

Gender and COVID-19 Vaccines in the Media: Evidence from Indonesia

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Abstract

This article continues to expand the examination on women's representation in the media during the COVID-19 pandemic by bringing the perspective of Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country. With women greatly impacted by the pandemic from health, economic, and social standpoints, are they getting enough and equal representation in the media? Drawing on a unique dataset from 197 news articles related to COVID-19 vaccines in Indonesia, the current study finds that there are a sufficient number of female authors but only 25% of sources being quoted were women. Subsequently, only one out of nine categories has more female than male sources. It raises concerns on how women's voices could be heard in a country where women make up for 50% of the population yet continue to be underrepresented in media coverage.

Keywords

Women, COVID, Media, Vaccines, Indonesia.

1. Introduction

A bulk body of research suggests that the COVID-19 stories in various angles from its cause and impacts on human bodies (Kontis et al., 2020; Shereen et al., 2020), effects on mental health (Pfefferbaum and North, 2020), to impact education and economy (Daniel, 2020; McKee and Stuckler, 2020). Others have focused on how the global pandemic affects one of the most vulnerable groups today, women. Girls and women are traditionally given the role as caretaker in their family and society. They make up 67% of the global healthcare workers and have to take more responsibilities at home to care for their families during the pandemic (Boniol et al., 2019; Power, 2020). The struggles of women do not stop there as studies have shown that more women than men are losing their jobs and face the threat of domestic violence from their husbands as the time spent at home increases significantly (Chang, 2020; Dias et al., 2020; Roesch et al., 2020). Their stress level is also overwhelming which may lead to death (Ildil et al., 2020; Pradana et al., 2020).

If women face such enormous challenges during this pandemic, how exactly are they being represented in the media? Do they get enough airtime in the media? Unfortunately, this topic remains understudied with very small exceptions. Smith (2020), for example, found that 93% of daily press briefings in the UK on COVID-19 are done by male politicians with only one female minister ever leading the brief. In first world countries, like the United States and Australia, quotations in news that are attributed to women make no more than 30%. Far worse, in developing countries such as India, Kenya, and Nigeria, only 20% quotations are given to females (Jones, 2020; Kossova, 2020). This shows just how poorly women are represented globally. A study by Prihatini and Halimatusa'diyah (2021) on how an Anglophone newspaper in Indonesia is reporting COVID-19 suggests that male sources continue to dominate news coverage. This composition is reflecting the political structure in which very few women are holding public offices such as parliament or local government (Prihatini, 2021).

While nearly every existing study that the author could identify is done in non-Asian country and not a single of them is executed in a Southeast Asian country, this article aims to fill in this gap by observing women representation in the Indonesian media. This analysis is the first to provide empirical data of female distribution

among journalists and sources in news articles about COVID-19 especially on vaccines stories. In this study, 197 news articles and 324 sources are collected and examined to understand the gender distribution across different media and sources position/affiliation. The findings of this study corroborates to Smith (2020) where she argues that women's descriptive representation in understanding their substantial representation.

The findings suggest that female journalists are more dominant compared to their male counterparts in news related to COVID-19 vaccines in Indonesia. However, quoted sources are still massively attributed to men (72%). Thus, the evidence from Indonesia conforms to the global pattern in news coverage. It is safe to argue that the persistent issue of women's underrepresentation as news sources is a challenge that is suffered by countries regardless of their socio-economic status. This study is arranged as follows. The second section provides a literature review on women's representation in the media, both the global and the Indonesian context. Subsequently, data and methods are being elaborated in section three. Following that is the findings and discussions which unpack the distribution of articles by the media, the gender of journalists and sources. The fifth part of the paper reiterates key takeaways from Indonesia and offers some suggestions for future research avenues.

2. Literature Review

Media contributes to the improvement of gender equality including to women (Montiel, 2015). Studies have shown that gender representation is far greater than merely identifying systematic exclusion of certain groups. It is to acknowledge that systematic exclusion is on a par with an illegitimate democratic system because its legislative outcomes, processes, and institutions are not made equal for everyone (Smith, 2020). Media representation for women is important as it has also shown crucial implications to increase the interest and knowledge from fellow females and mediates the unique needs, concerns, and needs of women into the political realm and creates policy in regard to it (Dassonneville and McAllister, 2018). On a greater level female representation may even increase public demands for more female politicians (Diaz and Piazza, 2020).

2.1. Women in the media: global perspective

Similar to the Indonesian media, globally, women are still portrayed based on gender stereotypes. Women are associated with feminine mother-like traits such as nurturant, caring, sympathetic, and emotional. In contrast, masculine traits including aggressive, decisive, and confident are attributed more to men. This results in more male politicians getting more media attention for being able to fit in the gender roles constructed by society (Van der Pas and Aaldering, 2020). Contrastingly, females are more likely to be featured for their appearances and not their ability to play important roles such as being a leader (Humphrecht and Esser, 2017).

The impacts of representation are more important than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic where women face greater challenges than they already do normally. Studies have shown that the pandemic increases domestic abuse toward women double the average rate in the past 10 years in the UK and three times in China (Chang, 2020; Roesch et al., 2020). In the US, mothers and women employment rate decrease 9.3% and 9.6% respectively (Dias et al., 2020). Similarly, in the UK mothers face higher chances to be laid off, paid less, or have to take more responsibilities in their household in comparison to fathers as schools are suspended. This suggests that women face tremendous threats when it comes to lockdown policy and pandemic in general.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, independent reports portray more in-depth analyses on the topic of gender representation in the news media. Existing journals tend to focus on social media impact toward women's mental health during lockdown or quarantine (Cerezo et al., 2021; Gao et al., 2020; Hou et al., 2020). Meanwhile, other studies focus their analyses on the economic, health, or general social impacts of COVID-19 toward women as described above (Chang, 2020; Dias et al., 2020; Roesch et al., 2020). With the absence of studies on women representation in the news media, it is harder to identify the degree of inequality women face during the pandemic such as their knowledge, interest, and policy that specifically cater to women's concerns.

Smith (2020) offers important findings on how the media coverage about COVID-19 is dominated by men. Her study is based on daily press briefings from the United Kingdom government on the COVID-19 from March 16, 2020, to May 10, 2020 (56 briefings). It analyzes the sex of ministers and experts who conducted the briefings. It is found that only 7% of briefings were led by non-cis male politicians. The said briefings are covered only by one female minister amidst the fact that there are 6 women in the UK cabinet. This indicates the descriptive representation of female ministers in the UK is only 17% and their substantial representation is no more than 29%. Contrastingly, 93% briefings were led by males and 44.4% only had male experts.

On the other hand, this paper identifies three reports with more relevant findings that are relevant to the topic. The reports exclusively discuss women representation in news related to the pandemic. Global Media Monitoring Project (2021) demonstrates the patterns of women's representation in media coverage in 120 countries. A study

by Jones (2020) covers three developed countries which are the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), and Australia. Lastly, Kossova (2020) examines countries representing three continents with different economic backgrounds: UK, US, India, South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria.

Unlike the observation period of this paper, previous reports mentioned earlier offer the perspective of female representation in the media during the early stage of the COVID-19 spread which was around May to July 2020. This means that discussions on vaccines have not yet existed or if it does, the coverage is likely to be minimal. This paper argues that with the rapid development of the pandemic made to this day, the reports could not capture this progress. Hence it is necessary to cover not only Southeast Asia, but also the vaccination process which takes place from the end of 2020 to 2021 and is expected to continue for several years to come.

The reports show that women are underrepresented in the media in many parts of the world. In developed or developing countries, females are more likely to be excluded in the media compared to their male counterparts. In developing countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and India quotations attributed to women only make up around 16% to 20% from the total articles. Developed countries, such as Britain, America, and Australia come with a slightly better percentage with 19% to an approximate of 30% female being quoted. Not only in digital news articles, have men overly dominated with at least 69% people in news share in social media, television, and the radio. Existing reports identify government bodies and officials as important actors during the pandemic. However, the percentage of women in such positions is drastically low compared to men. The range of female politicians in COVID-19 is between 13% to 17%. Comparatively, male politicians are four times more likely to be quoted compared to women.

2.2. Women in the Indonesian media

In Indonesia, the impact of COVID-19 toward women is as concerning as it is on a global level. The domestic violence impact for example, between March to April 2020 alone, 275 violence cases against women were reported (Abdullah, 2020). Similarly, mothers in Indonesia face unique struggles. With lockdown and quarantine taking place, the ability for pregnant women to check their pregnancy gets more limited. In the same time mothers' anxiety and stress levels continue to rise which have led to an increased risk of death (Ifdil et al., 2020; Pradana et al., 2020). This indicates the sphere situation that females face in Indonesia and the dire of being represented both in the descriptive and substantial manner during this global pandemic.

Unfortunately, only one research that attempts to analyze women representation during COVID-19 discourse in the media. Triana et al., (2021) analyzed the portrayal of ex-Health Minister of Indonesia, Siti Fadilah Supari, in Indonesian news media. This paper argues that the finding of this article should and could not represent the overview for the entire Indonesian women population. Therefore, there is little to nonconclusive research that portrays women's representation in Indonesian media news outlets.

Tracking into women's representation in the Indonesian media beyond the pandemic, this paper finds it hard to identify updated data of the topic. For example, the data that shows female to male journalists ratio in the country was made almost a decade ago (Luviana, 2012). In the book, it shows that from 10 authors in the news media, only two to three of them are women. The capital city, Jakarta, has the least journalist gender imbalance ratio with 4 females to 6 males. It is also reported that 60% of women who work for the press work in temporary contracts. In another study done in 2018, it shows that source quotations attributed to women from 23,000 citations sits at 11% which is bewildering (Madrim, 2019). These facts have indicated how critical women's descriptive representation in Indonesia is.

The lack of interest in discussing women's representation in the media is caused by the biased perspective society places against them. In the media, females are either seen as subpar to men or valued as commodities instead of their abilities (Sambur, 2016; Widiati, 2021). Women are attributed with their roles as mothers, being emotional, having attractive appearance, or if not, as victims of sexual violence. In comparison, male are more likely to be covered based on their leadership skill, education, or achievements in their career. The existence of strong gender roles placed upon women is rooted from the strong patriarchal values that the vast majority of people in Indonesia uphold. That is why gender inequality in Indonesia is not only apparent in the media but also in day-to-day life.

This paper attempts to fill the laguna in this particular topic by focusing on gender representation in Indonesian digital news media during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sex of journalists and sources that appear in the news are collected alongside with the media outlets and institutions they represent. The findings from this paper provide a fresh angle from a Southeast Asian country.

3. Data and Methods

The author compiles data from Google News which sets to trace news from December 1, 2020, to January 22, 2021 (53 days) with the keywords of 'vaksin'¹ and 'COVID'. The period is chosen as it marks the start of COVID-19 vaccines discussion in Indonesia based on Google Trends. The observation period is deemed to be sufficient as Smith (2020) has examined female representation in the UK government daily press briefings with similar time length (56 days). Subsequently, this paper prefers using Google News because it allows the compilation of most of the relevant articles from various media in the designated region (Indonesia) according to the keywords that have been determined.

The final dataset comprises 197 news articles from 26 media platforms. From the data, this article identifies *Kompas*, *Tempo* and *Detik* as the most prevalent media reporting on the topic of vaccines and COVID-19. The top three media organisations represent the contemporary media landscape in Indonesia where *Kompas*, *Tempo*, and *Detik* have the highest traffic volume (Alexa, 2021; SimilarWeb, 2021; AllYouCanRead, 2021). This paper also gathers the gender of the journalists who wrote selected articles, and coded them into male, female, and unknown for the unidentified ones. After all the articles collected, the author identified a total of 324 news sources and divided them into 9 categories (see Appendix 1 for complete details of each category). As the current study is also interested in understanding gender distribution across news sources and their affiliations, hence, the gender of each source is also coded in the same manner with how journalists' genders are coded.

One of the categories is a body which was formed by the Indonesian government as a response to COVID-19 outbreak in Indonesia. On March 13, 2020, the government officially formed the COVID-19 Task Force based on the Presidential Decree No. 7 in 2020 to accelerate the pandemic management (Gitiyarko, 2020). However, in July 2020, the Indonesian government dispersed the first COVID-19 Task Force and handed over its tasks to an umbrella committee which focuses more on economic recovery, the COVID-19 Handling and National Economic Recovery Committee or most known as KPC-PEN (Ihsanuddin, 2020). It should also be noted that some figures such as Airlangga Hartarto, Luhut Binsar, Mahfud MD, Muhadjir Effendi, Erick Tohir, Sri Mulyani, Budi Gunawan Sadikin, and Tito Karnavian serve double roles in some the category mentioned before and other institutions. Therefore, they are coded according to the position/affiliation that appeared in the news (see Appendix 2 and 3 for complete structure of the category).

This paper uses quantitative descriptive methodology to analyze the data. The reason why it is important to look at descriptive representation in the media is because it can act as a reflection of gender inclusivity in health issues (Smith, 2020), in this case the global pandemic. Hence, the gender of journalists and sources are coded according to their affiliated media and institutions. Subsequently, the narration and title of each article are also manually coded. The final dataset is presented with a data visualization tool, *Datawrapper*.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Media and journalists

This paper first looks at the media distribution that covers COVID-19 vaccines topic. There are three outlets which dominate the discussions. The three media are *Kompas*, *Detik*, and *Tempo* and they top Google News search with 40%, 12%, and 10% respectively (see Figure 1). This finding is interesting as the result replicates the top online news media demography in Indonesia. Based on Alexa.com (2021), Kompas ranks second and Detik ranks third as the top news media sites in Indonesia. Meanwhile, data from SimilarWeb (2021) shows that Kompas is the number one site and followed by Detik in third place. Although Tempo is not included within the top three in Alexa.com and SimilarWeb, AllYouCanRead (2021) identifies Tempo as the ninth most popular online newspaper in Indonesia

¹ The search is conducted in Bahasa Indonesia (vaksin is vaccines in English). Once the data is collected, the author provides free translation of each article into English.

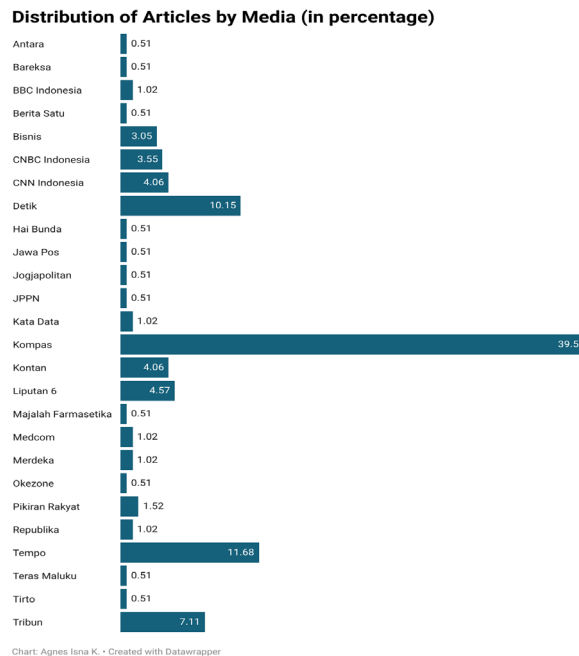


Figure 1. Distribution of Articles by Media (in percentage)

Previous studies have linked the relation between media ownership and their reporting styles (Ekayanti and Xiaming, 2018; Nugroho et al., 2012). Journalists who work in media whose owner has strong political connections face more interference in the newsroom. Such a relationship may result in bias and hinders the media from positioning themselves objectively. Top three media in this paper, Kompas, Detik, and Tempo are owned by Jacob Oetama², Chairul Tanjung (CT) Corp, and Yayasan Tempo respectively (Haryanto, 2011). On paper, CT Corp is the only media owned by a former minister. There are also other politicians who own big media groups such as Hary Tanoesoedibjo, Aburizal Bakrie, Surya Paloh, and Dahlan Iskan (Tapsell, 2017). This indicates a strong likelihood of political intervention towards a large number of press in Indonesia.

Subsequently, digital news media has risen and started to replace conventional newspapers in Indonesia and capture millions of readers. By 2017, the traditional newspapers in Indonesia lost 40% of their main profit (Sufyan, 2017). The rise of online news media is also a result of massive internet proliferation in the country. We Are Social and Hootsuite (2020) record an annual growth of 25 million internet users with 30% improved internet speed in Indonesia. As for devices, the vast majority of Indonesian users spend most of their time on the internet through their mobile phones then followed by laptops and desktops usage. This context is important to understand better the significance of online news media that is analyzed in this research.

Meanwhile, on the topic of gender distribution among the media journalists in Indonesia, it is almost surprising that there are more female journalists who have written articles on COVID-19 vaccines topic compared to male journalists. The former comprises 52% and on the other hand, male journalists contribute 33%. However, it is also worth noting that more than 15% authors' gender could not be identified, yet female sums more than half of it. This finding is quite similar with the distribution of female journalists in the top three most prevalent media reporting on this topic as mentioned in the earlier part. Kompas has 67% female journalists, Detik has 50%, and Tempo has slightly different results with the same percentage of female and male authors (see Figure 2).

² Jacob Oetama passed away in 2020 and Kompas Group continues to be managed by his family.

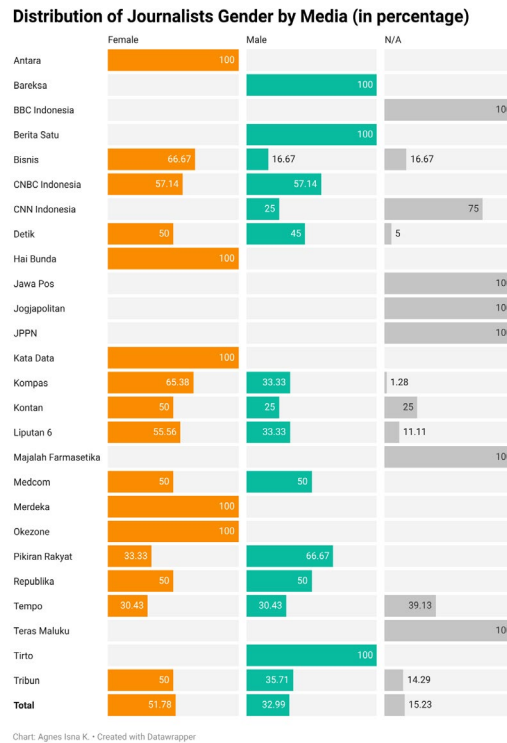


Figure 2. Distribution of Journalists Gender by Media (in percentage)

Despite having a majority of female journalists, this condition does not directly benefit women in news coverage. Shor and colleagues (2015) explain the complex system in publishing articles in the media. It is not within the authority of a journalist alone to release an article but there are newsroom policies and editors. Furthermore, the editors' belief may also determine the pattern of the coverage. Male editors are found to be more reluctant in publishing coverage on areas that are considered more masculine to female such as sports. Although this paper does not collect the gender of editors, it argues that there is solid proof to gender bias against women in the Indonesian media which will be elaborated more in the next section.

4.2. Sources: gender and position/affiliation

The data suggests that although most articles written by female journalists, the share of women being quoted in those articles are far from gender parity. Figure 3 displays men contribute 72% of the quotations for vaccines articles. This finding resonates with reports from other developing countries such as Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, and India where women's share in media reports is less than 20% (Kassova, 2020). At this point, one might think that developed states would have better women's representation in the media, yet this is not the fact. A study by Laura Jones (2020) suggests that in Britain, Australia, and America, female sources only made up a third of the overall quotations in media articles. Apparently, women's underrepresentation in the media remains a global issue with at least 120 countries experiencing the same shortage of women being the source of information in a news article (Global Media Monitoring Project 2021). The data indicates men continue to dominate media coverage during both normal and global pandemic.

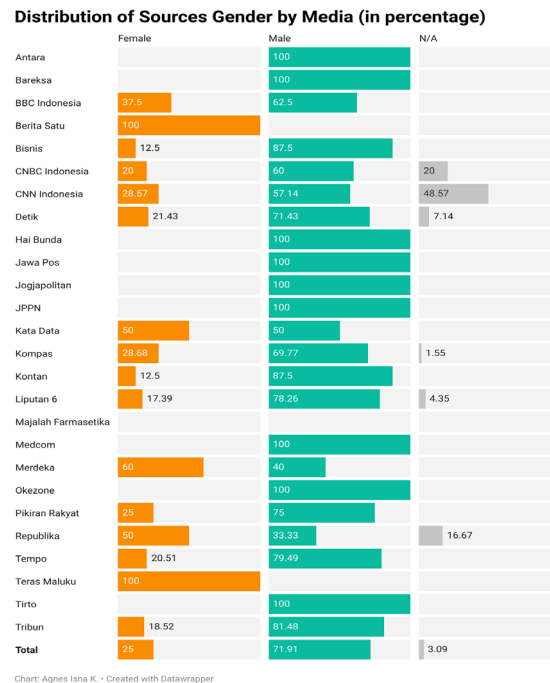


Figure 3. Distribution of Sources Gender by Media (in percentage)

There are a couple of key takeaways from the data when it comes to sources quoted. Firstly, government officials appear to be the most cited actors with 21.3% compared to other sources. One possible explanation as to why the category has the leading position/affiliation is because the vaccine rollout process is currently going on in Indonesia. Government officials hold an important role in providing key information regarding the distribution policy to the public. The examples are headlines from Kompas (12 December 2020) COVID Vaccines are Expected to Start Rollout Process in February 2021 and CNBC (28 December 2020) Indonesia is Going to Provide Vaccines to 180 Million People, Are the Vaccines Ready?. The distribution process, number of vaccines, priority groups to receive vaccines, and other information relating to the distribution of vaccines are frequently searched by the society hence the media focus their coverage on these issues.

The second most quoted in COVID-19 stories are pharmaceutical companies/scientists/academic/health associations with 15.43%. This paper suggests that one of the reasons for the high quotations of pharmaceutical companies/scientists/academic/health associations is the increase of public interest regarding vaccine types and their differences. Currently, there are multiple vaccines being developed and distributed such as Pfizer, Astrazeneca, Moderna, and Sinovac. The latter has been bought by the Indonesian government in a significant quantity of 3 million doses (Azanella, 2020). Because there are various variants of vaccines, it increases public curiosity to better learn about the quality and safety of each brand. An article titled Looking at the Effectivity of COVID-19 Vaccines that Have Been Announced, Pfizer BioNTech to Sinovac (Kompas, 1 January 2021) is a prime example of how the media is trying to educate about various vaccines available in the market.

Furthermore, ministers, especially the Minister of Health, hold a crucial role in the vaccine rollout. As an evident, in the article published by Kompas (12 December 2020), the spokesperson of the Ministry of Health explains the vaccine distribution processes, We will focus the rollout in Java and Bali. This is because of the high transmission rate in seven provinces in Java and Bali. The author believes that government officials have higher citations compared to ministers because the number of ministers that are involved in the vaccine rollout are small. Overall, there are only 8 ministers who are quoted by the media out of 34 ministries in Indonesia (see Appendix 1).

At the bottom three of least dominating categories are health agencies/medical workers, COVID-19 Task Force/COVID-19 Handling and National Economic Recovery Committee (KPC-PEN), and lastly legislators/politicians. Hence, the author argues that articles about ovid-19 vaccines tend to focus not on the politicians or medical workers and Economic Recovery Committee. For example, COVID-19 Task Force/KPC-PEN's role was most significant in the early stage of the pandemic where contact tracing and economic recovery efforts were massively discussed (Azka, 2020; CNN Indonesia, 2020).

When it comes to gender distribution of the position/affiliation categories, men domination is almost equally distributed in all sources categories but one, government officials. Unlike Kassova, (2020), this article finds that government officials are dominated by women with 67% (see Figure 4). Meanwhile, in Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, India, US, and the UK, the number of male government employees and spokespersons quoted are three times bigger than it is in Indonesia. On the other hand, this article supports the findings of existing studies where female ministers, legislators, and politicians are poorly represented in the media. This shows that gender inequality in the media is still a big problem in the vast majority of categories.

Distribution of Sources by Gender (in percentage)

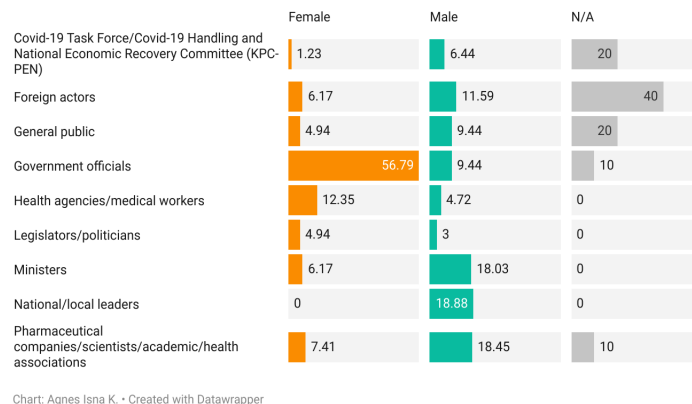


Figure 4. Distribution of Sources by Gender (in percentage)

On the second spot, health agencies/medical workers show a rather balanced gender distribution compared to other categories with a ratio nearly gender parity (48:52). However, this is inversely proportional to the global share domination of women as healthcare workforces which is 67% (Boniol et al., 2019). Previously, this paper has noted that the category is in the bottom three of position/affiliation quoted. This may indicate poor substantial appreciation toward healthcare workers in Indonesia. But female healthcare workers have it worse. This paper believes that women who serve in healthcare agencies or institutions face higher chances to be underappreciated compared to their male counterparts.

Afterwards, this article finds that women are most likely to be cited by the media when they serve as government officials (see Figure 5). There are two prominent female figures that are often quoted in this category. The two are Siti Nadia Tarmizi who is the Spokesperson for COVID-19 Vaccination from the Ministry of Health and Penny Kusumastuti Lukito who serves as the Head of National Agency of Drug and Food Control (BPOM). Tarmizi is quoted 22 times and Lukito 16 times from a total of 69 quotations of government officials. Both of them play important roles in the vaccination rollout process as explained in the earlier part. Examples of headlines where they are quoted are as follow, Ministry of Health: COVID-19 Vaccines are Free for All and COVID-19 Vaccines Permit is Still on Process, yet It Has Been Distributed, This is What BPOM Has to Say.

Distribution of Sources Gender by Position/Affiliation (in percentage)

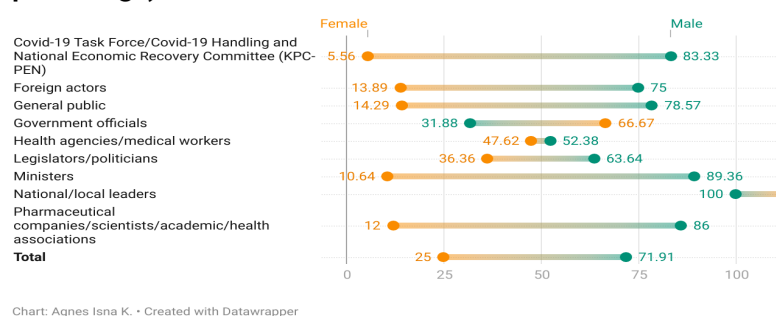


Figure 5. Distribution of Sources Gender by Position/Affiliation (in percentage)

In contrast, there is not even a slight chance for women to be quoted as national/local leaders. This reflects the poor female representation as a country or local leaders in Indonesia. In the 2018 local elections, there were only

31 women elected as local leaders (Tribun News, 2018). This makes women's contribution sit at 6% from 508 cities and districts. In the provincial level, only one governor is female out of 34 provinces which resulted in women's share merely at 3% (CountryMeters,2021). The only province with a female leadership is East Java which is led by Khofifah Indar Parawansa, who is also a former minister and lawmaker (Ramadhan, 2019). Interestingly, she was never quoted despite the fact that her province is among those with highest positive cases (Rizky, 2021). Similarly, the top job in the country continues to be dominated by men since the independence in 1945 as Megawati Soekarnoputri (2001-2004) is the only female president out of seven presidents. With these facts, the author asserts that women's underrepresentation in the media is mirroring the political realm in Indonesia. This situation is not unique to Indonesia as it happens in at least 120 other countries.

Among male leaders who have been massively quoted by the media are governors, vice governors, and regents in Java and Bali. Both islands are high populated areas in Indonesia with 151 million people hence it explains the massive quotations by the media (Sensus Penduduk, 2020). It is also worth noting that Jakarta, which is located in Java, is the capital city and business hub of the country where state civil apparatus mostly reside. Local leaders usually explain the vaccine distribution plans for their respective districts and cities such as Jakarta, Semarang, Solo, and Banyumas. One of the examples is the Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, who explained the priority groups of vaccination in an article published by Detik (4 January 2021) titled COVID-19 Vaccines have Arrived, on 14 January, Central Java Healthcare Workers will be Vaccinated.

In comparison, male leaders have been massively quoted by the media. These men leaders are Anies Baswedan (Governor of Jakarta), Ganjar Pranowo (Governor of Central Java), Ridwan Kamil (Governor of West Java), Wayan Koster (Governor of Bali), Ahmad Riza Patria (Vice Governor of Jakarta), Andika Hazrumy (Vice Governor of Banten), Fadelis (Regent of Lamongan, East Java), and Sri Purnomo (Regent of Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta). These men mostly explain about the rollout progress in the areas they lead such as Pranowo in Kompas (5 January 2021), The data of the vaccine recipients from 35 districts/cities are available. The highest are in Semarang, Solo, and Banyumas. The average is above 10,000 doses". With the same ability to lead, apparently Indonesian media still choose male leaders over women who are as meritorious as these men in leading their regions.

5. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that women are still poorly represented in COVID-19 vaccines stories in the Indonesian media. There are two key takeaways from the current study. Firstly, there are more female journalists covering this topic, yet male sources are overrepresented when it comes to news quotations. From a total of 197 news articles published by 26 media, more than half of journalists/authors are female. Secondly, news sources are massively attributed to men. From a total of 9 categories, only one category has more women being cited. Indonesian experience offers generalisability in terms of the condition in Southeast Asia and beyond. With the largest population in the region and the fourth in the world, women's underrepresentation in Indonesian media will continue to shape how women's fare in news coverage, especially during the current pandemic. The current study lends support to previous observations which suggest that women tend to be invisible in media reports regardless of countries' socio and economic status. It supports previous studies that assert how women are barely visible in the media (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020; Jones, 2020; Kossova, 2020; Smith, 2020).

Improving women's representation in the media is inseparable with the improvement of their substantive representation. Positions that currently are unfriendly toward women such as local/national leaders or ministers should admit more females. One of the approaches is through quota implementation. Furthermore, existing studies have suggested that gender stereotypes that exist in society limit women's coverage to mostly feminine related topics (Van der Pas and Aaldering, 2020; Widiati, 2021). To tackle this, society must be educated that women's roles are beyond being in the kitchen or as moms, but they can also be powerful leaders. There are two main caveats of this paper. First, as this paper collected its samples from Google News, hence it did not display the entire articles published during the period of the study. In this respect, some media may not appear in the search result as well. Therefore, future research might be interested in expanding the sampling method to other platforms beyond digital media and the period of observation. Doing it would allow more articles and media to be collected as data samples. Second, future study may also be interested in interviewing journalists to provide a qualitative perspective as to why authors choose to cover men or women sources in their articles. This could fill in the white spaces of this study that mainly focuses on a quantitative viewpoint in understanding gender bias in the media.

Despite the mentioned limitations, one of the biggest contributions of this study is its attempt to fill in the white spaces in existing research. The current paper provides empirical evidence on how poorly women are represented in the media in a developing country, specifically in Southeast Asia. Previous studies have paid more focus to

Western and non-Asian settings, hence the findings from this paper perform as great additions to what have been identified before.

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