

# **Gendered Micro Politics: Exploring the Conventional and ODL Academic Systems in Sri Lanka**

**Kanchana Sujanianie Bulumulle, Senior Lecturer-OUSL(Ph.D)**

## **Introduction**

A vast body of research knowledge demonstrate women's relative disadvantage in higher education particularly in academic ranks (Morley, 2005), positions of authority held and in academic promotion (Probert, 2005), in discipline areas in general and in areas traditionally considered masculine, in research grants and funds and research out puts as serious concerns. Further research point out that studies focus women's experiences alone are insufficient to explain the context of women's academic disadvantage, and for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, attention and scrutiny should turn towards men's behaviour and the gendered strategies they use frequently to manage their privilege, everyday and academic life experiences and practices, social position and advantage (Hearn, 2001 ; Eveline, 1996; Cockburn, 1991) that shape women's experiences of academic advancement and progression significantly (especially inspired by Eveline, 1996: 69).

Within the discourse of gendered academic disadvantage, focus on practices of gender politics in everyday academic life as constituting significant drawbacks to women's advancement particularly within the conventional higher education system is a substantive insight. These are practices of repression including both open (overt: direct physical, verbal or indirect/covert) gendered practices; eliminations from opportunities of academic privilege in everyday academic life, and more formal university policies which are overtly gender biased. The covert forms of repression on the other hand include the subtle, less pronounced or visible socio cultural informal practices and ideology that particularly act to undermine women's academic advancement more generally.

Therefore, the current research interrogates the experience of gendered academic micro-politics in two academic settings namely the conventional and open and distant learning (ODL) systems in Sri Lanka. Particularly, it attempts to determine the role and relevance of gendered micro-politics within the conventional academic systems (in Sri Lanka) and compare those with the findings of the ODL system (Sri Lanka). The paper in this regard seeks to present an analysis of the relative academic progression of male and female academics and look at the relevance of gendered micro-politics to their stories and experiences of academic advancement or disadvantage. Further, the paper interrogates whether and if so, how such gendered micro-politics configure academic life and identify the specificities unto the two settings of conventional and ODL, if any.

## **The categories**

Discourse regarding gendered micro-politics in the academy is multiple. There have been numerous efforts in gender and feminist research to examine non-tangible subtle forms of gender politics within the academy that constructs advantage/disadvantage relationality. These studies reveal that micro-politics constitute a significant aspect of work relations between academic males and females as per a large body of literature around the world (Brooks, 1997; Morley, 2006; 2003; Gunawardena, 2005; Krefting, 2003; Dwandre, 2002; Husu, 2000; Osongo, 2000; Bagilhole, 2002; Gloria et al., 2001, Wilson, 2010; Obrien, 2011). These particular efforts of conceptualizing the reality of gendered micro-politics have been conducted referring to a wide range of concepts such as discrimination and/or harassment (Husu, 2000; Brooks, 1997) male resistance (Cockburn, 1996), chilly climate (Dwandre, 2002) glass ceiling, micro-politics (Morley, 1999; Morley, 2004; Morley, 2006; 2003) and male hegemony (Bagilhole, 2002; Thornton, 1989) to include a significant few. What is common and clear in these reports are the active, overt as well as the informal, passive, covert, intangible and subtle nature of resistance and discrimination often on the part of the male academics against women that impact heavily on female academics disadvantaged academic position. On the other hand it is an area where very strong, clear and evident privileging of the male occurs in the academy.

Further, Kaplan (1985:19-22) states that it is the norm for men to treat women with verbal and non verbal hostility, ostracism and exclusion from informal networks. Different studies by Morley ( 2002 :214-215), (2006: 215) and Brooks (1997: 49-51) refer to acts of sexual harassment, and bullying directed both at students and female academic staff and masculine styles of leadership as means regulating the actions of women that disadvantage them. These discriminatory acts are often elusive, subtle in nature and difficult to capture and frequently leave individuals unsure of the validity of their 'readings of a situation' or *appropriate responses to them* (Morley, 1999 my italics). Further

studies by Castleman and others (1995) provide evidence that men in the academy are relatively more advantaged than women and these dynamics of advantage may not necessarily relate to merit and in fact undermines it.

### **Conceptual framework**

Conceptualisation of micro-politics for this discussion is drawn upon two specific aspects cited in previous research. These ideas primarily consider the subtle, pervasive nature of micro-politics on the one hand and the element of resistance cited in previous analyses on the other.

Some researchers have referred to micro-politics as ‘hidden transcripts’ of gendered discrimination and gendered power relayed in everyday transactions and relationships (Morley, 2006). These studies show that these occur via informal networks, coalitions, exclusions as well as through formal arrangements in classrooms and boardrooms through symbolic and material constructions that largely regulate and influence women’s academic behaviour.

Further more studies have used the notion of hegemonic masculinity that represents a form of an ‘**accommodating masculinity**’ that is *perhaps* not totally *explicitly* dominant but, achieved ascendancy through the subordination of other groups, particularly those of women using **collective masculine strategies** *especially of resistance* (Bagilhole, 2002 my italics). Hence the current analysis draws on ideas of the ‘hidden transcripts of micro-politics’ and ‘masculine hegemony and privilege’ to demonstrate the strong prevalence of collective masculine strategies of resistance towards women in ensuring male hegemony via the subordination of women within (formal and informal) academic settings. These ideas are used to emphasise the pervasive, covert and carefully crafted nature of norms, practices or habitus in resisting the female and assuring dominance and control of the masculine over such.

The resistant behaviour of male academics in this paper is analysed using a frame of overt and covert forms of resistance. Overt or direct forms of male privilege (resistance) are immediate personalised institutional forms of resistance or physical, emotional hurt or put down, physical or verbal violence directed towards women that advantage men. Covert or Indirect forms of resistant strategies include informal institutional practices and cultural habits in everyday academic life that resist or act as deterrents to women’s advancement.

### **ODL Open and Distance Learning and Conventional Academies**

Today in the twenty first century in the globalised world of increased technology based connectivity, the academic community is discovering and exploring learning experiences through a range of digital possibilities accompanied by technological advancement with much speed and spread. Students in one continent are earning degrees from a university in another or exchanging e-mail across districts, states, countries or continents as a supplement to their formal studies or students and teachers taking part in teleconferences that would have been unlikely five years ago.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) or education in general refers to two aspects in its definition; that is access and location. The distance denotes the use of telecommunication or means other than face to face classroom interaction to provide or enhance learning. On the other hand it refers to overcoming traditional barriers to learning through enabled access and openness that is traditionally encumbered with social categorizations and identities, that is present in the structures of the conventional educational systems or academies. Conventional academic system is on the other hand is characterized by traditional and conventional means of teaching which consists predominantly of face to face classroom sessions over a long period of time on a very regular basis. Thus the regulations governing the admission of students within the two systems also differ markedly in terms of entry and recruitment criteria and mode of delivery of learning and programme structures especially in terms of flexibility.

The commencement of Sri Lankan tertiary education has been recorded as a group of six western educated people forming the Ceylon University Association in 1906, and the subsequent establishment of a University college affiliated to the University of London in 1913. The University College Colombo was formally declared open in January 1921 and was promoted to a fully-fledged independent University in 1942 as the University of Ceylon, with two main campuses in Peradeniya and Colombo. Today the university system in Sri Lanka has matured to comprise 15 national universities including an Open and Distance Learning University established in 1980 (Singh, 2008: 57).

In the Sri Lankan context, conventional and ODL higher education systems largely cater to adult educational needs at the tertiary level. Conventional universities receive the school leavers of state schools after a very competitive screening of the Advance Level students to all streams in Science, Social science and Arts streams. Whilst the national ODL higher learning system of the Open University of Sri Lanka caters to adult students who are otherwise unable to enter into these conventional state institutes for reasons of age, resources, formal qualifications, distance or disability. The academic staff who are the primary focus of this research are all governed by the UGC under the same rules, regulations and criteria.

Appointment to academic positions in Sri Lanka is organized on a progressive ranking system based on academic merit from Probationary Lecturer to Senior Professor. Normally a lecturer would be initially recruited on a temporary basis as an assistant lecturer and may subsequently be absorbed into a permanent academic career as a 'Lecturer probationary' for a tenured/permanent position, and it is this procedure which is usually practiced within the conventional university system. With regard to academic performance evaluation, the emphasis upon research in Sri Lanka is evident and increases markedly from the level of Senior Lecturer 1 and above.

Academic staff privileges include paid study leave with travel funds for post graduate studies, and sabbatical leave entitlement of 10 months to one year every seven years after achieving the position of senior lecturer (UGC, 1989, 2008,2010, 2013). However, the financial support available for research is limited with little provision for academics to disseminate their research findings by way of conference participation and publication in reputable journals. The more prestigious universities have more opportunities for foreign scholarships and research funding than do other smaller, more recent universities with relatively less established reputations. Experience also reveals a division amongst disciplines, with Natural Science disciplines having greater access to resources and being better financed than Arts and Social Science disciplines.<sup>1</sup>Further, in terms of skills and qualifications it has been observed that there is an acute demand for academics with foreign earned post-graduate credentials, in preference to qualifications earned locally. This situation is applicable to all discipline areas, although more so to the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ThiliniNisansala, 2010).

## **Methodology and Methods**

How do realities of micro-politics figure in the field data of this research? The respondents were asked what their experiences of micro-politics in the academy were and whether those are gender related. It was then attempted to determine whether these experiences were suggestively different in the representations of academic men and women and also in the two academic systems.

The field data was collected through the method of academic life histories, conventional system data collection was carried out over a period of 8 months from 2 predominantly conventional academies (December2009-July 2010) and 1 ODL academy in Sri Lanka (2015 and 2016). The total sample of the conventional system includes 20 academics in conventional and 07 (3 M +4 F) in the ODL context. The field data was analysed using Foucauldian discourse analysis to illuminate discursive production of gender power in micro social contexts. This paper focuses field data exploring the relevance and impact of the manifestation of male privilege through gendered micro- politics in the conventional and ODL academic systems.

## **Findings**

Information gathered from the conventional academies in Sri Lanka provides evidence for representations of multiple forms of gendered micro politics that significantly undermine the academic progression of female academics. These include several types such as gendered remarks, gendered management decisions and powers, gendered practices of mobility and intersectionality. Further when compared with the experiences of the ODL system, there could be observed significant overlaps as well as notable differences in certain others. The details of the reality of micro-politics could be presented in the following way.

---

<sup>1</sup>This is based upon the researcher's experiences as an academic as well as rising out of the common sources of knowledge and discussion within higher education in Sri Lanka. Also refer Gunawardena et. al., 2005 and 2006 and Morley, 2006 for similar comments and ideas.

## Gendered personalised remarks

A strategic means of micro-politics operated in overt control and resistance to women is noted in 'gendered remarks' that meant to devalue and undermine women's academic excellence and performance. The informal and the 'out of context' nature of such crude, confrontational remarks and behaviour make it very difficult to effectively respond to such put down and discrimination. Such negative comments may strategically and overtly undermine the advancement of women and could often discourage them catching them off guard. Studies also point out that such remarks are made so that their achievements appear relatively secondary, substandard, undeserving and therefore less worthy.

Form of overt gendered remarks in resistance to female voice which is a widely noted technique of gender politics in previous studies as well. Similar experiences are visible in this study as well where a male academic in Sri Lanka pointed out his own experience of witnessing acts of male chauvinism by other men in faculty boards of universities, quoting the gendered control exerted over the apparently few vociferous women in the following manner.

At times there are certain male chauvinistic kind of male staff members who don't like female faculty members coming in and arguing in the faculty board, especially in the faculty board you can see some of the men when the females are vociferous, some men don't like it and react at least I heard one person say ("*watti amma wage katha karanna epa*") which means you know ...(watti amma like –don't argue like a fish wife)...so that was one occasion.

(Senior Lecturer I, Agri-Science, Sri Lanka, M)

These overt remarks are mechanisms or frequently adopted rude, deliberate strategies to undermine women's confidence and to rule out any challenges to the dominated male opinion. Within such forms of overt resistance women are often projected in gendered ways as less attractive, unfeminine women because they are vociferous and forward, exerting pervasive gender strategies of personified masculine control. The above reveals that women are also resisted, ridiculed or insulted when they are vocal and not stereo typical or challenge male dominance while resistant to gender discrimination imposed through male control. Men express their gendered resistance by way of hailing direct, embarrassing personal remarks at women even in formal public forums. These appear as attempts to construct such women who are vocal, as unfeminine and therefore are not to be regarded seriously. However, in terms ODL academics, resistance by way of personalized remarks is present and noted by a woman academic who expressed her experience in the following manner; however in this experience her experience of the resistance is more general rather than gendered.

I returned from my maternity leave (after some complications with my pregnancy) and took my [official] feeding hours [two and a half hours a day provision for 10 months] during the lunch time to feed the baby as I lived close by. There were some colleagues in the department who passed comments that 'lunch is not one hour' who were well aware of my circumstances. Sadly, there were females also who said this.

(Senior Lecturer II, OUSL, Sri Lanka, F)

I have observed in the academia that most female academics do not speak up... I consider this to be a big weakness. [I think] if they spoke up at forums, they would get a fair hearing. But I have seen that women don't... women in leadership however, is not felt much.

(Senior Lecturer 1, OUSL, Sri Lanka, F)

Further on the other hand, certain ODL academic women express the view that the academic women who do not come forward sufficiently and voice their views, while they do not express evidence of overt resistance to women's voice or remarks at public or other forums, they have not been explicit as to whether it is due to gender politics that women are silent in general. These academic women at the same time note the sheer lack of female representation in leadership positions and agrees that it is a glaring weakness that requires attention and working on.

Further evidence reveals not only this resistance is prevalent by way of verbal remarks, but subtle gender resistance is pervasively adopted and implemented within management decisions.

### **Gendered micro-politics in management decisions and powers**

The practice gender politics and its visibility within formal institutional structures and professional negotiations is a frequently observed reality in the workplace (Acker, 1999). Reports of some male academics of the conventional academy in this research signified extreme mechanisms of direct gender control and male power in administrative positions utilised to cause appallingly detrimental administrative outcomes on some female academics' careers. This is relevant in terms of resistance evident in practices pertaining to academic recruitment noted in the conventional system.

#### ***Resistance in recruitment***

Another noted means where micro-politics plays out is during recruitment into academic positions. Gendered resistance displayed in recruitment decisions is revealed in the comments of a few Sri Lankan senior academic men who are actively engaged in selection committees, which articulate this bias explicitly in the gendered nature of questions raised by the interview panel during recruitment. Within these recounts, the recruitment of already pregnant women or women who are planning to get pregnant or raise a family immediately or in future are represented as liabilities. These men's responses also interestingly reveal that often women are likely to be queried and questioned about family or personal plans during such recruitment interviews, though questions regarding having children or raising a family would not usually be raised with men during these interviews in a similar manner. Such duality in practice is noted and emphasised in this research as overt expressions of institutional resistance towards women and their entry into and progression within an academic career driven by gender stereo typed thinking. This becomes evident in following quotes;

**(Do they ask whether you are going to be married and are you going to be pregnant?)** Yes, that kind of thing and often such issues [does] come up. For instance when the children are studying somewhere else how will it affect their performances? Those kinds of things are there. But the plight is that these academics either don't have a good family life, which is the price they sometimes have to pay when you are so focused on academic work.

(Senior Professor, Arts, Sri Lanka, M)

Sri Lanka still I think is male dominated. There can be discrimination; they might say 'ayyo she will want to take maternity leave' and there was a situation like this. A very good student of ours did a Masters with us and joined the [Wijaya] University and at the interview she did not say that she was pregnant, and now they are regretting that they [recruited] her.

(Senior Professor, AScience, Sri Lanka, M)

#### ***Resisting the 'female'***

Another example of gendered micro-politics of resistance is present in the construction of female emotionality as an unsuitable and even an irrational disposition for decision making roles, whilst the absence of such regarding 'male emotionality'. A similar dimension of above construction of 'lack' was displayed in the sample of responses regarding leadership and management positions as well. Generally the leadership is projected as a masculine or male trait. This is common to the academia as well. Although not made explicit as such, the traditional gender ideologies and expectations underlying academic leadership positions are very highly resistant to female intrusion. In this regard, resistance to female emotionality was explicitly evident in some men's responses in the conventional system where Deans and Vice Chancellors positions are most exclusively held by men (UGC, 2013). These leadership duties and positions are

traditionally 'seen' as masculine work/jobs hence largely assigned to men. Further, the positions such as student counsellor and student manager are also recognised as academic positions of power in promotion evaluations particularly in Sri Lanka and therefore are usually assigned to male and men.

Here we have had problems where female academics have been fighting with male academics. One finally left anyway. I don't know, may be [due to] frustration or whatever. There are things like certainly females are much more emotional than males. So these things come out and we see that and therefore problems can happen.

(Senior Professor, AScience, Sri Lanka, M)

Similar experiences pertaining to gender politics of academic administration and management are evident in the ODL setting as per following expression that indicates subtle resistance as well as gender discrimination.

In terms of university service there have been instances of gender bias now as well as in the past. [I think] we [women] have always been nominated to carry burdensome heavy and undervalued work.

(Senior Lecturer II, OUSL, Sri Lanka, M)

### **Gendered micro-politics of mobility**

Some women reported experiencing control through gender norms and being constrained and limited as a result of a particular lack of freedom of mobility within the institution and to engage in field work outside for research. One is the institutional culture and norms' concerning what is and is not socially acceptable or appropriate feminine behaviour in Sri Lankan culture that work to inhibit academic women's research output. These include scandals spread against certain women academics in departments when remained after hours to engage in their unfinished academic work. Since sexualised remarks and scandals are considered most scandalous and would tarnish the social image of the 'good woman' some women reported that they never 'dare' work after office hours just to save themselves from an otherwise disgracefully scandalous situation.

If [men] have some work to do [they] can come to the Department, your room at anytime, no body questions you and you can come with anybody male or female but if I come with a male they all get very curious 'who is that person?' want to know 'but even if I want to I cannot come here and work at night because although it is allowed that is again going against the culture, so women won't come and work like that. If we came frequently, it will create another problem. So we don't work in the evenings or week-ends as a rule

(Senior Lecturer II, Science, Si Lanka, F)

In this regard, quite an opposite position is represented in the experiences shared by the women in the ODL system. These women very clearly expressed that they enjoy equal freedom of working after hours just as other men, and that there are no gendered pressure directed at them by the male colleagues.

I have always worked very late in my office whenever there is the need for very longer periods of time and there have never ever been a problem or a word of disgrace. It has been so positive in that respect. In fact, I have seen quite a number of women colleagues in my department work after hours and we have never had any pressure to discourage. Only thing is, most women cannot work late with their family commitments.

(Senior Lecturer I, OUSL, Si Lanka, F)

The engagement in field based research is a serious challenge to Sri Lankan women academics due to cultural practices. The traditional practice of women not travelling after dark unchaperoned, especially in rural suburbs which

consists about 75 percent of the country's land proves extremely challenging and impractical in the context of an academic career. However, in certain institutions and also amongst different groups of people and individuals, these practices subject to variation, and a certain amount of reverse resistance and support may be exercised.

I did feel that I am a woman conducting field work. May be it meant that I had to attire and conduct myself in a particular way. The initial phase of establishing links for interviews was difficult. But, gender worked very positively for me and they gave me a lot of support to complete my task.

(Senior Lecturer II, OUSL, Sri Lanka, F)

### ***Gendered dress codes***

Differences in the configuration of micro-politics is evident in Sri Lanka prompted by its different cultural practices and traditions. A significant informal practice that women showed concerned about and experienced discrimination from is, the pressure imposed via gender bias dress codes. These responses contrastingly cited the privilege accrued men in terms of the relative freedom men enjoy being free from restraining dress codes. In a context where a woman often has to efficiently manage family affairs and academic work, draping oneself in six yards of cloth is seen as considerably restrictive of brisk body movement, for example walking fast and considering the warm climate conditions in Sri Lanka. Further the female academics of the sample observed 'saree' largely as an adornment on special occasions rather than a practical dress to adorn every day. However, in this regard the views of some OUSL female academics entailed a marked difference in their experiences of dress code reality. They expressed being relatively free and liberated from similar norms and controls.

We are supposed to wear 'saree' for academic work which I suppose is [quite unfair] why only for us? This is the situation of this university, why only women, I was [told] once you cannot come to the examination hall in a dress; you have to come in a 'saree'...then, I should have asked from that person what about men? They wear T-shirts, denims, sandals and they also sometimes have long hair, why only us? Nobody asks that question.

(Senior Lecturer II, Science, Sri Lanka, F)

We wear saree for special occasions and not necessarily for lectures which is fine. Our faculty is quite liberated in that regard which is good considering the duties of academic coordination and how much we have to run around the faculty/ university each day.

(Senior Lecturer I, OUSL, Sri Lanka, F)

### **Intersectionality**

However, significantly the findings also revealed that sometimes the micro-politics within the academia is not confined only to gender but often also would be constructed along the hierarchical social ordering. Interestingly the experiences of Australian academics represented two main trends, one was in relation to class and the dynamics around it. The other was how micro-politics figured itself in the experiences of minority academics that divide indigenous and non indigenous. Further, interestingly certain male academics also expressed insecurities concerning professional jealousies by men towards more ambitious men and its impact on them.

Ethnically I never had any problems in the University may be because my Sinhalese is very good. Personally I have not felt it and I have not heard it from the friends whom I know. What I would have experienced are more general things to do with petty jealousies and things...There have been times where I have felt that the tendency to control and manipulate is there in people who are senior to you in the

University that is there. It is like as long as people don't feel threatened it is ok, you are left alone, that you experience in all universities, especially in Sri Lanka...Those are actually constraints to [academic] development, what happens is many times you feel like chucking up.

(Senior Lecturer I, Science, Sri Lanka, M)

## Discussion

The foregoing paper examined the behaviour of a sample of academics chosen from the conventional and ODL universities in Sri Lanka. It seeks to analyse whether the established (conventional university) notions of gendered micro-politics is consistent with ODL group of academics' stories of gender disadvantage, and if so, how? The analysis considers the subtle and the pervasive nature of resistant element drawing on the idea of "micro-politics" and/or 'hidden transcript'; and the element of resistance visible in the explanations of an 'accommodating masculinity' of a 'masculine hegemony' (Bagilhole, 2002). Hence, within the current analyses, the pervasive, less obvious/indirect, hidden transcripts are referred to as 'covert' whilst the more visible, open, direct or formal institutionalised expressions referred as 'overt' categories of resistance.

The overt control of gendered resistance is prevalent to this sample and operate through 'gendered remarks' for devaluing and undermining the academic excellence particularly within the conventional context. Gendered remarks are valid in two respects. One being the form of rude utterances directed at females in formal settings [may] that represent itself as institutional oppressions of women's voice that requires immediate intervention and mediation. Secondly it is the resistance to particularly women in informal settings of the everyday academic life in the use of everyday entitlements such as less articulated work related facilities and rights that has been articulated in the ODL context. The rudeness embedded in the oppressive remarks and verbal tactics are confrontational and very personal. Such overt deliberations are seen as often used to control independent, ambitious or talented women who possess the potential to make rapid strides in academic achievement, thus exerting pervasive gender strategies of personified masculine hegemony. These findings confirm similar revelations in previous studies (Kaplan,1985:19-22 Also see Morley, 2006) whilst the articulations regarding women's lack of voice in formal bodies and forums has been less articulated.

Micro-politics in management decisions and positional power (Acker, 1999) may also be relevant regarding everyday academic life experiences of the women in ODL setup to the extent where university services are assigned and distributed. In this research it has come into play in being promoted to decision making positions exerting pressure over women's social vulnerabilities and political independence. This is brought out in both the contexts. This research represented itself in men's' resistance of female emotionality or 'resistance of the femininities' for decision making roles. In this regard, it deliberates on the hidden project (transcripts) of leadership as a masculine trait ensures the continual traditional ideological expectations of leadership positions that remain very highly resistant to feminine/female intrusion.

Gender politics of mobility propounded through cultural traditions of stigma and dress codes are further important examples of patriarchal resistance. Whilst its relevance is contestable in ODL context, the conventional university reports cite it as a burden that signifies gender bias. Thus within the broad academic context of Sri Lanka, dress codes requires empathetic and gender sensitive consideration.

Further, in terms gender micro-politics of mobility, the particular lack of freedom within academic institutions, in terms of academic and social cultural norms pertaining to expectations of ways of being affect research out puts of academic women that impedes academic progression. In this regard however, within the ODL context there are no explicit references of sexual advances made on women, whilst it is a key expression of the conventional experience.

These findings also very importantly indicate that, sometimes gendered micro-politics of the academia exist very much so, however do not confine itself exclusively to gender dynamics alone and that would construct itself within a more complex matrix of hierarchical social ordering, such as class, race/ethnicity or caste. Hence this research

confirms that the repressive subtleties of gendered micro-politics of resistance do exist and act against the academic progression of women in everyday academic life in Sri Lanka.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, within the conventional and ODL university systems in Sri Lanka, the covert-informal cultural norms and gendered norms or micro-politics work to prevent some women's academic achievement in more subtle and perhaps relatively less disruptive aggressive ways. However, in comparison, the overt and formal gender-politics work more adversely towards their academic advancement and progression. In both the systems, politics of gender represents itself, however to different levels and degrees, at micro as well as macro settings. Awareness of the multiple nature of gendered micro-politics is essential for effective strategic interventions for enhancing women's position in the academy as a whole.

## References

Bagilhole, B 2002, 'Challenging Equal Opportunities: Changing and Adapting Male Hegemony in Academia', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 23, no. 1, Mar., 2002, pp. 19-33.

Brooks, A 1997, *Academic women*, Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press,, Buckingham [England] ; Bristol, PA .:

Castleman, T, Allen, M., Bustalich, W., Wright, P., 1995, *Limited Access: Women's Disadvantage in Higher Education Employment*, National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), Melbourne.

Cockburn, C 1991, *In the way of women: Men's resistance to equality in Organization*, ILR Press, Ithaca, New York.

Dwandre, N 2002, 'European strategies for promoting women in science', *Science* 295 January 11, pp. 278-279.

Eveline, J 1996, 'The worry of going limp: Are you keeping up in senior management?', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 11, no. 23, pp. 65-79.

Gunawardena, C (ed.) 2005, *Not Adding Up; Looking Beyond Numbers: Gender Equity in Higher Education in Sri Lanka*, Open University Press, Sri Lanka., Colombo.

Hearn, J & Parkin, W 2001, *Gender, sexuality and violence in organizations the unspoken forces of organization violations*, SAGE, London Thousand Oaks, Calif., <<http://proxy.library.adelaide.edu.au/login?url=http://AP7ZD9YB6X.search.serialssolutions.com/?V=1.0&L=AP7ZD9YB6X&S=JCs&C=TC0000161231&T=marc&tab=BOOKS>>

<http://samhs.library.adelaide.edu.au/login?url=http://TC4YM2BP7B.search.serialssolutions.com/?V=1.0&L=TC4YM2BP7B&S=JCs&C=TC0000161231&T=marc&tab=BOOKS>>.

Husu, L 2000, 'Gender discrimination in the promised land of gender equality', *Higher Education in Europe XXV*, vol. 2, pp. pp. 221-228.

Husu, L & Morley, L 2000, *Higher Education in Europe:special edition on academe and gender: what has and has not changed*, UNESCO XXV(2), Bucharest.

Krefting, LA 2003, 'Intertwined discourses of merit and gender: evidence from academic employment in the USA', *Gender, Work & Organization*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 262-278.

Morley, L 1999, *Organising feminisms : the micropolitics of the academy*, Basingstoke : Macmillan ; New York : St. Martin's Press.

Morley, L 2002, 'A Micropolítica dos Estudos de Gênero: Feminismo e Mudança Organizacional no Mundo Acadêmico ', *Revista Emancipação*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 57 - 73.

Morley, L 2004, *Gender equity in commonwealth higher education : Emerging themes Learning by comparison:International experiences in education and training*, Department for Education and Skills, Nottingham.

Morley, L 2006, 'Hidden transcripts: The micropolitics of gender in Commonwealth universities', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. Volume 29,, no. Issue 6,, November-December ,, pp. Pages 543-551.

Obrien, S 2011, 'Horetarts, mullets and slurries: sexual subject positions available to young women at Roseworthy College', *Discourse: studies in the Cultural politics of Education*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 89-99.

Osongo, JK 2000, 'Publish or perish? : An investigation into academic women's access to research and publications in Kenyan universities', Institute of education, MA thesis, University of London.

Park, SM 1996, 'Research, Teaching and Service: why shouldn't women's work count?', *Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 67, no. 1(January/February 1996).

Probert, B 2005, 'I just couldn't fit it in: Gender and unequal outcomes in academic Careers', *Gender, Work and Organization*, vol. 12, no. 1, January, pp. 50-72.

Shackleton, L, Desireé Simonis and Sarah Riordian 2005, *South AfricaWorking Paper 5 Data Analysis II*.

Wilson, J, Z, Marks, G, Noone, L & Mackenzie-Hamilton, J September 2010, 'Retaining a foothold on the slippery paths of academia: university women, indirect discrimination, and the academic marketplace', *Gender and education*, vol. 22, no. 5, pp. 535-545.