



# Women leaders in the 14<sup>th</sup> General Election: A comparative framing analysis of the Malaysian media

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## ABSTRACT

Malaysia concluded its momentous 14th General Election in May 2018, which heralded a regime change after 60 years. In this election, an unprecedented number of women stood as candidates but only 11% succeeded in becoming elected representatives. Hence, this study analyses the media discourse in the Malaysian press on women representation in the election. The media portrayal of women leaders in general elections constitutes an important research area as it reflects the crossroads of gender, politics, media and identity. Literature further indicates that effects of media reporting on political participation and election results may be particularly noticeable in Malaysia because it may give a new social meaning to women in politics, women's political presence and gendered social constructions about women's political capacity. The research ascertains how the articles were framed to contribute to women empowerment or framed to highlight awareness of women's basic role in the Malaysian society. This study employed a content analysis on a corpus of mainstream Malay (*Utusan Melayu*), English (*The Star*) and Chinese (*Sin Chew Daily*) newspapers, and the online media (*Malaysiakini*). The findings reveal that the coverage of women is still under-represented since only superficial issues on women's roles were discussed instead of their professional and leadership qualities. In the new Malaysia, the media needs to veer away from the stereotypical representation of women and instead represent them in a more progressive role, reshaping their political identity to enhance women's suitability and capability as key political figures.

Keywords: ***Women politicians, media and elections, representation of women***