



“Look, I Have Been Working”: Professional Personalization and Gender Negotiation of Women Politicians on Instagram

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“Look, I Have Been Working”: Professional Personalization and Gender Negotiation of Women Politicians on Instagram

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Abstract

This study examines how Indonesian women members of parliament visualize their political identity through personalization strategies on Instagram. The study employs quantitative content analysis. The research population includes all Instagram posts of women members of the House of Representatives (DPR) for the 2024–2029 term who maintain active and publicly accessible accounts. A total of 98 women legislators have active official Instagram accounts. The unit of analysis consists of single-photo or carousel posts published during the first six months following their inauguration (1 October 2024–31 March 2025). From a total of 5,486 posts, a sample of 1,002 posts was selected using proportional stratified sampling based on each party’s posting distribution. The findings indicate a strong dominance of professional personalization through documentation of official activities and representations of personal qualities as active and competent politicians. Private and emotional personalization are present but appear in relatively smaller proportions, suggesting that these elements are used selectively by women politicians. Meanwhile, intellectual personalization (the articulation of policy positions and ideas) is the least frequently observed dimension. This pattern suggests that women politicians primarily use social media to construct legitimacy through an image of work performance while simultaneously negotiating gender expectations. However, the dominance of activity-based representation without accompanying expressions of substantive ideas may reinforce a form of political visibility centered on performance rather than policy articulation.

Keywords: Political Personalization; Women Politicians; Social Media; Instagram; Content Analysis; Political Communication.

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INTRODUCTION

Women entering politics face stereotypes that are not experienced by male politicians. According to Mechkova and Wilson [1], stereotypes of women politicians operate at two levels. First, stereotypes are related to domains of issue. Women are associated with social issues such as health, education, equality, and family, whereas men are considered more competent in economic, security, and foreign policy issues. Stereotypes are also associated with personal traits like compassion, gentleness, and emotionality. Women are often perceived as being unqualified for leadership positions due to their disconnection from traditionally masculine attributes such as strength, decisiveness, and rationality.

These stereotypes place women in a unique position not experienced by male politicians. When women emphasize leadership characteristics (such as being decisive, rational, and strong) are often perceived as violating gender norms. Conversely, when they maintain feminine stereotypes (such as being gentle, emotional, and compassionate), they are considered insufficiently strong to lead [2], [3], [4], [5].

Women politicians can use social media to counter and negotiate some gender stereotypes by using the social media platforms and the public self presentation strategies afforded by the media [6]. Most women politicians are portrayed in the traditional media derived from the existing gender norms in most of the media stories. In contrast to traditional media, social media are decentralized, allowing women politicians to decide how to present themselves [6]. Via social media, women politicians are able to draw attention to different parts of their identity, and by choosing certain images, writing specific captions, and by telling certain stories about their political activities, they are able to pose as credible political leaders, while also embodying characteristics that are deemed as socially acceptable for her to hold.

In political communication literature, this phenomenon is known as political personalization, defined as the tendency for politicians to emphasize the personal over the party [6]. As political communication increasingly shifts its focus from institutions to individuals, politicians take on a more active role in shaping their own public image through social media. Politicians may present themselves as professionals, emotional individuals, or ordinary human beings, thereby building psychological proximity with the public. In this context, social media grant politicians greater autonomy to manage and curate their self-representation as personal political figures [7].

Van Aelst et al. [6] differentiate between two types of personalization: individualization, which focuses on politicians as key figures in the political scene, and privatization, which draws attention to politicians' personal lives outside of their public positions. Van Santen and Van Zoonen [8] further classify personalization into three dimensions: professional, emotional, and private. In professional personalization, the focus is on competence and performance, whereas emotional personalization centres on building empathy and creating an affective connection, with private personalization focusing on non political aspects of a person's life. In the context of gender stereotypes, individualization aligns more closely with masculine stereotypes, whereas privatization aligns more closely with feminine stereotypes [3].

Numerous studies have examined how women politicians use personalization to negotiate gender stereotypes. Kahn [9] found that women emphasize social issues more strongly. Research by Fox [10] indicates that when women are drawing on personal experience,

they also tend to focus on qualifications and community engagement. Schneider [5] found that women more frequently employ strategies aligned with gender expectations. Banwart and Winfrey [11] observed that women display a combination of masculine and feminine traits. Fridkin and Kenney [12] showed that women emphasize political experience more than family, while Stalsburg and Kleinberg [13] found that women tend to avoid emphasizing family roles. Meanwhile, Dolan [14] and Sapiro et al. [15] found no significant differences between women and male politicians. These findings suggest that women politicians' self-presentation constitutes a site of negotiation between gender stereotypes and the need to build political legitimacy.

Despite the growing body of research on the self-personalization of women politicians, several gaps remain. First, most studies on women politicians' self-presentation have been conducted in the United States and Europe. This study contributes by incorporating the Global South, specifically Indonesia. Most studies focus on Western democracies with advanced socio-political frameworks of gender equality and personalized modes of political communication, leaving the Indonesian political context unexamined. Within the Global South, there are often more rigid and pronounced gender stereotypes, party-centric political systems, and strong socio-cultural norms around women's public roles. These factors may impact the strategies employed by women politicians to create and manage their public personas, resulting in unique forms of political personalization on social media. Second, much previous research focuses on campaign websites or verbal narratives rather than visual social media. This study centers on women politicians' self-personalization through visual posts on social media, specifically Instagram. This supports the notion that visual politics is crucial in contemporary political communication [16], [17]. Through images, politicians can present a more human and authentic side [18].

Addressing these gaps, this study aims to examine how women politicians in Indonesia use Instagram to represent themselves through personalization. What forms of self-personalization are emphasized by Indonesian women politicians? The study focuses on women members of the House of Representatives (DPR) elected in the 2024 legislative election. Of the 580 DPR members, 127 are women [19]. Specifically, this study addresses the central question: how are forms of political personalization among women members of the DPR represented through visual Instagram content?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs quantitative content analysis, a research method that enables the systematic, objective, and replicable identification, classification, and measurement of communication messages [20], [21]. Although content analysis has traditionally been associated with textual data, it can also be applied to the analysis of visual images. As Bell [22] explains, visual images contain identifiable and recurring elements that can be systematically coded and categorized, allowing researchers to examine patterns of representation across large collections of images. In this study, visual elements in Instagram posts are operationalized into observable indicators that capture different forms of political self-personalization. Similar approaches have been employed in previous empirical studies examining visual

communication on social media, such as those by Uluçay and Melek [23] and Liebhart and Bernhardt [24].

One of the primary advantages of quantitative content analysis is the ability to maintain a standard of objectivity and replicability. Other researchers are able to replicate analyses with the same coding procedures and assigned data sets because the coding categories and methods are unambiguously stated. Moreover, the method of intercoder reliability testing is a means of ensuring that visual data are consistently interpreted across coders, thereby minimizing subjectivity of coders [20], [21]. Despite the advantages of content analysis, there are also constraints when its application pertains to visual data. Although content analysis is able to determine the patterns of representation, it is unable to analyze the latent meanings, focus on the symbolic meanings, or determine how the audience engages with the visual imagery. Many times, the visual communication entails meanings that are elaborately contextual or culturally defined, and are very difficult to simplify, or measure [22]. This is the reason the current study aims to identify the visual representation patterns rather than conducting a detailed interpretative analysis of single images.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of all Instagram posts published by women members of DPR of the Republic of Indonesia for the 2024-2029 term. The researcher first conducted a preliminary search to identify the names of women DPR members and then examined their Instagram accounts. Of the 127 women legislators, 98 were found to have official Instagram accounts that were actively used. The remainder either did not have Instagram accounts or had inactive accounts (no posts within the six months preceding the study). The remainder either did not have Instagram accounts or had inactive accounts (no posts within the six months preceding the study). The unit of analysis consists of Instagram posts, specifically single-photo or carousel posts, published between 1 October 2024 and 31 March 2025, a period spanning the first six months after the official inauguration as DPR members. Instagram Stories were excluded because of their temporary nature (24 hours) and limited retrievability.

The selection of a six-month period was based on two considerations. First, the first six months represent a critical phase in which women politicians begin to build and consolidate their political identity in the public sphere. Throughout this time, Instagram is used not only for self-introduction but also to showcase political actions, policy stances, and connections with local constituents. A six-month period offers a wider range of contextual variation, reducing the impact of temporal bias that can occur within a shorter timeframe, such as during singular events like inaugurations or recess periods. In total, there were 5,486 posts from 98 women politicians during this period.

Sampling was carried out using a proportional stratified sampling method, which took into account the distribution of posts across different political parties, to ensure that each party received a sample size proportional to its share of posts in the total population. From a total population of 5,486 posts, approximately 1,002 posts were selected as the sample (Table 1). With this sample size, the sampling error is approximately $\pm 3\%$ at a 95% confidence level [21], [25].

Table 1. Distribution of Population and Sample Allocation of Women Politicians Instagram Posts by Political Party




Political Party	Population		Sample
	Number of Politicians	Number of Posts	
PKS	9	436	80
PKB	12	724	132
PDIP	18	608	111
PAN	6	310	57
Nasdem	15	1,083	198
Golkar	17	954	174
Gerindra	12	996	182
Demokrat	9	375	68
	98	5,486	1,002

Conceptualization and Operationalization

The concept and operationalization of political self-personalization are developed from Metz et al. [7]. Political self-personalization refers to a political communication strategy in which politicians explicitly present their personal identity through social media or other platforms. In the context of social media, such as Instagram, self-personalization occurs when politicians portray themselves as individuals distinct from the party or institution they represent. This may include the use of self-images, personal videos, personal stories, or textual elements that emphasize the individual politician rather than the party or collective. In the context of Indonesian women legislators, political self-personalization can be understood as the representation of politicians in Instagram posts, whether in photo or video form, in which the politician’s personal image and identity are more prominent than the identity of the party or the DPR institution (see Table 2).

Table 2. Conceptualization and Operationalization of Political Self-Personalization in Instagram Posts of Women Politicians

Element Type	Personalization (Politician Prominent)	No Personalization (Party/DPR Prominent)	Mixed (Combination)
Self-Representation in Photo/Video	Photos or videos clearly showing the politician as an individual (e.g., selfies, personal portraits)	Photos/videos showing the politician in a group or focusing on party agenda rather than the individual.	Photos showing the politician as an individual but including party elements (e.g., party logo).
Use of “I” or Personal Name	Use of “I” or the politician’s name in captions or accompanying text.	Use of “we” or party name, focusing on collective identity.	Use of “I” combined with references to party or institution.

Element Type	Personalization (Politician Prominent)	No Personalization (Party/DPR Prominent)	Mixed (Combination)
Visual Emphasis on Personal Identity	Photos/videos highlighting personal activities, such as leisure, socializing, or family life.	Photos/videos focused on official political activities or party meetings.	Personal photos with minor political elements, such as party pins or logos.
			
	Personalization (Politician Prominent)	No Personalization: The politician is absent or the party/DPR is more prominent.	Mixed: Balanced presence of politician and institution, with neither dominant

The researcher develops a framework of political self-personalization used to analyze politicians' self-representation based on Van Aelst et al. [6], Metz et al. [7], and Van Santen and Van Zoonen [8]. In addition to the established forms of political self-personalization (professional, emotional, and private), the researcher introduces a new dimension: intellectual personalization. Intellectual representation functions as a performative strategy through which politicians demonstrate their competence, capability, and credibility as policymakers.

This study identifies four forms of personalization (see Table 3). The first is professional personalization. Professional personalization refers to the presentation of politicians that foregrounds their identity as professionals in their capacity as members of the legislature. This includes visuals showing politicians engaged in official activities or roles directly related to their political duties, such as attending parliamentary meetings, participating in hearings, delivering speeches, conducting working visits, or interacting with constituents in formal political settings. These visual cues emphasize competence, work performance, and institutional roles as elected representatives.

The second type is emotional personalization. Emotional personalization is a presentation style where politicians are shown to engage emotionally, and in a way that would touch the public. This category includes visuals displaying facial expressions or communicative cues that convey emotions such as happiness, anger, sadness, empathy, or solidarity. Examples include smiling or joyful interactions with supporters, expressions of concern or sadness in response to social issues, or emotionally charged messages related to political or humanitarian causes. Emotional personalization therefore focuses on the expression or evocation of affective responses rather than on personal life contexts.

Third, intellectual personalization. Intellectual personalization is a type of focus that places politicians' thoughts, opinions, or arguments on certain issues or public policies. This category includes visuals or accompanying captions that show politicians discussing policy

matters, expressing viewpoints on social or political issues, or presenting arguments supported by references, documents, reports, or statistical data. Examples include images or videos of politicians participating in policy discussions, presenting ideas in public forums, or referring to policy documents or analytical materials. Such representations emphasize the intellectual and analytical dimension of politicians, portraying them as individuals capable of critical thinking and policy engagement.

Fourth, private personalization. Private personalization is a presentation of politicians that shows them beyond their political office as members of parliament. This category includes visuals depicting family interactions, leisure activities, hobbies, religious practices, or everyday social settings that are not directly connected to official political duties. Typical examples include photographs with family members, participation in recreational activities, visits to personal or community events unrelated to parliamentary work, or informal moments in daily life. Unlike emotional personalization, which emphasizes expressions of feelings, private personalization focuses on the representation of personal life contexts and informal social environments.

Table 3. Forms, Visual Indicators, and Operationalization of Political Self-Personalization in Instagram Posts of Women Politicians

Form of Personalization	Visual Indicator	Operational Description	Example in Image/Video
Professional	Reference to Professional Activity	The politician is presented in a context that demonstrates political activity or professional engagement related to their role as a member of the legislature.	Photo or video of the politician speaking in a political forum or official meeting, addressing an audience, or working in an office.
	Reference to Professional Qualities	Visuals showing the politician with professional attributes, such as formal attire (e.g., suit or blazer), party symbols, or being in a meeting room.	Photo or video of the politician wearing formal attire during a parliamentary session, with the DPR building or party meeting room in the background. Video of the politician speaking directly to the camera, using firm language, or demonstrating professional gestures.
Emotional	Emotional Expression	The politician displays facial expressions that indicate specific emotions such as smiling, anger, surprise, or sadness.	Photo or video of the politician smiling while interacting with the public, or a photo of the politician with a

Form of Personalization	Visual Indicator	Operational Description	Example in Image/Video
			serious or angry facial expression.
	Emotional Appeal	Use of visual elements that evoke emotional responses from the audience, such as emojis, heart symbols, or humor in posted images/videos.	Photo or video featuring emoji effects (e.g., hearts) or humorous memes with the politician's expression reflecting a particular mood.
Privatization	Personal Information	Visuals focusing on personal aspects of the politician's life, such as activities outside politics, family, or hobbies. Images or videos that display highly intimate personal environments, such as home settings, bedrooms, or family rooms, to highlight the private dimension of their lives.	Photo or video with family members, on vacation, or showing personal hobbies (e.g., sports, culinary activities, visiting tourist destinations). Photo of the politician at home, in a living room or family room.
	Personal Impression	Use of visual perspective that conveys closeness or intimacy with the audience, such as selfies or images showing more personal situations.	Selfie of the politician with followers or informal photo with close acquaintances conveying a sense of closeness.
Intellectual	Personal Thoughts or Opinions on Issues/Policy	The politician is presented in a context showing that they are expressing personal thoughts or opinions regarding specific issues or policies. The politician articulates their ideas while displaying or referring to sources or data supporting their arguments (e.g., books, reports, statistical data).	Photo or video of the politician seriously discussing a particular policy with a background such as a whiteboard or office setting. Photo of the politician with books or important documents related to a policy or issue, or displaying charts or data.

Form of Personalization	Visual Indicator	Operational Description	Example in Image/Video
	Interaction with Other Ideas (Discussion/Debate)	The politician is presented in a situation of discussion or debate with others holding different viewpoints, demonstrating intellectual engagement with specific issues.	Photo or video of the politician debating with colleagues or members of the public, showing interaction centered on argumentation or in-depth analysis of a particular issue.

Coding Process and Data Analysis

The coding process was conducted by four students who received training on the conceptual framework, operational definitions, and coding procedures. Before the coding process, the researcher conducted an intercoder reliability test to ensure consistency among coders. Reliability testing employed Krippendorff’s alpha coefficient, and all categories used in this study yielded values above 0.80, indicating a high level of reliability [20], [21]. Data analysis was conducted descriptively to identify the distribution and frequency of each type of personalization across the entire sample. The study also performed comparative analysis across political parties to examine variations in visual representation patterns and tendencies in personalization strategies among women politicians from different political party backgrounds.

Ethical Considerations

This study analyzes social media posts published by women politicians on their official Instagram accounts. The research utilizes only publicly accessible posts that are available without any privacy restrictions. In social media research, content produced by public officials (such as members of parliament) can be considered part of the public domain and therefore does not require individual consent from account owners when analyzed for academic purposes [26]. To protect privacy and minimize ethical risks, this study focuses exclusively on content posted by the politicians themselves. Audience responses, such as comments from followers, were not included in the dataset.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study analyzed 98 active Instagram accounts belonging to women members of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) for the 2024–2029 legislative period. The analysis of 98 Instagram accounts reveals that 84.54% of posts featured personalized content, showcasing politicians' individual images via personal photographs and the use of the pronoun "I." Only 7.00% of posts were non-personalized, focusing on collective identities such as party or institutional affiliation, while 8.46% were classified as mixed, combining both personal and institutional elements (see Figure 1). These data indicate that women politicians have used social media accounts (in this case, Instagram) as a means of political personalization. Posts on

Instagram focus primarily on the women politicians themselves rather than on political parties or institutions.

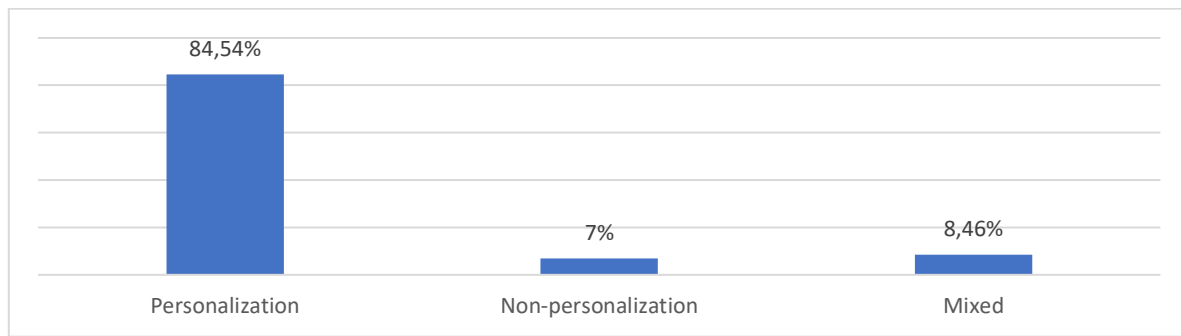


Figure 1. Proportion of Personalization, Non-Personalization, and Mixed Content in Instagram Posts of Women Politicians (N=1,002)

Both Islamic-based and nationalist parties generally demonstrate a strong tendency toward political self-personalization, although variations exist in distribution patterns and proportions (see Figure 2 and Table 5). In this study, Islamic-based parties include the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) and the National Awakening Party (PKB). PKB recorded the highest level of personalization among all parties at 90.61%, while PKS also showed a highly dominant level at 86.70%. This pattern indicates a shift in political communication strategies among Islamic parties, from a movement- or group-centered representation toward a more individualized communication model. Meanwhile, nationalist parties such as the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), Golkar, and National Democratic Party (NasDem) also demonstrate high levels of personalization. Despite their strong organizational structures and institutional identities, women politicians within these parties tend to present themselves more personally in the digital sphere.

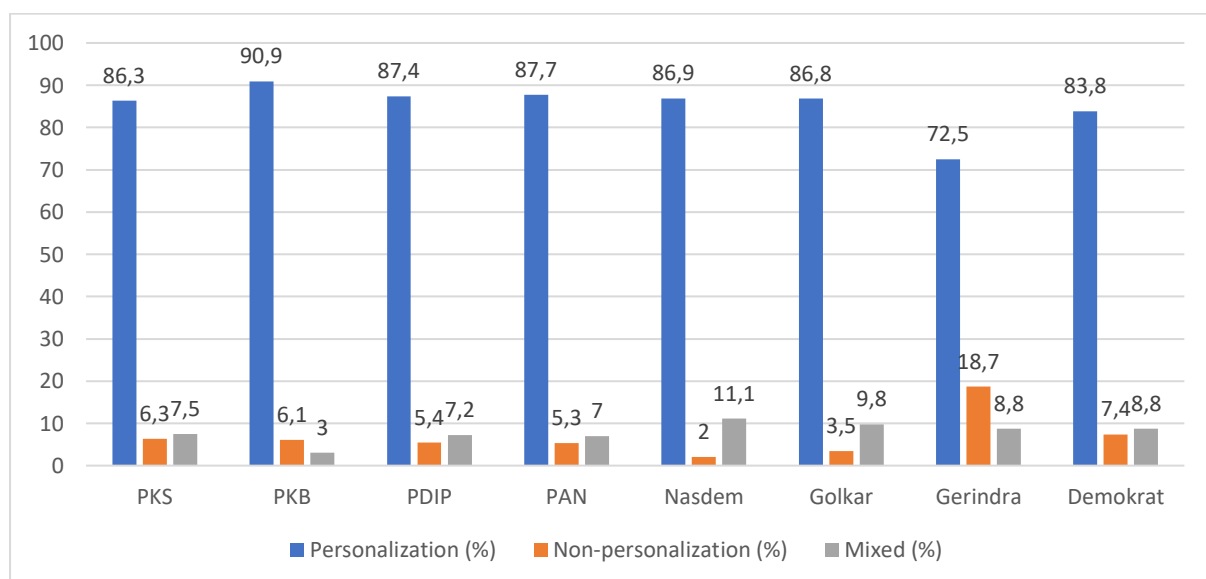


Figure 2. Distribution of visual communication personalization among women Politicians by Political Party

Table 5. Comparison of the Proportion of Personalization in Women Politicians' Posts across Political Parties

Party	Sample		Personalization	Type	
	Number of Politicians	Number of posts		Non-Personalization	Mixed
PKS	9	80	86.25% (69)	6.25% (5)	7.50% (6)
PKB	12	132	90.91% (120)	6.06% (8)	3.03% (4)
PDIP	18	111	87.39% (97)	5.41% (6)	7.21% (8)
PAN	6	57	87.72% (50)	5.26% (3)	7.02% (4)
Nasdem	15	198	86.87% (172)	2.02% (4)	11.11% (22)
Golkar	17	174	86.78% (151)	3.45% (6)	9.77% (17)
Gerindra	12	182	72.53% (132)	18.68% (34)	8.79% (16)
Demokrat	9	68	83.82% (57)	7.35% (5)	8.82% (6)
Total	98	1,002	84.63% (848)	7.09% (71)	8.28% (83)

Analysis of Instagram posts by women members of the DPR shows a strong tendency toward personalization focused on a professional image (Table 6). Women politicians predominantly present themselves as individuals engaged in official activities, such as meetings, working visits, or delivering speeches. Emotional and private forms of personalization are relatively less prominent in comparison. Content related to family life, personal relationships, or emotional expression is used selectively to add a human dimension and foster closeness with audiences. Intellectual personalization (such as expressing positions on policy issues or engaging in public discussion) remains very limited.

Table 6. Distribution of Political Self-Personalization Categories in Instagram Posts of Women DPR Members

Personalization		Number	Percent
Professional	Reference to Professional Activities	378	37.72%
	Reference to Professional Qualities	383	38.22%
Emotional	Emotional Expression	32	3.19%
	Emotional Appeal	13	1.30%
Private	Personal Information	121	12.07%
	Personal Closeness	26	2.59%
Intellectual (Positioning)	Personal Thoughts or Opinions on Issues/Policies	45	4.49%
	Interaction with Other Ideas (Discussion/Debate)	4	0.40%
Total		1,002	100.00%

Analysis of personalization forms among women members of the DPR across eight political parties shows that most women politicians emphasize a professional image. Women politicians from Gerindra most prominently highlight professional activities, while those from Golkar and PKB tend to balance work-related narratives with personal qualities. Women politicians from PDIP display a relatively higher proportion of intellectual personalization compared to those from other parties. Meanwhile, women politicians from Demokrat and NasDem stand out in private personalization (Table 7).

Table 7. Distribution of Personalization Dimensions among Women Politicians by Political Party

Personalization	Category	PKS	PKB	PDIP	PAN	NasDem	Golkar	Gerindra	Demokrat
Professional	Reference to Professional Activities	38.75 % (31)	41.67 % (55)	42.34 % (47)	33.33 % (19)	30.81 % (61)	31.61 % (55)	52.20 % (95)	27.94 % (19)
	Reference to Professional Qualities	38.75 % (31)	34.09 % (45)	28.83 % (32)	42.11 % (24)	40.91 % (81)	44.83 % (78)	39.01 % (71)	30.88 % (21)
Emotional	Emotional Expression	6.25 % (5)	5.30 % (7)	2.70 % (3)	5.26 % (3)	1.52 % (3)	4.02 % (7)	2.20 % (4)	1.47 % (1)
	Emotional Appeal	1.25 % (1)	3.03 % (4)	0.90 % (1)	3.51 % (2)	0.51 % (1)	1.72 % (3)	0.55 % (1)	0.00 % (0)
Private	Personal Information	10.00 % (8)	12.12 % (16)	5.41 % (6)	12.28 % (7)	19.19 % (38)	10.34 % (18)	4.40 % (8)	25.00 % (17)
	Personal Closeness	1.25 % (1)	2.27 % (3)	1.80 % (2)	1.75 % (1)	3.03 % (6)	1.72 % (3)	0.55 % (1)	13.24 % (9)
Intellectual	Thoughts/Opinions on Issues	3.75 % (3)	1.52 % (2)	16.22 % (18)	3.51 % (2)	3.54 % (7)	5.17 % (9)	1.10 % (2)	1.47 % (1)
	Interaction of Ideas (Debate)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)	3.60 % (4)	0.00 % (0)	0.51 % (1)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)	0.00 % (0)
Total		100 % (80)	100 % (132)	100 % (111)	100 % (57)	100 % (198)	100 % (174)	100 % (182)	100 % (68)

From the total posts categorized as personalization, it is evident that the majority of women members of the DPR use Instagram to construct an image as professional figures.

Around seventy-five percent of all tailored content showcases them within the context of official political duties, either through images or footage of official events such as meetings, parliamentary sessions, or working visits, or through storytelling that highlights personal qualities as capable representatives of the public. An example from Ida Fauziyah clearly illustrates this pattern (Figure 3). In the image, she appears in an official DPR forum, actively engaged in a hearing meeting with the board of directors of Pertamina. The accompanying narrative not only explains the context of the meeting but also conveys concern about public anxiety and expectations for service improvement. In this post, the opinions of the woman politician regarding issues developing in society are not explicitly presented; the visual primarily depicts the woman politician (a member of the DPR) attending a meeting. Together, the visual and textual elements construct an image of a politician who is serious, vocal, and directly engaged in policy-related issues.



Figure 3. Example of Professional Personalization in the Instagram Post of a Woman Politician

Professional personalization is the most frequently used form of posting among women politicians (members of the DPR). In general, this type of post primarily displays the everyday activities of women politicians. The typical posts contain information showing that the DPR member has been working, attending meetings, and participating in various activities within the parliament. Through such posts, audiences are not provided with the politician's opinions on particular issues, nor with clear indications of alignment or advocacy regarding specific problems.

Emotional personalization occurs at a notably lower frequency than professional personalization across all categorized posts. Only a limited number of women DPR members use social media to explicitly convey emotional expression or to encourage emotional engagement from their audiences. A post from the account of Netty Prasetiyani Heryawan, a

DPR member from the Prosperous Justice Party (@netty_heryawan), serves as an example of emotional personalization (Figure 4). In this post, the politician does not present herself in the context of legislative work or private activity; rather, she expresses solidarity with Palestine through religious and emotionally charged language. Phrases like "may Allah curse" and "we will stand guard until Palestine recovers" convey a strong emotional intensity, intended to evoke sympathy, moral backing, and a sense of shared values amongst her supporters.



Figure 4. Example of Emotional Personalization in the Instagram Post of a Woman Politician

Interestingly, this study shows that personalization in the form of private content is also used only to a limited extent. In fact, through Instagram, women politicians have the opportunity to share posts reflecting private activities, such as culinary experiences, hobbies, activities at home, and information about family life. One example of this category is a post from the account of Cellica Nurrachadiana, a DPR member from the Democratic Party (@cellicanurrachadiana) (Figure 5). The visual shows Cellica in a *takjil* market setting, selecting popular Indonesian snacks such as *bala-bala* and *cilok*. A casual and emotive caption creates the impression that the politician aims to portray herself as an ordinary member of society, participating in relatable daily activities known to the public. These posts aim to convey authenticity, closeness, and a relatable image, which helps to establish social and emotional connections with constituents.



Figure 5. Example of Private Personalization in the Instagram Post of a Woman Politician

The least commonly used form of personalization is intellectual personalization. This type of personalization holds considerable weight, despite being relatively rare, as it showcases a politician's ability to think critically, reflect, and clearly express their ideological or policy stances on specific issues. A post from the account of Rieke Dyah Pitaloka from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (@riekediahp) can be categorized as an example of intellectual personalization (Figure 6). This post constitutes Rieke's response to the injustice experienced by the music group Sukatani, which reportedly faced intimidation from the police after releasing a song criticizing law enforcement. The post conveys a moral-political stance using a short video and hashtags like #SaveSukatani, #SaveIndonesia, and #viralforjustice, to express opposition to an unjust phenomenon perceived as violating the public's sense of justice. The accompanying caption functions not only as an informative element but also as a normative one, conveying attitude, critique, and a call to advocate for social justice.



Figure 6. Example of Intellectual Personalization in the Instagram Post of a Woman Politician

Discussion

The main finding of this study reveals a strong dominance of personalization strategies in the visual communication of women members of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) on Instagram. Content emphasizing collective party or institutional identity appears only in a small proportion, with the remainder falling into the mixed category. This pattern aligns with the concept of personalization as a shift in political focus from institutions to individuals [6], also illustrating how social media enhances politicians' roles as active producers of self-image through self-personalization [7].

An important question arises: Why does professional personalization appear most frequently? The dominance of professional personalization suggests that women politicians choose a relatively “safe” pathway to build legitimacy. About three-quarters of personalization content depicts politicians as professional politicians, for example, by documenting meetings, work visits, and official meetings. Women politicians use professionalized social media posts to highlight their hard work and competence. By emphasizing visible work performance, such as meetings and official activities, communication on social media may prioritize the display of activity rather than the articulation of policy ideas or deeper political engagement with audiences. As a result, opportunities to build stronger emotional connections or to communicate more substantive policy positions may become relatively limited.

Professional personalization represents an effort by women politicians to balance gender stereotypes with the normative expectations of leadership. Gender stereotypes position women as gentle, emotional, and oriented toward domestic concerns, such as health and education. If these stereotypes were emphasized, women politicians would predominantly present themselves through family-related activities, such as taking children to school or engaging in family-oriented moments. Conversely, leadership expectations require women

politicians to demonstrate the capacity to address public problems. Women politicians would regularly share information about engaging directly with society, participating in public events like protests or demonstrations, and expressing their views on public concerns.

The findings show that women politicians neither reinforce gender stereotypes nor fully conform to idealized leadership expectations. Their posts tend to occupy a middle position. The most common posts by women DPR members are those that depict themselves working, particularly through documentation of meetings and activities within the parliament. Very few Instagram posts show women DPR members engaging directly in the field, participating in community activities, or expressing positions on emerging public issues. By emphasizing the professional dimension, women politicians seek to avoid being perceived primarily through domestic or private roles while also avoiding portrayals that emphasize traditionally masculine forms of political leadership.

Posts associated with domestic or private roles emphasize activities such as family life, hobbies, culinary activities, or religious practice, which correspond to forms of private personalization. These types of posts highlight aspects of personal life that are culturally associated with femininity and the private sphere. In contrast, posts associated with traditionally masculine leadership roles highlight activities such as field engagement, physically demanding tasks, or active participation in public debate. These representations emphasize visibility in the public sphere, strength, and political assertiveness. Women politicians therefore often navigate between these two poles through professional personalization.

Women politicians, as stated by Bauer and Santia [27], must balance their femininity with their capacity for leadership. This represents an effort to counteract the prejudice that femininity is incompatible with leadership by highlighting leadership capacity and professional credibility [27]. The dominance of professional content reflects a trait-balancing strategy in which women politicians highlight competence and performance while selectively maintaining communal feminine attributes through private and emotional content [27].

The smaller proportion of private and emotional personalization indicates that women politicians do not fully pursue privatization as a dominant strategy, even though privatization is often associated with feminine stereotypes and the private sphere [3], [6]. Private content is used sparingly to display an authentic personal side without shifting public perception toward a domestic figure that could reinforce assumptions of incompatibility between femininity and leadership. Previous research indicates that women frequently use a cautious approach, prioritizing family and personal life to convey a sense of competence, and incorporate both masculine and feminine characteristics in their communication methods [11], [12], [13].

Interestingly, intellectual personalization occurs less often than other forms of personalization. A potential reason could be attributed to the communicative logic associated with social media platforms including Instagram, where visual narratives and symbolic political acts are emphasized over granular, micro political discourse. Convincing policies are more difficult to communicate as they would require extended and elaborated explanations, constituting a more complex reasoning than the visual reasoning and brevity demanded by Instagram posts. Therefore, politicians are likely to showcase conspicuous political acts rather than develop substantive policy discourse.

Theoretically, however, this type of personalization has strong potential as a counter-stereotypical strategy to challenge stereotypes about women's competence in strategic policy domains [1], [5]. This finding suggests that Instagram is used more for symbolic image construction than for substantive policy articulation. It also reinforces an implicit message frequently conveyed in women politicians' communication: "Look, I am working." The emphasis on formal activities indicates that personalization primarily functions as evidence of performance rather than as a space for articulating ideas."

Women politicians seek to avoid appearing overly masculine (too assertive) while also avoiding appearing weak. This negotiation through a middle position also reflects the structural context of politics in Indonesia, where politicians remain closely tied to party structures. Law No. 13/2019 (concerning the MPR, DPR, DPD, and DPRD) underscores the continuing strength of political parties, including their authority to recall members during their term. Politicians, including women politicians, must therefore align their positions with party expectations. Selecting professional personalization is the safest course of action, as it enables politicians to showcase their performance to both their party and the voters without taking stances perceived as critical towards the party.

Personalization among women politicians on Instagram can therefore be understood as a practice of negotiating gender stereotypes. The dominance of professional personalization indicates a persistent requirement to demonstrate leadership capability, whereas the modest presence of private and emotional personalization serves as a balancing approach to maintain relatability. The limited use of intellectual personalization leads audiences to recognize women politicians more as figures who "work" than as intellectual actors with clear policy positions and visions. As a result, visual communication that focuses on action without conveying ideas may unintentionally perpetuate traditional stereotypes: women seem diligent, present, and active, but not always as knowledgeable decision-makers or intellectual leaders.

CONCLUSION

This study's results show that women politicians' personalization of their political presence on social media, especially Instagram, is primarily driven by professional representation. Women politicians mainly present themselves as active, competent, and trustworthy individuals in performing their political duties, with many posts emphasizing visible political activities such as meetings, official visits, and parliamentary work. In many cases, the visual message conveyed through Instagram posts can be summarized in a simple yet powerful signal to the public: "Look, I have been working." Private and emotional personalization are present but appear in relatively smaller proportions. Meanwhile, intellectual personalization (the articulation of policy positions and ideas) is the least frequently observed dimension.

These findings have broader implications for understanding political personalization in the context of social media. The dominance of professional representation suggests that women politicians may strategically use social media to demonstrate competence and legitimacy while navigating gender stereotypes in political leadership. At the same time, the limited presence of intellectual personalization indicates that digital political communication often prioritizes visible performance over the articulation of policy ideas. For women politicians, this suggests

an opportunity to further utilize social media platforms not only to display political activities but also to communicate substantive policy positions and political arguments.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations that should be considered for future research. First, the study analyzes only visual and narrative content from Instagram posts during the first six months following inauguration. This timeframe is temporal and does not capture longterm dynamics in political communication patterns. In addition, the dataset includes only permanent Instagram posts (single-photo and carousel posts), while Instagram Stories were excluded. As a result, this study may not fully capture forms of political self-presentation that occur through ephemeral social media features. Future research is therefore recommended to adopt a longitudinal design and to consider incorporating such temporary content in order to examine how personalization evolves across political cycles (e.g., recess periods, elections, or national crises). Second, this study focuses solely on the dimension of self-presentation without evaluating public responses and perceptions of posted content. This restricts comprehension of the effectiveness of personalization strategies in fostering political legitimacy and audience connection. Future studies are encouraged to integrate qualitative netnographic approaches or user-comment analysis to assess how audiences respond to and interpret the images constructed by women politicians.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

"The author declare no conflict of interest."

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The author used AI-assisted technology (Trinka AI) solely for English language editing, including grammar and spelling, to improve clarity and readability. The author takes full responsibility for the content and originality of the manuscript.

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