Sharia, Gender Politics, and Public Discourse: Media Representation of Female Royal Leadership in Yogyakarta

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Abstract:

This article examines how two mainstream Indonesian newspapers—Kompas and Republika—construct competing discourses around the prospect of female royal leadership in the Yogyakarta Sultanate. Focusing on the 2015 succession controversy triggered by Sultan Hamengku Buwono X's decision to open the throne to his eldest daughter, the study investigates how media narratives invoke Islamic law, royal tradition, and gendered authority. Using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis, the article analyses news reports and opinion pieces published between March and May 2015 to uncover how linguistic choices, sources, and intertextual references are mobilised to legitimise or contest a woman's claim to the throne. The findings show that Republika frames the issue through a conservative Sharia-based perspective, emphasising religious orthodoxy and patriarchal norms. On the other hand, Kompas adopts a more pluralist and constitutionalist framing that normalises female leadership as congruous with democratic and cultural change. The primary argument advanced in this article is that the core site of contention is not Islamic law per se, but the way Sharia is selectively interpreted and circulated through media discourse to support competing hegemonic projects concerning gender and authority. Theoretically, the study demonstrates that media discourse serves as a critical arena in which Sharia,

gender authority, and cultural legitimacy are negotiated, thereby making an essential contribution to Islamic legal studies and critical media analysis.

Keywords: Islamic law; gender politics; female leadership; media discourse; Yogyakarta Sultanate

Introduction

The governance structure of the Special Region of Yogyakarta in Indonesia presents an exceptional case in the intersection of monarchy and democracy. Governed by Law No. 13/2012 concerning Yogyakarta's Special Autonomy, the Governor of Yogyakarta is not publicly elected but appointed based on hereditary succession within the Sultanate.[1] The Sultan thus serves as both a traditional monarch and a regional head under the Republic, allowing the Sultan of the Yogyakarta Palace to also serve as the province's governor.[2] The controversy surrounding royal succession intensified in 2015 when Sultan Hamengku Buwono X amended his regnal title, removing Islamic honorifics such as "*khalifatullah*", and designated his eldest daughter, Princess GKR Mangkubumi, as heir apparent. This symbolic and political manoeuvre was met with opposition from his male relatives, sparking public debate. This issue primarily departed from a long-standing patriarchal lineage that regards male succession as normative and religiously legitimate.[3]

Based on the history of Islamic Mataram, every change of power at the Yogyakarta Palace has always been accompanied by conflicts over the throne and clashes among various interests. This has affected people outside the palace, as seen during the split of Islamic Mataram into four kingdoms.[4] In the context of the current succession in the Yogyakarta Palace, Safitri mentioned that what is happening in the political dynamics of the Yogyakarta Palace today occurred during the reign of Sri Sultan HB V before his succession. Sultan HB V had no male heir to succeed him at that time. His first queen, G.K.R. Kencono, had no sons, while his second queen, G.K.R. Sekar Kedaton, was pregnant and had not yet shown signs of childbirth. Therefore, for the first time, the throne was handed over to Sultan HB V's younger brother, Raden Mas Mustojo.[5] On July 15, 1855, Sultan HB VI crowned Raden Mas

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[1] Muhammad Anwar Hidayat, "Women ' s Rights to Become Leaders of The Yogyakarta Sultanate Perspective of A Modern Democratic State," *Peradabab Journal of Law and Society* 1, no. 2 (2022): 133–45, https://doi.org/10.59001/pjls.v1i2.43.

[2] Ratnawati and Purwo Santoso, "Gender Politics of Sultan Hamengkubuwono x in the Succession of Yogyakarta Palace Gender Politics of Sultan Hamengkubuwono x in the Succession of Yogyakarta Palace," *Cogent Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1976966.

[3] Muflikhatul Khoiroh and Abd Syakur, "The Flexibility of Islamic Law in the Ganjur Tradition in Lamongan Indonesia," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 23, no. 2 (2023): 139–59, https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v23i2.139-159.

[4] Ilmiawati Safitri, "Keraton Yogyakarta Masa Lampau Dan Masa Kini: Dinamika Suksesi Raja-Raja Jawa Dan Politik Wacana 'Raja Perempuan,'" *Indonesian Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (2019): 44, https://doi.org/10.14710/ihis.v3i1.4850.

[5] Susilo Harjono, *Kronik Suksesi Keraton Jawa 1755 - 1989* (Yogyakarta: Research Centre for Politics and Goverment UGM, 2012).

Mustojo the next king. [6] Although Sultan HB VI was not the biological son of the previous king, he received full support from the nobility in Yogyakarta.

While studies on Islamic leadership and media representation in Indonesia have proliferated, a gap remains in critically examining how gendered Islamic authority is discursively contested in media spaces, particularly in semi-monarchical settings like Yogyakarta. For instance, research by Subagyo,[7] which described the appointment of G.K.R. Pembayun as G.K.R. Mangkubumi through *Dhawuh Raja,* subtly challenges traditional interpretations of Islamic inheritance and leadership norms, which have historically favoured male succession. The study by Nasionalita and Nugroho[8] explored media framing in local political conflicts, but did not foreground gender or Islamic law as primary analytical categories. Meanwhile, Ida[9] highlighted gendered dynamics in the Javanese royal court but lacked an analytical framework on media discourse.

This study bridges that gap by integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and gender theory, focusing on Sharia to understand how ideologies are constructed and negotiated in media texts. The study also analyses Sultan HB X's repositioning of female authority within a Javanese-Islamic framework, blending cultural tradition with a progressive reimagining of gender roles in royal governance. At the core of this controversy lies a profound legal and cultural anxiety: can a female legitimately succeed to Islamic royal leadership in a context where kingship also implies religious authority? The Sultan's decision further prompted questions about the interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law) regarding female leadership, as well as broader contestations around gender equality and dynastic politics. Simultaneously, the media played a pivotal role in constructing competing public narratives, either supporting the Sultan's progressive stance or upholding traditional, male-dominated views.

This study employs Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) because it demonstrates an analytical capacity to link textual structures with broader ideological and socio-cultural formations. CDA investigates linguistic patterns and examines how discourse reproduces and challenges power relations within society.[10] In the context of debates on Islamic law and female leadership, CDA provides a robust framework for uncovering how the media construct religious legitimacy,

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[6] Retno Setyowati, "Sabda Raja against Paugeran Lanang : Quest for Gender Equality in Yogyakarta Kingdom," in *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Gender Equality and Ecological Justice*, ed. Darmawan Napitupulu, Rahmat Hidayat, and Dahlan Abdullah (EAI, 2019), https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.10-7-2019.2299315; Mohd Anuar Ramli et al., "The Quest for Third Gender Equality: Challenges and Implications for Islamic Law and Muslim Women's Sustainability in Malaysia," *AHKAM : Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 24, no. 2 (December 2024): 295–310, https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v24i2.37746.

[7] Arie Subagyo, "Jejak Kuasa Dalam Sabda Raja Dan Dhawuh Raja ; Tinjauan Analisis Wacana Kritis," *International Seminar Language Maintenance and Shift V* (Semarang), Master Program in Linguistics, Diponegoro University, 2015, 350–54.

[8] Kharisma Nasionalita and Catur Nugroho, "Media Agenda on Yogyakarta Sultanate Succession," *Jurnal Kajian Jurnalisme* 4, no. 1 (2020): 61, https://doi.org/10.24198/jkj.v4i1.24071.

[9] Rachmah Ida, "The Construction of Gender Identity in Indonesia; Between Cultural Norms, Economic Implications, and State Formations," *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik*, no. 1 (2001): 21–34.

[10] K C Schrøder, "Media: Pragmatics," in *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics (Second Edition)*, ed. Keith B T - Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics (Second Edition) Brown (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), 623–31, https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/00354-0.

gendered authority, and ideological contestation. Conventional Islamic legal approaches (fiqh) tend to focus more on textual interpretation and juristic authority, yet they rarely account for how media shape public understanding of Sharia-related issues. Therefore, this study offers an interdisciplinary contribution by situating Islamic legal debates within the discursive practices of mainstream media.

More recent scholarship emphasises the fluidity of Islamic legal interpretations on female leadership. Islamic history includes precedents of female authority,[11] yet media and legal discourses in Muslim-majority societies often re-inscribe patriarchal norms.[12] In Southeast Asia, the regional specificity of Islamic legal pluralism shows that local traditions frequently shape the implementation and perception of Sharia.[13] Islamic legal pluralism in Indonesia is marked by the strategic deployment of Sharia, where local governments exploit religious legitimacy amid legal ambiguities to entrench power, often amidst the absence of clear judicial recourse.[14] In the context of Sharia law and women, Geertz's[15] ideas regarding "*abangan*," "*santri*," and "*priyayi*" give an understanding that Islam in Java is not always applied in the context of formal law (fiqh or normative Sharia) but through social traditions and customs, including in terms of gender relations.[16] Islamic law, as it applies to the lives of Javanese women, is not formalistic but integrated into customs and cultural symbols influenced by male elites.

Dewi's study[17] reveals how Islam, once considered a restrictive force for women's autonomy, has evolved into a platform for liberation and empowerment, particularly through reformist movements such as Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah, which opened up educational and public spaces for women. Dewi's research focuses more on the history of Javanese women and socio-religious transformation, without exploring how Islamic symbols (such as the hijab or religious titles) are publicly and politically debated and negotiated in contemporary discourse, as shown in research on gender discourse and Sharia. These works collectively support the need to situate

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[11] Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, Fourth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Ahmad Annizar, Zainul Fuad, and M. Syukri Albani Nasution, "Identity Politics and Prospective Leader Selection: A Perspective from Fiqh Siyasah," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mizani: Wacana Hukum, Ekonomi Dan Keagamaan* 11, no. 1 (April 2024): 150–70, https://doi.org/10.29300/mzn.v11i1.3445; Muhammad Rikza Muqtada et al., "Fiqh Contestation on Women's Public Leadership in Indonesia and Malaysia: Reproducing Qur'anic and Hadith Interpretations," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 19, no. 1 (June 2024): 221–48, https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v19i1.13163.

[12] Margot Badran, "An Historical Overview of Conferences on Islamic Feminism : Circulations and New Challenges," *Féminismes Islamiques* 128 (2010), https://doi.org/10.4000/remmm.6566.

[13] Afiya Shehrbano Zia, "' My Body , Allah ' s Choice ': Islamic Laws and Sexual Autonomies in Pakistan," *Australian Journal of Asian Law* 23, no. 2 (2022): 95–110, https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/agispt.20230124082363.

[14] Daniel Peterson, "The Longevity of Perda Syari ' Ah in Post-Soeharto Indonesia Revival of Political Islam Post-Soeharto Islamic Identity or Political Expediency ?," *Australian Journal of Asian Law* 25, no. 1 (2024): 39–53, https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.T2024100100000891520806046.

[15] Clifford Geertz, *Agama Jawa; Abangan, Santri, Priyayi Dalam Kebudayaan Jawa* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2014).

[16] Kurniawati Dewi, "Javanese Women and Islam: Identity Formation since the Twentieth Century," *Southeast Asian Studies* 1, no. 1 (April 2012): 109–40, https://doi.org/10.20495/seas.1.1_109.

[17] Dewi.

Indonesian cases like Yogyakarta within a transregional, comparative framework of Islamic governance and gender.

This study advances the work of Nasionalita and Nugroho,[18] who explored media agenda-setting on the Yogyakarta succession but did not analyse gendered Islamic discourse. This research expands the analytical scope by comparing two ideologically different newspapers and incorporating Sharia as a central framework. Al-Qahtani's analysis of Saudi media representations of women's rights[19] demonstrates the integration of CDA into Islamic legal discourse, showing that CDA is increasingly used to bridge media discourse with Islamic legal debates; hence, this study builds upon and extends these scholarly contributions.

Within Indonesia itself, debates about female leadership, particularly in religious or customary contexts, remain contentious. According to the Wahid Foundation,[20] public acceptance of women in political office has increased, yet resistance persists when female authority intersects with religious symbolism.[21] This is evident in reactions to the Sultan's decision, where media such as Republika invoked Islamic conservatism to question the legitimacy of female succession, while Kompas framed it as a step toward pluralism and cultural resilience. Statistical data from Komnas Perempuan[22] shows that while Indonesia has made significant strides in gender equality, cultural and religious institutions continue to be male-dominated.[23] This structural barrier is compounded by the media's framing of such issues. Studies by Iyer and Luke [24] and Pajnik and Smerdelj[25] demonstrate that media discourse often reproduces gender biases, subtly reinforcing patriarchal ideologies through language and representation. However, no existing research has systematically analysed how such media discourses interact with interpretations of Islamic law in the context of royal succession.

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[18] Nasionalita and Nugroho, "Media Agenda on Yogyakarta Sultanate Succession."

[19] Abdulaziz Al-qahtani, *Navigating Modernity and Tradition : A CDA of Saudi News Articles on Women ' s Rights*, no. September (2025): 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251365752.

[20] Wahid Foundation, "Perkuat Peran Perempuan Dalam Pencegahan Ekstremisme, Wahid Foundation Gelar Pelatihan Pencegahan Ekstremisme Kekerasan Dan Literasi Hukum Untuk Pokja Desa / Kelurahan Damai Di Jawa Tengah," Wahidfoundation.Org, 2025, 1–6, https://wahidfoundation.org/news/detail/Perkuat-Peran-Perempuan-dalam-Pencegahan-Ekstremisme-Wahid-Foundation-Gelar-Pelatihan-Pencegahan-Ekstremisme-Kekerasan-dan-Literasi-Hukum-untuk-Pokja-Desa-Kelurahan-Damai-di-Jawa-Tengah.

[21] Radhina Fasya Tazkianida, "The Contribution of Empowered Women Programs in Promoting Gender Equality for Sustainable Development Goals," *Social, Ecology, Economy for Sustainable Development Goals Journal* 2, no. 2 (2025): 158–72; Wahyuni Retno Wulandari et al., "Inheriting Inequity: A Comparative Legal Dissection of Gender Discrimination in Indonesian Inheritance Law," *Volksgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum Dan Konstitusi*, June 30, 2025, 285–307, https://doi.org/10.24090/volksgeist.v8i1.12994.

[22] Perempuan Komnas, *Catatan Tahunan Komnas Perempuan Tahun 2023* (2024).

[23] Komnas.

[24] Radha Iyer and Carmen Luke, "Gender Representations in the Media and the Importance of Critical Media Literacy Dr . Radha Iyer School of Cultural and Language Studies in Education Faculty of Education Queensland University of Technology Victoria Park Road Kelvin Grove," in *Handbook of Research in the Social Foundations of Education* (Taylor & Francis, 2011), 434–49.

[25] Rok Smrdelj and Mojca Pajnik, "Intersectional Representation in Online Media Discourse : Reflecting Anti-Discrimination Position in Reporting on Same-Sex Partnerships," *Gender, Technology and Development* 26, no. 3 (2022): 463–84, https://doi.org/10.1080/09718524.2022.2144100.

This study adopts Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which conceptualises discourse simultaneously as text, discursive practice, and social practice.[26] To sharpen the critical orientation, the study also draws on Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony,[27] highlighting how dominant groups maintain leadership not only through coercion but also through the production of "common sense" in civil society. Media discourse is thus treated as an arena in which competing actors attempt to naturalise their vision of Islamic gender norms and political authority as the taken-for-granted truth. Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse as a form of power/knowledge further informs the analysis:[28] news narratives on female royal leadership are approached as the regimes of truth that regulate what may be thinkable or sayable about women's authority under Sharia. Finally, Clifford Geertz's[29] insights on Javanese Islam and the entanglement of religious and cultural symbolism provide a cultural insight for interpreting the specific meanings embedded in royal titles such as *Khalifatullah* and *Sayidin Panatagama* within the Yogyakarta context.

This research, therefore, seeks to explore how Indonesian mainstream media construct discourses on female Islamic leadership in the context of royal succession in Yogyakarta. The primary argument advanced in this study is that media discourses surrounding female royal leadership in Yogyakarta serve as arenas of ideological contestation, where interpretations of Sharia, gender roles, and cultural identity are strategically negotiated. Furthermore, it reveals that female leadership within Islamic institutions, particularly when mediated through royal symbols and political office, remains a contested terrain, shaped by competing claims to authenticity, tradition, and modernity.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design with a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework based on the model developed by Norman Fairclough, including textual analysis, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice.[30] The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is particularly suited to examining how power, ideology, and hegemony are embedded in language and how texts function within broader socio-political contexts.[31] [32] The method is applied to reveal how media discourse constructs, negotiates, and contests meanings surrounding Islamic leadership, gender authority, and cultural legitimacy in the case of Yogyakarta's

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[26] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis : The Critical Study of Language* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2010).

[27] A. Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals and the State," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, a Reader* (2006).

[28] Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," in *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* (2008), https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470776407.ch20.

[29] Geertz, *Agama Jawa; Abangan, Santri, Priyayi Dalam Kebudayaan Jawa*.

[30] Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Policy Studies," *Critical Policy Studies* 7, no. 2 (2013): 177–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2013.798239.

[31] Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, Second Edi (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[32] Junfang Mu, Hongyue Zhao, and Guang Yang, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Reports about China on the COVID-19 Pandemic in The New York Times," *OALib* 08, no. 08 (2021): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1107746.

royal succession. Compared to van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, which prioritises mental representations,[33] or Wodak's discourse-historical approach, which emphasises long-term historical trajectories,[34] Fairclough's framework is chosen here because it foregrounds the dialectical relationship between discourse and social change. This emphasis aligns with the article's focus on shifting interpretations of Islamic authority and gender in contemporary Indonesia.

Data and Sampling

The primary data for this study consist of news texts from two Indonesian newspapers—Kompas and Republika. These sources were chosen for their ideological diversity, national or local reach, and their active coverage of the Yogyakarta royal succession discourse during the critical period between March and May 2015. Kompas and Republika were selected based on their contrasting ideological orientations. Kompas is a mainstream national newspaper rooted in pluralist, secular-national values, historically guided by Jakob Oetama's editorial philosophy of inclusivity and neutrality.[35] Republika was founded within the intellectual circles of ICMI and is widely recognised as a Muslim-oriented newspaper that represents moderate-to-conservative Islamic viewpoints. This ideological diversity provides a comprehensive comparative field for analysing discursive constructions of Islamic leadership and gender. The period of March–May 2015 was chosen because it marks the peak of public controversy following the Sultan's issuance of the Sabda Raja, which opened the possibility of female succession. Despite being a decade old, the case remains socially and politically relevant, as debates about female Islamic leadership and the symbolic authority of the Yogyakarta Sultanate continue to re-emerge in public discourse.

The selected corpus includes 34 news articles—20 from Kompas and 14 from Republika. These articles cover a range of topics relevant to the royal succession debate, including: the issuance of the "Sabdatama" and "Sabda Raja", public and familial opposition to female leadership, interpretations of Islamic leadership norms, and legislative debates on gubernatorial eligibility. Articles were sourced from the official digital and physical archives of the respective newspapers, as well as from national news aggregators and the Indonesian press database (e.g., Perpusnas and Monumen Pers Solo). The inclusion criteria were based on the following: (1) Articles published between March 1 and May 31, 2015; 9; (2) Articles that specifically addressed the issue of royal succession, female leadership, Islamic legitimacy, or reactions to the Sultan's title change; (3) News in the format of hard news, editorials, or opinion pieces (excluding advertisements or unrelated cultural features). Each article was catalogued and coded thematically using a content analysis protocol to identify key discursive features, ideological framings, and actor representation.

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[33] Teun A. Van Dijk, "Discourse and Manipulation," *Discourse and Society* 17, no. 3 (2006): 359–83, https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926506060250.

[34] Ruth Wodak, *Gender and Discourse*, in *The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Psychology* (London: Sage Publication, 2013), https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446269930.n5.

[35] W Wijayanto, "Between Fear and Power : Kompas , Indonesia ' s Most Influential Daily Newspaper , 1965-2010" (University of Leiden, 2019).

Analytic Procedure

Data analysis followed Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model,[36] which involves textual analysis, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice. At the textual level, the study examined lexical choices, modality, transitivity, evaluative adjectives, metaphors, headlines, and the use of religious and royal terminology (e.g., syariah, imam, Khalifatullah, Sayidin Panatagama). Particular attention was paid to how women and men were described, which actors were represented as active or passive, and how female leadership was grammatically constructed as controversial, normalised, or deviant. At the level of discursive practice, the analysis explored how texts were produced and circulated by each outlet. This included identifying who was quoted or given voice (e.g., palace officials, ulama, legal experts, activists), what intertextual references were invoked (Qur'anic verses, hadith, historical precedents), and how headlines and leads cued readers toward particular interpretations. Differences between Kompas and Republika in source selection, narrative structure, and citation patterns were used to infer their editorial positioning toward female royal succession. At the social practice level, the discursive patterns identified in the texts were interpreted in broader sociopolitical contexts: Indonesia's legal pluralism, debates on women's political leadership in Islam, and the symbolic role of the Yogyakarta Sultanate.[37] This step drew on scholarship in Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic feminism to situate the media discourses within ongoing struggles over gender, religious authority, and democratic governance.

Validity, Reliability, and Reflexivity

To enhance analytic rigour, the coding of thematic categories (e.g. "Sharia-based objection," "cultural tradition," "gender equality," "modernisation") was documented in a coding scheme and applied systematically across all articles. A second researcher independently reviewed a subset of texts to check the consistency of category application; disagreements were discussed to reach consensus, which served as a form of inter-coder reliability. The primary researcher also engaged in reflexive reading, acknowledging her own positionality as a scholar of Islamic communication and gender, and triangulated the discourse analysis with existing literature on Islam, monarchy, and women's leadership in Indonesia to minimise interpretive bias.

Result and Discussion
A Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective on Yogyakarta's Royal Discourse

The symbolic and legal transformation initiated by the King of Yogyakarta Palace, Sultan Hamengku Buwono X—particularly his removal of the title *khalifatullah* and the appointment of his daughter, GKR Mangkubumi, as Crown Princess—prompted significant debate over the legitimacy of female leadership within an Islamic monarchy. The controversy highlights a fundamental tension between progressive interpretations of Islamic law and traditionalist, patriarchal norms deeply embedded in both religion and Javanese royal culture. The media

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[36] Fairclough, *Language and Power*.
[37] Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis : The Critical Study of Language*.

outlets analysed in this study responded to this controversy with distinct ideological framings. Kompas, a pluralist-leaning national daily,[38] portrayed GKR Mangkubumi as a legitimate and capable leader for a modern monarchy. In contrast, Republika foregrounded the issue of Islamic religious authority, often citing the incongruency between female leadership and traditional understandings of male religious roles, particularly through the perspective of Sharia and *fiqh siyasa*.

For instance, a Republika article dated 21 March 2015 described the prospect of a female Sultan as *"bertentangan dengan paugeran keraton dan syariat yang baku"* ("in conflict with palace rules and established Sharia"). The phrase "established Sharia" constructs conservative interpretations as fixed and non-negotiable, while the use of *bertentangan* ("in conflict") signals a strong modal stance of incompatibility rather than mere concern. Moreover, the article selectively quoted male religious authorities who framed female succession as a potential source of *fitnah* (slander) and social disorder, thereby associating women's leadership with moral risk. By contrast, a Kompas article published on 20 March 2015 referred to the Sultan's decision as *"langkah progresif dalam menempatkan perempuan setara dalam tradisi kerajaan"* ("a progressive step in positioning women as equal within royal tradition"), emphasising the language of progress and equality. Here, female leadership is normalised through positive adjectives ("progressive") and equalising metaphors, and the article foregrounds voices, from legal experts and palace insiders, who interpret the succession as compatible with the Indonesian constitution and evolving cultural norms. These contrasting lexical and intertextual choices support the characterisation of Republika's discourse as aligning with conservative Sharia-based objections and Kompas's discourse as pluralist and reformist, not as abstract labels but as empirically traceable patterns.

Table 1 summarises the thematic distribution of articles across the three newspapers. This thematic distribution reflects not only editorial priorities but also how each media outlet constructs public meaning around gender and Islamic law. The disparities in framing serve as indicators of deeper ideological alignments and institutional motivations.

Table 1. Thematic Coding of Media Discourses on Yogyakarta Royal Succession (March–May 2015)

Media	Total Articles	Gender Equality	Islamic Legitimacy	Cultural Tradition	Internal Conflict	Political Reform
Kompas	20	8	3	4	2	3
Republika	14	2	9	1	1	1

Source: Author's Processing Result, 2025

The thematic distribution in Table 1 is not merely a reflection of the researcher's initial assumptions; it emerged inductively from repeated readings of the articles. Themes such as "Sharia-based objection," "gender equality," and "cultural

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[38] Wijayanto and Masduki, "'Polite Watchdog': Kompas and Watchdog Journalism in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 29, no. 3 (August 2023): 628–45, https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612231196155.

continuity" were coded whenever they appeared explicitly or implicitly in the text, such as through references to religious duty, constitutional rights, or the preservation of palace custom. The higher frequency of "Sharia-based objection" themes in Republika and "gender equality" in Kompas, therefore, reflects demonstrable patterns in their lexical choices, source selection, and narrative structures, rather than post-hoc categorisation.

Using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model, we examined how gender and Islamic leadership were represented in the news texts across three analytical levels: micro (textual), mezo (discursive practice), and macro (social practice), as described in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of Text, Discourse and Social Practice

CDA Level	Kompas (National Secular Daily)	Republika (National Islamic Daily)
Textual (Micro)	Kompas uses a formal, neutral news reporting tone and highlights the *controversy* and "pro–kontra" (pros and cons) surrounding a woman leading Yogyakarta. It tends to quote *officials, local politicians, and palace figures* debating legal requirements (e.g., a law requiring a male governor). Overall, Kompas textually presents the issue as a constitutional and administrative debate, but by quoting opponents of a female Sultan at length, it implicitly reflects those patriarchal views.	Kompas uses a somewhat more *religiously coloured vocabulary* and respectful tone toward the Sultanate, while referencing Islamic perspectives or alluding to *tradition (adat)* and *religious norms*. For example, Republika news on the Sultan's 2015 decree emphasised terms such as "Putri Mahkota" (Crown Princess) and noted the historic gender barrier being challenged, while also citing the voices of *ulama* (community leaders) concerned about adhering to Islamic tradition. Textually, Republika frames the issue through an Islamic lens (e.g., mentioning "dawuh Allah" – the Sultan calling his decision God's command) and uses more evaluative language about moral implications.
Discursive Practice (Meso)	Kompas reporters rely on mainstream news production practices: balancing sources from different sides (palace spokesmen, government officials, critics). However, analysis shows Kompas gave significant space to those	Republika approaches discursive production from an Islamic-oriented standpoint. It often features commentary or quotes from *religious scholars and conservative figures*, given its audience. The paper's editorial

CDA Level	Kompas (National Secular Daily)	Republika (National Islamic Daily)
	rejecting female leadership, perhaps aiming for neutrality or acknowledging conservative readers. The newspaper, known for its secular-national outlook, still needs to maintain credibility with its traditional Javanese readership, so it reported palace conflicts and legal disputes straightforwardly rather than overtly championing women's rights. The content suggests that Kompas was influenced by its role as a national paper trying to stay neutral, leading to the discursive reproduction of the dominant patriarchal viewpoint (by quoting it extensively).	choices emphasise the *cultural-religious context*: for instance, Republika stories highlighted the Sultan's need to justify his decision in Islamic terms (by citing divine guidance) and included perspectives from Muslim community organisations, such as Muhammadiyah or NU members, on the legitimacy of a female Sultan. Thus, Republika's discourse practice involves selecting sources that resonate with its Muslim readership's concerns, balancing the Sultan's progressive move with conservative voices worried about Sharia compliance. This practice reflects Republika's identity as an Islamic media outlet mediating between modern gender norms and traditional Islamic values.
Social Practice (Macro)	The broader social context for Kompas is Indonesia's post-reform democracy and commitment to gender equality under law, juxtaposed with *local patriarchal tradition*. Kompas operates under a journalistic norm of objectivity, but the *social practice* revealed that even a secular-leaning media outlet inadvertently reinforced the *status quo* by privileging the voices of established (male) authorities. The debate is situated in the context of Yogyakarta's special status: Kompas frames it as a clash between *constitutional rights and tradition*, aligning with the national discourse on democracy and women's political rights (especially after the 2016 Constitutional Court decision allowing female	Republika's coverage must be understood against the rise of conservative attitudes in Indonesian Islam. The *social practice* level shows that Republika is both a product and propagator of an Islamist discourse that views female rule with caution. Its reporting and opinion pieces are influenced by debates on women's roles in Islam, e.g., the hadith often cited to oppose women leaders. By contextualising the Yogyakarta issue within discussions of Islamic law, Republika helps perpetuate the view that religion and tradition are paramount in evaluating leadership. At the same time, the paper mirrors internal social change: some Indonesian

CDA Level	Kompas (National Secular Daily)	Republika (National Islamic Daily)
	governors). Socially, Kompas reflects a transitional society negotiating between modern legal equality and entrenched cultural norms.	Muslims accept a Sultana for reasons of equality and local necessity, while others resist it. Republika's social practice thus involves negotiating Islamic gender ideologies in the public sphere, reflecting the broader contest in Indonesian society between progressive interpretations (supporting women's leadership) and conservative interpretations that invoke religion to maintain male authority.

Source: Authors Processing Result, 2025

At the micro level, linguistic features such as lexical choices, modality, and metaphor were used to frame female leadership either positively or negatively. Kompas used affirmative modality (e.g., "mampu memimpin," "perempuan layak memegang tampuk kekuasaan") and inclusive lexical items (e.g., "kemajemukan," "setara") to normalize GKR Mangkubumi's role. Social actors such as GKR Mangkubumi were described with adjectives such as "berpendidikan tinggi", "berwibawa", and representatif. These descriptors reflect a deliberate positioning of the Crown Princess as a capable and legitimate leader, despite her gender. Moreover, Kompas' narrative tended to downplay theological contestation, instead focusing on cultural resilience and political pragmatism. Republika utilised restrictive and evaluative language, such as "tidak sesuai syariat" or "melanggar tradisi Islam," to delegitimise her candidacy. Additionally, religious terms (*khalifatullah*, imam, sayidin panatagama) were more prevalent in Republika, emphasising theological resistance to gender reform. These Republika's framings not only delegitimise female succession but also reinforce conservative interpretations of Islam,[39] which have been shown to dominate public discourse in many Muslim societies.[40]

At the level of discursive practice, we analysed how these texts were produced and what institutional, ideological, or economic interests influenced their content. Kompas draws on its historical association with nationalist-humanist ideology, often favouring progressive social narratives and reflecting the broader discourse of modern Indonesian pluralism. Republika reflects its institutional ties to Islamic intellectual conservatism via ICMI and other Muslim networks, using its religious authority to

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[39] Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslim and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[40] Robert W. Hefner, "The Social Scientific Study of Islam in Indonesia: A 75 Year Retrospective," *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 32, no. 1 (2025): 9–42, https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v32i1.45289.

speak for a collective Muslim morality. This level illustrates how media institutions serve as channels of information and as producers of ideological alignment and consensus—or contestation—depending on their audience.

At the macro level, the royal succession issue intersects with broader ideological structures in post-Reformasi Indonesia, such as (1) the ongoing negotiation between Islamic law and state democracy, (2) the redefinition of gender roles within Muslim societies, (3) the symbolic authority of monarchy as cultural and religious institution, and (4) the media's role in shaping moral public discourse. The analysis reveals that the succession issue in Yogyakarta became a site of ideological contestation, where media outlets constructed divergent narratives not only about gender and Islam but also about authority, modernity, and tradition. Employing Fairclough's three-level analysis, the study uncovers how these ideological struggles were embedded in language choices, discursive framing, and institutional positioning.

Media, Hegemony, and the Discourse of Female Islamic Leadership in Yogyakarta

This analysis supports Foucault's [41] view that discourse both constitutes and is constituted by social power relations, and aligns with Gramsci's concept of hegemony, [42] where consent is manufactured through dominant cultural institutions, including the press. [43] The debate over royal succession in Yogyakarta cannot be separated from broader contestations regarding the legitimacy of female leadership within an Islamic cultural framework. The designation of GKR Mangkubumi as an heir by Sultan Hamengku Buwono X was not merely a familial decision; it was a socio-political statement that disrupted entrenched gender norms embedded in royal tradition and religious discourse. Central to the controversy was the removal of the title *khalifatullah* from the Sultan's name—an act symbolically decoupling the monarchy from its traditional religious authority.

This symbolic act drew intense criticism, particularly from conservative Islamic voices and male relatives within the palace. Media such as Republika constructed a discourse that emphasised religious orthodoxy, framing the Sultan's move as a violation of Islamic succession norms. Headlines frequently invoked theological language, suggesting that rulership entails male-exclusive religious leadership. The Republika corpus featured repeated use of terms such as *imam, syari'ah,* and *khalifah*, positioning the Sultan not only as a political figure but also as a spiritual guide. This framing mirrors findings in contemporary Islamic legal debates, where female leadership remains contested, particularly when associated with religious authority. [44]

In contrast, Kompas de-emphasised religious roles and highlighted modernisation and cultural adaptation. Articles in Kompas framed the succession as

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[41] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, in *New York* (1980), https://doi.org/citeulike-article-id:798470.

[42] Peter Ives, *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci*, in *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183q4d3.

[43] Paola Merli, "Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 16, no. 1 (2010): 53–55, https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630902971603.

[44] Badran, "An Historical Overview of Conferences on Islamic Feminism : Circulations and New Challenges."

a reflection of the changing roles of women in society and the resilience of royal institutions adapting to democratic norms. This media line is consistent with studies on Indonesian Muslim feminism, which advocate for the reinterpretation of religious texts to accommodate gender equity.[45] From the perspective of Islamic law, the debate hinges on the interpretation of classical jurisprudential views that have traditionally excluded women from positions of political leadership. However, scholars such as Hosseini[46] and Samadi[47] argue for contextual reinterpretation of the *fiqh siyasa* (Islamic political jurisprudence), particularly in modern nation-states where gender roles have evolved. In Yogyakarta's case, this is further complicated by the fact that royal succession carries not only political implications but also deeply embedded religious and cultural meanings, particularly within Javanese Islamic syncretism. The media discourses analysed thus reflect a broader ideological struggle over the meaning of Sharia in a pluralistic society. As Fairclough (2006) emphasises, discourse is never neutral; it serves to legitimise certain power structures while marginalising others.[48] In this case, the patriarchal interpretation of Islamic leadership is upheld by some media and contested by others, demonstrating how the media act as ideological apparatuses.[49]

These patterns underscore Foucault's argument that knowledge and power are co-constitutive.[50] What is said (and not said) in public discourse shapes the boundaries of what is thinkable and doable within a society. By representing succession through divergent ideological frames, media outlets do not merely report reality; they construct it. The broader implication is that female Islamic leadership, especially in institutions symbolically tied to religious and royal authority, remains a deeply contested issue. Despite notable policy advancements across Southeast Asia, the full realisation of gender equality remains hindered by cultural barriers, limited political representation, and uneven enforcement of legal reforms.[51] Media discourses serve either to normalise or to stigmatise this possibility. In doing so, they influence public attitudes and policy responses. As Gramsci (1971) theorised, hegemonic ideas are often naturalised through cultural institutions like the media, making contestation all the more critical in societies undergoing transition.[52]

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[45] Nina Nurmila, "The Spread of Muslim Feminist Ideas in Indonesia: Before and After the Digital Era," *Al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 59, no. 1 (2021): 97–126, https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2021.591.97-126.

[46] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 4 (May 2006): 629–45, https://doi.org/10.1086/508085; Aniek Rahmaniah et al., "The Movement of Muhammadiyah Women: Religious Values, Culture, and Gender Equality," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 1 (January 2025): 669–94, https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i1.1089.

[47] Mona Samadi, "Advancing the Legal Status of Women in Islamic Law," in *International Studies in Human Rights* (Brill, 2025), 162–92, https://doi.org/9789004446953.

[48] Fairclough, *Language and Power*.

[49] Louis Althusser, "Lenin and Philosophy," *New Left Review*, 2002.

[50] Michel Foucault, "Power. Vol. 3 of The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984," in *SubStance*, vol. 30, no. 3, preprint, 2001, https://doi.org/10.1353/sub.2001.0025.

[51] Nehaluddin Ahmad, Zheimie H Zamri, and Noor Saffrena Omarali, "Islamic Nations ' Approaches to Combating Gender Discrimination against Women : An Examination of the Southeast Asia Region," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 2 (2024): 501–30, http://dx.doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v16i2.29965.

[52] Ives, *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci*.

Islamic Law and Gendered Power in the Yogyakarta Palace

From an analysis of news articles in the daily newspapers Kompas and Republika, it is clear that the discourse on leadership succession in Yogyakarta cannot be separated from gender issues, especially given differences in the interpretation of the Special Autonomy Law for Yogyakarta. On several occasions, Sultan HB X stated that the Yogyakarta Sultanate must keep pace with the times, as it, as part of the Republic of Indonesia, must adhere to the constitution in force. Sultan HB X also urged the people of Yogyakarta to be open to democracy and gender equality, where women have the right to become leaders. The discourse on male dominance cannot stand alone as a strong societal issue without media framing. The role of the media cannot be separated from perpetuating the hegemony of the patriarchal system on the one hand and spreading discourse about feminism on the other.

Of the two media outlets analysed, only the daily newspaper Republika did not produce discourse directly related to gender issues. Most of the discourse in Republika did not directly address hegemonic struggles related to gender issues. Although it sparked debate over changing the Sultan's title, Republika did not directly reject female leaders holding power in Yogyakarta. Republika prefers to engage in discourse on changing the Sultan's title, which has implications for the transfer of control of the King in the Yogyakarta Palace as the leader of Muslims in the Yogyakarta region. According to Republika, the claims of "*khalifatullah*" and "*sayidin panatagama*" that have been in the Sultan's title must receive public attention.

Historical and contemporary scholarship in Islamic jurisprudence, such as that of Wadud [53] and Barlas,[54] has highlighted both the positive precedents of Muslim women rulers and the contextual nature of classical prohibitions, and argues that there is no explicit Qur'anic ban on female political leadership. Islamic feminist scholars demonstrate how patriarchal interpretations, rather than the scriptural sources themselves, have restricted women's access to public authority. In this light, Republika's frequent invocation of titles like *Khalifatullah* to problematise a female Sultan reflects a particular theological choice. In contrast, Kompas's relative silence on the titles and emphasis on constitutional legality indicates a shift away from sacralised male authority towards a more civic conception of kingship. However, the discourse presented by Republika implicitly resists the proposed change to the Sultan's title—an amendment that would symbolically open the path for female leadership in Yogyakarta. Gender equality is not about dominance or subjugation,[55] but about ensuring equal opportunities and rights across all sectors of society.[56]

The discourse on leadership succession in Yogyakarta, as reported by the Kompas daily newspaper, has shifted toward supporting female leaders. Kompas has

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[53] Amina Wadud, "Reflections on Islamic Feminist Exegesis of the Qur'an," *Religions* 12, no. 7 (2021): 497, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070497.

[54] Asma Barlas, *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (University of Texas Press, 2002).

[55] Pitrotussaadah, Eva Fadhilah, and Faisal Zulfikar, "Islamic Law and Gender : A Misconception of Roles and Responsibilities in Parenting," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 15, no. 2 (2023): 331–42.

[56] Zephyr Sumayyah Maylon and Intan Primadini, "Empowered Voices : Unmarried Women's Perspective On 'Perawan Tua,'" *LISKI; Lingkar Studi Komunikasi* 11, no. 1 (2025): 80–91.

become a productive media outlet in producing discourse on female leaders. The issue, which originated from Sabdatama and Sabda Raja, ultimately boiled down to differences in views and interpretations regarding the content of Sabda Raja, which was considered one of the ways Sultan HB X could pass the throne to his eldest daughter, GKR Pembayun. The ideology of the Kompas daily newspaper, which is closely aligned with pluralism, diversity, and inclusivity, makes gender equality a critical issue to be addressed in language and discourse. Kompas sees the Yogyakarta Palace as a cultural, economic, and political institution with the legitimacy to uphold diversity in the Yogyakarta region, which is often regarded as a miniature version of Indonesia.

Recent studies highlight the rise of female Islamic scholarship, challenging patriarchal norms. For example, Mun'im et al. (2024) show that the Indonesian Congress of Women Islamic Scholars (KUPI) has emerged as a new authority reinterpreting Islamic law through a gender-equitable perspective. By revisiting male-biased regulations, KUPI offers a paradigm of Islamic feminism that advocates justice and gender equality within Sharia discourse.[57]. Kloos and Ismah (2023) likewise describe KUPI as a progressive Islamic feminist movement that brings together female scholars and activists to challenge male-dominated religious authority.[58] This work underscores that Indonesian Muslim women are not only reclaiming interpretive authority in Islam but also bridging global feminist ideas with local religious practice.

Regarding the discourse on female leaders in Yogyakarta, the Kompas Daily newspaper used language that did not explicitly support women becoming leaders in the Yogyakarta Palace or as leaders of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. With its well-known polite and discussion-oriented style, the Kompas daily newspaper disseminates gender issues in the context of leadership succession in Yogyakarta not directly and clearly, but by borrowing the "voices" of social actors who support gender equality, such as Sultan HB X, GKR Hemas, and GKR Mangkubumi. Kompas is aware of the existence of groups that reject female leaders in Yogyakarta, led by the younger siblings of Sultan HB X and supported by Islamic figures and mass organisations in the Yogyakarta region.

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[57] Zainul Mun'im et al., "Revisioning Official Islam in Indonesia: The Role of Women Ulama Congress in Reproducing Female Authority in Islamic Law," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 24, no. 1 (2024): 135–52, https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v24i1.34744; Hani Sholihah, Nani Nani Widiawati2, and Mohd Khairul Nazif bin Hj Awang Damit, "Reinterpretation of Justice in Islamic Inheritance Rights Based on Gender," *Al-'Adalah* 21, no. 1 (June 2024): 101–24, https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v21i1.21256; Fauziati Fauziati et al., "The Ijtihad of Female Judges in Aceh's Sharia Courts: Disparity in Sentencing for Child Sexual Abuse," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 8, no. 1 (June 2025): 294–312, https://doi.org/10.22373/zr002d09.

[58] David Kloos and Nor Ismah, "Siting Islamic Feminism: The Indonesian Congress of Women Islamic Scholars and the Challenge of Challenging Patriarchal Authority," *History and Anthropology* 34, no. 5 (October 2023): 818–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2023.2249495; Mustafid Mustafid et al., "Alternative Legal Strategies and Ninik Mamak Authority: Dual Administration of Malay Marriage in Koto Kampar Hulu, Riau," *Journal of Islamic Law* 5, no. 1 (January 2024): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v5i1.1972; Viktoriia Kobko -Odarii et al., "Reconstructing Gender Equality in Family Law: A Normative and Comparative Analysis of European Family Law Systems in Religious Context," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pemikiran* 25, no. 1 (August 2025): 195–214, https://doi.org/10.18592/sjhp.v25i1.17694.

The production of news articles that explicitly support female leaders in Yogyakarta as a representation of Kompas' ideology and interests could result in attacks from groups that reject female leaders. The gender issue in the leadership succession in Yogyakarta is a separate problem for the Kompas daily newspaper, given the position of the Yogyakarta palace as a cultural institution closely associated with patriarchal Javanese culture and, on the other hand, the issue of gender equality, which is still not accepted by some circles in Yogyakarta. In the discourse surrounding leadership succession in Yogyakarta, the Kompas Daily employs a cultural journalism strategy to enhance the legitimacy of the Yogyakarta Palace as an institution capable of upholding pluralism within the Yogyakarta region and across Indonesia.

Another facet of female leadership in Islamic law is the role of female judges. Indonesia has been a pioneer in appointing women to religious courts, yet a "glass ceiling" persists. Kholiq and Halimatusa'diyah (2022) argue that a formally gender-blind judicial system can still reproduce inequality, as female judges remain underrepresented in top positions. Their analysis of Indonesia's Islamic courts finds that entrenched institutional and cultural biases limit women's judicial influence despite numeric gains. This indicates that mere inclusion of women is insufficient without addressing patriarchal structures that constrain women's authority in legal decision-making.[59]

New research probes how cultural attitudes intersect with formal institutions to limit female leadership. White et al. (2024) use the term "political patriarchy" to describe how deep-seated patriarchal values (often couched in religious terms) undermine efforts to boost women's representation. Whereas earlier scholars downplayed religion as a factor, White and colleagues argue that Islamist ideological currents have indeed become a social barrier to accepting women as leaders in Indonesia. As evidence, they point to enduring public biases: surveys and voting patterns indicate a segment of the electorate resists female leaders on religious grounds (e.g., beliefs that women should not hold authority over men).[60] Indonesia's scorecard reflects these challenges. The country ranked 87th in the 2023 Global Gender Gap Index[61] and has not had a woman in the presidency since 2004. Together, these studies highlight an ongoing gender gap in leadership: legal reforms like quotas have inched women's representation upward, but societal norms and Islamist resurgence continue to restrict women's full political empowerment.

Media Representation and Influence in Muslim-Majority Indonesia

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[59] Achmad Kholiq and Iim Halimatusa'diyah, "Does Gender Blindness Improve Gender Equality? Female Judges and the Glass Ceiling Effect in the Islamic Judicial System in Indonesia," *Social & Legal Studies* 32, no. 1 (April 2022): 139–58, https://doi.org/10.1177/09646639221094153.

[60] Sally White et al., "Voting against Women: Political Patriarchy, Islam, and Representation in Indonesia," *Politics & Gender* 20, no. 2 (2024): 391–421, https://doi.org/DOI:%252010.1017/S1743923X23000648; Sulastri Caniago et al., "Gender Integration in Islamic Politics: Fiqh Siyasah on Women's Political Rights since Classical to Contemporary Interpretations," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 3, no. 2 (December 2024): 411–31, https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v3i2.9962; Neng Eri Sofiana et al., "Gender-Responsive Construction in Nikah-Kawin Traditions in West Java: A Qiwamah Perspective," *El-Mashlahah* 14, no. 1 (June 2024): 71–94, https://doi.org/10.23971/el-mashlahah.v14i1.7691.

[61] World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*, no. June (2023).

Scholarship on media in Indonesia's Islamic contexts shows that news outlets significantly shape public perceptions of gender roles and Sharia. Nurrahmi[62] conducted a content analysis of how Sharia's implementation in Aceh was portrayed in the press. Her study of Religions has found that media frames often reflect each outlet's ideological stance when reporting on Islamic law issues. For instance, local Acehnese outlets affiliated with the Kompas media group emphasised cultural familiarity and community norms in Sharia news, whereas national media highlighted legal controversies and human rights perspectives.[63] Studies have critically examined Indonesian news media's depiction of women, revealing persistent gender biases. Mardikantoro et al.[64] analysed how four major newspapers, including secular Kompas and Islamic-leaning Republika, report on violence against women. They found that women are frequently portrayed in marginalised or victimised positions, with little agency, echoing patterns observed a decade earlier. Even in 2020-era coverage (e.g., reports during the COVID-19 pandemic), Kompas and Republika often framed women through stereotypes, emphasising their vulnerability or domestic roles rather than their empowerment.[65] These findings echo previous research highlighting the persistent challenge faced by the media in Muslim-majority Indonesia to transcend patriarchal gender narratives.[66]

Research on the global gender gap in political leadership demonstrates that women's underrepresentation cannot be attributed to a single cause. Instead, it results from a complex interplay of factors, including women's access to opportunity and support, institutional biases within leadership structures,[67] and prevailing societal attitudes, all of which are deeply gendered. [68] In the context of the Yogyakarta Palace, similar dynamics are evident: the reluctance to accept female succession reflects cultural and religious norms and structural limitations embedded within royal traditions and public sentiment. These factors collectively shape the barriers figures like GKR Mangkubumi face, whose leadership is contested not on merit but on enduring patriarchal interpretations of authority and legitimacy.

How the media represent female leaders is a growing research focus. Ningrum et al. (2022) examined the media framing of prominent women leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic. They found that even successful female politicians were sometimes undermined by gendered commentary (e.g., focus on their appearance or family role) rather than their policy merits.[69] Similarly, a study of 2019 election news

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[62] Febri Nurrahmi, "Mediated Representation of Sharia in Aceh : A Hybrid Approach to Media Frames," *Religions* 13, no. 857 (2022): 1–15, https:// doi.org/10.3390/rel13090857.

[63] Nurrahmi.

[64] Hari Bakti Mardikantoro, Muhammad Badrus Siroj, and Esti Sudi Utami, "Analysis of Macrostructure and Superstructure of Corruption News Discourse In Newspapers," *Retorika: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya* 13, no. 1 (2020): 22–29, https://doi.org/10.26858/retorika.13i1.10968.

[65] Mardikantoro, Siroj, and Utami.

[66] Wijayanto, "Fearing the Majority: Catholic Media in Muslim Indonesia," *Media Asia* 44, no. 1 (2017): 33–39, https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2017.1374319.

[67] Edward Aspinall, Sally White, and Amalinda Savirani, "Women's Political Representation in Indonesia: Who Wins and How?," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 40, no. 1 (2021): 3–27, https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103421989720.

[68] Aspinall, White, and Savirani.

[69] Novi Setya Ningrum and Vinisa Nurul Aisyah, "Framing Indonesian Women Leaders During the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Mass Media," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Community*

on Kompas.com observed that female candidates often received less visibility and were framed around "female" issues, reflecting an implicit bias in what is considered newsworthy for women politicians.[70] On a positive note, some female politicians have actively countered stereotypes by utilising social media to control their narrative, highlighting competence and leadership to override biased traditional media coverage.[71] In the context of Yogyakarta, these patterns are mirrored in the media discourse on GKR Mangkubumi. Rather than focusing on her qualifications or leadership capacity, public narratives, especially in conservative outlets, often frame her succession from the perspective of cultural deviation or religious impropriety. However, like other women leaders globally, female royals in Yogyakarta have begun leveraging alternative platforms and elite alliances to assert their legitimacy as leaders. This underscores a broader shift: while mainstream media may still reproduce patriarchal frames, the evolving media landscape offers new spaces for women in power to reclaim their narratives and challenge dominant gender hierarchies.

Conclusion

This study examines how two mainstream Indonesian newspapers—Kompas and Republika—construct competing discourses on the possibility of female royal leadership in Yogyakarta. The analysis demonstrates that the primary focus of this research is not the normative substance of Islamic law, but instead how media institutions mobilise religious, cultural, and political symbols to influence public understanding. As general-interest newspapers, Kompas and Republika draw upon different ideological orientations: Republika employs conservative religious language to frame female succession within established patriarchal norms, while Kompas emphasises constitutional principles, pluralism, and cultural adaptation. These contrasts show that debates on female leadership are shaped not by doctrinal Islamic jurisprudence itself but by the media's selective interpretation and circulation of Sharia-related discourse.

The findings further indicate that the media serve as influential actors in mediating tensions between tradition, religion, and democratic governance. Both newspapers reflect Indonesia's complex legal pluralism, where customary norms, religious symbolism, and constitutional frameworks intersect, yet they position these elements differently, reflecting their editorial identities and target audiences. This suggests that public perceptions of gendered authority are constructed primarily through journalistic framing and ideological positioning. Consequently, the legitimacy of female leadership becomes a matter negotiated in the public sphere through media discourse, rather than a question resolved solely through legal or

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Empowerment and Engagement 661, no. ICCEE 2021 (2022): 152–62, https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220501.017.

[70] Evi Novida Ginting Manik and Fredick Broven Ekayanta, "Women's Representation in Political Development in Indonesia: Examining Gender Discrimination and Patriarchal Culture," *EVOLUTIONARY STUDIES IN IMAGINATIVE CULTURE* 8, no. 2 (2024): 228–41, https://doi.org/10.70082/esiculture.vi.683.

[71] Sarah Nuraini Siregar, "Politicised Policing in Indonesia: A Study of the Indonesian National Police during the 2019 Presidential Election," *Asian Journal of Political Science*, Routledge, 2025, 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/02185377.2025.2500005.

theological arguments. By foregrounding media representation, this study contributes to scholarly understanding of how gender, power, and religious authority are negotiated within contemporary Indonesian public discourse. The results affirm that progress toward gender-equitable leadership depends not only on legal reform but also on discursive shifts that normalise women's authority across media platforms. Future research may extend this analysis to digital Islamic communities, alternative media, and comparative contexts in other Muslim-majority monarchies to deepen understanding of how media systems shape gendered interpretations of religious and political legitimacy.

These findings have several implications. For public policy, they indicate that efforts to implement gender-equal leadership frameworks, such as the Constitutional Court's decision enabling a woman to become Governor of Yogyakarta, cannot rely solely on legal reform. Government institutions and local authorities need to engage proactively with media outlets and religious leaders to communicate that female leadership is consistent with both constitutional guarantees and plural interpretations of Islamic teachings. For Islamic legal scholarship and religious institutions, the study underscores the urgency of revisiting juristic positions on women's political leadership in light of contemporary realities and gender-egalitarian hermeneutics. Fatwa councils and Islamic organisations can play a constructive role by publicly acknowledging the diversity of classical and modern opinions and by endorsing interpretations that affirm women's eligibility for leadership based on competence and justice. Future research should examine the role of digital Islamic communities, female preachers, and alternative media in deconstructing patriarchal interpretations of Sharia. Moreover, studies could examine comparative cases from other Muslim-majority monarchies to assess how legal traditions, media systems, and gender ideologies intersect across sociopolitical contexts.

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