Gender Disparity of Representation in Sub-national Level Politics in Sri Lanka; A Case Study of the Western Provincial Council.

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Abstract

Devolution is frequently presented as favorable for women. However, the reality is not so clear cut. Provincial level governance is one of the tiers that is closer to people, but relationships, structures and processes of provincial governance can provide space for women's representation and the policy potential for addressing gender issues. Therefore, the prime objective of the present study is identifying as to how numerical representation lead to better representation in women's interests. In achieving the prime objective, this study is focused on relationship between numerical and substantive representation in Western Provincial Council, Sri Lanka.

The novelty of this study is from many previous studies is that taken into account of substantive representation in sub-national politics. In analyzing data and information, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods has been used in order to have better results. The experience of devolution in Sri Lanka is invariably held up as an example of good practice in advancing gender equality in representation.

The major findings of the study are can be summarized as follows; women representatives do have gender related impact on public policy and political process, women issues have been on their agendas. The experience of devolution of power in Sri Lanka advanced the representation. But gender equity that did not arise only from devolution of power. Under descriptive representation leads to under substantive representation of women. Devolution remains a real litmus test of Sri Lanka's ability to achieve gender parity.

Keywords:

Women, Decentralization, Provincial Council, Substantive representation, Descriptive representation