Who Represents 'Immigrant Women'?*

An Empirical Evidence from Local Council Proceedings in South Korea

Kazuhiro Terashita

Abstract

This paper elucidates which 'women' are represented in local councils in South Korea, and by whom and to what extent 'immigrant women' are represented among them, through a textual data analysis of local council minutes. Some literatures have pointed out that politicians with specific attributes, such as foreign origin, tend to represent immigrants and ethnic minorities among women. However, having certain attributes does not necessarily mean that they represent minorities that are relatively small and 'non-voting' minorities. Nor are the conditions under which politicians without certain attributes represent minorities clear. Therefore, this paper overcomes the challenge by using a case study of local councils in South Korea, where there are differences among local governments in immigration policies, despite the fact that there are almost no foreign-born council members. Specifically, I collect council minutes from Seoul, Busan, Deagu in South Korea and use text analysis techniques to measure the themes of 'women' statements made by each council member. Then, I determine the impact of Korean politicians' attributes, vote share, and the presence of feminist protests in the region on the quantity and quality of 'women'-related statements. In doing so, this study contributes to the debate on the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation of women.

Introduction

This paper aims to elucidate the representation of 'women' in South Korean local councils and assess the extent and representation of 'immigrant women' among them through a textual analysis of local council minutes.

Discussions on women's political representation have explored the impact, or lack thereof, of increased descriptive representation of women on their substantive representation. Various theoretical and empirical studies have analyzed the influence of rising female legislators on policies, legislators' expressions, and actions (Bratton and Ray 2002; Ennser-Jedenastik 2017; Kobayashi and Kamahara 2019; Yoon and Osawa 2017).

However, since most studies primarily focus on the correlation between specific attributes and policy enactment or representation in Congress, it remains unclear whether legislators lacking those specific attributes represent minority attributes. Just as it's uncertain whether female legislators inherently represent all facets of 'women,' it's equally uncertain whether male legislators do not represent 'women.' Furthermore, exploring the scope of 'women' being represented is essential.

This paper delves into the characterization of 'women' represented in the local government legislatures of South Korea. It particularly examines the representation of 'immigrant women,' a significant intersectional minority group. Korea presents an intriguing case study where immigration rates are increasing, yet the number of foreign-born legislators remains low. Focusing specifically on local governments actively engaged in immigration policy, this paper compares cases within Korea to provide insights that contribute to the debate on descriptive and substantive representation.

The paper is structured as follows: The subsequent section frames the debate on political representation and reviews prior studies, specifically addressing representation in Congress. The data collection methods and analysis techniques used in this study are then delineated. Subsequently, the findings derived from our current analysis are presented. Lastly, the conclusions and implications derived from the results of the analysis are discussed.

Literature Review

Previous research on women's political representation has investigated why, despite the entry of women into the labor market and the subsequent increase in the number of female politicians alongside an elevation in their social status, there hasn't been a correction of discriminatory institutions or the implementation of gender quotas. The foundation of this study lies in the critical mass theory, which delves into the institutional changes that accompany the rise in female politicians (Celis et al. 2008). This theory explores the correlation between the descriptive representation of women in politics—such as the proportion of female politicians— and the substantive representation, encompassing institutions and policies (Bratton and Ray 2002; Ennser-Jedenastik 2017; Kobayashi and Kamahara 2019; Yoon and Osawa 2017).

However, merely increasing the percentage of female politicians and government officials doesn't automatically lead to gender-equitable policies. Consequently, critiques and adaptations to the critical mass theory have surfaced. Specifically, theories like critical actor theory, feminist advocacy coalition theory, policy framing theory, policy network theory, and feminist institutional theory have emerged to address this (Beckwith and Cowell-Meyers 2007; Smith 2014; Annesley 2010; J. Lee 2022; Lanfranconi and Valarino 2014; Holli 2008; Stetson and Mazur 1995; Waylen 2007).

Simultaneously, there has been exploration into interest representation in parliaments. For instance, Höhmann (2020b) suggests, based on various studies indicating that the parliamentary behavior of female legislators and the correlation between descriptive and substantive representation are impacted by institutional factors, that in cases where reelection is guaranteed and there's no necessity to vie for votes from the constituency (primarily representatives elected through proportional representation), German case studies indicate that female legislators tend to focus more on representing women's interests and significantly increase statements regarding 'women's' interests. Höhmann (2020a) also examines the effect of a rise in the number of female parliamentarians on the representation of the interests of male parliamentarians. Research on women's political representation has highlighted that female parliamentarians tend to represent women's interests more than their male counterparts do. The outcomes

support the hypothesis that with an increase in female legislators, male legislators, perceiving the representation of women's interests as the responsibility of female counterparts, might refrain from representing those interests. As a result, recent empirical analyses have centered on women's substantive representation in Congress.

The studies above highlight the common assumption that increased descriptive representation often leads to perceived policy changes. Additionally, the focus has been directed toward congressional statements and speeches(Evans 2016). These assumptions stem from debates surrounding the correlation between descriptive and substantive representation. Consequently, the ongoing discussion revolves around the representation of minority attributes by politicians lacking specific characteristics. Do politicians devoid of specific details ever represent minority attributes? Considering this, the present paper scrutinizes the representation of minority attributes in Korean local council proceedings.

Methods

Case

The striking characteristic of the South Korean scenario lies in the near absence of foreign-born legislators. Prior research has primarily centered on nations or regions where foreign-born legislators have some presence. As previously noted, there's a dearth of studies investigating the circumstances and mechanisms through which politicians lacking specific attributes represent those attributes. Hence, this paper positions the South Korean context as a pivotal case study that addresses gaps in previous research.

Furthermore, it's worth noting that South Korea might intensify its immigration policy in the future. Given the backdrop of exceedingly low birth rates and labor shortages, the national government is actively advocating for 'immigrant acceptance' policies. Specifically, there have been relaxations in work and visa requirements. However, it's the local governments that extend actual support to immigrants. Consequently, there exist variations in support policies across different local governments. This variability implies potential discrepancies in political

representation within legislative bodies across municipalities. Hence, this paper assesses the extent of representation of 'women' and 'immigrant women' in various municipalities, employing several metropolitan cities as case studies.

Data

This paper gathered council meeting minutes from Seoul Metropolitan City, Busan Metropolitan City, and Daegu Metropolitan City to compile data on statements made by individual council members. The methodology employed is detailed below.

Initially, I accessed the archives of Seoul, Busan, and Daegu assemblies, gathering minutes related to 'women.' To identify discussions related to 'women,' I conducted keyword searches using 'women(여성).' My focus was on the standing committees(상임위원회) in each municipality's assembly(2014-2020).

The collected minutes were organized based on the speaker's order and their statements. Subsequently, I extracted statements containing any of the specified keywords, specifically 'women,' while excluding statements made by the chairperson, mayor, and staff members from our analysis. Speaker and meeting consolidated the text data obtained through this process.

I conducted a tokenizing(like morphological analysis) to process the collected text data quantitatively. Quanteda[1] served as the tool for tokenizing. Word frequencies were tabulated, and I filtered out stopwords, excessively frequent or rare words, English words, Chinese characters(Hanja), names, numbers, and words comprising only one character. Consequently, the analysis in this paper solely utilizes words composed of two or more characters in Hangul.

This study examines the frequency and content of statements concerning 'women' by estimating the primary topic of each speaker for every meeting. I employed a quasi-supervised learning model, Seeded Sequential LDA (Watanabe and Baturo 2023). This model surpasses

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[1]quanteda is R package for managing and analyzing text that supports multiple languages. In the case of Korean, there is a problem that the combination of a noun and a particle is identified as a single word because tokenization is done with spaces(e.g. '한국어는', '어렵다'). However, this paper overcomes the problem by identifying particles and deleting them in advance(e.g. '한국어', '어렵다'). Details of tokenization are provided in the Appendix.

the unsupervised learning model, LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation), as it estimates topics based on predetermined seed words and considers the preceding sentence's topic content, thus analyzing topics on a speaker-specific basis. Leveraging these advantages, this paper estimates the topic of each statement in meeting minutes, aiming for a more precise validation of congressional representation beyond a mere count of 'women' or 'immigrants' statements.

I developed an independent dictionary to estimate topics, drawing from the qualitative categorization of parliamentary proceedings in Seoul and Tokyo by Yoon and Osawa (2017). My dictionary incorporated classification labels encompassing topics such as 'women and human rights,' 'safety,' 'marriage and childbirth,' 'childcare,' 'medical care,' 'education,' 'youth and employment support,' 'business and enterprise,' 'disabled individuals,' 'elderly and nursing care,' 'urban development,' 'foreigners,' 'others 1,' and 'others 2'(Table 1). I registered high-frequency words from relevant proceedings under each category as seed words [2].

Table 1: Seed Words Used in the Analysis

Topic	Seed Words
Women_rights	"*평등*","차별*","*인권*","권리*"
Safety	"성폭력*", "성범죄*", "성매매*", "성희롱*", "가정폭력*", "피해자*"
Marrige_and_birth	"결혼*","출산*", "임신*"
Childcare	"보육*","어린이*", "육아*", "아동*","아이"
Medical_Health	"건강*", "의료*","*병원*"
Education	"*학교*", "*교육*","학생*"
Young_labor	"청소년*","청년*","*일자리*","직업*", "노동*", "임금*","실업*","젊은*"
Business	"기업*", "산업*", "디지털*", "스타트업*"
Disabled	"*장애*", "휠체어*"

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[2] Subsequently, I validated the accuracy of the topic estimation process. See Appendix for more information.

Topic	Seed Words
Old_age	"노약자*","노인*", "돌봄","고독사"
Urban	"공사*", "*공원*", "지하철", "화장실","주차장"
Research	"*연구*"
Foreigner	"다문화*","외국인*","이주","이주민","결혼이주*","국제교류*"

The data extracted from the statements were organized by legislator and year. We then acquired legislator data (including party affiliation, female representation indicators, vote share, and reelection status) from the Board of Elections website for the years 2014-2020.

This data was subsequently merged with the statement data. The ensuing analysis explores the association between attributes, especially gender, and legislative representation as previously investigated but also delves into the relationship between party affiliation and election system.

Results and Discussion

Firstly, the attributes of statements concerning 'women' in local councils are identified. Figure 1 illustrates that numerous councilors either refrain from making any statements related to 'women' or their frequency is relatively low. Additionally, it's observable that certain councilors tend to make an unusually high number of 'women'-related statements.

The frequency based on gender is then identified. Figure 2 depicts the average number of statements male and female councillors made. It indicates that female MPs made more statements concerning 'women' than male MPs.

The subsequent section explores the specific 'women'-related topics mentioned across municipalities. Figure 3 illustrates the proportion of total statements dedicated to various estimated topics. The figure highlights the variability in topic percentages among different municipalities.

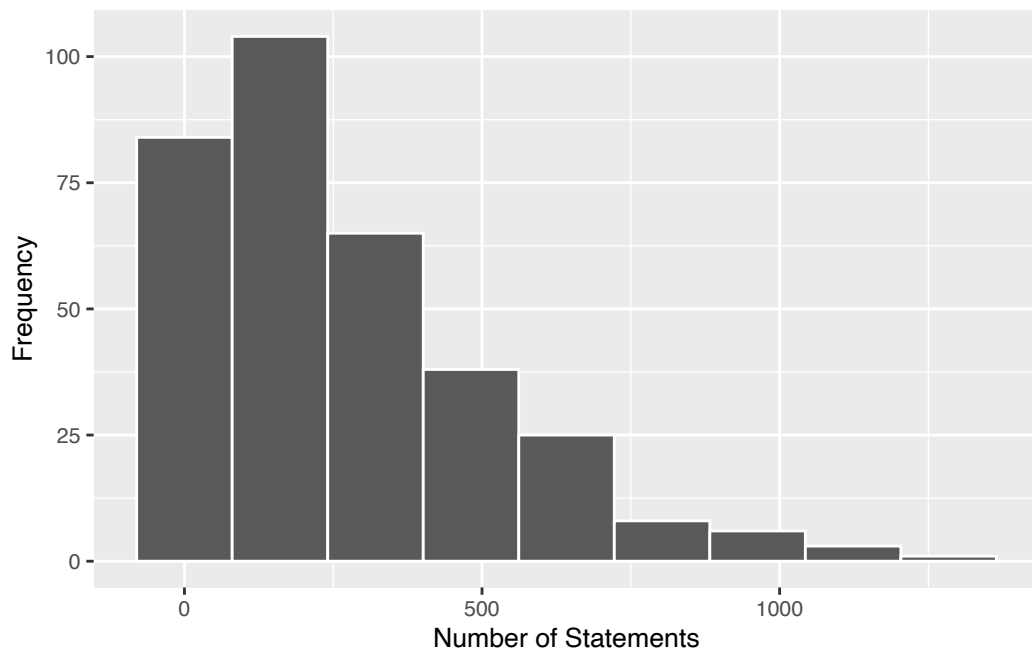Directing attention to the topic of migrant women, the primary focus of this paper,

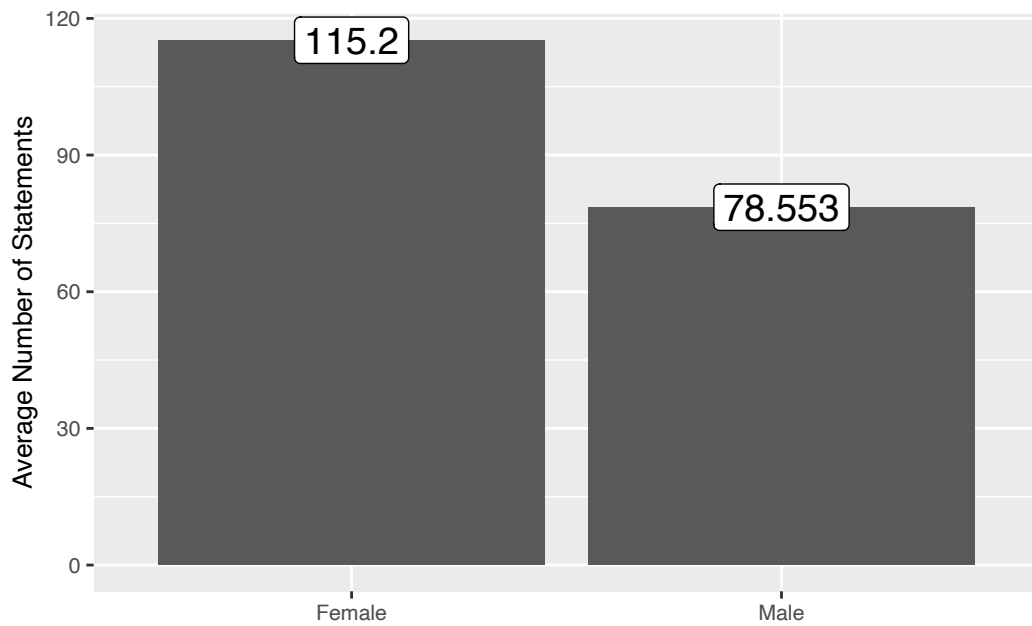Figure 1: Frequency of 'women' Statements

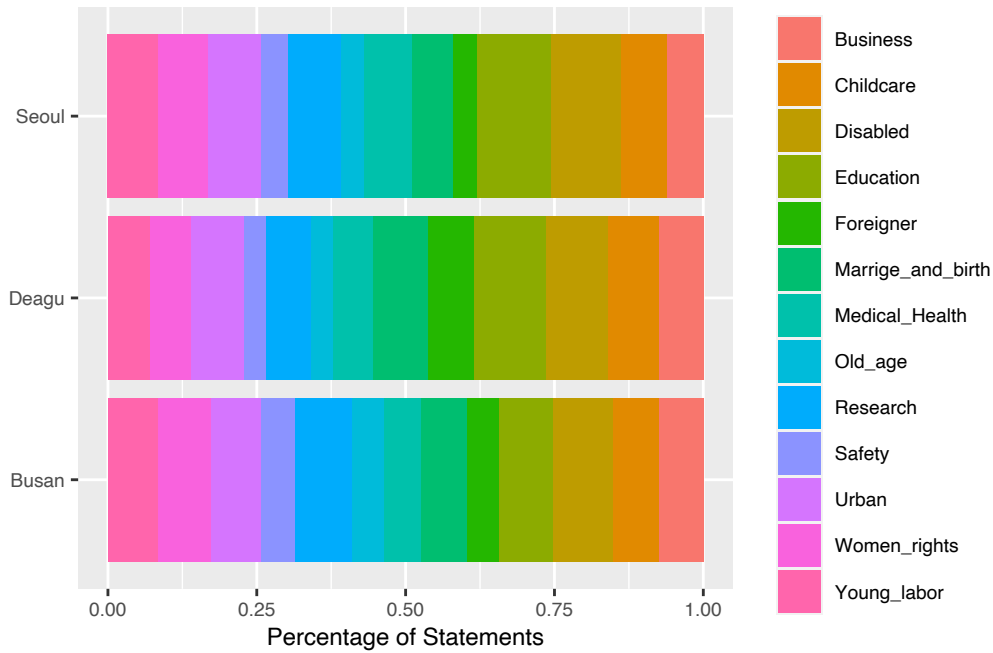Figure 2: Statements by Male and Female Council Members

Figure 3: Percentage of Total Statements on the Estimated Topic

reveals a discernible number of statements across each municipality. Nonetheless, slight discrepancies are evident between municipalities; in Daegu, it comprises approximately 7 points, whereas in Seoul and Busan, it constitutes less than 5 points. These variations underscore the differing emphasis on 'immigration policy' among distinct local authorities.

Subsequently, the analysis delves into the specific individuals referencing 'migrant women', focusing solely on this aspect. Initially, the figure presents the pattern in the occurrence of 'migrant women' statements. Notably, different from 'women' statements, several MPs do not have any statements about 'migrant women' at all. Consequently, in the broader context of 'women' statements, the representation of 'migrant women' remains notably scarce.

Figure 5 presents the gender distribution among legislators. A notable observation arises from this data. While gender disparities are noticeable in discussions regarding 'migrant women', the discrepancy has diminished in comparison to statements encompassing 'women' collectively. This implies that policies concerning 'migrant' issues may also receive representation from male legislators, diverging from the broader interests of 'women'.

Moving on to the party affiliations of the parliament members, those aligned with
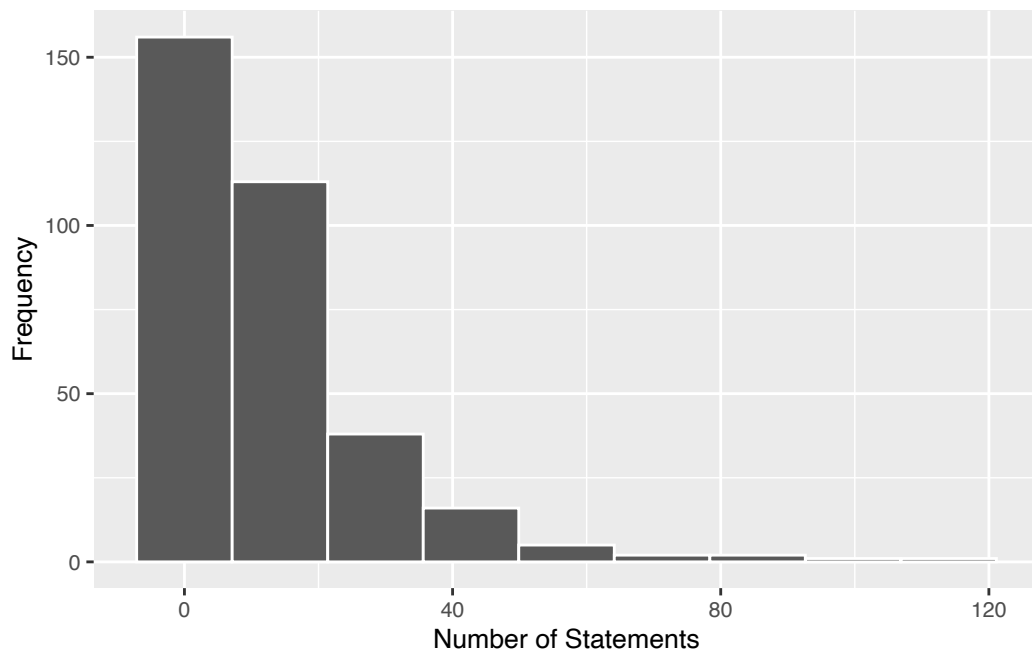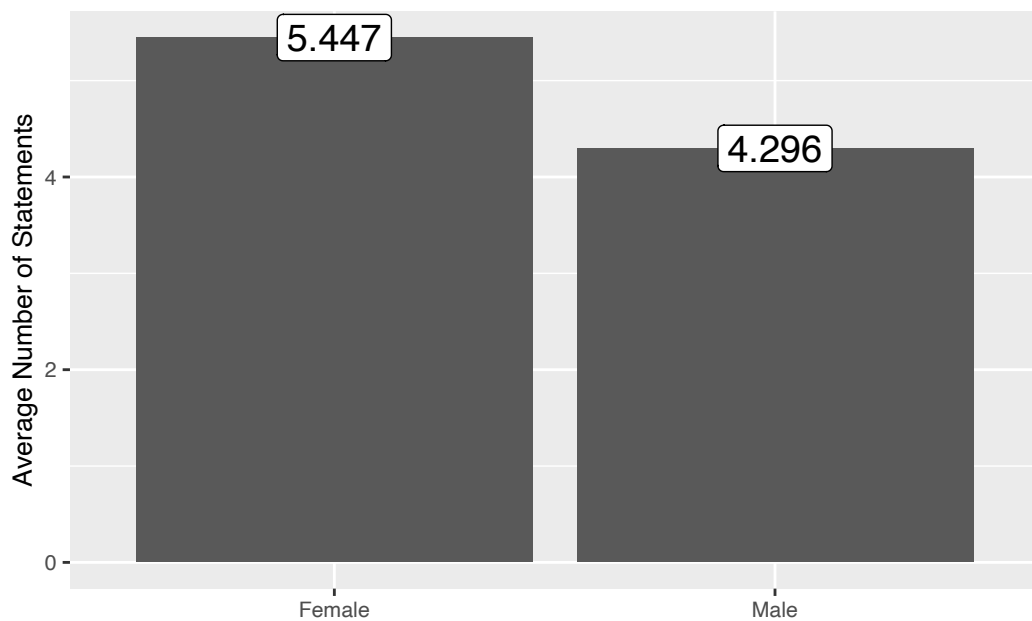
Figure 4: Frequency of 'immigrant women' Statements

Figure 5: References to 'migrant women' by Gender in Parliamentary Representation.

progressive parties are often assumed to advocate for more vulnerable groups. Figure 6 scrutinizes this aspect. Surprisingly, MPs affiliated with non-conservative parties are found to more frequently represent 'migrant women' compared to their counterparts in progressive parties. However, the disparity is not substantial and warrants further detailed examination in future studies.
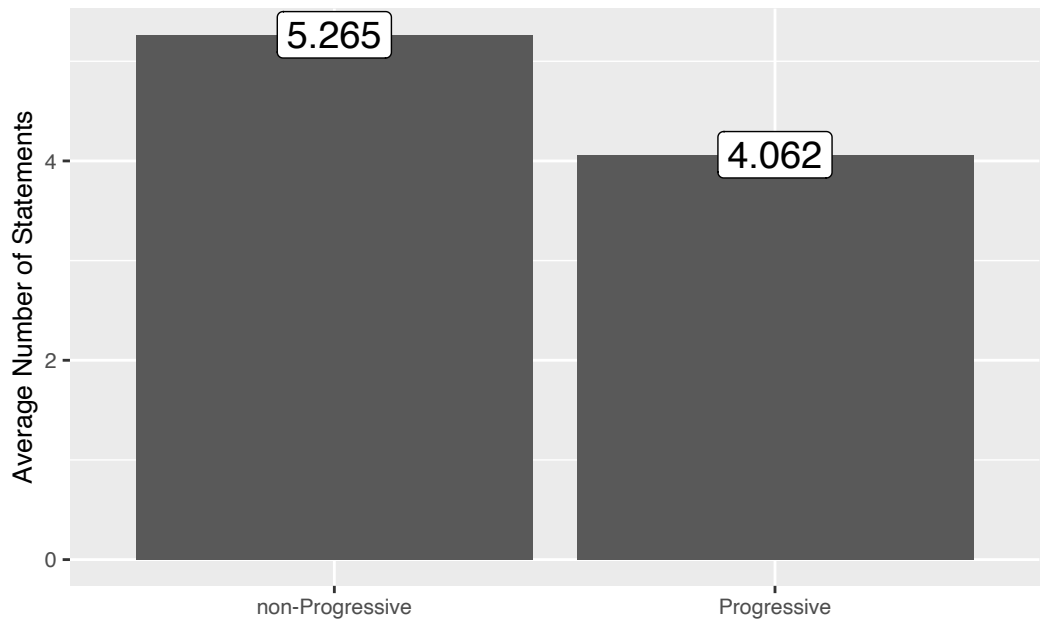

Figure 6: Average Number of 'immigrant women' Statements by Legislator's Party Affiliation

The subsequent analysis focuses on various electoral districts. Prior research has highlighted that proportional representation(PR) tends to yield MPs advocating for minorities over majorities. However, this paper's analysis reveals gender differences in this context. Initially, Figure 7 comparing proportional and electoral districts distinctly indicates a prevalent trend among proportionally represented MPs in representing 'immigrant women'. This aligns with findings from earlier studies.

However, when considering gender alongside the constituency, it becomes apparent that this contrast is more conspicuous among male representatives. Figure 8 demonstrates a more excellent difference between male MPs and female MPs concerning the election method. This could be attributed to the higher likelihood of male proportional councilors representing 'migrants.' This discrepancy might be influenced by the presence of origin associations and
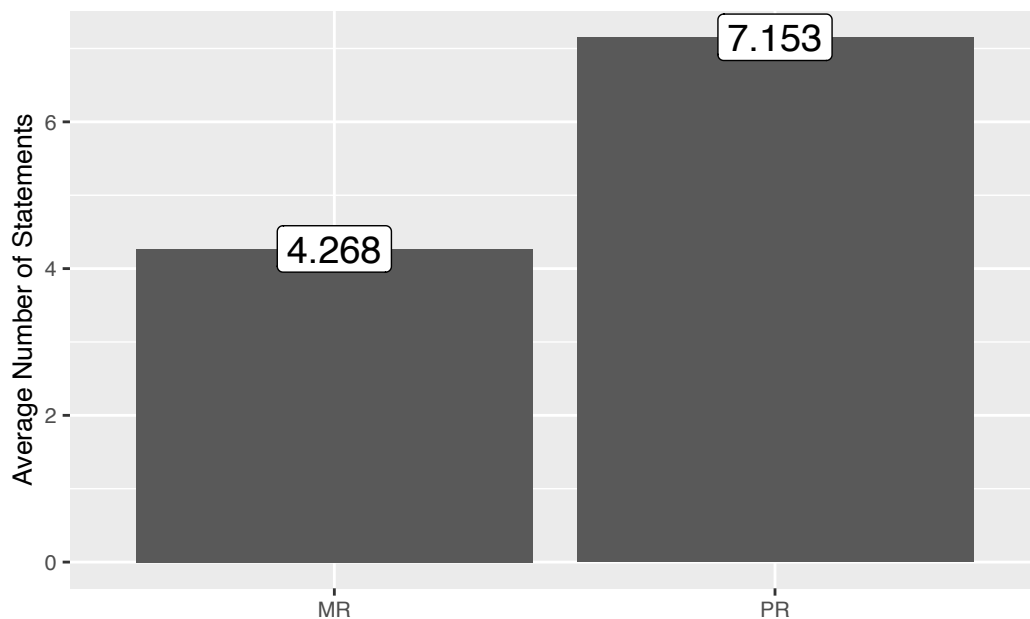
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Figure 7: Average Number of 'immigrant women' by Electoral System

industrial interest groups within their voter base. Yet, a comprehensive investigation into the support groups of MPs is essential to validate this supposition.

Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this paper unveils several key findings. Firstly, references to the topic were sporadic and exhibited variations across different periods and regions. While some mention of 'immigrant women' was identified, the frequency varied significantly among municipalities.

Secondly, intriguing observations emerged regarding who referenced 'immigrant women,' representing an intersectional minority. Although more female members mentioned the topic 'immigrant women' than male members, the gender difference was less pronounced compared to references to 'women' as a whole. Additionally, the impact of proportional election varied between male and female, with a more substantial contrast observed among male. This discrepancy might be attributed to support and affiliations with sectors like agriculture and industry.
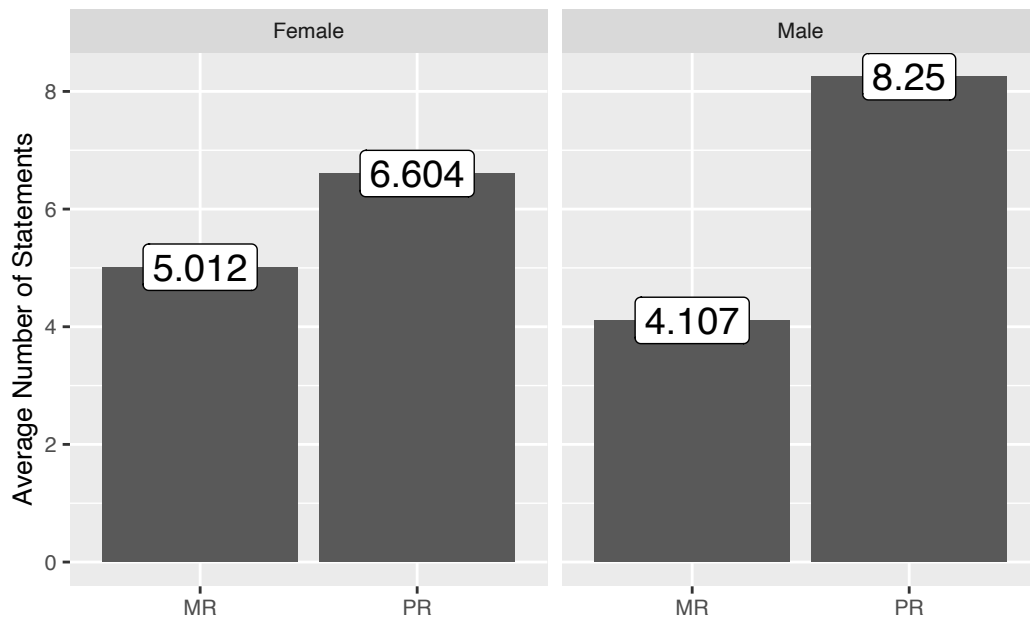
Figure 8: Average Number of 'immigrant women' by Electoral System and Gender

These findings contribute significantly to the discourse on the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. Particularly, there's a need to consider representation beyond descriptive demographics. In a predominantly 'homogeneous' society like Korea, relying solely on descriptive representation to address minority interests remains challenging in the absence of changes in the majority group's representation. Despite these concerns, it's evident that references to 'foreigners' were present in Korean local legislatures, aligning with past arguments suggesting the strategic use of minorities by majorities (e.g., Cassese and Holman 2019; Laperrière and Lépinard 2016; Tatari and Mencutek 2015).

Moreover, this paper holds significant implications for gender and Korean politics. South Korea experiences pronounced gender divisions and substantial political fragmentation. Against this backdrop, there's a need for more nuanced examinations, including considerations of 'men' and the LGBTQ+ community in future studies. Additionally, observations note an emergence of anti-feminist movements among men opposing feminism, alongside the rise of radical feminism, supporting claims such as TERF and anti-Islam (S. B. Lee 2023; Kim and Kweon 2022). This might be indicative of a situation where average 'Korean women' and 'Korean men' perceive lesser 'representation' than other attributes. The discussion on political

representation in this paper may offer insights to address such political fragmentation.

Appendix

The Appendix and handouts for the day will be available after November 30 at the following URL.

URL: https://github.com/namiterashita/KPSA2023

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