitimasi. Selain itu, media lokal dan nasional memainkan peran penting dalam membingkai representasi gender sesuai konteks budaya masing-masing wilayah. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa representasi gender dalam politik Indonesia bersifat kontekstual dan tidak dapat dilepaskan dari konstruksi budaya lokal yang hidup dalam masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: komunikasi politik, representasi gender, budaya lokal, simbol politik, identitas politik, Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

The involvement of female political actors in Indonesia has increased over the past two decades, marked by the increasing proportion of women successfully occupying legislative seats. In the 2019 elections, women gained 20.5% of seats in the Indonesian House of Representatives, and this figure rose to around22,1%in the 2024 elections, making it the highest achievement in the history of elections in Indonesia (KPU, 2024). However, this representation still does not meet normative standards.30% female candidacy quotaas required by the Indonesian electoral system (IPU, 2023). The imbalance between nomination quotas and electability indicates that the issue of women's representation is not only related to numbers, but also to the political communication processes and strategies that shape the image and public acceptance of female politicians.

Gender representation bias in political communication remains a significant structural challenge.Global Gender Gap Reportshows that the dimensionspolitical empowermentIndonesia has one of the lowest sub-index scores in the gender equality category globally (WEF, 2024). On the other hand, data on female labor force participation is only around5253%Studies show that traditional gender norms still influence women's participation in public spaces (World Bank, 2024). This structural condition impacts various media framings and political communication strategies, which often emphasize women's domestic roles as "mothers of the nation," moral figures, or symbols of family honor, reflecting discursive biases in gender representation.

At the same time, Indonesia's highly diverse cultural context plays a significant role in shaping how political actors communicate and construct gender legitimacy. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) indicates that Indonesia has more than1,300 ethnic groupswith different gender value systems and norms (BPS, 2010). For example, Javanese culture is known for its subtle patriarchal structure that differentiates rolessmooth And country; Minangkabau culture adheres to a matrilineal system which gives more space to women in the social structure; Bugis society recognizes the concept of plural gender including figuresbissu; while Balinese culture understands gender roles within a framework of balancepurushapradhanaWhile maintaining a hierarchical structure, this cultural diversity creates variations in symbolism, honor values, gender roles, and even leadership figures, which are then utilized by political actors to construct locally resonant political narratives.

In practice, political communication in Indonesia is inseparable from the cultural constructions and local symbols inherent in people's lives. The use of traditional clothing, regional languages, local rituals, and even the representation of gender roles embedded in cultural identity are crucial components of political strategies for building image, garnering support, and asserting legitimacy before voters. Therefore, studies on gender representation in political communication need to consider the local cultural context as a key variable influencing how political actors present themselves, how the media frames them, and how the public interprets them. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how local culture shapes patterns of gender representation in Indonesian political communication, particularly within the context of an increasingly competitive and image-oriented political system.

Table 1
Relevant Statistics and Indicators Related to Gender and Culture in Indonesia

Indicator	Key Values/Findings	Source
Women in the Indonesian House of Representatives for the 2019 period	20.5% of total DPR seats	(General Elections Commission, 2019)
Women in the Indonesian House of	22.1% (estimated 128 seats out of	(KPU, 2024)

Indicator	Key Values/Findings	Source
Representatives for the 2024 period	580)	
Quota for female candidates	Minimum 30% female legislative candidates	(IPU, 2023)
Political Empowerment Index Indonesia	The dimension with the lowest score on the Global Gender Gap	(WEF, 2024)
Female labor force participation	52–53%	(World Bank, 2024)
Number of ethnic groups in Indonesia	> 1,300 ethnic groups	(BPS, 2010)
Minangkabau cultural system	Matrilineal (maternal line)	(Britannica, 2024)
Bugis gender concept	Plural gender (male, female, calalai, calabai, bissu)	(UNESCO, 2024)

Source:

KPU (2019); KPU (2024); Inter Parliamentary Union/IPU (2023); World Economic Forum(2024); World Bank (2024); BPS (2010); Britannica (2024); UNESCO (2024)

The table above displays key indicators relevant to understanding the issue of gender representation in Indonesian political communication. Women's representation, which remains below the quota standard, indicates structural barriers in the political arena. Meanwhile, local cultural variations demonstrate that political actors' communication strategies are inextricably linked to the gender norms prevalent in their respective communities. This data reinforces the argument that research on gender representation in political communication must be rooted in a deep understanding of local culture.

Studies on political communication and gender have progressed significantly, but the relationship between local culture and the construction of gender representation remains an area that has received relatively little academic attention. Most previous studies have focused on the national level, emphasizing the dynamics of politics and mainstream media, thus ignoring the complexity of local cultural meanings inherent in political communication practices across Indonesia. Yet, local values such as Javanese patriarchal norms, the matrilineal structure of Minangkabau, or the dual-gender concept of Bugis culture have a significant influence on how communities interpret leadership, the role of women, and political legitimacy. This lack of integration local wisdom as an analytical variable, the existing literature has not been able to comprehensively explain how symbols, narratives and cultural practices influence the process of gender representation in the political communication of local and national actors.

Furthermore, most gender literature tends to emphasize structural representation, such as the quantity of women's representation in parliament or executive positions. This numerical focus has neglected the processual aspects of how gender representation is produced, negotiated, and understood through political discourse. Representation as a discursive process, encompassing framing, identity narratives, gender performativity, and symbolic practices, has not been studied in depth within the context of local cultures. Yet, these forms of communication significantly influence how female and male politicians construct their images in the public sphere.

On the other hand, research in political communication is still dominated by studies that place the country as the primary unit of analysis and rely on data from national media. This approach ignores the role of local media, traditional communication channels, and community-based communication practices, which often have a greater influence on voter behavior at the regional level. As a result, understanding of how local culture interacts with

political communication strategies and how this shapes gender representation remains limited. This research gap is crucial to fill so that the political communication literature is more sensitive to diverse socio-cultural contexts and can provide a richer understanding of the dynamics of gender representation in Indonesia.

This narrative review aims to provide a deeper understanding of how local culture shapes the construction of gender representation in political communication in Indonesia. Specifically, this research identifies cultural mechanisms, including symbols, narratives, rituals, and collective values, that influence how political actors construct and communicate their gender identities to the public. By examining various studies from the perspectives of political communication, cultural studies, and gender studies, this review seeks to construct a comprehensive picture of how gender representation is influenced not only by political and media structures but also by socio-cultural dynamics at the local level.

Furthermore, this study aims to analyze the communication strategies used by political actors to strengthen gender legitimacy through the mobilization of cultural symbols. Understanding these strategies is crucial for uncovering how politicians, both male and female, utilize specific cultural values to construct a leadership image acceptable to local communities. This narrative review also seeks to synthesize relevant theories from various disciplines to build a conceptual framework capable of explaining the complex relationship between local culture, gender representation, and political communication. Thus, this study is expected to provide theoretical contributions, open up new empirical exploration opportunities, and enrich the study of Indonesian political communication from a contextual and culturally based perspective.

Based on the background and research gaps that have been identified, the main research questions posed in this narrative review are: "How does local culture shape patterns of gender representation in the political communication of political actors in Indonesia?" This question was formulated to explore the symbolic, narrative, and performative processes used by political actors to construct their gender identities through reference to local cultural values. It also allows for exploration of how voters and local communities interpret these forms of representation and how these interpretations contribute to the formation of political support.

To support a more comprehensive analysis, this main question can be deepened through sub-questions that explore specific factors, such as the types of cultural symbols used in political communication, the dominant forms of framing strategies, differences in representation patterns across cultural regions, the role of local media in shaping gender perceptions, and the dynamics of gender identity negotiation within the context of local power. Thus, the structure of the questions posed not only provides a clear direction for the narrative review but also opens up space for multi-level analysis that can enrich theoretical and practical understanding of gender representation in local culture-based political communication.

2. METHODS

2.1. Design Review

This study uses a descriptive design.narrative reviewA thematic approach was used to produce a comprehensive synthesis of the relationship between local culture and gender representation patterns in the political communication of political actors in Indonesia. A narrative review was chosen because it allows the author to integrate various cross-disciplinary findings, including political communication, cultural studies, and gender studies, which are methodologically and epistemologically diverse. Unlike systematic reviews, which emphasize technical procedures and quantification of results, narrative reviews focus more on critical interpretation, theoretical interpretation, and argumentative construction. Thus, this approach provides flexibility in exploring complex cultural and political dynamics that cannot always be reduced to numerical data. A thematic approach is used to identify recurring patterns of

meaning in the literature, thus enabling the development of a deeper understanding of how local culture influences political communication strategies and gender representation.

2.2. Literature Search Strategy

The literature collection process is carried out systematically through several reputable databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Garuda. The use of various sources aims to ensure broad coverage of relevant international and national publications. The search process is carried out using a combination of keywords such as "political communication", "gender representation", "local culture", "Indonesia", "cultural politics", and "gender in politics". These keywords were compiled to capture various dimensions of the research, ranging from political communication perspectives, gender construction, to local cultural issues. In addition, the techniques Boolean search used to broaden or narrow search results, for example through "AND", "OR", and "NOT". Additional literature was also identified through snowball technique by searching the bibliographies of key publications, thus enabling the discovery of important studies that did not appear in the initial search.

2.3. Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria were designed to ensure that only articles relevant to the research focus were analyzed. First, only articles that explored political communication in the context of local culture such as Javanese, Sundanese, Bugis, Minang, Balinese, or other indigenous cultures are considered. Second, articles that discuss gender representation, both in political media and through the actions and rhetoric of political actors, are included because they are relevant to the focus on the construction of gender representation. Third, research originating from disciplines such as political communication, cultural studies, gender studies, feminist studies, and political anthropology studies were included because they offer rich theoretical perspectives on the relationship between culture, gender identity, and political practice. With these criteria, the selected studies are expected to provide a multidimensional picture of how gender is represented and negotiated in local cultural contexts.

2.4. Exclusion Criteria

Some publications were excluded from the analysis to maintain the focus of the study. Articles that only measured numerical representation of women in politics. Studies that did not examine aspects of political communication or the construction of gender meaning were excluded because they did not support the study's objectives, which emphasize discursive strategies. Similarly, studies that discussed local culture descriptively without linking the findings to political dynamics or gender issues were excluded because they did not contribute to an understanding of the relationship between culture, gender representation, and political communication. Furthermore, articles that focused on the context of other countries without direct relevance to Indonesia were also excluded to maintain contextual specificity.

2.5. Analysis Procedure

The analysis was performed using thematic synthesis, an approach that allows researchers to group findings across studies into core themes. This procedure begins with a thorough reading of all articles to identify recurring concepts, arguments, and patterns related to gender representation in local cultural contexts. A coding process then occurs to group the findings into four categories of gender representation: symbolic, discursive, performative, and media framing. Symbolic representation encompasses the use of cultural symbols to shape gender images; discursive representation examines how gender is constructed within political narratives; performative representation examines the gestures, actions, and communication styles of political actors; while media framing examines how the media interprets or highlights gender aspects within a cultural context. The next stage is to analyze the relationship between

local culture, political communication strategies, and gender construction, thus producing a comprehensive understanding of how the three interact in Indonesian political practice.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Major Themes Found

A. The Influence of Local Cultural Norms on Gender Representation

A. The Influence of Local Cultural Norms on Gender Representation

The complexities surrounding gender representation within Indonesian society are deeply rooted in its diverse cultural norms, notably exemplified in the Javanese, Minangkabau, Bugis, and Balinese cultural contexts. Each of these cultures presents distinct narratives and practices that frame gender roles, leadership opportunities, and the broader understanding of gender equality and representation.

The Javanese cultural framework, characterized by its patriarchal orientation, emphasizes a duality in norm classifications, notably *alus* (refined) and *kasar* (rough). This dichotomy not only informs social interactions but also governs the domestic roles assigned to genders. In particular, women are often relegated to subordinate positions within the household and community structures, aligning with broad patriarchal norms commonly observed in various global contexts. This pattern appears to stifle women's public engagement and leadership opportunities, perpetuating unequal power dynamics within Javanese society (Elfira, 2018).

In contrast, the Minangkabau society showcases a matrilineal structure where lineage and inheritance are passed through female members. This unique cultural orientation provides significant legitimacy to female leadership, challenging traditional patriarchal norms. Research indicates that Minangkabau women possess considerable authority within their familial and social spheres, often embodying the concept of *Bundo Kanduang*, which emphasizes the matriarch's pivotal role in decision-making processes (Bahardur et al., 2020; Halimatussa'diyah et al., 2024; Azzahra et al., 2021). However, despite this seemingly empowering structure, underlying tensions still exist, with historical narratives often shaped by male perspectives that may obscure the true roles of women (Sriwulan et al., 2023; FAUZA, 2023).

Turning to the Bugis culture, the concept of *bissu* emerges as a notable example of gender fluidity. This recognition of a third gender not only symbolizes gender tolerance but also challenges strict binary classifications of gender roles within the society. The inclusion of *bissu* and their recognized spiritual and social authority underscores a broader, more inclusive understanding of gender that can coexist alongside traditional male and female roles (Abbas & Collins-Gearing, 2014; Pardi & Pageh, 2021). This cultural acceptance of dual gender expressions reflects a nuanced view of gender identity, diverging from conventional patriarchal frameworks.

Bali presents a complex landscape where cultural norms promote a dual respect for both genders, as encapsulated in the principles of *purusha* and *pradhana*, which emphasize balance while retaining certain hierarchical elements. While women in Bali participate in cultural ceremonies and hold positions of influence, societal expectations continue to circumscribe their roles, often limiting them to supportive functions rather than leadership (Coldiron, 2018; Campbell, 2019). The interplay of both equality and hierarchy within Balinese culture illustrates a multifaceted approach to gender representation where cultural tradition and modern influences collide (Suyoga, 2017).

In summary, the interplay of cultural norms across these Indonesian communities significantly shapes gender representation, revealing a spectrum of practices from the Javanese's patriarchal limitations to the Minangkabau's empowering matrilineal society and the Bugis' recognition of gender fluidity. Each cultural context presents unique challenges and opportunities for women's representation, illustrating a rich tapestry of gender dynamics influenced by historical, social, and cultural factors.

B. Political Communication Strategy Based on Local Culture

In exploring political communication strategies shaped by local culture, it is essential to consider various themes, including the use of cultural symbols, gender imagery within cultural frameworks, and the negotiation of gender identity by female politicians through cultural rhetoric.

One prominent strategy is the incorporation of local cultural symbols, such as traditional clothing, regional languages, and local rituals, which plays a crucial role in the political discourse of female politicians. This utilization aids in establishing an emotional connection with constituents, fostering community engagement, and emphasizing shared cultural values. A study on women's political communication in Maluku illustrates this point, indicating that women successfully integrate local values into their communication strategies to advance political agendas and resonate with their communities' identities and traditions (Afdhal, 2024).

Furthermore, gender imagery is pivotal within the cultural framework of political communication, particularly in how female politicians are portrayed. The rhetoric surrounding "mother of the nation" and empowered women reflects traditional gender roles while simultaneously seeking to enhance female representation in politics. This phenomenon is observed among Republican congresswomen, who increasingly invoke their identities as women and mothers in their political messaging, framing their leadership roles as aligned with traditional family values (Wineinger, 2022). This strategic use of gender imagery allows female politicians to negotiate their identities effectively while adhering to cultural norms and expectations, thereby increasing their electability.

Moreover, the negotiation of gender identity through cultural rhetoric is evident as female politicians navigate the complex cultural dynamics within their societies. In regions with distinct gender roles, such as in certain communities in Indonesia, women politicians often utilize cultural narratives to support their legitimacy and authority. For instance, female politicians in a matrilineal society in West Sumatra leverage local customs and community expectations to gain electoral support, reinforcing their political agency (Selinaswati, 2019). The blending of cultural references and gender identity enables them to articulate a compelling vision that resonates with their constituents while addressing the unique challenges women face in political participation.

These strategies underline the critical intersection of culture and gender in shaping political communication, revealing how cultural symbols, gender imagery, and identity negotiation can empower female politicians and enhance their effectiveness in their political endeavors.

C. Gender Representation in Local and National Media

Gender representation in local and national media is a critical area of study, as it reflects broader societal norms and influences public perceptions of gender roles, particularly in politics. This body of research emphasizes how cultural contexts shape media coverage, framing female politicians through lenses that often prioritize traditional narratives centered on honor, morality, and familial roles.

One prevalent theme in the literature is that local media tend to amplify cultural symbols that resonate with local audiences, thus dictating how female politicians are framed. For instance, Andrich and Domahidi highlight that women in leadership positions face coverage steeped in traditional masculine narratives, suggesting that journalists reflect societal gender inequalities rather than showing overt bias against female politicians (Andrich & Domahidi, 2023). Similarly, Greene and Lühiste assert that media coverage of parties' election campaigns is influenced by the gender representation of candidates, emphasizing how the presence of women can alter the media's portrayal and consequently the public's reception of political

messages (Greene & Lühiste, 2017). Furthermore, the analysis of media framing by Shehzad supports the notion that women politicians are often relegated to less serious coverage, overshadowed by sensational aspects rather than their policy contributions (Shehzad, 2014).

Cultural framing also plays a pivotal role in this representation. Studies indicate that the internalization of gender stereotypes within the media facilitates the portrayal of female politicians in ways that align with traditional perspectives on femininity. For example, Brooks and Hayes propose that narratives emphasizing bias against women can paradoxically hinder their representation by reinforcing the perception that they are less capable political candidates (Brooks & Hayes, 2018). The concept of a "paper ceiling" suggests persistent structural barriers even in media coverage (Hayek & Rußmann, 2020). This highlights that local cultural contexts are intertwined with framing practices that reinforce gender stereotypes, necessitating consideration of intersectionality in this discourse.

Moreover, the media's framing of female politicians often intersects with expectations surrounding their domestic roles, leading to inherent bias in how their identities are constructed in public narratives. Both Hayes and Lawless highlight the nuanced challenges faced by female candidates, noting that differential media treatment can slow progress towards gender parity (Hayes & Lawless, 2015). Such biases manifest not only in overt discrimination but also through subtler narratives that prioritize male experiences and capabilities, reflecting a hypermasculine political culture that marginalizes women's voices (Humphrecht & Esser, 2017).

In conclusion, the representation of women in local and national media is significantly influenced by cultural narratives that frame female politicians in restricted ways, emphasizing traditional gender roles and often undermining their credibility in political spaces. The interconnection between media portrayal and societal expectations underscores the need for critical examination of the mechanisms at play in media narratives concerning gender. Addressing these biases is essential for fostering a more inclusive political environment that adequately represents all voices.

D. Patterns of Interaction between Power, Culture, and Gender

The interrelationship between culture, power, and gender is a significant topic in political studies, with various scholars indicating how culture-based gender constructions facilitate political legitimacy and influence electoral dynamics. For instance, Jacobs and Sobieraj discuss the mechanisms through which cultural narratives shape political interests, particularly in the realm of congressional debates, highlighting the importance of cultural persuasion in legitimizing political action and securing voter support for specific political agendas (Jacobs & Sobieraj, 2007). This connection suggests that political actors can leverage cultural symbols and narratives rooted in local customs to appeal to gender identity politics, thereby obtaining legitimacy and votes from the local populace.

Moreover, Frech examines representation and the systemic barriers women face in political arenas, arguing that cultural norms significantly impact women's political careers within the European Union. By revealing how traditional gender roles can be reinforced or challenged depending on the political actor's approach, Frech illustrates how local culture interacts with gender stereotypes, affecting overall participation and representation in politics (Frech, 2024). This dynamic illustrates how cultural frameworks can either empower or restrict gender identities within political systems.

Furthermore, Lombardo et al. investigate feminist institutional responses to anti-gender movements, illustrating that the capacity of parliamentary systems to challenge or reinforce gender constructions is mediated by broader cultural and political dynamics, further emphasizing the role of cultural context in shaping gender politics (Lombardo et al., 2025). This is consistent with the assertion that socio-cultural factors critically influence the construction and perceptions of gender roles within specific communities, leading to varied expressions of

cultural gender norms and their political implications, although specifics on the sources that claim such were not directly available (Khoury & Krumer-Nevo, 2022).

In specific case studies, such as the electoral dynamics outlined by Okegbola, it becomes apparent that electoral legitimacy is intertwined with cultural perceptions of gender and the longstanding patriarchal structures that shape electoral practices (Okegbola, 2023). The findings point to a critical need for understanding how culture operates as a framework for governance and representation, reinforcing traditional gender roles that could hinder diverse political representation.

In summary, the patterns of interaction between power, culture, and gender are underscored by a tapestry of cultural narratives that influence political legitimacy, the construction of gender identity politics, and the reinforcement or subversion of gender stereotypes, all of which are shaped by local cultural contexts and political climates.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Analysis of the Relationship between Local Culture and Gender Representation

The findings of this study indicate that gender representation in political communication is never neutral, but is always influenced by local cultural structures that shape norms, symbolism, and frameworks of meaning for political actors. In societies such as Javanese, Minangkabau, Bugis, and Balinese, local culture functions not only as a social setting but also as a discursive resource which politicians actively use to construct their image, legitimacy, and gender identity. Through the use of traditional dress, narratives about motherhood, spiritual symbols, and an emphasis on honor and collectivity, gender identity is constructed not solely based on biological roles, but through symbols, rituals, narratives, and performativity embedded in each ethnic culture. Thus, local culture shapes how women are positioned, presented, and valued in the political sphere, while also determining the social boundaries that permit or limit their leadership roles.

4.2. Theoretical Implications for Political Communication Science

The interpretation of these findings emphasizes the need to develop an interdisciplinary approach in political communication science by integrating political communication theory, cultural studies, and gender studies. Gender representation in Indonesia cannot be fully explained using Western political communication theories that tend to focus on formal institutions or national media; instead, local cultural contexts have a significant influence in framing gender narratives. These findings strengthen the relevance of framing theory in explaining how media and political actors construct women's identities based on cultural symbols. Furthermore, Butler's concept of gender performativity is becoming increasingly important in explaining how women emerge as political subjects through cultural performances accepted by society. Findings from the Bugis, Minang, and Balinese communities also encourage the expansion of cross-cultural communication theory, particularly in understanding the diversity of political communication practices in non-Western contexts.

4.3. Practical Implications

Practically, this research provides insights for politicians to design more culturally sensitive communication strategies, particularly for women who often face normative constraints in political contests. Understanding how local culture influences public acceptance of gender identity allows politicians to adopt more effective strategies, such as the use of traditional symbols or emphasizing specific cultural values to build legitimacy. Furthermore, political analysts can leverage this understanding to interpret voter support patterns, which are heavily influenced by local cultural norms. For the media, these findings provide a basis for identifying and evaluating gender bias that may arise from culturally based framing, thus allowing for more fair and proportional coverage of female politicians.

4.4. Research Limitations

Despite its important contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the literature explicitly integrating the three main elements of local culture, political communication, and gender representation is still limited, requiring some analysis to draw on stand-alone studies of anthropology, local politics, and gender studies. Second, Indonesia has a vast cultural diversity, so findings from Javanese, Minangkabau, Bugis, and Balinese cultures cannot be generalized to all Indonesian society. Variations in values, norms, and social structures across regions can result in different dynamics of gender representation, not all of which can be captured in this narrative study.

4.5. Further Research Directions

To deepen our understanding of the interaction between local culture, political communication, and gender, future research could expand the scope of this study through political ethnography that directly observes culturally based gender communication practices at the community level. Comparative studies across local cultures could also offer richer perspectives on how each culture shapes different political representations of women. Furthermore, future research should highlight gender representation on social media, particularly as female political actors are increasingly actively constructing their image through digital platforms, which may exhibit different patterns of representation than traditional media.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that local culture plays a significant role in shaping patterns of gender representation in political communication in Indonesia. This representation is not present in a neutral manner, but is formed through a complex interaction between cultural symbols, media framing, political rhetoric, and identity negotiations carried out by political actors, particularly women. The findings indicate that gender representation is not universal; it is always contextual and heavily influenced by the values, norms, and sociocultural structures of each community, such as Javanese, Minangkabau, Bugis, and Balinese. Therefore, understanding local culture is key to understanding how gender identity is positioned, presented, and perceived in the political sphere.

Theoretically, this narrative review makes an important contribution by offering a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between local culture, gender, and political communication in the Indonesian context. This synthesis broadens the scope of political communication theory by incorporating the perspectives of cultural studies, emphasizing the diversity of cultural expressions and power dynamics. Furthermore, this research enriches the Indonesian political communication literature through an approach that prioritizes cultural context, thus providing a foundation for further, more in-depth and comparative research. These findings underscore the importance of developing more culturally sensitive analyses to understand political practices and gender representation in multicultural Indonesia.

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