

EDITORIAL

Across Social Realities: Critical Reflections on Recognition, and Representation

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In contemporary Social Science, the concepts of recognition and representation are not merely theoretical concerns, but fundamental to understanding how social realities are constructed, experienced, and challenged among communities. Social reality refers to shared perceptions, beliefs, values, and social constructs that shape how people understand and interact within a society through ongoing social interactions and cultural transmission (Kaldis, 2014). While this reality is not fixed or purely objective, it is actively created and maintained by individuals and groups who interpret and reinforce social roles and behaviors.

The concept of the 'social construction of reality' developed by Berger and Luckmann (1966), remains a foundational framework for understanding how societies produce and maintain shared meanings. According to this theory, social reality emerges through *habitualization*, where repeated behaviors become routine, and *institutionalization*, where these routines are perceived as objective and taken for granted. This view emphasizes that what we consider 'real' is not fixed or universal but shaped by cultural context and social interaction (Kaldis, 2014; Miller & Nowacek, 2018).

The articles featured in this issue of *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences (SLJSS)* draw on the above ideas, exploring how social realities are shaped, reinforced, and contested across diverse contexts and disciplines. By engaging in interdisciplinary perspectives and empirical insights derived within these articles we invite our readers

to critically reflect on the dynamics of social realities, in terms of recognition and representation. Despite being situated in diverse contexts, at their core, all four articles explore how social structures, cultural meanings, and institutional contexts shape human behavior and perceptions.

The article titled *Investigating perceptions of Sri Lanka's tourism image via travel blog narratives: A netnographic examination*, by Chandralal et al. demonstrates how tourist-generated content impacts shaping socially constructed representations of a country. Analyzing 85 blog narratives through interpretive netnography, the findings reveal strong positive images related to Sri Lanka's functional and psychological features, while unique aspects were less emphasized. These recurring, shared narratives contribute to the holistic image of Sri Lanka, illustrating how collective representations of the country are formed through repeated individual experiences. The authors suggest that marketing strategies should build on these dominant images, improve safety and innovation, and better align branding with visitors' real experiences. This article highlights the dynamic interplay between representation, recognition, and institutional messaging in the co-construction of social realities related to tourism.

In their article *Age disparities in delinquency and victimhood across crime types: exploring age-dependent dynamics*, Bandaranayake and Prabodanie examine how age influences experiences of delinquency and

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victimization, demonstrating how social realities vary across demographic groups. Using crime records from a regional police station in Sri Lanka, the study employs graphical analysis and chi-square tests to analyze the age profiles of suspects and victims across a range of offenses. The research finds that delinquency peaks in the twenties for common crimes such as theft, robbery, and assault, whereas more calculated crimes, including cheating and breach of trust, tend to involve mature suspects in their thirties and forties. Involvement in criminal groups was most prevalent between late teens and forty years of age. Adolescent delinquency is notably high for sexual and abduction-related offenses with many child victims, while people in their forties are more vulnerable to property crimes such as housebreaking. These findings deepen understanding of how age influences patterns of crime and victimhood within specific social contexts.

The article *Cultural context and folk consciousness of folk instruments: An exploration of the Sri Lankan traditional folk instrument “Kulla” (Winnowing Fan)* by Ihalagama et al., (presented in Sinhala language) explore the cultural significance and historical context of a traditional tool— *kulla*, integral to daily life in Sri Lanka. Primarily crafted from natural materials, it serves multifunctional purposes in culinary, medicinal, and construction practices, reflecting its embeddedness in rural livelihoods. Through an examination of production techniques, usage patterns, and socio-cultural contexts, the study illustrates how this tool contributes to the continuity of traditional craftsmanship. Emphasizing the importance of preserving both the traditional tools and the associated indigenous knowledge, the article advocates for their recognition amid the pressures of modernization. This research enriches understanding of cultural identity and heritage, aligning with broader discussions on how social realities are constructed and maintained through material culture and collective memory.

In their article *Who gets counted: a decomposition analysis of provincial disparities in birth registration in Pakistan*, Malik et al. address critical issues of recognition and social inclusion by investigating uneven birth registration rates across provinces in Pakistan. Utilizing data from the 2017–2018 Pakistan Demographic Health Survey (PDHS) covering 8,638 children under five, the study finds that only 42.54% have officially registered

births indicating a significant barrier to legal identity and protection. Employing Fairlie Decomposition analysis, the research distinguishes between compositional factors (such as household wealth and maternal education) and behavioral differences driving disparities among the three provincial groups studied. The findings emphasize the complex and context-specific nature of social inequalities affecting children’s recognition at birth, underscoring the need for tailored policies to promote equitable access to birth registration and advancing to achieve the SDG targets by 2030. This study contributes to wider reflections on how recognition, representation, and institutional structures shape social realities, particularly for marginalized populations.

Together, the articles in this issue of *SLJSS* offer critical insights into the diverse ways social realities are constructed and experienced. Through varied contexts—from tourism narratives and age-related crime patterns to traditional material culture and disparities in legal recognition, they highlight the significance of recognition and representation in shaping identity, access, and belonging in societies. These studies collectively highlight how social realities are produced through interaction, discourse, and institutional structures, and call for continued reflection on how more equitable and inclusive forms of recognition might be achieved.

We hope these contributions spark further reflection and interdisciplinary dialogue. Looking ahead, we invite scholars, practitioners, and researchers to submit their work for future issues of this journal. We welcome high-quality contributions that address diverse issues across the field of Social Sciences!

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