

Self-Presentation Through Visual Framing in Political Communication of Candidates in Elections on Social Media

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Abstract

The military and civilian positions in Indonesia have strict limits, where military members who enter the realm of government must renounce their military titles. This phenomenon occurred in several figures, including Prabowo Subianto, Andika Perkasa, and Sturman Panjaitan. This study aims to analyze the visual communication strategies employed by the three candidates in constructing their self-presentation and visual framing through Instagram. With a quantitative approach through visual content analysis, this study identifies characterization patterns that emerge as both The Ideal Candidate and The Populist Campaigner. The findings show that Prabowo Subianto, as a candidate for head of state, highlights the character of The Ideal Candidate by creating the impression of a leader who is firm, strong, visionary, and has a broad reach. Andika Perkasa, as a candidate for regional head, displays the character of The Populist Campaigner with a relaxed and simple image, creating the impression of a leader who is close to the people and does not distance the community. Sturman Panjaitan, as a candidate for legislative member, more closely displays the character of the Ideal Candidate by conveying an impression of authority and formality. This research also demonstrates that in visual communication strategies, the role of position influences the construction of self-presentation in relation to different responsibilities, authority, and reach. Thus, visual framing is a crucial tool in the political communication strategy of candidates with a military background in the civilian realm.

Keywords: *Visual framing; Self-Presentation; Military Politicians; The Ideal Candidate; The Populist Campaigner*

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become the dominant force in transforming political communication in the digital age. His ability to reach the public widely, quickly, and directly makes him an important tool in building a candidate's political image. The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the communication patterns between political candidates and the public. From previously focusing on conventional media such as television and newspapers, it has now shifted to social media platforms such as Instagram, which are visual, interactive, and personal (Mansour, 2021). In Indonesia, the role of social media is increasingly crucial in every stage of the election process. Data shows that Instagram users in Indonesia will reach more than 90 million people by 2024, making it one of the most popular platforms used by politicians to interact with constituents (NapoleonCat, 2024).

Instagram, as a visual-based social media platform, is an effective medium for building a political image due to its high visual appeal and ability to influence emotions and public perception. Visual information can be processed faster than text and has a stronger emotional impact (Coleman, 2010; Rusmanto, 2017). In addition, visual framing, a technique that frames political messages through visual elements such as photos, symbols, and expressions, enables politicians to control the narrative to a greater extent compared to traditional media channels (Steffan, 2020). With visual framing,

candidates can choose how they want to be seen by the public, form specific characters, and emphasize values that they deem relevant to voters' preferences.

In the context of the 2024 election, this phenomenon is clearly observable in the communication strategies employed by candidates with military backgrounds. Figures such as Prabowo Subianto, Andika Perkasa, and Sturman Panjaitan utilize Instagram as their primary platform to shape public perception of their leadership. Their military background lends a unique perspective to their approach in visual political communication. The military is generally associated with values such as discipline, firmness, nationalism, and high integrity, which are considered ideal by most Indonesian people when choosing leaders (Nordlinger, 1977; Huntington, 1995).

The advantages of visual framing over other forms of political communication lie in three main aspects. First, images are faster understood by the brain because 90% of the information processed by the brain is visual (Rusmanto, 2017). Second, visuals have a stronger emotional effect and can form an impression without the need for lengthy verbal explanations (Coleman, 2010). Third, control over the narrative is entirely in the candidate's hands because the content is uploaded through personal accounts without intervention from traditional media (Steffan, 2020).

Self-presentation is a crucial aspect of political communication. Goffman (1959) states that individuals in social interactions consistently engage in "impression management" to influence how others perceive them. In a political context, self-presentation is used to present a certain image to voters. Political candidates choose a specific way to present themselves, pose, and convey a message that supports the desired image, whether as a resolute, popular, religious, or nationalist leader. Visual framing is the main supporting tool for the self-presentation process in the digital era.

Previous research by Grabe and Bucy (2009) developed a visual framing framework in political communication, which divides visual characteristics into three types: The Ideal Candidate, The Populist Campaigner, and The Sure Loser. This research was subsequently developed by various academics, including Ulucay & Melek (2024) and Steffan (2020), who demonstrated that the visual character of framing has a close relationship with electability and public perception of candidates. In election case studies in Turkey and Europe, visual characters such as "ideal" and "populist" were strategically employed by candidates to appeal to different audiences. However, most research has not specifically examined how military backgrounds affect a candidate's visual framing strategy in civilian political contests, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia. Additionally, there have been few studies that compare how visual framing is used by military candidates in different positions, specifically heads of state, regional heads, and legislative members.

This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing how Prabowo Subianto (presidential candidate), Andika Perkasa (gubernatorial candidate), and Sturman Panjaitan (legislative candidate) construct their presentations through visual framing on their respective Instagram accounts during the 2024 election campaign period (October 2023 – March 2024). The focus of the research is on how differences in leadership levels result in distinct framing strategies, despite all three figures sharing the same military background. This approach combines framing, self-presentation, and issue ownership theories, considering the differences in roles, responsibilities, and scope of positions in shaping the visual character displayed.

Conceptually, the election of the president demands the character of a charismatic and visionary leader with a national reach (Norris, 2000). Meanwhile, regional heads must emphasize proximity to local communities and administrative responsibilities, and the legislature is required to demonstrate integrity in public policy and representation (Fenno, 1978; Petrocik, 1996). Therefore, the visual framing strategies of the three are not only influenced by their military background, but also by the context of the position they are heading to.

Thus, this article contributes to the study of visual political communication by presenting an in-depth analysis of how political candidates with military backgrounds in Indonesia build their political image through Instagram. This analysis is crucial for understanding how visual framing and self-presentation strategies can shape public opinion and influence election outcomes in the digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the study of political communication, the concepts of self-presentation and framing are the primary foundations for understanding how candidates shape their public image, particularly in the context of visual social media platforms like Instagram. These two theories play a role in explaining the communication strategies employed by political candidates to create a specific impression that aligns with their target audience. In today's digital era, the practice of self-presentation has evolved from a purely verbal to a more visual and strategic form, utilizing visual framing techniques.

Theory Self-Presentation

Erving Goffman first introduced the concept of self-presentation in his work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). According to Goffman, individuals in social interactions act like actors who play roles on the social stage to form a certain perception in the minds of their audiences. In the political context, candidates employ self-presentation strategies to present themselves in a manner that aligns with the desired image, such as a decisive, popular, religious, or nationalist leader (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Self-presentation is basically strategic. The candidate will control behavior, choose visual symbols, and construct a narrative to create an image that is expected to be acceptable to the public (Dayakisni & Hudaniah, 2009). Through social media, political candidates have a wider platform to construct their image directly with the public, bypassing the filters of mainstream media.

Theory Framing

Framing theory was developed to explain how messages are constructed to influence the way people perceive reality. According to Entman (1993), framing is the process of selecting certain aspects of reality and making them more prominent in communication messages to support certain interpretations. In the context of political communication, framing plays a crucial role in shaping the public's understanding of issues, figures, or policies. In framing theory, several key elements are identified, including problem definition, causes, moral judgment, and solutions (Entman, 1993). These elements are presented explicitly or implicitly in the communication message. In visual politics, framing elements can also be observed in the way a candidate presents themselves, for example, through military attire, interaction with the public, or national symbols.

Visual Framing and Self-Presentation

Visual framing is a development of framing theory into the visual realm. Grabe and Bucy (2009) stated that visual framing refers to the way visual elements are used to frame political messages, thereby forming a certain impression. Visual framing is important in the context of social media such as Instagram, because visual content is more dominant than text. In their research, Grabe and Bucy (2009) identified three main visual framing characters: The Ideal Candidate, which is a candidate who is described as a visionary, professional, authoritative, and integrity leader; The Populist Campaigner, which is a candidate who appears popular, relaxed, and close to the community; The Sure Loser, a candidate who appears unconvincing, passive, or visually counterproductive. Each of these characters has distinctive visual attributes, such as the use of formal clothing, national symbols, or direct interaction with the masses. Visual framing not only emphasizes the visual aspect but also the interaction between the visual message and the audience's emotions (Coleman, 2010).

Visual Framing in Political Communication

Visual framing has become a strategic tool in political campaigns due to its ability to create an impression and shape public perception in a short period of time. In the competitive world of politics, visual imagery can be the differentiator between candidates. Candidates with a military background, for example, tend to highlight attributes such as assertiveness, discipline, and nationalism through visual framing that matches their background (Huntington, 1995; Asbari et al., 2023). Visual framing does not stand alone, but becomes part of the self-presentation strategy. In this context, self-presentation serves as an internal strategy, while visual framing acts as an external instrument that displays the strategy to the public. These two concepts complement each other in forming a consistent visual narrative of the candidate (Schill, 2012).

In this study, visual framing was analyzed as a form of self-presentation displayed by candidates with a military background on Instagram during the 2024 election campaign. By analyzing visual elements such as symbols, interactions, clothing, and atmosphere in the candidate's uploads, this study aims to understand how visual framing influences the perception of the leadership character portrayed by each candidate, as well as how the context of political positions affects the visual representation chosen.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a visual content analysis method, to identify and categorize the visual framing strategies employed by three political candidates with military backgrounds during the 2024 Election campaign. This approach is used because it enables researchers to systematically examine the content of visual communication on social media platforms, particularly Instagram, which serves as the primary medium for political campaigns. This type of research is comparative-descriptive. The study aims to describe the visual framing character of each candidate and compare the visual representation patterns between Prabowo Subianto (presidential candidate), Andika Perkasa (governor candidate), and Sturman Panjaitan (legislative candidate), taking into account the differences in political responsibility and structural position of office. The object of this study is the content of Instagram uploads on the official accounts of the three candidates, namely @prabowo, @jenderalniandikaperkasa, and @sturmanpanjaitan, during the 2024 election campaign period, starting from October 2023 to March 2024. Data samples were purposively taken from uploads that displayed visual elements such as photos of campaign activities, interactions with the public, political symbols, clothing, expressions, and relevant visual backgrounds.

The research instruments were arranged based on the visual framing category developed by Grabe and Bucy (2009), namely: the ideal candidate, the populist campaigner, and the sure loser. Each category has its own visual indicators encoded in the research observation sheet. Two independent coders carry out the coding process to ensure the reliability of the data. Before the main process, an inter-coder reliability test was conducted using the Holsti method, yielding a reliability result of greater than 0.80, indicating high consistency in visual coding. Data analysis was conducted in a quantitative descriptive manner, followed by a non-parametric test (Kruskal-Wallis) to determine the differences in visual framing characteristics between candidates. Thus, this method not only explains the visual character of each figure but also evaluates the significance of their differences in the context of different political positions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the visual framing strategies in the political communication of three candidates with a military background: Prabowo Subianto (presidential candidate), Andika Perkasa (gubernatorial candidate), and Sturman Panjaitan (DPR-RI candidate) on their respective Instagram

accounts during the 2024 election campaign (October 2023–March 2024). Visual data were analyzed based on the category of visual framing by Grabe and Bucy (2009), which were divided into two main types: The Ideal Candidate and The Populist Campaigner.

Descriptive Results and Categorization of Visual Framing

Of the total 485 uploads analyzed (Prabowo: 300 uploads; Andika Perkasa: 105 uploads; and Sturman Panjaitan: 80 uploads), 23 visual indicators were encoded. Each photo can contain more than one visual framing indicator (as shown in Table 1).

Table 1. Frequency of Visual Framing Indicators for Each Candidate

Indicator	Prabowo Subianto	Andika Perkasa	Sturman Panjaitan
Elected official and other influences	156	35	13
Patriotic Symbols	17	0	18
Symbol of progress	8	0	0
Identifiable Entourage	25	2	3
Campaign Paraphernalia	31	3	16
Political Hoopla	1	0	0
Formal Attire	63	6	30
Children	2	0	0
Family association	1	25	8
Admiring Women	2	6	4
Religious Symbols	25	5	0
Affinity Gestures	48	7	21
Interaction with Individuals	22	5	0
Physical Embraces	65	2	1
Celebrities	3	1	0
Large Audience	71	4	0
Aproving Audiences	1	4	3
Interaction with Crowds	25	4	0
Informal Attire	115	10	14
Casual Dress	49	65	31
Athletic Clothing	2	6	1
Ordinary People	3	8	12
Physical Activity	4	5	0
Total	739	203	175

Visual Framing Prabowo Subianto

As a presidential candidate, Prabowo dominantly displayed the character of The Ideal Candidate. He highlighted the image of statesmanship through the indicators "Elected official and other influence" (21.1%), followed by "Informal Attire" (15.6%) and "Large Audience" (9.6%). This illustrates the combination of elite charisma and a populist approach. Compassion is also evident, as seen in "Physical Embraces" (8.8%) and "Affinity Gestures" (6.5%). Religious imagery is also displayed through "Religious Symbols" (3.4%), which reinforces associations with religious values and nationalism. Prabowo is also the only candidate who displays all 23-character indicators; the visual framing shows an eclectic but controlled communicative approach (see Table 2).

Visual Framing Andika Perkasa

Andika Perkasa emphasizes the character of The Populist Campaigner, particularly the dimension of ordinariness (as shown in Table 3). The most prominent indicator was "Casual Dress" (32%), indicating an effort to appear popular and emotionally close. In addition, indicators such as

"Family Association" (12.3%) and "Ordinary People" (3.9%) reinforce the image of warm and friendly civic leaders. Interestingly, as a military figure, Andika did not use the indicators "Patriotic Symbols", "Symbol of Progress", or "Political Hoopla", which are generally associated with militarism. This strategy aims to bridge the military's image with a more populist and adaptive civilian image that resonates with local constituencies.

Table 2. Frequency of *visual framing* characters Prabowo Subianto

Character Visual framing	Dimensions	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Statemanship	Patriotic Symbols	17	2,3%
		Symbol of progress	8	1,1%
		Identifiable Entourage	25	3,4%
		Campaign Paraphernalia	31	4,2%
		Political Hoopla	1	0,1%
		Formal Attire	63	8,5%
		Total Statemanship		40,7%
	Compassion	Children	2	0,3%
		Family association	1	0,1%
		Admiring Women	2	0,3%
		Religious Symbols	25	3,4%
		Affinity Gestures	48	6,5%
		Interaction with Individuals	22	3%
		Physical Embraces	65	8,8%
		Total Compassion		22,4%
The Populist Campaigner	Mass Appeal	Celebrities	3	0,4%
		Large Audience	71	9,6%
		Aproving Audiences	1	0,1%
		Interaction with Crowds	25	3,4%
		Total Mass Appeal		13,5%
	Ordinarriness	Informal Attire	115	15,6%
		Casual Dress	49	6,6%
		Athletic Clothing	2	0,3%
		Ordinary People	3	0,4%
		Physical Activity	4	0,5%
		Total Ordinarriness		23,4%
Total			739	100%

Visual Framing Sturman Panjaitan

Sturman Panjaitan employs a balanced visual framing strategy (Table 4). The Ideal Candidate's character dominates 65% of the total visuals, mainly through "Formal Attire" (17.1%), "Campaign Paraphernalia" (9.1%), and "Patriotic Symbols" (10.3%). Meanwhile, the dimension of compassion is also shown through "Affinity Gestures" (12%) and "Family Association" (4.6%). The popular image was found to be limited to indicators such as "Casual Dress" (17.7%) and "Ordinary People" (6.9%), but it did not display "Large Audience" or "Interaction with Crowds". It shows a conservative visual approach, reflecting a more representational and functional legislative role than a charismatic one.

Comparison of Visual Framing Proportions

An analysis of the proportion of visual framing characters among the three political candidates with military backgrounds reveals significant differences in strategy. Based on the categorization of the two main characters of visual framing —namely, The Ideal Candidate and The Populist Campaigner—it was found that each candidate adopted a distinct composition in shaping their self-image on social media, particularly through Instagram uploads during the campaign period.

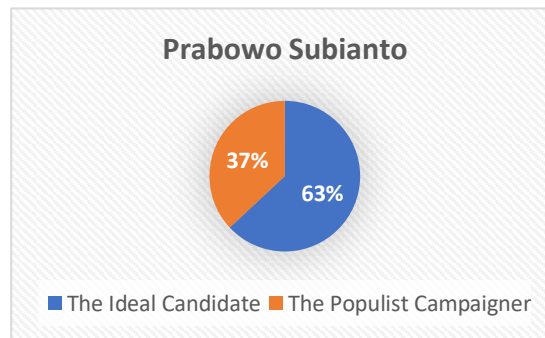


Figure 1. Visual *framing* character diagram Prabowo Subianto

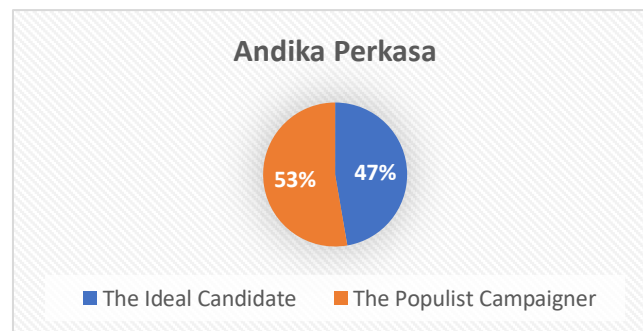
Table 3. Character Frequency *Visual Framing* Andika Perkasa

Character	Visual framing	Dimension	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The Ideal Candidate	Statemanship		Elected official and other influences	35	17,2%
			Patriotic Symbols	0	0
			Symbol of progress	0	0
			Identifiable Entourage	2	1%
			Campaign Paraphernalia	3	1,5%
			Political Hoopla	0	0
			Formal Attire	6	3%
			Total Statemanship		22,7%
	Compassion		Children	0	0
			Family association	25	12,3%
			Admiring Women	6	3%
			Religious Symbols	5	2,5%
			Affinity Gestures	7	3,4%
			Interaction with Individuals	5	2,5%
			Physical Embraces	2	1%
			Total Compassion		24,7%
The Populist Campaigner	Mass Appeal		Celebrities	1	0,5%
			Large Audience	4	2%
			Aproving Audiences	4	2%
			Interaction with Crowds	4	2%
			Total Mass Appeal		6,5%
	Ordinarriness		Informal Attire	10	4,9%
			Casual Dress	65	32%
			Athletic Clothing	6	3%
			Ordinary People	8	3,9%
			Physical Activity	5	2,5%
			Total Ordinarriness		46,3%
Total				203	100%

Prabowo Subianto displays a proportion of 63% of The Ideal Candidate characters and 37% of The Populist Campaigner characters (in Figure 1). This dominance of ideal character reflects Prabowo's efforts to appear as a charismatic, assertive, and authoritative national leader. The image is strengthened through visuals that present themselves in the context of statehood, meetings with strategic figures, wearing formal clothes, and accompanied by symbols of statehood and nationalism. Despite this, the populist character remains present in some uploads, especially in moments when he interacts directly with the masses, wears casual clothes, or performs affectionate gestures, such as shaking hands and hugging citizens. This strategy employs a hybrid approach, combining the image of the elite with that of the people, which aligns with Prabowo's strategic position as a presidential candidate.

Table 4. Character *Frequency Visual Framing* Sturman Panjaitan

Character <i>Visual framing</i>	Dimension	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>The Ideal Candidate</i>	<i>Statemanship</i>	<i>Elected official and other influences</i>	13	7,4%
		<i>Patriotic Symbols</i>	18	10.3%
		<i>Symbol of progress</i>	0	0%
		<i>Identifiable Entourage</i>	3	1,7%
		<i>Campaign Paraphernalia</i>	16	9,1%
		<i>Political Hoopla</i>	0	0%
		<i>Formal Attire</i>	30	17,1%
	Total Statemanship			45,6%
	<i>Compassion</i>	<i>Children</i>	0	0
		<i>Family association</i>	8	4,6%
		<i>Admiring Women</i>	4	2,3%
		<i>Religious Symbols</i>	0	0%
		<i>Affinity Gestures</i>	21	12%
		<i>Interaction with Individuals</i>	0	0%
		<i>Physical Embraces</i>	1	0,6%
	Total Compassion			19,5%
<i>The Populist Campaigner</i>	<i>Mass Appeal</i>	<i>Celebrities</i>	0	0%
		<i>Large Audience</i>	0	0%
		<i>Aproving Audiences</i>	3	1,7%
		<i>Interaction with Crowds</i>	0	0%
	Total Mass Appeal			1,7%
	<i>Ordinarriness</i>	<i>Informal Attire</i>	14	8%
		<i>Casual Dress</i>	31	17,7%
		<i>Athletic Clothing</i>	1	0,6%
		<i>Ordinary People</i>	12	6,9%
		<i>Physical Activity</i>	0	0%
	Total Ordinarriness			33,2%
Total			175	100%

**Figure 2.** Diagram character *visual framing* Andika Perkasa

In contrast to Prabowo, Andika Perkasa actually highlighted the character of The Populist Campaigner with a proportion of 53%, while the ideal character appeared at 47% (in Figure 2). This proportion shows that Andika's visual communication approach emphasizes closeness to society, simplicity, and family. This is evident in the visual dominance of casual clothing, the interaction with family and society, and the minimal use of formal symbols or military attributes. As a former TNI Commander running for governor, Andika appears to be attempting to soften his militaristic image by presenting a visual narrative that is civil and populist. This strategy is intended to adapt to the character of regional voters who prioritize leaders who are approachable, emotional, and familiar in the local context.

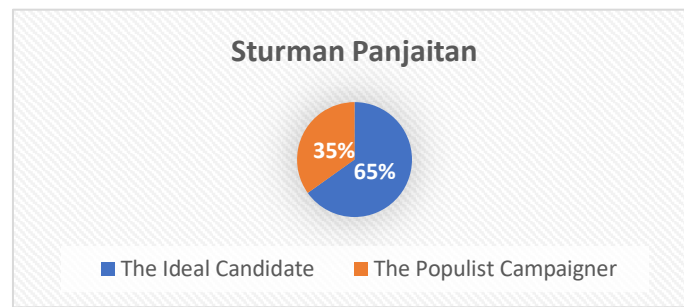


Figure 3. *Sturman Panjaitan's* visual framing character diagram

Meanwhile, Sturman Panjaitan shows a stronger tendency towards the character of The Ideal Candidate, with a proportion of 65%, and only 35% as The Populist Campaigner (in Figure 3). The visual imagery that Sturman displays tends to be formal, serious, and professionally oriented. As a candidate for legislative office, this strategy can be interpreted as an effort to establish a public perception that he possesses the capacity, credibility, and integrity to advocate for the people's aspirations through formal institutions. However, populist characters still appear in several uploads, for example, in the context of interacting with citizens, wearing casual clothes, and using informal gestures. However, the portion is not dominant, and the visual framing still reflects a classic legislative representation that emphasizes work ethic, dedication, and discipline.

When compared as a whole, it can be concluded that the visual framing approach of the candidates is not only influenced by their military background, but also greatly influenced by the intended position. Prabowo, as a presidential candidate, combines elite and populist characteristics to reach segments of national voters. Andika, as a candidate for regional head, is more focused on building closeness and emotionality in the local context. Meanwhile, Sturman, as a legislative candidate, emphasizes formality and personal capacity. This shows that visual framing strategies are not a one-dimensional approach, but rather a dynamic response to the political roles and expectations of different constituents.

Results of Statistical Test (Kruskal-Wallis Difference Test)

To test the hypothesis that there is a difference in the visual framing character between candidates, a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test is used, as the data is ordinal and does not meet the assumption of normal distribution. This test was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in the distribution of visual framing indicators used by Prabowo Subianto, Andika Perkasa, and Sturman Panjaitan. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test showed that the significance value (p-value) was below the threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$, which was $p < 0.001$ (in Figure 4).

Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
	Frekuensi
Kruskal-Wallis H	24.428
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	<,001

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable:
kandidat

Figure 4. Results of the Kruskal-Wallis Difference Test

This means that statistically, there is a significant difference in the visual framing strategies used by the three candidates. These findings support the study's main hypothesis that visual framing strategies are not uniform, even though all three have military backgrounds. This difference indicates that the visual framing character chosen is significantly influenced by the context of the intended political position, as well as the characteristics of the target audience for the campaign. Furthermore, follow-up tests were conducted between candidate pairs to identify which pairs exhibited significant differences more specifically.

Further test results showed that the comparison between Prabowo Subianto and Sturman Panjaitan yielded a significance value of $p = 0.000$, indicating a very significant difference between the two. This reflects the difference in framing character between national-scale presidential candidates and DPR-RI candidates who tend to display local and legislative images. The comparison between Prabowo Subianto and Andika Perkasa yielded a p -value of 0.047, indicating a significant difference, albeit not as strong as the previous pair. This indicates that there is a variation in framing between presidential and gubernatorial candidates, particularly in the area between populist and elite approaches. Then, a comparison between Andika Perkasa and Sturman Panjaitan yielded a p -value of 0.035, indicating that even though both occupy positions outside the national executive, the visual strategies used still exhibit significant differences. This is made possible by differences in the functions of the office and public expectations regarding the roles of a governor and a member of the legislature.

These statistical findings further reinforce previous qualitative and descriptive findings that the intended political office greatly influences how candidates shape their presentation through visual framing strategies. Presidential candidates tend to blend elite and populist characteristics to reach all segments of society. In contrast, regional head candidates place more emphasis on the aspect of emotional closeness, while legislative candidates emphasize aspects of integrity and formality.

Discussion

This section discusses the research findings by relating them to the formulation of problems, theories, and the context of digital political communication in Indonesia. The focus of the discussion lies in how candidates with a military background form their self-image through visual framing strategies, as well as how differences in visual character are determined by the level of political office they are seeking.

Candidates with a military background generally bring values such as assertiveness, nationalism, discipline, and hierarchy into their public communication style. These values indirectly shape the way they present themselves, including through visual-based social media such as Instagram. Based on the study's findings, Prabowo Subianto, Andika Perkasa, and Sturman Panjaitan demonstrated a general pattern in the use of visual framing strategies, specifically emphasizing the characters of The Ideal Candidate and The Populist Campaigner, albeit with varying proportions and emphases (Bossetta, 2018).

The Ideal Candidate character is most displayed through the "Elected Official and Other Influence" and "Formal Attire" indicators. The three candidates actively took advantage of the moments with important figures, the use of official attributes, and state symbols to form an impression of integrity, professionalism, and authority. Prabowo appears as a nationalist statesman, Andika as a regional leader who remains authoritative, and Sturman as a legislative representative who maintains institutional credibility (Filimonov et al., 2016).

Instead, the Populist Campaigner's character is revealed through the indicators "Casual Dress" and "Informal Attire" to build an impression of closeness to the community. The use of visuals in

casual clothing, direct interaction with citizens, and warm gestures indicate an attempt to present oneself as a leader who is down-to-earth, empathetic, and familiar. This strategy serves as an emotional bridge between candidates and the public, which is especially important in the context of digital-based political campaigns.

These findings align with the research of Uluçay & Melek (2024), which demonstrates that visual framing is highly influenced by the political context and public perception it seeks to shape. Candidates with broad power coverage tend to display ties to political elites and state symbols, while regional candidates emphasize a social approach that is personal and participatory.

The research of Bucy and Seigmund (2024) also supports this finding. Their study of Volodymyr Zelensky's campaign demonstrates how candidates can effectively combine formal visuals, symbols of power, and heroic narratives to establish an image as both a national leader and a person emotionally connected to the public. In this context, Prabowo often displays military attributes and his closeness to elite figures as a form of visual framing of his legitimacy and symbolic power. At the same time, Andika simplifies his image, and Sturman balances between institutional formalities and social touches.

The findings also show that differences in visual framing between candidates are not only due to military backgrounds, but are also significantly influenced by the intended political office. Prabowo Subianto, as the dominant presidential candidate, displays the character of The Ideal Candidate. His visualization often shows relationships with important figures, participation in national forums, and the use of state symbols. This approach presents a strategy of presenting oneself as a figure who is not only ready to be chosen but also capable of leading the nation.

According to Goffman (1959), this is a form of front-stage performance in which individuals present themselves with all symbolic elements to create a certain impression in front of the public. Prabowo, in this case, not only portrays himself as a national leader but also sends a strong signal about his power network and diplomatic experience. This approach also reflects the concept of "visual mystique" as described by Bucy & Seigmund (2024), which involves the use of visuals to convey an aura of power and charisma through a single, consistent visual narrative.

On the contrary, Andika Perkasa, as a candidate for governor, adopted the Populist Campaigner's approach. It consistently displays a relaxed, inclusive, and popular image. By wearing casual clothes, greeting citizens directly, and avoiding military symbols, Andika frames himself as a civilian leader who is sensitive to social realities. This strategy aligns with the concept of role adaptation in Goffman's theory (1959), where candidates adjust their self-presentation style to meet the expectations of the local community. In the context of visual framing, this is referred to as downward orientation framing (Febryanti & Ahmad, 2023), a strategy that creates a sense of closeness to grassroots communities.

Meanwhile, Sturman Panjaitan, as a legislative candidate, displayed a relatively balanced strategy. He combines professional formalities through formal attire and the context of political activities, with a casual touch to build social accessibility. In this context, he made a hybrid presentation that combined institutional authority and social connectedness. This strategy aligns with the typology of Uluçay & Literacy (2024), in which legislative candidates serve as a bridge between formal power and the reality of the people.

All three candidates also showed a tendency to reinforce certain issues that "belong" to them through visual framing. This concept is known as issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996), which occurs when a candidate displays competence and a strong association with a particular issue, thereby gaining the public's trust. Prabowo explicitly asserts ownership of the issue of defense and nationalism, Andika builds an image as a defender of people's welfare at the local level, and Sturman asserts his legislative role through visuals that emphasize integrity and social sensitivity (Zulli & Towner, 2021).

Thus, visual framing is not only an aesthetic tool of communication but also plays a crucial role in shaping political self-presentation in the digital era. Visual framing is a strategic means of shaping perceptions, building emotional connections, and affirming the candidate's position and competence in electoral contests.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the visual framing strategy used by political candidates with a military background in the 2024 elections, namely Prabowo Subianto, Andika Perkasa, and Sturman Panjaitan, not only reflects typical military values such as discipline, firmness, and nationalism, but also shows adaptation to the power structure and political position to be targeted. Prabowo Subianto, as a presidential candidate, highlights the character of The Ideal Candidate through symbols of statehood and institutional legitimacy. Andika Perkasa, as a candidate for regional head, displays the image of the Populist Campaigner with a casual and down-to-earth approach. Meanwhile, Sturman Panjaitan, as a candidate for legislative member, employed a combination of strategies by displaying both formal and socially familiar visuals. This difference in visual framing character confirms that the intended political position greatly influences the form of a candidate's self-presentation on social media.

This research contributes to enriching the study of digital political communication, particularly in understanding how visual framing is used to construct self-image and garner public support. However, limitations in the number of samples and the scope of candidates are important notes. For further research, it is recommended that the study be expanded to include a comparative approach between regions, incorporating dimensions of public perception through surveys or interviews, and an analysis of the production and distribution processes of visual content. Thus, an understanding of the effectiveness of political communication based on visual framing can be developed more comprehensively and in a more contextualized manner.

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Data Availability Statement

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