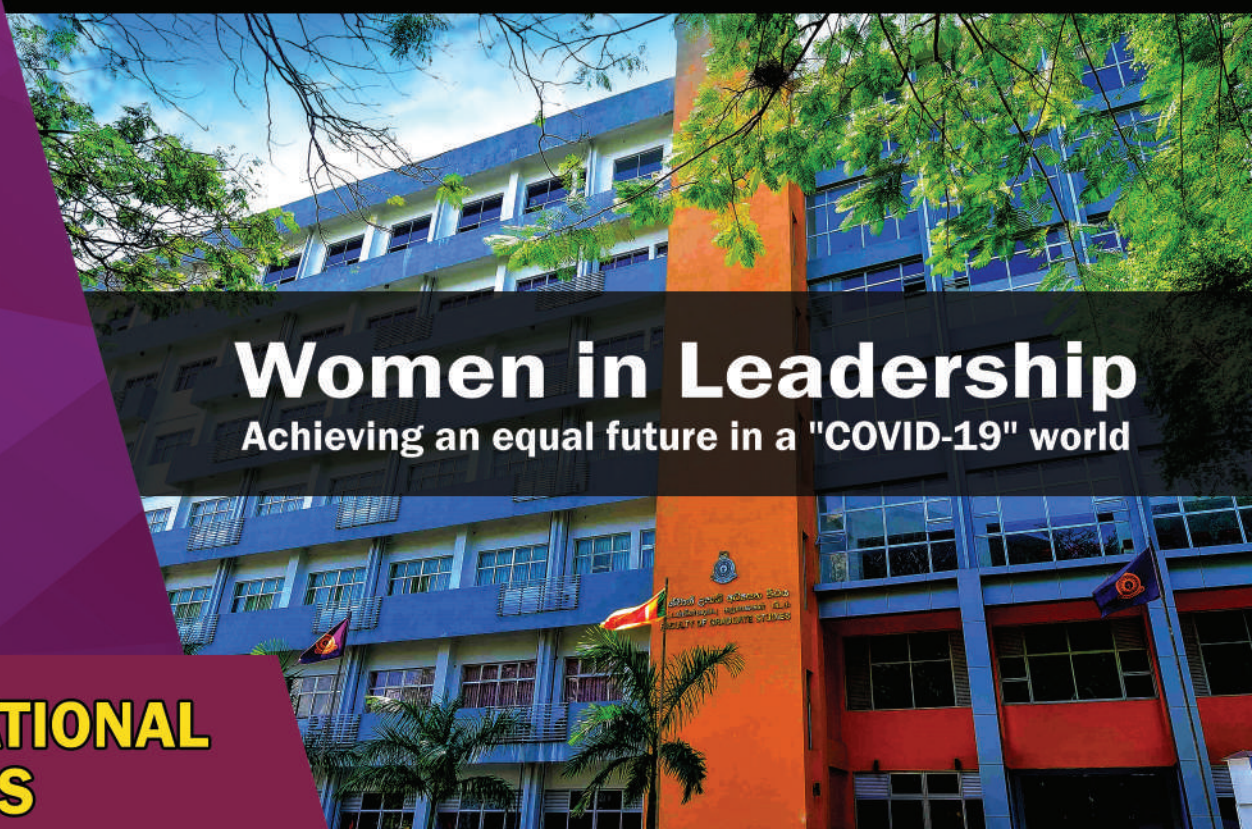




Faculty of Graduate Studies University of Colombo



Women in Leadership

Achieving an equal future in a "COVID-19" world

**INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DAY 2021
Symposium**

Abstracts

► Track One:

Women in Leadership

► Track Two:

Legal Rights for Equality

► Track Three:

Achieving an Equal Future

MARCH

08th

2021

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08th March 2021

**Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Colombo**

IWD 2021- Symposium Chair:

Senior Professor Nayani Melegoda

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Dr J. D Jayawardena

Dr Maneesha Wanasinghe

Dr R. Senathiraja

Dr Pradeep N’ Weerasinghe

Dr Rajitha Silva

Dr Hasith Kandaudahewa

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Dean, Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Colombo

Track Two: Legal Rights for Equality

Chair: Dr. Janaki Jayawardene

Chairperson, Board of Study for Development Studies, Faculty of
Graduate Studies, University of Colombo

Track Three: Achieving an Equal Future

Chair: Professor Nayani Melegoda

Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo

MESSAGE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR

Senior Professor Chandrika N Wijeyaratne



It gives me great pleasure to participate in the commemoration of International Women’s Day 2021, organized by the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) of the University of Colombo. This event is of special significance for the men, women and children of our beautiful motherland. While coping with the many challenges and adaptation required by the current pandemic, the 2021 norm of living and working with the threat of COVID19, highlights the contributions made by our pioneers who ensured the sustenance of social policies and norms that recognize the rightful role of women. We are proud to note that the Postgraduate Diploma leading Masters in Gender and Women’s Studies remains the only postgraduate multidisciplinary study program on women and gender in Sri Lanka. The FGS now has many distinguished alumni that includes women leaders in education, health and policy development, law and security and the corporate sector, in parallel with women leaders in the fields of sports and recreation.

The impact of the current pandemic highlights the role of women in any society. Women and children have remained the worst affected by any natural disaster or health hazard, while grandmothers, mothers and girls of our communities contribute in numerous ways to be the informal guardians of “health and safety” at family and community levels. The sustenance of universal health and education in Sri Lanka without gender discrimination, of over seven decades, needs our humble salutation. The contribution of women to Sri Lanka’s human capital, be it in the professions or as unskilled labour workforce, is far ahead of regional figures. The role of women in the health care sector - ranging from ministerial portfolios to frontline care givers, in education - as the main drivers of teaching and learning and as community leaders in fostering social harmony through networking and leadership is

undisputable. Nevertheless, there remains unmet needs in the role of women in leadership and in the parliament that require our due attention. We need to recognize that women contribute to major facets in society through multi-tasking, while keeping the home fires burning with a caring maternal outlook. It is reasonable to conclude that the Sri Lankan milieu depicts that the role of women being well beyond tokenism and a home-based pastoral role.

Gender-based requirements in policy formulation and implementation, need to be factored into all aspects of management. I am very happy that our university community advocates for a gender sensitive governance and educational practices, by providing an annual forum for an evidence-based discussion on gender issues. Such an approach undoubtedly ensures the generation of gender sensitive citizens within our work and social environments. The FGS has great potential to be the considered benchmark for gender studies at national and regional levels.

I acknowledge with gratitude the role of all stakeholders while endorsing the unified expectation that ‘no one is left behind’ due to gender and related issues. I wish you the best of health and safety while engaging in these deliberations.

Senior Professor Chandrika N Wijeyaratne
Vice Chancellor
University of Colombo

MESSAGE OF THE DEAN, FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Senior Professor Nayani Melegoda



Enloe (1989) asked the question ‘where are the women?’, encouraging IR scholars to see the spaces that women inhabit in global politics demonstrating that women are essential actors in the international system. Sri Lanka has been the world’s first in having a woman leader, who went on to world stage in proposing Indian ocean as a zone of peace. In 1960, Srimavo Bandaranaike declared that country shall maintain an external relations policy of non-alignment with power blocs, neutralism and of co – existence. Today, many women leaders have emerged in various sectors contributing immensely to sustainable development of Sri Lanka. This is very true in the Universities of Sri Lanka. Women have taken leadership as Vice Chancellors, Deans and Heads of Departments on the basis of their academic and professional qualifications. Currently an important place where Sri Lankan women have missed out is in the representation of women population in the Parliament of Sri Lanka. Even in the 21st century there are so few women in our parliament.

As a Professor in International Relations by training, I am happy to note that at the Women’s Day celebrations at the Faculty of Graduate Studies today includes several papers on feminist contribution to IR such as powerful women leaders of world, in politics and governance, conflict resolution, war and peace, and women leaders managing the pandemic world.

With Best Wishes for today and always,

Senior Professor Nayani Melegoda

Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo

MESSAGE OF THE CHIEF GUEST

Ms. Kimarli Fernando, Chairperson, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau



It gives me immense pleasure to share with the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Colombo on International Women’s Day where we celebrate ‘women’ and what we stand for.

Let me raise a question of thought? Why is that women are symbolic on a cover of a fashion magazine but seems to fade if they are in a station of office?

It is all about choosing to “Challenge”. Nowadays, people think that “Feminism” and the rights of women is archaic, but it’s never going to be old if we have to keep voicing that women need to be given the same understanding as the other gender, be treated equally, and be provided the same compensation as the other person in the room. Women today are standing on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, this is showcasing the most exemplary women leaders in combating the pandemic.

100 years ago, education and voting in some countries for women was unheard of. Women stood with tremendous efforts to achieve their goals. Leadership, accolades, and acceptance did not come easy. It comes because they chose to navigate around the collective thought process and made people accommodate the evolving roles of women. The current statistic of 35.29% of the Sri Lankan workforce are females who are engaged in economic development as well as political and social stratosphere is something, we need to advance in the next 5-10 years.

Women with opinions are not “hard”, “difficult” and “tough” to deal with; these pre-conceived notions require mindsets to recognize where one can learn to be opinioned and

still be respectful of others' ideas. A common sentiment shared recently was one that females themselves look around and feel less than the girl they see on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Then again, having the confidence to say, “I am enough” and go that extra mile to be achieving your goals is what makes you different.

Women must be unpagged in the spotlight, they must think grace, tact, and empathy. Mastering these skills will take time but in doing so you are planting a skill yourself. Eventually, becoming unequivocal to support, challenge and embrace the new normal.

Today in Sri Lanka the feminist role is not just challenging the other gender, but also standing together so that as women we will not be inferior or superior but progress the community. It is about having equality within both genders in all aspects.

Ms. Kimarli Fernando
Chairperson, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau

MESSAGE OF THE GUEST OF HONOUR

**Ms. Bimshani Jasin Arachchi,
Deputy Inspector General of Police**



International Women's day is a global day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women in all spheres around the world. The day also makes a call to action towards accelerating Women's equality and ensuring a safer home, workplace and society for women. Today, we see many women who are in recognized leadership positions, pushing the boundaries of gender equality by utilizing their strength and leadership qualities through skill, knowledge, experience and attitude for this purpose.

The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka promotes the concept of women being citizens entitled to all rights & privileges equaling them to men. Article 12 of the Constitution stipulates that all persons are equal before the law highlighting that no citizen shall be discriminated against on the ground of race, religion, language, cast, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any such grounds.

When women are empowered to strive as leaders, policy makers & decision makers, their own communities benefit immensely resulting in a holistic growth. Especially, during these present times, when the whole world is crippled by a pandemic it is important to emphasize the value of an equal future for the women of today. In this way, our homes, our villages,

our workplaces and the society as a whole would be strengthened to face these vulnerable & uncertain times with solidarity & resilience.

It is said that little girls with dreams become women with vision. As such, it is important to create a secure platform for our future generation to enhance their scopes for a better world where gender is no barrier to be successful & fruitful.

**Ms. Bimshani Jasin Arachchi,
Deputy Inspector General of Police,
Police Ombudsman Range, Sri Lanka Police**

MESSAGE OF THE KEY NOTE SPEAKER

Professor Arosha S. Adikaram



It is such a pleasure to pen down this International Women’s Day 2021 message for the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo, in celebration of women and their generation-long struggles for gender equity and equality. In essence, it is a celebration of what we have achieved as women and a reminder of what we need to achieve for women in the future.

Looking at women in leadership in academia today, especially at the University of Colombo, gives us much hope for a future of equity and equality. Yet, women in leadership elsewhere indicate that the road ahead is hard and long. While we harp on the few women who have led our country or led/lead organizations, those appear to be extraordinary situations. For instance, if you look at Director Boards of the top 50 organizations in Sri Lanka, the parliament, or many professional bodies, you will see that women’s representation in leadership positions is staggeringly low. It is indeed rare for women to lead. Hence, in a country that numerically dominates the population, with much higher educational achievements, where have we gone wrong? There are undoubtedly many challenges to overcome for women to achieve true equality and equity and celebrate the true spirit of women’s day. As always, change starts with us; from looking at our own biases and prejudices about gender in general, and women in particular.

“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything” - George Bernard Shaw

Let us all gather to change mindsets and to support each other to create an equitable workplace for higher productivity, efficiency, wellness, and happiness.

Happy women’s day, everyone!

Professor Arosha S. Adikaram

Acting Director, Center for Gender Equality

University of Colombo

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA LEADING TO MASTERS IN GENDER AND WOMEN’S STUDIES COORDINATORS’ MESSAGE

There is mounting evidence from across the world that the burden of reproductive labour – that is, household management and care work for children, elderly, and the sick - during the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately fallen on women, especially mothers with school-aged children. Sri Lanka is no different. A few preliminary studies investigating the impact of long-term closure schools, lockdowns, and work-from-home orders on the division of labour at home reveal that women are bearing the brunt of the burden.

Working mothers are expected to work-from-home while supervising their children’s schooling, preparing meals, cleaning, and doing laundry. The closure of schools is having a serious impact on mothers with children in Grade One or younger; they cannot supervise schoolwork, but rather have to be with their children as they navigate online classes, or even teach them in the case of assignments and activities. This has meant attending to office work in the evenings and between household chores. Working women also complain that the work day has extended beyond the 8-4 or 9-5 routine with meetings and phone calls extending into the late evenings and weekends.

Women in low-income working-class neighbourhoods experience the burden differently. On-going studies reveal that with children at home, many women are unable to go to work. As daily-wage earners their work has always been precarious, but the pandemic has exacerbated their vulnerabilities with many losing access to their daily wages due to lockdowns and fears of their being the primary vectors of the virus. With schools closed, their children no longer have access to the state’s nutrition programmes, and mothers are deeply anxious about feeding their children and meeting the mounting utility bills including the cost of data cards and photocopies for school.

There is no doubt that the pandemic is having a serious impact on women’s health and wellbeing. On International Women’s Day 2021 we are challenged to consider women’s lives in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Policy makers must consider the differential impact of the pandemic on women from various socio-economic backgrounds when formulating policies for a post-COVID world. Women have always been expected to cope and manage, but policies must consider their flourishing as well.



Dr. Asha L. Abeyasekera



Dr. Pavithra Jayawardena

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Track One: **01**

Women in Leadership

Board Gender Diversity and Investment Efficiency: Evidence from Listed companies in Sri Lanka

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Promotion of gender diversity within the boardroom has become a new corporate governance mechanism within the corporate world to mitigate the agency problem and maximize shareholder value. Since women possess unique traits required to positively influence the strategic direction of a corporation and the growth of firms (Lincoln & Adedoyin, 2012). Vohra and Kaur (2017) clearly evidenced that women tend to be holistic thinkers, balanced, intuitive, good savers, and self-controlled. They tend to adopt the futuristic approach and perform in-depth research before making investments. On the other hand, women have to face many obstacles when climbing up the leadership ladder. Mainly they have to face the glass ceilings, glass cliffs, and glass walls in their carrier life. Additionally, barriers like masculine or patriarchal corporate culture and lack of women role models have to be faced by women (Wellalage & Locke, 2013). Consequently, gender quota to board of directors showcasing that less female representation in the board of directors is a global problem. This study aims to identify whether the presence of female directors in the board of directors can influence the investment efficiency of Sri Lankan publicly traded companies. This research was based on the secondary data and incorporated all the public companies listed in the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) during the period 2014 to 2018 except the companies listed under the Banks, Finance and Insurance sector. Based on the availability of data, the final sample was limited to 160 companies listed in CSE. Panel data regression analysis was adopted to examine the influence of female directors' presence in the board of directors on investment efficiency. The study results revealed that there is no significant influence made by the presence of females in the boardroom on investment efficiency in Sri Lankan companies. This might be due to the weaker corporate governance practices in the country setting. The study further analyzed the influence made by female directors on the firms under and over investment situations. Accordingly, it was found that female directors will significantly enhance firms' investment efficiency that is more prone to underinvestment. In sum up, findings of the study can be helpful for financial practitioners and regulators while developing firm policies to promote and encourage gender diversity in top management.

Keywords: Investment efficiency, female directors, corporate governance, over investment, under investment

Emergence of New Woman-A Challenge to Patriarchal Ideologies

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Woman's independence does not mean that she must perform the role of male power. She should be independent, autonomous and self-directed without being caught up in the phallocentric blandishments. In short, women's empowerment and emancipation can be effected by giving her space to come out from the private sphere to join the public sphere in which she can use her potential to achieve her empowerment. In this research I will use “post-conventional morality” (Gilligan) to analyze *The Road from Elephant Pass* by Nihal de Silva in an attempt to show the extent to which women “challenge and manipulate existing restrictive structures to step into public political activism” (Emmanuel 20). In the fiction the protagonist's gender role transformation from submissiveness to virility highlights the importance of women's empowerment and emancipation. The protagonist's new identity, which she achieves through the transformation of her gender role disrupts the dogmatic traditional patriarchy which victimizes women. In the novel the protagonist's quest for identity initially demands her performing traditional roles of women's submission and sacrifice for the sake of her community, society and the family. However, she changes the role/s forced on her by disciplining herself part from traditional gender norms in order to accept her own autonomous desire as the motive for a “postconventional” position in gender and its traditional discourses. The advent of such a position—the emancipation of desire and empowerment has implications for all women. By protecting the male protagonist in the fiction, the female protagonist validates the notion that women not only are playing the role of an “assistant” to man but also has potential to play the role of perpetrator of violence thereby become leaders. Therefore, Sri Lankan women's identity is seen at a transitional stage at which women are testifying to their own caliber and potential and are moving towards their financial, sexual and political liberty across all domains.

Key words: Woman, Empowerment, Emancipation, Caliber, Leadership

Angela Dorethea Merkel: International Relations of a Powerful Woman leader 2005 -2020

Nayani Melegoda

Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

There are many definitions to ‘Powerful’ but looking at International Relations (IR) of a woman leader, the term is meant as able to influence or control [people] as a political leader. Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany according to *Forbes* (2021) achieved the top position in the 100 most powerful women in the world for the tenth consecutive year. A remarkable woman leader from the European Union (EU) Angela Merkel, hailing from East Germany joined country’s politics at the end of the Cold War in 1989. She studied Physics at Leipzig University and earned a doctorate in quantum Chemistry from the German Academy of Sciences in 1986. In the first election of unified Germany in December 1990 Merkle entered the Bundestag winning the seat representing the Christian Democratic Union Party (CDU). She was appointed the Minister of Youth and Women. In 1994 having won her seat again she was appointed the minister of environment conservation and presided over the first UN Climate Conference in Berlin in 1995. In November 2005, Merkel was elected the Chancellor of Germany becoming the first woman, first East German and the youngest to hold the office. The challenges Merkel faced in conducting IR of Germany were numerous. As many countries in the EU had struggling economies, Merkel championed austerity (together with French President Sarkozy) as the way to recover European economies. Today in the world ranking of economies, Germany, France, United Kingdom (prior BREXIT) and Italy are among the first 10 largest economies. President Obama awarded Merkel the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011 for "an excellent steward of the German economy and the European project ...in future too, he [Obama] said, Angela Merkel’s leadership will play a very important part in overcoming the economic problems currently besetting the eurozone states." (Whitehouse archives). Fukushima disaster in 2011 made Merkel to take a spectacular decision on shutting down all nuclear power stations in Germany by 2022. Merkel’s political party (Leader of the Christian Democratic Union from 2000 to 2018) paid a high price for her stand on refugees, during Merkel administration more than a million migrants, mostly refugees entered Germany. The UN climatic summit of 2015 saw the Merkel engagement tirelessly to make the diplomatic success of the Paris Climate Agreement where Merkel pushed for an “ambitious, comprehensive, fair and binding agreement.” While Merkel maintained close relations with Obama, and good relations with George W. Bush, she did not get off to a good start with Trump and remained the same. Recently she talked of post Trump ties with the US. Nicknamed by journalists as "Climate Chancellor" for her long-standing international engagement for emissions cuts she ends her fourth and final term in autumn 2021. Merkel’s handling of the coronavirus crisis in the country has revitalized her reputation as a science savvy, reasoned leader with a pragmatic approach.

Key Words: Angela Merkel, Germany, Woman Leader, European Union, Diplomatic Success

Decision Making in Crisis: Governance of Jacinda Ardern during a world pandemic

Hasith Eranda Kandaudahewa

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Jacinda Ardern, the 40th Prime Minister of New Zealand, assumed duties for first time in September 2017, becoming the world's youngest female head of government at that time. During her early political career, Ardern, identified herself as a social democrat, who focused on progressive social development in Northern Island, including child/women welfare, the housing crisis and refugee/native rights. She reached the country's political leadership in a historically surprising manner, yet managed to lead the Labour Party into two political victories within a short period, including the record-breaking victory with the largest political majority in 2020 General Election during COVID-19 pandemic. During her first tenure, Ardern faced two major crises: Christchurch massacre and Covid-19 pandemic. After the Christchurch massacre in 2018, Ardern was proactive to manage the direction of public sympathy, control the rise of white supremacy and counter the Islamophobia arose within the community. As a result, her profile was internationally identified as a progressive female leader, who directed a country empathetically during a tragic terror attack. German Chancellor, Angela Merkel often credited Arden as a prominent female figure of hope. New Zealand was one of the first Pacific nations to impose a nation-wide lockdown and to restrict border migrations during Covid-19 pandemic. Ardern announced a scientifically-based four-level 'Alert System' indicating her strong initiative to combat the crisis while following expert opinion on crisis management. Mobilizing a collective effort to manage the crisis is one of her approaches while promoting “Unite against COVID-19” as the key government slogan. This pandemic has directly impacted the New Zealand GDP by nearly 12.5% in tourism alone, yet the government promoted subsidies to fill the domestic cashflow needs until December 2020. The proposed study opted for thematic analysis by employing qualitative methodology consisting of archival analysis on selected key speeches/ national addresses by Arden made from March 2020 to January 2021. Initial findings suggest that during the management of pandemic, Ardern elaborated two perceptions: domestic and international. Her domestic perceptions were based on 'go hard-go early', 'testing-retesting' and 'stable livelihood', while 'New Zealand-First', 'geopolitical location' and 'vaccine cure' were the leading norms promoted internationally.

Keywords: Jacinda Ardern, Covid-19, New Zealand First, Progressive Social Development, Political Leadership

Empathy, authenticity and order for resilience against Covid : lessons learnt from effective women leadership

Dilini Lenagala

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Peoples of all walks of life around the world were drastically and unprecedentedly impacted by the pandemic caused by the global spread of covid. Formal and informal settings of the societies started to scatter. Daily death tolls, economic recession, poverty and sudden collapses of health sectors were alarming factors for resilience amidst covid. In the matter of resilience, leadership came into forefront. Insensible leadership is one among many criticisms essentially due to large number of death tolls during the pandemic. Despite the ongoing debate on whether feminism compliments the women leadership or women leadership is threatened by being feminists and despite the proportionate number of women leaders are lacking, the critical roles played by the women leaders particularly country heads were extensively notable during the covid pandemic period. Interestingly, those achievements were beyond feministic goals, surpassing criticism over feminism but with true sense of leadership, belongingness and empathy. Several women country heads have chosen approaches of not common and not identical for resilience against covid. The objective of the study is to analyze the critical role played by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, a women country head for resilience against covid . While noting that there are several studies on effective women leadership of Prime Minister Ardern, the study examines how leadership traits of Prime Minister Ardern impacted for better resilience against covid by applying trait theory findings of Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) while assessing available literature in the field. The study is also complemented by a comparative impact analysis of covid in New Zealand, Australia, Germany and France during the period of February to May 2020. Mixed methods including both qualitative and quantitative were applied sourcing data from both primary and secondary including statistics of World Health Organization, paper articles, journals, news clippings, speeches, YouTube discussions etc. Study found that resilience against covid by New Zealand substantially higher compared to other countries. Contingencies have been effectively managed by Prime Minister Ardern impacting better resilience than other countries. Usage of social media platforms by her to penetrate the citizens during covid is comparatively higher than other leaders concerned. Interestingly, the study found that Prime Minister Ardern outperformed female leaders in achieving resilience against covid. Empathy and authenticity along with firm decision making were the salient leadership characteristics proven by her. Altogether, it is evidencing that New Zealand possesses a unique country leader characterized by inherent leadership traits which were more of cognitive and emotional intelligence based. Leadership of Prime Minister Ardern is far reaching than leaderships of other countries irrespective of gender and volume of intensity. The study therefore suggests cultivating empathy along with firmness in decision making for an effective leadership irrespective of gender bias in addressing impacts of covid pandemic.

Keywords: Women Leadership, Empathy, COVID, Trait Theory, Effective Leadership

**Experiences of women academics in leadership positions at Cambodian Universities:
Challenges Cambodia during Covid-19**

KUM Somaly

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Cambodia's population is over 16 million (world bank, 2019). Females have 51.5% higher than male (NIO-S-MoP, 2019) and higher number are group age of 15-59 years old (61.7%), while a group below 14 years old have 29.4% and over 60 are 8.9% (MoP, 2019). 125 higher education under control of 16 ministry which divided to private sector and public sector (MoEYS, 2018). 41 institutes providing education for graduating students. However, 18 university provided information on management structured which has 39 females out of 128 members (CSHL and CHRIJ 2020, page 23). Women from one grade to next grade have dropped especially when they have to go university. It impact to career of women working at university. At university, starting from a professor, they need to have education at less Bachelor. The females and male professor have hold Bachelor degree 1780 out of 4569, Master 1393 out of 10289, and PhD 135 out of 1309 (MoEYS, 2018). Despite Cambodia has ratified and signed United treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and constitution of Kingdom of Cambodia in article 38 said that “ Man and Women have the same rights and equality to work”. 2020, Covid-19 spread across the world. The education system worldwide has changed to virtual teaching online by the various applications. In Cambodia is the same. The university, high school, secondary school, and primary school have preparing curriculum and materials for students and using technologies which is the first experience. While the women are a limited number because of challenges on social expectation already but in this period, women have to create more work at university and responsible children at home for the online class. This paper will study women working as professors at Cambodian universities during Covid-19. It will find out the challenges of women during this period and their perspective of the impact of Covid-19 in their career and how they service for themselves, family, and students. The methodology will be using depth interview with five women who are a law professor at the Royal University of Law and Economic and one female teacher in direction at the National University of Management. The transcribe from the interview will store in a safe place, coding during and after, and not harmful policies to each party. The key findings will contribute to the university for understanding women's condition during Covid-19. Moreover, the challenges will find good recommendations to improve women's future careers at university.

Keywords: Gender, Women, Academic, Challenges, University

Role of Social Determinants on Women's Personal Finance Behavior: Evidence from Sri Lanka

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The Micro Finance sector in Sri Lanka has been severely challenged in recent past due to over indebtedness among its clients. Non-performing loans are a widely accepted and a common problem in the country. According to Rubatheesana (2018), the high debt burden in this sector has led to a large number of suicides, most of which have been identified among women living in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka. Women majorly represent the sector with an 84% (approx.) of micro borrowings in Sri Lanka (Lanka Micro Finance Practitioner's Association, 2017). These borrowers were reported as selling kidneys to settle lenders and women in particular were pressurized by these collectors to exchange “sexual favors” for installments (Wipulasena, 2019). The researchers visited the field and further evidenced that these women have continuing indebtedness which is reflected through high debt ratios, bills and loans in arrears, debt burdened and bankruptcy. These women have not used the funds to generate income, instead they have been exploited for their personal consumption. Thus, it clearly raises the issue related with their personal financial management behavior. Therefore, it creates a dilemma between theory and practice, although the literature suggests that women to have better repayment records, especially within Grameen villages (Kevane & Wydick, 2001). Moreover, social capital has declined as a result of the civil war continued for 30 years and thus being highly socially isolated within the Northern and Eastern Provinces compared to other regions of Sri Lanka. This has adversely affected their finance behavior (Kawachi & Subramanian, 2006; Wind & Komproe, 2012). Supporting to this argument, Waqas et al. (2015) mentioned that social influences as significantly influencing women's personal finance behavior and affecting female decision making more than for men. Hence, the primary aim of this study is to explore the impact of social determinants on personal finance behavior of the women within North and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka who are using micro finance services. The study surveyed a sample of 298 women who are using micro finance services in the North and East provinces of Sri Lanka, with a structured questionnaire. Multiple Ordinary Least Squares method was adopted to explore the impact of social determinants. The results of this study concretely evidenced that financial socialization, perceived social support and personal social capital act as social determinants and positively impact on women's personal finance behavior that resultantly adds a contribution to Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). The level of education, per capita GDP, socio demographic attributes, financial characteristics and saving motives were controlled within the study. This sample affirms that women from North and East provinces of Sri Lanka have faced over indebtedness as a result of social determinants which impacted on their personal finance behavior. The study outcome contributes to the existing theoretical argument of behavioral finance. In addition, the findings could help policy makers and government to ensure effective personal finance behaviors, especially, among women to regulate and sustain the Micro Finance Sector in the country.

Keywords: Social Determinants, Personal Finance Behavior, Women, Micro Finance Sector, Sri Lanka

**The Empowerment Promise:
A Silver Bullet or Fool’s Gold for Urban Low-Income Women?**

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Women’s empowerment continues to be a significant topic of discussion in international development and is perceived crucial to the growth of families, countries, and regions. A popular strategy for women's empowerment includes microcredit. However, some claim that microcredit has contributed to women’s economic empowerment and others critique that its benefits are marginal, and women may even be disempowered. This research, therefore, explores whether microcredit empowers women in terms of economic sustainability, enhanced skills, upward mobility, improved access and control over assets, and active participation in decision-making; or whether they are double burdened and exposed to social issues. Using purposeful sampling, the research selected 20 women from Colombo and Negombo - beneficiaries of the private organization, Vision Fund, and the government’s poverty alleviation program, Samurdhi, for over two years; had ongoing microcredit-supported businesses; and were part of a community network. A semi-structured questionnaire, with open questions based on the literature review and the pilot, was used to gather information. As the dissertation considered aspects difficult to quantify, it used qualitative elements. The findings showed that more than half of the businesses were managed by women, a quarter by their husbands, and the rest by both. Following the business, most women were out of regular debt. They felt they were economically at a better footing but at the cost of increased workload and stress. For the majority, life also changed positively. Positivity was described as hope, independence, self-worth, flexibility, new connections, and acceptance. Most businesses were informal, home-based, family-owned and had no liquid assets. Women deliberately did not expand their businesses so they could easily close or shift gears, if needed. Only a few invested their income in the business and in liquid assets mostly owned by their husbands. More than half acquired new skills; most through informal channels. However, the acquired skills were not “cutting edge” to help women in their upward mobility. They did not remain in one business for long to hone the acquired skills. Following the business, women’s economic empowerment, was insignificant. However, as empowerment is a process, the research confirms that most women embarked on their empowerment journey. Microcredit, it also found, was a “quick” solution to earn “quick” money, but not an alternative for sustainable income or a long-term solution for poverty alleviation. More than half the women said they made decisions related to the loan, income, and the future of the business. A few women said the decision-making involved them because of their role as mothers and grandmothers. This helped them to gain confidence, garner more respect, and enjoy an elevated role in the family and community. All women, especially the older, appreciated and benefitted from social collateral including among others, trust, a support system, networking. Such relationships continued beyond the loan. However, the majority were overworked, ill, and had no time for leisure. Beneficiaries did not complain of abuse, harassment, or tensions, following the business. In relation to social empowerment, the study confirmed that these women made significant strides.

Key Words: Women’s empowerment,

The COVID-Slayer of Kerala: Breaking Down Gendered Stereotypes During COVID -19

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The Covid-19 pandemic posed various hurdles to human beings while breaking down and challenging stereotypical gender roles. The existing world context requires actions despite of socially constructed and assigned gender roles. However, against this backdrop we see an increased emergence of female leadership at the forefront in the fight against the pandemic demonstrating successful disaster management. When investigating women in leadership with an emphasis on Covid-19 pandemic, the feminist theories can be applied to understand the theoretical backdrop. As women increasingly enter into leadership roles that traditionally have been occupied by men an increasing discourse on the shifts in gender roles and capabilities of women have been constructed and ascertained. There is a growing interest in exploring the relationship between gender and transformational leadership and a wide array of feminist theories have emerged in the recent past to offer a conceptual lens to understand the role of gender in an decision-making context. Furthermore, this paper investigates the notion of ‘gender bind’ that was raised by Fletcher (2004) in relation to the infamous ‘Covid Slayer’ K. K. Shailaja of India. The health and social welfare minister of Kerala, K.K. Shailaja’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic was bold. The diminutive female leader Shailaja has earned praise for her leading role in keeping the virus in check. A former Chemistry Teacher Shailaja has drawn on lessons learned during a 2018 outbreak of the deadly Nipha virus. When the first Covid 19 positive case was reported in China, K.K. Shailaja paid close attention on it and activated the health department soon as possible. She had a meeting with her rapid response team, set up a control room and mobilized investigation teams. Although Kerala has a large urban population, with quick responses, random testing, isolation processes the number of corona virus cases reduced and that led to keep the situation controlled. The mortality rate of Covid-19 cases in Kerala was among the lowest in the world. Taking her leadership in the fight against Covid-19 as an exemplary case study to measure the capacity of women to breakdown the conventional beliefs and ideas of a patriarchal society, this paper analyses through a gender reform approach perspective how women’s leadership can achieve an equal future despite the challenges they face in relation to male leadership, how visible and acknowledged their transformational leadership and the backlash they receive in comparison to the male counterparts due to their gender.

Keywords: Covid-19; Gender Bind; Feminism; Gender Reform Approach; Transformational Leadership

Ladies in the lead: Sustainability through fashion and textile

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Sustainability is gaining traction in the current business landscape both globally and locally, irrespective of the scale, calling for responsible leadership in navigating companies. The purpose of this study is to explore how women act as responsible leaders in pursuing sustainability through their local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the fashion and textile industry. Extant literature on organization studies explicates responsible leadership as a mindset or an orientation fostered by the top decision-makers involved in a business to understand and address their stakeholders' needs (Mark & Pless, 2006; Waldman, Siegel, & Stahl, 2020). The enactment of such an orientation calls for a multi-level approach starting from one's self (personal values) which is then translated to others involved in the whole business (organizational values) (Maak & Pless, 2006). In this regard, defining a business's stakeholders and nurturing an empathetic understanding of their needs and expectations are essential (Waldman, Siegel, & Stahl, 2020). Despite responsible leadership being captured in the extant literature conceptually, enacting such a leadership style, especially by women in SME context is minimal. Two local boutiques owned by females were selected as cases to closely examine the style of leadership practiced. One of these businesses manufactures premium quality sustainable textile, handloom, and accessories. The other is a small-scale sustainable fashion brand engaging in upcycling and transforming factory waste/discarded cut pieces into unique designs – stylish and ethical alternatives to high street fashion. Both these SMEs cater to local and export markets. Wattegama (2009) states that despite the local fashion market being relatively small, SMEs are identified as key/active players than their larger counterparts. The study adopted a qualitative approach. Data came from nine in-depth interviews from both businesses used as case studies along with documentary evidence analyzed thematically to arrive at findings. The study denotes that both companies adopted an array of environment-oriented/nature-friendly business processes and practices, ranging from upcycling waste into value-adding products to using non-toxic dyes with the guidance and direction of responsible leaders. These dyes cause harm to the artisans who are directly involved in the fabric dying process and in turn, affect consumers who use the product(s). Most prominently, both businesses also adopted people-oriented practices including fair wages/compensation to artisans, ensuring conducive working environments with facilities like childcare, flexible working hours and working from home. They employed differently-abled people and women who are otherwise not employable (like middle-aged or old) and firmly stood against child labour. Both female leaders well-versed and passionate about sustainability played a pivotal role in extending their responsibility willingly, to enact both environment and people-oriented practices adopted. The study provides insights to both academics and practitioners to broaden their perspective on the enactment of responsible leadership in pursuing sustainability by females and the nature of the environment and people-oriented practices adopted under such influence in the local fashion and textile industry.

Keywords: Sustainability, women leadership, SMEs, fashion and textile industry, Sri Lanka

Track Two: **02**

Legal Rights for Equality

Determinants of Knowledge Sharing Capabilities of Female IT Professionals in Sri Lanka.

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Considering the IT industry, team concept has introduced due to quick adaptation and technological innovation (Partington and Harris, 1999). The ability to obtain knowledge from another person and share one's knowledge with others identified as knowledge sharing capabilities. In the new knowledge economy, IT professionals are essential. They play a significant role in tacit knowledge management within the organizational context. The female IT professionals also in the IT industry of Sri Lanka act as critical contributors to the country's economic revival (National IT-BPM Workforce Survey 2019, 2019). It was evident that not many empirical studies have been performed on knowledge sharing capabilities in the IT sector to examine the current situation (Kaewchur & Phusavat, 2016). Further, past research indicates that it provides a conceptual basis for explaining gender differences in social relationships. For example, Abukhait, Bani-Melhem & Zeffane (2019) argued that females report greater feelings of empowerment but were less inclined to engage in knowledge sharing. Besides, men and women socialize differently (Mohindra & Azhar, 2012). It makes interest for the researchers to identify the level of knowledge sharing capabilities of female IT professionals in Sri Lanka and the factors required to nurture a favourable environment to develop knowledge sharing capabilities within the female IT professionals. A quantitative research approach followed. The data was collected from female IT professionals in eight ICT companies in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, using a self-administered questionnaire. The convenience sampling technique was used. The study results derived from the descriptive analysis, correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis. In total, 135 female IT professionals responded, and most of the respondents were in the age group of 31 – 40. 40% had completed their bachelor's degrees, while 28% achieved the postgraduate diploma. 49% have work experience between 5 to 10 years. It revealed that female IT professionals' knowledge sharing capabilities in Sri Lanka are moderately high. It recognized that in the organizational perspective, top management support and organizational rewards, and in the technological perspective, the knowledge management system's quality act as primary motivators for women to increase their knowledge-sharing capabilities. It discovered that the IT companies' knowledge management system infrastructure needs further improvement to increase female IT professionals' knowledge sharing capabilities. Moreover, it was understood that the level of experience and the level of education of the female IT professionals' play a moderating role between the organizational and technological factors, and knowledge sharing capabilities of female IT professionals' in Sri Lanka. According to this study, the female IT professionals who have higher education and experiences used the opportunities to improve their knowledge sharing capabilities than other female IT professionals who have less education and experience. It could be performed in different sectors such as academic and financial institutions, to develop more effective knowledge sharing best practices among the employees.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing capabilities, Female IT professionals, Organizational rewards, Top management support, Knowledge management system

Women in International Entrepreneurship: Selected case studies in Sri Lanka

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Women-owned businesses are considered as one of the fastest-growing forms of business. It has been estimated that women own approximately 30 percent of all small enterprises worldwide. There is increasing interest in women's role in entrepreneurship, yet little research has been conducted about the link to women's internationalization in the Sri Lankan context. Even though Sri Lanka is a fore-runner in many human development dimensions and aspects of gender equality amongst the South Asian countries, it is similar to other South Asian countries when it comes to women's participation in economic activities. This study was conducted to identify the women's current status in international business in Sri Lanka. According to the merchandise export statistics in the year 2020, the percentage of women-owned export-oriented Sri Lankan businesses is only around 1.6%. Out of those women-owned businesses, 47% of enterprises belong to Small & Medium scale category based on their export revenue, and 32.2% are on Microscale. Further, the distribution of export-oriented women-owned business entities was concentrated in only seven districts. Although there is an insignificant percentage of women participation in international entrepreneurship, some women perform well in Sri Lanka's global market. Therefore, the authors investigated the motivations of two leading female entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka who are successfully performing international market. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect primary data. The authors have also triangulated the data collected from interviews with secondary data sources. The findings indicate that Sri Lankan businesswomen often pursue international business opportunities to satisfy family needs, rather than focus on traditional business outcomes such as growth or profit. Of the two companies, both the women are well-educated females who push into international entrepreneurship due to family obligations and household issues. The study also revealed that desire for independent play as one of the push factors. Besides, it identified the importance of women education and expertise in the business area. Further, it reveals that quality and the stylish way of doing a thing (creative) play an essential role in their business success in the international market. The study also heightened the need for institutional support for overcoming challenges, expansion, and sustainability in the global market. The study explores different aspects of the women in international entrepreneurship phenomenon, and contrasting contexts is insightful. Much research should focus on identifying factors influencing women internationalization in different cultural and social contexts. According to the study, every woman has some special skills, and it is a mostly untapped resource in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan women have the potential to play a significant role in the country's export economy. Given the right tools and support, women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka can achieve this potential and positively affect the global economy. The study brings a new conceptual model for global women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka to illustrate how policymakers decide.

Key Words: Export Orientation, Global market, Global women Entrepreneurs, Internationalization, Women-owned Businesses

The effect of Covid-19 on Sri Lankan women’s mobility across international borders

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Covid-19 global pandemic has affected individuals’ and communities’ mobility in multiple ways. Specifically, the immigration restrictions by different countries have made severe impacts on peoples’ mobility across international borders. This paper pays special attention on how Covid-19 affects Sri Lankan women’s international mobility (their capability to cross state borders) and consequently their lives. I analyse narratives from six different Sri Lankan women whose lives are severely influenced by their (in)ability to cross the Sri Lankan border due to the Covid-19 migration restrictions. These narratives show that Sri Lankan women who have some kind of a mobility character in their everyday life have been affected socially, culturally, financially and emotionally in a significant degree. These effects include job insecurity, exploitation, less access to safe facilities, overload of care work, gender-based discrimination and various other socio-economic and emotional impacts. It was also noticeable that these effects are closely associated to their gender role of *being a woman* in the Sri Lankan society. For example, when a female labour migrant in Gulf (who have children in Sri Lanka) lost her job but cannot arrive in Sri Lanka due to the immigration restrictions, she is judged for her less commitment in performing her motherhood role rather looking at her through the lens of Covid-related consequences similar to other migrants. The paper concludes by highlighting the importance of further academic explorations on the effects of Covid-19 on Sri Lankan women’s mobility and their lives.

Keywords: Sri Lankan women, mobility, Covid-19, Migration, International Borders

**Women journalist in electronic media: Challenges, barriers, and current realities and
future directions in COVID 19 world.**

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Electronic media is one of the important services where gives information to people in every circumstance. From the general situation to the emergency situation electronic media has a big role in every country. Thus, for the people who work in electronic media, a big role is assigned. From receiving information to disseminating it to people, the work they do usually cannot compare with other jobs that people do in 8 hours. It is a 24-hour job and workers should dedicate themselves to work in every situation. However, women’s role in electronic media is a critical topic since its history. Especially, even there many career opportunities have for women, gender equality and their representation is taken less amount in decades. On the other hand, several studies have shown many women workers in electronic media is faced sexual and mental abuse from colleagues. That is why unlike many other organizations, working in an electronic media organization is challenging for women employees. Meanwhile, with the rapid outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic women in the electronic media face new challenges. For example, other working women could be worked from home while the pandemic, women who work in electronic media could not be able to work at home. Especially women journalist who works in the newsroom have been come to work daily even in the lockdown. Despite the outbreaking of the pandemic, they should have been worked with a risk. Many of them had been provided the office transport some of them should have been used public transport to work. These few examples show what kind of difficulties that women journalists have during the pandemic. Accordingly, this study is based on the experience of women journalists who work in news and program units during the pandemic. Thus, the research question is how does the pandemic effects to women journalist in the newsroom?. The study uses a case study approach that is based on true experiences. As a methodology, this study used qualitative research methodology.

Key words: Gender, Electronic Media, COVID 19, Journalism

Women’ s resilience in pandemic governance

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The pandemic situation is indeed an unexpected circumstance. Hence, a crisis such as Covid-19 requires immediate and rapid interventions and effective public governance. Since governance is an actor specific arena, effective leadership and informed citizens are needed for governance. Notably, the leadership's strategic responses can navigate the public in the directions, along with different consequences. Covid-19 pandemic which is the most significant uncertainty occurred in 2020 taken as a transboundary security threat; this paper intends to explore the strategies of resilience which were carried out by female political leaderships from different countries in governing Covid-19 pandemic. This is a qualitative research. The author’s observations, government decisions and action plans are studied as the method of research. Resilience is an imported term from natural sciences to social science very recently. The apolitical character of resilience changed due to the emergence of scholarly attention to link this concept with Politics and International Relations. It is defined as an inherent dynamic and complex process which is adopted by a society or an individual in the face of an internal or external shock (Brassett et al. 2013). This is getting to be an organizing rule in modern politics (Philippe 2015). The discipline of IR is linked with a vibrant discussion about resilience from multiple aspects. Nonetheless, this paper delimits to explain the women's (leadership) resilience in Covid-19 world, with particular reference to pandemic governance. The (good) governance and resilience are conjoined concepts specially in a time of crisis. Good governance elements such as accountability, transparent, just, responsive and participatory are provisional to design and implement a beneficial resilient strategy (Bedi et al. 2014). The appropriate reciprocity between governance and resilience enables the state and the citizen to recover, adapt and sustain in a relatively better way. Therefore, the actors who involve in this process should be capable in this regard. On the other hand, enhancing resilience is vital to building capacity among the public because an informed and capable public can actively mitigate the consequences of the threat. Therefore, specially in a pandemic situation, informing the public to be resilient to mitigate the risk is fundamentally essential to any government. The decisions related to pandemic governance which women leaders made from different countries demonstrate the effectiveness and inclusivity (UN. Women, 2020). As of May 2020, only 21 countries have female political leadership. Among them, the political leadership in Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand and Slovakia were recognized as the top female political leaders who could flatten the curve through their rapid intervention (ibid). Most significantly, being transparent in governance (i.e., publicizing relevant and important facts-based public health information to the citizen, designing alert levels and limitations, sharing and telecasting experts’ opinion via online and offline platforms) could make them relatively successful (UN Women 2020). The collectivity, collaboration and coaching behaviour are additional elements of these female political leaders that demonstrated to the world through their resilience strategies. Unfortunately, the resilient strategies of female political leaders in pandemic governance are overlooked at the global level.

Key Words: Resilience, Pandemic Governance, International Relations, Female political Leadership

Constitutional protection of Women’s Rights: A Critique on the State Obligation to protect rights of women in Sri Lanka²

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Sri Lanka, being a State party to numerous human rights treaties including the UN Convention on Eliminating All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional Protocol, is under a strong obligation to protect the right to equality of all with no discrimination based on gender. The current Constitution, despite its inability to include an exclusive provision to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of women as a fundamental human right, provides to take affirmative action in the form of subordinate legislation or executive action for the advancement of women. This research identifies that after about 40 years of its stipulation, this Constitutional obligation, galvanised by the international obligations of the State, has not been fulfilled effectively. Constitutions, having stronger provisions to protect fundamental human rights of all, such as the Constitutions of South Africa, Nepal and Kenya, give particular prominence to guarantee and achieve the right to equality of women paired with effective institutional mechanism. The contemporary efforts of amending the Constitution of Sri Lanka should be inspired by such envisioned features, in addition to the required commitment of the State to enact new statutes to fill the gaps identified in several areas, where the equality of rights of women is hardly adequate, whilst identifying the grey areas in the existing statutory law to be addressed with appropriate amendment. Main objective of this research is to identify the gaps in the current Constitution and the other statutory laws in Sri Lanka to guarantee the equal rights of women, in the domains of civil, political, economic and cultural rights in par with Sri Lanka’s international obligations. It wishes to propose relevant legislative reforms to drive the executive to take appropriate affirmative actions and to implement national policies; and to empower the judiciary to interpret laws by ironing out their creases and to apply the laws to provide effective remedies when women’s right to equality is violated. Analysis of relevant domestic and international legal instruments and the applicable institutional framework would help this qualitative research to propose stringent policy proposals to take robust actions for the advancement of women’s rights. Preliminary findings demonstrate that family rights of women, particularly based on marital and reproductive rights, are not guaranteed duly. Civil and political rights of women too are at a sad status where women are not recognised as equal partners of citizenry life and in the system of governance. Stereotyped and orthodox ideas about the employment rights of women, where they are less recognized as equal contributors to the economy of self, family and the nation, has to be addressed effectively whilst paying attention to eradicate traditional cultural myths that hinder women’s equal enjoyment of and access to culture and technology. The research concludes by capitulating the immediate need to fulfil State obligations, particularly by taking timely actions recognized in the National Human Rights Action Plan of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Right to Equality, Constitution, State Obligations, affirmative actions,

Role of Women’s Sustainable Practices in Promoting Collective Actions for Environmental Protection

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Women are not intrinsically vulnerable, but socio- economic and political environments in which they live make them vulnerable and marginalized. This situation applies equally to the natural environment in which women live. Environmental issues and challenges not only increase the vulnerabilities for women, but also influence women to adopt strategies and collective actions to minimize the conditions that increase such risks and vulnerabilities. Therefore, understanding how women address environmental vulnerabilities and risks through domestic practices and collective actions can better inform women’s role in environmental protection. United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women asserts that women play multiple roles as consumers, producers, caretakers of their families and educators while promoting a variety of sustainable practices at domestic levels that can largely affect the policies and initiatives aimed at protecting the environment and natural resources. (1995). In this context, how women effectively use natural resources, manage sources of water and fuel, conserve food, recycle waste materials at domestic level become more important. In addition to these domestic practices, women are also involved in collective activities for the conservation of natural resources and the environment. This interrogates the conventional ways in which the role of women in addressing environmental risks and vulnerabilities has been approached in the existing scholarship. The key objective of this qualitative research is to examine how women contribute to the conservation of the natural resources and the protection of environment from the grassroots level and to further investigate how such attitudinal interest in their domestic practices has been converted into collective actions. In order to realize these research objectives, the study intends to answer two research questions. First, what are the sustainable practices adopted by women at domestic level that contribute to the environmental protection? Second, how do these domestic and grassroots practices influence women to take collective actions for environmental protection? Further, the study argues that the relationship between women’s sustainable practices at domestic level and their collective actions for environmental protection has been largely overlooked by both academia and policy makers. Then the study uses two case studies; Green Belt Movement in Kenya and *Chipko* Movement in India to sustain this argument. The selected case study also explore how women are increasingly involved in a variety of collective actions for protecting the environment by extending their sustainable practices at domestic level. These collective actions mostly include non-violent tactics such as public speeches, protests, marches and public demonstrations aimed at protecting critical natural sources for livelihood of both men and women. Finally, the study reveals the significance of adopting a bottom-up approach to analyze the role of women in promoting environmental protection considering them as critical agents of diffusing the environmental norms and values.

Key words: Sustainable Practices, Environmental Protection, Environmental Norms.

**The Sri Lankan Mumpreneur : a study on the dual roles of entrepreneur and mother
performed by businesswomen in urban Sri Lanka**

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This study contributes to the scholarship on women and entrepreneurship. The research relates to a specific group of women entrepreneurs called ‘*mumpreneurs*’ - defined as women who configure a business that complements their primary role as caregiver to their children (Ekinsmyth, 2011). The current understanding of *mumpreneurs* in global scholarship is that it is a particularly middle class phenomenon: middle class mothers may not feel compelled to work as they are likely to be propped up by the wealth of their family; and they may face a more pronounced social expectation that they should be actively involved in the upbringing of their children as it was essential to their growth and wellbeing. Middle class mothers tend to face a lifestyle that is fairly restricted in terms of time and space as it revolves around their children and family; firms run by *mumpreneurs* – or ‘*mumpreneurships*’ - are therefore a spatial phenomenon that assimilates business operations into and around the time-space restricted lifestyle of urban middle class motherhood. Twelve face-to-face interviews were conducted with women from a middle class background, residing in Colombo. Their status as “middle class” was ascertained through an assessment of certain markers such as (1) their area of residence – in central Colombo or inner suburbs; (2) their educational background – in English speaking private schools; (3) the educational background of their family; (4) occupation of spouse – in high level corporate jobs or family business (5) personal or familial wealth – income from business is not primary means of livelihood; and (6) employment of domestic workers. The research participants were found using my own social networks as well as the social media platform Instagram, according to their suitability to certain criteria ascertained from the literature review. They were between the ages of 30 and 42 and of various ethnicities. The data was studied through thematic analysis, focusing on (1) how the rationalization of gender norms about marriage and motherhood inform these women’s understanding of their role as primary caregiver, and (2) how they perform their dual, often conflicting, duties towards their family and business. Furthermore, it explores how *mumpreneurs* make sense of their unique career choice, and in performing this role, how *mumpreneurs* undertake a range of labours – physical, social, mental, and emotional – that are demanded of them. This research is meant to aid organizations and institutions in order to facilitate programs focused on supporting *mumpreneurs* as an emerging niche group of small business owners, and enhancing their participation in the Sri Lankan economy. This study is limited to the middle class and does not consider intersectional analysis of *mumpreneurs*, although class dimensions are explored when considering the relationships between *mumpreneurs* and their domestic workers.

Key words: Gender, Entrepreneurship, Motherhood, Middle class, Urban

Track Three: **03**

Achieving an Equal Future

Lean and Green Practices in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): A Gender-based Analysis

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The application of sustainable business practices, especially, lean and green practices, as they have been coined in layman’s language, cannot be undermined even in the context of small and Medium enterprises (SMEs). Escalating costs due to wastes, stakeholder pressure for environmental practices, increasing customer awareness and demand for environment-friendly products, and inefficiencies leading to loss of competitive advantages in the sector are the drivers for SMEs to adopt lean and green practices in their operations. Extant literature evidence ample investigations into lean and green adoption in SMEs. However, the status of lean and green adoption by SMEs of women remains unexplored, especially in developing countries. Not only women in SMEs but also women entrepreneurs are noted as economically and socially deprived segment which tend to encounter constraints in initiating, imitating, innovating and managing their businesses. In support of this thesis, lack of education, training, skills, networks, access to technology, information, finances, and support from third parties have been highlighted repeatedly in the existing literature. On these grounds, a reasonable assumption to make is that the sustainable practices like lean and green practices would be difficult for women to adopt in their businesses, however, there is dearth of investigations into this matter. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine to what extent lean and green practices are adopted by women in SMEs and whether there is a significant difference in such practices among men and women. The data for the study is drawn from a baseline survey conducted in the manufacturing SMEs in the Western Province of Sri Lanka in 2019 for understanding the status of lean and green adoption. The sample consists of 341 SMEs of which 66 are responded by women. The focal areas of the present study are; lean and green practices and benefits achieved from lean and green initiatives. The analysis is conducted with the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. While the sample had less women (66 out of 341), the analysis reveals that for most practices (lean and green) a greater proportion of women reported to have implemented them compared to the men. When analyzing the benefits of implementing lean and green practices, in most of these benefits, women had achieved a higher level compared to the men where in some cases difference was statistically significant. This was especially noticed in green practices. These findings indicate the need of revisiting the constraints highlighted as those encountered by women in SMEs in the previous mainstream SME literature and rechecking them for contextual disparities. This study concludes that women in SMEs in the Western Province of Sri Lanka are in par with or ahead of their men counterparts in the adoption of lean and green practices in their businesses. The findings imply the need of considering women as an important and integral part of sustainable business. Further facilitation, education and awareness on lean and green practices for women in SMEs will yield more benefits to the society.

Keywords: Gender; Green practices; Lean practices; Sri Lanka; Women in SMEs

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The Rook not the Pawn: Women as Active Agents in War

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In Chess, the Pawn holds the lowest value. In wars, women's role is often presented in the lowest value, stereotypically as helpless recipients of violence and violations. It is a disheartening visual and invoke disempowerment, helplessness and deep sadness. While women (and girls) who have been survivors of war – as wives, mothers, as victims of rape and torture, as survivors in refugee camps – are strong women, they are often portrayed as powerless and passive in the midst of war. However, this stereotypical image of women as recipients of the horrors of war, as victims of war, does not present the full picture of women in wars. Women do play an active role in combat, whether as soldiers in state military or as active members of non-state militant groups. Women actively engaged in wars are agents of political violence just as much as they are agents of security and peace. Indeed, Toler's *Women Warriors* (2019) notes that women have always fought as members of armies in wars. In this sense, they have power and thus are not disempowered. They can, in fact, be like the Rook in Chess, the second most powerful piece in the Chess Board. Whilst women soldiers have the potential to become like Rooks in a Chessboard, Keegan in the *A History of Warfare* (1993) notes that women might be part of the war effort but only in a supporting role as they do not fight men in battle. In the case of USA, female military included women initially in the Army Nurse Corps from 1901. Female soldiers in USA military were able to participate in active duty in the air and naval warfare from 1990s onwards. However, only after more than 100 years have women been included in active ground combat. Indeed, female soldiers from countries such as Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, and the USA have seen active combat in traditional armies (www.nationalgeographic.com). Terrorist and militant groups, on the other hand, apparently have been more forthcoming in accepting women into their 'military'. Women have also risen, as in the case of the Kurdish YPJ and the Colombian ELN, to fight as soldiers against what they perceive as injustice. Both the FARC and the LTTE actively recruited women for their 'military' (Morrison-Fleming 2020). Thus, women have increasingly become active combatants in traditional state and in non-state non-traditional militant warfare. Despite the growing role played by women – as the Rook and not the Pawn – there is a question as to whether women in warfare do have the same power as their male counterparts. Using primary insights through video analysis and incorporating documentaries, academic analysis and country-specific data, and taking into account the 'Conceptual model of military women's life events and well-being' (Segal et al., 2015; Tape, et al., 2016), this research examines whether women remain as lowly pawns in active combat warfare and if so, why this is the case.

Key Words: War, Women in Combat, Power imbalance, Inequality, Gender Discrimination

UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; a process itself under pressure in the context of COVID-19 crisis

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The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR-1325) unanimously adopted in 2000 is one of the crowning achievements and most inspired decisions in terms of the global women's movement. The Resolution played a key role to better serve the world's most vulnerable people while recognizing the importance of their effective participation in peace processes. The principles of UNSCR-1325 were well-blended as ingredients while gender equality and women's leadership reforms are set as priorities in the new momentum of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was a terrible irony, when marking the 20th anniversary of the UNSCR 1325 in October 2020, the agenda of women, peace and security had been severely threatened. From the inception of COVID-19 pandemic, deeply rooted gender inequalities are woven into the fabric of society. Despite conflicts, violence and political instability all over the world, COVID-19 keeps the momentum to treat women disproportionately. Women were further underrepresented and discriminated in the economic, political and social spheres with the structural barriers, societal norms that perpetuate gender stereotypes and biases arises with the pandemic situation. The COVID-19 crisis presents multiple challenges to reduce numbers in women's participation in peace processes, peace negotiations and political settlements led by the United Nations. The pandemic has crippled the local women peace-builders' work with numerous impediments such as reductions in financial and technical support from international donors. In the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic, there is a very limited understanding on achieving and maintaining the desired goal of gender equality in post-conflict scenarios and to figure out what strategies/policies is effective. In respect of implementation of UNSCR 1325, there is a clear contrast between rhetoric and reality, and previously agreed national and international commitments are in a deadlock. The COVID-19 crisis is a wake-up call for all national and international policymakers. The next decade of UNSCR 1325 is challenging and implementation modalities have to be different in order to get realized the dream of women in the peace process is no more a vision. Capacity building initiatives, networking opportunities, knowledge-sharing discussions and progress review meetings may be done through virtual modes to have qualified well-trained women in the peace building process enabling them to contribute their invaluable service. In this context, COVID-19 urges a new transformative approach which brings forward gender equality and equal participation of women in the peace process to the top of the agenda. The COVID-19 opens a gateway for change and opportunity to shift power to local women peace builders and the agenda of women, peace and security agenda of UNSCR 1325 and also to review the impediments lies with women in grassroots level especially in fragile conflict torn areas. As the prevailing COVID-19 crisis has spotlighted the three pillars of UNSCR 1325 namely Participation, Protection, & Prevention and as consequences, it critically affected women's participation in the peace process which is urgently required to be revisited; hence the first UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security; a process itself under pressure.

Key words: Women, Peace, Security, UNSCR-1325, COVID-19

Patriarchy and inequality: promoting women leadership to achieve substantive equality in Sri Lanka

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Patriarchy was given prominence as the bearer of the country's social system for thousands of years until the feminist movement raised its voice in the 18th century. Since then, there had been different movements through out to achieve gender equality and women's rights in various aspects. In the Sri Lankan context, it is evident that women face constant struggles and insecurities in accomplishing their desires and goals. In fact, attention is focused on women in leadership and management levels in the employment sector and service industry of Sri Lanka and the social and legal barriers they face in fulfilling their job role. In understanding equality, focus should be placed on achieving substantive equality. In this regard considering the differences and requirements of women and acknowledging the fact that women are different from men plays a crucial role which would pave way to sensibly respond to prevailing social and legal inequalities. To this end, the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women stipulates and promotes the substantive equality model. The CEDAW Substantive equality approach is of two forms; firstly, equality of opportunity in relation to access to resources to be secured by laws and policies, secondly, equality of results upon access and opportunity. Sri Lanka being a State party to CEDAW Convention is under an obligation to honour, implement and monitor same. According to the concept of substantive equality, it recognizes the fact that women and men are different and the equal treatment cannot be given to both genders due to the inherent distinct differences. In consequence, it is of imperative relevance to achieve expected results of substantive equality in terms of law and social standards. The prudent approach in this regard is to understand the differences and to determine the pertinent reforms for a distinctive treatment which would avail the platform for equal access to opportunities. To this end a question arises as to whether Sri Lanka has given due regard to substantive equality in its social and legal standards to promote women in leadership. Accordingly, the main objective of this paper is to critically evaluate the barriers for women to achieve and guarantee their survival in playing leadership roles and to explore the adequacy of existing laws which promote substantive equality among women in Sri Lanka. The paper would entail literature gathered through discussions with gender studies experts, desk research, public domain information and observations and special reference would be given to International and National legal standards including CEDAW and Shop and Office Act of Sri Lanka. The traditional concept of 'the right to be equal to men' should take a smooth transition and a shift while placing due regard to real inequalities faced by women. Thus, it is expected that identifying the social and legal disparities and inequalities faced by women as a separate category and providing solutions therewith would result in achieving the rights of women to be treated equally in terms of their leadership roles.

Key Words: Women, Leadership, Substantive Equality, Legal Standards

Myanmar’s Foreign Policy: The Aung San Suu Kyi Administration and Her Foreign Policy from 2015 to 2020

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Aung San Suu Kyi is a global figure renowned for her advocacy of human rights and for her commitment towards democracy. Despite her international image, she was ostracized by the military *junta* in Myanmar for her Buddhist and Western liberal values based political philosophy. Being the daughter of the architect of modern Burma, married to a foreigner, and educated at the University of Oxford, Suu Kyi was not only the darling of the West but also of her own people. Such were convincing evidence for the military government to suppress her and her party; the National League for Democracy (NLD), thus obstructing her from being democratically elected as the head of state of Myanmar for nearly 15 years. However in 2015 Suu Kyi swept into power with a supermajority where she was merely recognized as the *de facto* head of government due to Constitutional restrictions. At the very inception, she held four ministerial portfolios which included foreign affairs. This Nobel Peace Prize laureate further served as the State Counsellor of Myanmar where she functioned as the Prime Minister until her arrest on 1st February 2021 by her own military. The author intends to examine Suu Kyi’s foreign policy between 2015 and 2021 with a specific focus on the Rohingya issue. As the Foreign Policy Executive (FPE) of her government, she defended the actions of the Myanmar military against the Rohingya minority at international fora. Her oral submissions in defence of military action against the Rohingya, at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case of *The Gambia v. Myanmar* is surprising given her glowing human rights credentials. The issue studied in this research is whether, Suu Kyi as the FPE had accurately grasped the systemic stimuli and as a consequence whether she had formulated a pragmatic foreign policy in defending her country while safeguarding national interest. In such a context the FPE must ensure that her foreign policy does not jeopardize sovereignty and territorial integrity of Myanmar and compliments national security. Despite international condemnation, Suu Kyi vehemently objected to the allegations of genocide and established a strong defence against the same at the ICJ. Leader perceptions / images, which is a unit level factor determining the foreign policy trajectory of a state and as postulated in Neo – Classical Realism shall be utilized in analyzing Suu KYI’s conduct as the FPE. This is a qualitative case study which involves the deductive method. The author will analyze both primary and secondary data in the adoption of a qualitative approach. This research will derive its propositions from Neo – Classical Realism in the discipline of International Relations particularly in analyzing the correlation between the foreign policy and the domestic intervening variable of the leader image in Myanmar’s foreign policy making.

Key Words: Myanmar, Foreign Policy, Aun San Suu Kyi, FPE, Leader Perceptions

**The Role of Women Peacebuilders: Examining Community Efforts in War-Affected Regions in
Sri Lanka**

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The paper aims at analyzing the role of women in post-war peacebuilding. The women's engagements in community peacebuilding are identified as essential to war recoveries. The war-affected communities suffer from issues ranging from poverty insecurity, deprivation, livelihood marginalization and psychological issues. Considering Sri Lanka's post-war peacebuilding since 2009, it is of utmost importance to examine the role of women at the grassroots layer and their direct contribution to peace. Due to the 26 years-long civil war, there are more than 85,000 war-widows, hundreds of girl war-orphans, female ex-LTTE combatants and women-headed households reside in these regions. A variety of women-led community-based organizations are established to tackle some of the serious community requirements in livelihood development and micro-financing. The paper examines whether women's role in the war-affected regions is effective for various peace establishments. The international scholarly literature has shown community peacebuilding as an essential process for dialogue, empowerment, and healing, therefore, probing the question about how effective women's leadership in conflict transformation is worthwhile. Considering women's community peacebuilding endeavors they have become effective 'peacebuilders', the paper examines how their efforts are central to resolve some intrinsic issues among the war-affected communities. The paper examines Sri Lanka's women-led community peacebuilding to discuss some unique nature of outcomes. The paper follows a qualitative case study examination, overview of the post-liberal peacebuilding theories and empirical literature on non-state actors' role in strengthening community peacebuilding. The literature prompts how the bottom layer of society is making a significant impact on peace. The paper presents a qualitative explanatory overview, examines ethnographic and in-depth empirical evidence gathered from Vavuniya and Kilinochchi: two districts that were directly affected during the war. The paper reflects the women's role in the case-by-case approach. The paper concludes that women are playing a key role in community peacebuilding. Their interactions are based on network-ability, leadership qualities, empathy and ability to engage in trust-building. Also, women peacebuilders are potential peace agents for linking the community with the local government institutions. The paper argues how the women peacebuilders' success would remain at the level of government financial support, client-patron relationship and community trust. However, the paper suggests that without the involvement of more viable policies and resource allocation, these women peacebuilders' attempts remain inconsistent and limited.

Keywords: Community-peacebuilding, Community-based Organisations (CBOs), Liberal Peace, Post-war peacebuilding, Sri Lanka, Women Peacebuilders

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