

From Home to Politics: Study of Female Representatives in Local Governments in Sri Lanka

De Mel M P M

Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Peradeniya
prarthana.madu@gmail.com

Although Sri Lankan women have obtained universal franchise in 1931, since then they have been struggling to create a sufficient space for them represent their interests and needs. Granting 25% quota for women recently for Sri Lankan local governments increased opportunities for women to increase the total number of women's representation though there were many debates and criticisms were mounted against it. In the current scenario, it is essential to study that how these newly elected or selected women play their latest political role. Hence, this study focuses to analyse and understand the decision-making behaviours of female representatives in local governments. The main objectives of this research are: to examine the decision-making behaviours of these women, strategies used by them to overcome gender base challenges and gaps in empowering them to play a better role in decision-making. The researcher used a multiple case study design and intended to gain insight and understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, this is an instrumental case study to gain knowledge on the behaviour of the decision-making of women in politics. In-depth interviews, informal interviews, direct and participant observations are applied in data collection across 10 cases. Categorical aggregation strategy is implemented in the analysis. The research found 5 types of women according to their behaviour patterns, based on similarities and differences of their roles in decision-making. They are: radical women, community women, disciplined woman, stereotyped woman and silent women. Each type has unique characteristics and these are more like levels which women choose to act according to different circumstances. Their private and public spheres also promenade special influences to their decision making behaviours. The study also found all women are fighting in different ways to create a space for representing their voices that benefit their community in the local government institute. Mainly the organized acts of violence within the local governments directly influenced the decision-making capacity of women. Therefore, empowering women by providing knowledge on local government act and motivate to build a strong alliance among women are necessary to strength the decision-making behaviours of women. Coalition building is essential among women to let themselves, but it is still very far from saturating level.

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