

## Insights on Gender Disparity in Politics: Women at Decision-Making Levels in Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

Women make significant contributions to civil society, yet around the world their representation in government is limited. Consequently, low women political representation has concurrently led to increasing gender parity in decision making portfolio in the government. In Malaysia, women have made slow progress in the political arena though numerous initiatives were taken by the government such as introduction of at least 30 per cent of women in decision-making positions in public sector policy. This study aims to examine situational analysis in regard to the policy on representation of women in Malaysia. This study will also identify the challenges in achieving gender parity in Malaysia's public sector and effective government policies and programmes based on input from interview and comparative studies of good practices by benchmarked countries. Primary source data for this study was collected using qualitative method research tool of semi-structured interview with government officials from decision-making level positions in Malaysia. In addition, a simple quantitative technique is used to analyze the secondary data collection from ministries and published scholarly journals and international institutions. Research findings depict that dissatisfaction of disproportionate inclusion of women in Malaysia government's decision-making level persists although government's initiatives have improved women's welfare and opportunities. Recommendations of several policies and programmes such as gender budgeting, among other government's initiatives, shall facilitate the objectives of this study to achieve an equal representation of women in parliament and in positions of decision-making. With the current newly elected government, the recommended actions are perceived to allow identification and voicing of new concerns to be added to the political and developmental agendas previously unidentified or unvoiced.

**Keywords:** women's representation; Malaysian public sector; decision-making level; gender disparity; politics