

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, the figure of woman leaders either visually or textually can be seen in the media discourse. The role of media in representing the figure of woman leaders does not only just give information about their achievements or policies, but also creates a discourse to either construct the image of the figure or bring it down. Media discourses not only reflect social practices; but also contribute to identifying certain phenomena and shaping public opinions and behaviors (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Fairclough, 1995; Habermas, 1989; Koller, 2005; Wu, Xue, Morrison, & Leung, 2012). It means the media has an important role to mobilize people and mould public opinion.

In the current condition, women leaders' images in media are still in their subordinate position. People think that women's existence will always be on their physical appearance. Mills (1988) has found that woman is socially constructed as a marginal position in the text always in the wrong position. In conclusion, it shows that in the news discourse, the social roles still belong to the male domain. This occurs because of the underrepresentation of women in politics and as leaders, causing social inequity and injustice against women. According to Rahmaningtyas et al. (2016), one feature of women's restricted activities in the public domain is their lack of political awareness; this reality is established as a result of the construction of beliefs established by gender role stereotypes, which affects perceptions about women's leadership.

The media's involvement in representing leaders who are still dominated by man's figures contributes to a rising stereotype in society. According to Trijayanto (2018) society still adheres to patriarchal ideology and values, which assume that men are more dominant than women. The presence of media and discourse reinforces the position and stereotypes about women. The media's biased portrayal of women plays an important role in confirming, spreading, and socializing differences and gender inequalities through multi-layered channels of information. According to Yusuf (2004), "media construction is typically considered correct and the reality of media's presentation is accepted as something normal." (p. 354). If the media negatively labels women as weak, consumeristic, and not independent figures, then such a biased portrayal of women will easily be accepted by the public.

Stereotypes about women, as well as new gender hierarchies, give rise to a number of new societal issues. Women, for example, face a variety of challenges because societal beliefs limit their access and possibilities. This stereotype is violence and discrimination against women, and the media industry is a leading propagandist in shaping discourse and campaigning for this stereotype (Trijayanto, 2018)

Discourse about women's figures and women's representation in politics is constructed differently by several media according to their ideological perspectives. Media tends to lead readers to understand a discourse based on the news presented (Mandarani, 2019). Discourse about women's figures especially women leaders aims to disseminate information about public policies and the achievements of these leaders. Nevertheless, discourse constructed in media can be considered to be

political, because discourse is identically related to the political interest of the media. In addition, the image of the leader and information about policy and their achievement is constructive, so it will affect public opinion and contribute to either constructing the image of the figure or bringing it down. Mandarani (2019) adds that media is one weapon for political figures to form discourse. Therefore, the readers should be careful in interpreting the meaning of the news. Since the media not only creates a discourse but plays a part in the production and reproduction of power disparities between socioeconomic classes, majority, and minority groups, as well as men and women, which are represented in news discourse.

Currently, mass media is growing rapidly. News media change from traditional modes by adapting and innovating conventions (Rafaeli et al, 2008). Further, traditional media such as newspapers shift into an online environment by generating new genres. Because online media is more convenient to access, some people prefer to read the news through online sources rather than newspapers. Furthermore, news content in online media not only consists of articles but also includes visual representations such as interesting images to illustrate phenomena and figures in the news text. Visuals provide interpretations to aid in the transfer of meanings or intents, whereas words provide facts and explanations (Berger, 1972). As a result, both visually and textually appealing news plays an important part in grabbing the reader's attention.

One way to attract readers' interest is by resending certain phenomena and important issues, such as political and social issues. The political issue regarding

the representation of presidential candidates in 2024 is one of the important issues which has great demand from the readers. The presidential election, however, is still a long way off. However, several candidate surveys have been released. The media tries to lead public opinion by presenting various political figures who are suitable to be presidential candidates in 2024, ranging from male figures and female figures. Quoted from www.republika.co.id, According to polling organizations such as Charta Politica, New Indonesia Research and Consulting, and Indonesia Political Opinion (IPO), male figures such as Prabowo Subianto, Anies Baswedan, and Ganjar Pranowo are consistently mentioned as presidential candidates for the 2024 presidential election. Meanwhile, quoted from kabarbasuki.pikiranrakyat.com Akar Rumput Strategic Consulting (ARSC) discovered various women's political names, such as Tri Rismaharini, Puan Maharani, and Khofifah Indar Parawansa, from female figures. However, as compared to male figures, the electability remains low.

In general, men continue to dominate women in presidential election surveys. The results of the KedaiKOPI survey conducted between November 16 and 24, 2021, revealed that 65.8% of 1,200 respondents did not want women to be elected as leaders. This situation arises as a result of the patriarchal culture that is deeply rooted in society. Inequality between men and women is common. Gender inequality is a condition where there is injustice or differences between men and women to the point of discriminatory appearances (Amalia et al., 2021). This inequality happens in various sectors, such as politics, economy, society, etc. Thus, the media has a prominent role as the main site to construct discursive gender

identity and maintain dominant gender ideology. In line with that, Hermes (2011) stated that feminist and masculine constructs are part of the prevailing ideology. It is critical to understand how the media portrays gender. Thus, this study tries to expose how the representation of women leaders as social actors is portrayed in the media to find out whether women's position is marginalized in the discourse.

From several figures of Indonesian women leaders in Indonesia, Tri Rismaharini as a social minister and Khofifah Indar Parawansa as Governor of East Java are chosen in this study. These two women leaders which come from East Java the examples of women leaders in politics who are currently in the spotlight of the public. Apart from the fact that these two women leaders have the potential to run in the presidential election, these two-woman figures are also in the same order, in the list of the most powerful and most vocal women in the media. It is proven by the results of the Indonesian Indicator (I2) research that is quoted from <https://rm.id> which shows that these two women leaders are included in the "*Top Influencer*" category of women who dominate news coverage in 5,964 online media, both local and national in Indonesia, with a total of 50 thousand news coverage throughout 2020-2021. They have a long list of accomplishments and leadership experiences, as well as a positive response from society. Therefore, the media gave great attention and is often rumored with various kinds of discourse to the various steps taken by Risma and Khofifah in dealing with cases of natural disaster, and Covid-19.

As an example, the handling of COVID-19 in East Java was marked by a disagreement between the Mayor of Surabaya Tri Rismaharini and the Governor of East Java Khofifah Indar Parawansa. This has been the situation from the beginning of the pandemic, and it is becoming more widely recognized as the number of new cases in the area rises. As a result, the names Risma and Khofifah began to appear frequently in the media. To add, in handling social assistance in Jember, the Minister of Social Affairs, Tri Rismaharini criticized several bank officials because it was found that 8,000 social assistance for the poor affected by Covid-19 had not been distributed. Meanwhile, East Java Governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa checked through the destitute residents of Jember who were not on the list of recipients of social aid. The actions of these two female figures towards the handling of social assistance in Jember attracted public attention, and various discourses appeared in the media, for instance, to build a good image as a step and preparation for the 2024 presidential election. Consequently, the media's portrayal of a social actor, particularly a figure of women leader will impact public perception. As we know, news tends to be manipulated by some people to control people because news shapes public opinions (Bonyadi, 2010). Therefore, readers must be extremely careful in interpreting the meaning of the discourse presented in the news.

The social actors in the news can be represented as they are, but there is a hidden meaning or ideology in involving them, so readers are unaware and only focus on the information and events given in the news. This needs to be revealed in depth through critical discourse analysis. The way media represents social actors

and action certainly is related to the CDA approach. Critical Discourse Analysis is used to expose how social actors in this case the figure of Risma and Khofifah are presented in online media *rakyat merdeka*. This allows the public to find out how women leaders are portrayed in the media, whether they are marginalized or get the same position as male figures.

Van Leeuwen is a Critical Discourse Analysis scholar who developed the concept of a sociosemantic approach to revealing the representation of social actors in the text. Social Actor Representation (SAR) proposed by van Leeuwen (2008) is one of the ways to uncover the intended meaning or perspective behind a certain text, for example, an online news article. Van Leeuwen's CDA model seeks to identify and investigate how a group or individual is marginalized in his or her position in discourse. This approach considers the various ways in which social actors can be represented, as well as the sociological and critical significance of these representations and how they are realized linguistically (van Leeuwen, 2008). There are two components in van Leeuwen's CDA model: the expenditure process (exclusion), which is the disregard of the parties involved in the discourse, and inclusion, which is how the people involved in the discourse are presented. Furthermore, Van Leeuwen's paradigm of visual representation of social actors (2008) is also utilized to examine how social actors, in this case, Risma and Khofifah, were portrayed through the picture in *rakyat merdeka*.

Rakyat Merdeka was chosen as the object of the research because *rakyat merdeka* is one of the online media that prioritizes news about politics according to

its slogan "*Political News Leader*" which implies that the daily aims to be at the forefront of political news. Rakyat merdeka is appropriate online media for this study, because it contains political updates, such as issues of political figures, government actions, and political parties. In addition, rakyat merdeka is one of the Indonesian national newspapers which was founded in April 1997 in Jakarta. This newspaper is part of the Jawa Pos which contains news about political and social events, especially since the beginning of the reform era in Indonesia. The daily prioritizes political news as its main focus and publishes more than 150,000 copies daily. In 2005, Rakyat Merdeka Group published an online newspaper called Rakyat Merdeka Online (RM.id) which managed to capture 50 million clicks per month. It is suitable for this study, since this study aims to investigate any visual or verbal distinctions between the representations of Risma and Khofifah as two women figures who become women leaders in Indonesia and come from opposing political parties. Van Leeuwen's model's critical discourse analysis will be used to investigate how these two social actors are presented in the news that is published by *rakyat merdeka*.

Many recent studies have focused on women's representation in media. Prior studies examined how women's positions are represented in online news media (Rafiq, 2019; Evianda, et al., 2019; Trianan et al., 2021; Risdaneva; 2017). Prior studies also discussed how the media represents women in the media of business and advertisement (Power, et al., 2019; Alkan, 2016; Shuo et al., 2014; Mendrofa, 2020). In addition, another study conducted by Kabgani (2013) examined how media represents Muslim Women in Non-Islamic Media. In relation

to the political field, some scholars investigated women's representation related to their power in political elections (Ahlstran, 2018; Badara & Jamiluddin, 2020; Mandarani, 2019). Another study conducted by Ghajarieh & Salami (2021) investigated Gendered social actors' representations within the subversive discourse of equal educational chances for men and women. Sarani and Kord (2018); investigate how social actors are represented in EFL textbook in relation to visual actor representation.

Based on various studies on women's portrayal in the media, a topic about the representation of the figure Risma and Khofifah has never been studied before, especially by using critical discourse analysis of Leeuwen's model. As a result, the current study aims to expose how social actors are represented in two ways (linguistic & visual), whether it is marginalized or to be the center of attention in media discourse. The writer tries to see further, how journalists present or explain the actors in the media discourse, and whether there is a powerful element so that there are groups of actors that are marginalized in the news. It is very important to analyze, because media discourse can lead readers' minds in constructing certain figures or even changing their views in choosing a presidential candidate.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Based on the background of the study above, the following questions are formulated:

1. How is the figure of Tri Rismaharini as a social actor represented in the news?
2. How is the figure of Khofifah Indar Parawansa as a social actor represented in the news?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In line with the research problems above, this study has the following objectives:

1. To analyze how the figure of Tri Rismaharini as a social actor is represented in the news
2. To analyze how the figure of Khofifah Indar Parawansa as social actor is represented in the news.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to contribute theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study may help develop the understanding of Critical Discourse Analysis of Van Leeuwen's model in revealing the representation of social actor in the text and image, especially in online news media, and provide new knowledge for researchers who are interested in conducting a correlated further study.

Practically, this research is expected to add reader's knowledge about the strategies used by the media in representing certain figures whether it is included or excluded from the news. In addition, the readers are also expected to get further information regarding the figure of Khofifah and Risma as women leader in Indonesia. The readers also are able to find out how women's position as political figures are represented in the news, whether it is marginalized or even being special in the news. Furthermore, the findings of this study may be valuable in raising readers' awareness of news presented by the media.