

## Foreign and Domestic Online Media Representation of Indonesian Minister of Finance: A Feminist Stylistics Approach

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### Abstract

**Background:**

Examination of gender representation and the portrayal of a prominent female public figure in both foreign and domestic online media. By applying a feminist stylistics approach, the study sheds light on the importance of fair and unbiased representation of female leaders in the media landscape, which can contribute to dismantling gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality in society.

**Methodology:**

This study employs a qualitative method to explore the portrayal of gender relations using Sara Mills' feminist stylistics framework, focusing on word, phrase/sentence, and discourse levels.

**Findings:**

The findings reveal that the representation of the Indonesian Minister of Finance in both foreign and domestic news sites exhibit specific yet distinct results, influenced by cultural norms and Sri Mulyani's reputation within Indonesia and internationally. Utilizing the three levels of analysis within the feminist stylistics theory framework, the study uncovers that the minister is addressed fairly and without explicit gender bias.

**Conclusion:**

This study highlights the importance of fair and unbiased representation of public figures in media by examining the portrayal of Indonesia's Minister of Finance through a feminist stylistics approach.

**Originality:**

This comprehensive analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of gender representation in media and highlights the importance of addressing public figures in a fair and unbiased manner.

**Keywords** : Feminist; Media Representation; Indonesian Minister.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The pivotal role of media in perpetuating traditional gendered roles and reconstructing social and cultural characterization of women in various forms of communication, such as advertising, magazines, news, and television series, has long been established. Media's influence on the production, construction, and regulation of "sexual differences" is now widely recognized (Alkan, 2016; Ward, 2016). Women in leadership roles or occupying high-ranking positions often face challenges and stereotypes, with society considering them weaker or inferior compared to their male counterparts.

The underrepresentation and often negative portrayal of women in leadership positions within news media raise several concerns (Humprecht & Esser, 2017; Lammers & Gast, 2017; Seo et al., 2017). In addition, women working in public or political positions often face undue scrutiny of their private lives. Previous research on Sri Mulyani, the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, has primarily focused on her leadership style, achievements, and challenges (Dewi & Rachmawati, 2014; Murtomo & Riyanto, 2021; Riantoputra & Gatari, 2017). While some studies have analyzed her representation in local news through linguistic devices (Haryadi & Suardi, 2018; Hasibuan, 2016), only a few have employed Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis approach (Rafiq, 2019; Triana et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the representation of women in leadership positions is crucial for challenging traditional gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality. When women leaders are portrayed fairly and accurately in the media, they serve as powerful role models for future generations, inspiring young girls and women to pursue leadership roles and break through gender barriers. Consequently, understanding the representation of powerful female figures like Sri Mulyani Indrawati is critical for fostering social change and pushing the boundaries of gender expectations in both local and global contexts (Lee & Park, 2018; Oktaviani et al., 2021; Sinaga et al., 2018).

In light of these research gaps, this study aims to investigate the representation of Indonesian Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani Indrawati in domestic and foreign online news media, particularly focusing on her role as the host and representative from Indonesia in the G20 forum held in the country. Utilizing Feminist Stylistic theory by Sara Mills, this research will analyze Sri Mulyani's representation in both domestic and foreign online media coverage, examining the construction of her personal branding through the analysis of words, sentences, and discourse, as well as the potential social and cultural implications of these portrayals. This comprehensive approach will contribute to a deeper understanding of gender

representation in media and provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by women in leadership roles.

In addition, by employing Feminist Stylistic theory, this research will delve into the subtle linguistic nuances and stylistic choices that may reveal underlying gender biases or assumptions in the media's representation of Sri Mulyani. This analysis will help illuminate the complex interplay between language, gender, and power, highlighting the importance of language as a tool for both reinforcing and challenging gender stereotypes. Ultimately, this research aims to encourage more inclusive, diverse, and unbiased representations of women leaders in the media, contributing to the ongoing struggle for gender equality and the empowerment of women in leadership positions across various sectors and industries.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1 Representation of women as politicians in online news media***

Representation in online media news conveys how reality is created and exchanged in digital news platforms through imagery and language. The online platform gives newspapers more opportunities, such as competing with broadcast journalism to deliver breaking news faster. Suárez Romero suggests that "female under-representation is embodied in a triple dimension: that of the media, that of public opinion, and that of politics itself" (Fernández-Rovira & Giraldo-Luque, 2021). The majority of studies on female politicians' representation in news media believe that the problem is twofold: one is women's news media marginalization in relation to their actual presence as political actors on the national and international stage, and the other is how they are reported when they do receive airtime and column inches (Ross et al., 2020).

### ***2.2 Feminist Stylistics by Sara Mills***

Feminists have also extended stylistics beyond literature to encompass media such as newspapers and advertisements (Mills, 2002). Mills divides discourse analysis into three levels in her analysis: analysis at the word level, analysis at the phrase/sentence level, and analysis at the discourse level. The choice of certain words also represents a specific meaning, so ideology represents a significant role in this regard. The three levels of analysis are described in detail below:

#### ***a. Analysis at The Level of Word***

Linguistic determinism reveals that various structures of language produce different ways for societies to view the world. Furthermore, the language of culture influences how its members perceive the world. The feminists have reasons to believe that the

concept of how language influences our perception is important. Many critical feminist studies of the English lexicon have argued that many labels used by English speakers are inherently employed. Other feminists have written about lexical gaps in the language, which make it difficult to discuss women's experiences because there are no readily available terms in English (Mills, 2002). This level entails the analysis of generic nouns, gendered-lexical items, and address terms.

***b. Analysis at The Level of Phrases/Sentences***

This level is concerned with how phrases and sentences make sense in relation to their co-text, context, usage history, and the background knowledge required to understand them. Meaning is frequently produced through a process that is inaccessible at the literal level of the sentence's individual words. Several points are discussed at this level as follows: ready-made phrase/stigmatization, presupposition and inference, metaphor, jokes and humor, and transitivity choices.

***c. Analysis at The Level of Discourse***

Analysis at the discourse level includes content, the substance of texts, as a negotiation of linguistic components and codes, as well as factors outside the text that influence both how the text is constructed and how we understand what is written. The analysis seeks connections between the words and phrases and the ideology through these textual patterns and structures.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted using the qualitative method. Doing research qualitatively refers to activities in which meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things are all associated with quality (Fossey et al., 2002). The qualitative method incorporates a naturalist paradigm that depicts reality as multiple, heterogeneous, and holistic, and thus cannot be fragmented. Qualitative research is classified as descriptive because it seeks to comprehend the analysis and focus on providing information on cultural phenomena (Santosa, 2017).

The data analysis method used in this study is based on Sara Mills' feminist stylistics framework. Sara Mills has proposed methods for individuals concerned with the portrayal of gender relations to use linguistic and language analysis to create a set of tools that may expose the workings of gender in texts at a variety of different levels (Mills, 2002). The levels include analysis at the word level, analysis at the phrase/sentence level, and analysis at the discourse level.

#### 4. FINDINGS

The results of this research reveal that the representation of Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Indonesia's Minister of Finance, in both domestic and foreign online news media exhibits specific yet distinct portrayals influenced by cultural norms and her international reputation. The following is an explanation of the findings.

##### 4.1 Analysis at the level of words

##### 4.1.1. Gender-specific words

Table 1 Foreign News

No	News site	Address term
1	Reuters (Indonesia calls for G20 joint ministerial forum to tackle food crisis)	- Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati - Sri Mulyani
2	Bloomberg (Divided Over Russia, G- 20 Aims at Food Security, Debt Crises)	- Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Indonesia's finance minister - Indrawati - She
3	Strait Times (G-20 finance chiefs pledge to tackle rising food crisis, but remain split over Russia's role in it)	- Indonesia's Finance Mulyani Indrawati - Dr Sri Mulyani said - She - Dr Sri Mulyani said

Table 2 Domestic News

No	News site	Address term
1	Kompas (Indonesian Minister Projects 20 Percent Rise in Global Food Prices by End-2022)	- Indonesia's Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati - The minister - She - Sri Mulyani
2	Tempo (Sri Mulyani Asks G20 Countries to Tackle Global Crisis)	- Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati - Her - Sri - She - The minister - Sri Mulyani
3	Jakarta Post (G20 host Indonesia calls for joint ministerial forum to fight food crisis)	- Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indarwati - Sri Mulyani - She

The six news sites comprising gendered terms have been denoted fairly. However, there is a slight difference in how online news sites from foreign and domestic address Sri

Mulyani Indrawati as an Indonesian Finance Minister. Below is the comparison from two different news sites.

1. **Indrawati** cited “an alarming increase in risks to food security” wrought by the war in Ukraine and its after-effects, on top of pandemic woes. (Bloomberg)
2. All members agreed that "a lot of attention, and intervention, and policy" is needed to improve and correct the supply disruption in order to address the current food security issues, **Dr Sri Mulyani** said. (The Strait Times)
3. **Sri Mulyani** called to apply all financing mechanisms to save lives and strengthen financial and social stability, especially for low-income and developing countries. (Kompas)
4. The three threats, **Sri** underlined, have led to the rising vulnerability of the debt position of many countries, not only low and middle-income countries. (Tempo)

Bloomberg, one of the foreign news sites, mentions Sri Mulyani Indrawati using her last name, while the domestic news sites such as Kompas and Tempo use the first and middle name of the finance minister. This is in view of the fact that cultural differences are playing a role in the construction of the news. Western culture addresses someone by their last name or within a title such as Dr, which is also related to showing respect. Meanwhile in Indonesia, no matter how distant the relationship between people is, calling names by their first name is not considered rude as long as there are honorifics used when the person is older than us.

#### 4.1.2. Generic Nouns

Table 3 Foreign News

No	News site	Address term
1	Reuters (Indonesia calls for G20 joint ministerial forum to tackle food crisis)	- G20 finance and agriculture ministries - G20 meeting of finance leaders - G20 members
2	Bloomberg (Divided Over Russia, G-20 Aims at Food Security, Debt Crises)	- Group of 20 finance chiefs - Finance and health ministries - The finance ministers and central bank governors - Officials - The person
3	Strait Times (G-20 finance chiefs pledge to tackle rising food crisis, but remain split over Russia's role in it)	- The finance ministers and central bankers - Financial leaders from Western countries - Finance and agriculture ministers - Finance and health ministers - Foreign ministers - Russian officials - Senior officials

Table 4 Domestic News

No	News site	Address term
1	Kompas (Indonesian Minister Projects)	- Members of the major economies

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2	20 Percent Rise in Global Food Prices by End-2022) Tempo (Divided Over Russia, G-20 Aims at Food Security, Debt Crises)	- Finance ministers
3	Strait Times (Sri Mulyani Asks G20 Countries to Tackle Global Crisis)	- Members of Russian President Vladimir Putin's government - Finance ministers - Ministers - A treasury - Russian officials - G20 finance officials - Ministers of finance and governors of central banks

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The gender-free language used in all of the six news sites has been done appropriately as they do not contain any gendered term whether it is to label female or male. Words such as officials, and members are neutral-gender language in which they refer to the representatives of government departments. There is no sexist word or language that appears in all of the news. This finding shows that all of the news writers here focus on the aspect of professionalism of Sri Mulyani, in which her role as Indonesia's minister of finance, and the news is putting aside the fact that she is a woman or female politician.

#### **4.2 Analysis at the level of phrase/sentences**

##### **4.2.1. Presupposition/Inference**

###### *Presupposition in the headlines*

1. *G-20 finance chiefs pledge to tackle rising food crisis but remain split over Russia's role in it (Strait Times).*
2. *Indonesia calls for G20 joint ministerial forum to tackle food crisis (Reuters).*

Headlines in foreign news sites are more lenient to the neutral and broader point of view where they do not mention the actor or person's name in the title. The news cover not only the Indonesian Minister of Finance that calls to fight the food crisis but also the issues which are important to be discussed in the forum of G20 including the Russia-Ukraine war that is still going on.

3. *Sri Mulyani Asks G20 Countries to Tackle Global Crisis (Tempo).*
4. *Indonesian Minister Projects 20 Percent Rise in Global Food Prices by End-2022 (Kompas).*

Unlike the foreign news sites, the writers of the domestic news sites clearly state the actor in the headline. Sri Mulyani Indrawati as the minister of finance and also the representative of the host of G20 held in Indonesia, is explicitly mentioned.

#### **4.2.2. Transitivity Choices**

	Material Process	Mental Process	Relational Process
Doer	2	31	-
Receiver	-	-	-

Based on the collected transitivity choices from all of the six different news sites, the most in number of the process is mental process. The followings are examples of mental processes employed:

1. Sri Mulyani **said** the world was facing alarming global hunger due to war, export restrictions, and the lingering effect of the pandemic. (Reuters)
2. The G-20 discussions have been “very difficult but sometimes fruitful,” Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Indonesia’s finance minister, **said** in opening remarks for the Friday meetings. (Bloomberg)
3. Sri Mulyani **called** to apply all financing mechanisms to save lives and strengthen financial and social stability, especially for low-income and developing countries. (Kompas)
4. The three threats, Sri **underlined**, have led to the rising vulnerability of the debt position of many countries, not only low and middle-income countries. (Tempo)

There are two material processes found in the news texts but only in domestic news sites. Below are the results:

1. *Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati today opened the third meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors of G20 member countries in Nusa Dua, Bali.* (Tempo)
2. *Indonesian Minister **projects** 20 Percent Rise in Global Food Prices by End- 2022.* (Kompas)

The two excerpts were from the headline, and they showed that in domestic news the Minister is also given the position of an actor doing particular actions or making decisions. Quantitatively, material processes were not many, however it does not mean that she has passive roles since the news also emphasizes more of Sri Mulyani highlighting and discussing major economic issues in G20 forum.

#### **4.3 Analysis at the level of discourse**

The different cultural backgrounds signify respect between Indonesia which belongs to eastern culture and the foreign news sites which come from western culture is implicitly represented in the form of addressing Sri Mulyani’s name whether it is her first or last name.

The news from Kompas and Tempo daily's write about the critical sides of Sri Mulyani’s plan to tackle the food crisis. An example of the piece in the news is:

*Sri Mulyani called to apply all financing mechanisms to save lives and strengthen financial and social stability, especially for low-income and developing countries.*

*“A good macroeconomic policy must be maintained to thrive and address this problem,” she said.*

In journalism, direct quotes add authenticity and a more human element to the story since they have a tendency to entice the reader. The quote above exemplifies Sri Mulyani as a figure who is resolute, conscious, giving comprehensive advice or solutions and involving all parties in a coordinated effort.

Meanwhile, Bloomberg, Reuters, and Strait Times keep the neutrality of the news by covering G20 generally and mostly reporting about other official representatives of G20 by only mentioning how Sri Mulyani asked the ministerial forum to secure food supply at a glance.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The portrayal of Sri Mulyani Indrawati, both from foreign and domestic news comprises different representations based on two factors. The first one is regarding the way her name is addressed. This is linked to the cultural norm that is reflected in each news site. Most of the foreign sites come from Europe and the West countries meanwhile the domestic news sites here are located in Indonesia with Eastern cultural norms. Therefore, even for a simple thing such as addressing a person's name in a news text moreover in this context, namely a woman, there is a slight difference but still have the same purpose; as a sign of respect. There is no specific term to address the minister that is attached to gender stereotypes. The generic nouns or gender-free language is also constructed fairly in all of the news texts. This finding confirms [Haraldsson & Wängnerud \(2019\)](#) study about research on gender discrimination in media coverage of female politicians that is different from the past and it becomes lesser and lesser.

The second is related to the framing of Sri Mulyani Indrawati. The domestic news site focuses on the minister in a personal or individual framework by giving reports about her plans and projects ([Juwita et al., 2020](#); [Susilo et al., 2019](#)). and also, how she handled the forum to fight the issue of the food crisis. She is portrayed as critical, and conscious in her role as a leader in uniting the G20 officials to have the same goal and purpose in improving the global economy after the pandemic and amid the war between Russia-Ukraine. They also put Sri Mulyani as the main actor or the news again. However, in foreign news sites, she is represented in a professional framework and not focusing on her personal attributes since most of the topics covered the results of G20's discussion and sources from other officials by quoting their statements regarding the international meeting. Nevertheless, both foreign and domestic news sites showcase Sri Mulyani's big role in G20 in a positive way and not in a gendered-driven manner.

This finding is consistent with the previous study by [Alkan \(2016\)](#) and [Biscomb & Griggs \(2013\)](#) regarding the emerging trend in media coverage of women's representation in terms of quantity that has been changed to more noticeable.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The analysis of the Indonesian Minister of Finance's representation conducted on the foreign and domestic news sites yields specific, yet distinct results based on cultural norms and the reputation of Sri Mulyani in foreign countries and Indonesia. Within the three levels of analysis of the feminist stylistics theory framework, it is discovered that she is addressed fairly and without specific-gender tendencies. This can be seen from the analysis at the level of the word where all of the news sites mention her name using titles or with her first-middle or last name. A little difference is noticed in the use of first or last name and additional title. This is because the culture in the countries of foreign news sites is showing respect for someone by calling them by their last name. The analysis also revealed that there is no gender-specific language which confirms that all of the news sites focus on Sri Mulyani as an Indonesian Minister of Finance and taking her role in the G20 meeting without attaching gender stereotypes to her work or as an individual, rather the address system is constructed based on a professional or political basis. Sri Mulyani Indrawati is portrayed as a figure who is resolute, conscious, and is able of giving comprehensive advice or solutions by accommodating all parties in a well coordinated effort.

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