



## Political Attitudes of the Students in Mizoram

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### Abstract

*One of the objectives of the study is to comprehend the viewpoints, values, and involvement of Mizo students in the political sphere of Mizoram by examining their political attitudes. The potential for the students to shape the political landscape of the state going forward is highlighted in this article. The study focuses on the youth's perception of politics and their degree of involvement in it. Their degree of political involvement also reflects their level of political understanding and interest. It also draws attention to the difference in political engagement between male and female students. It also mentions a proportion of the students who would rather pursue a career in politics. Additionally, the student's degree of trust in the political and governmental systems is highlighted. They often voice concerns about corruption and the effectiveness of political institutions and their sentiments show a desire for social fairness, good governance, and growth.*

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Government, Interest, Politics, Students.

### I. Introductions

At the most basic level, political attitudes can be understood as patterns of thoughts and feelings towards political objects. Political scientist Richard Brody defined "political attitudes" as "a person's views on public issues."<sup>1</sup> A more restricted definition limits political attitudes to views on the

policies pursued by the government. Political issues arise when the government chooses alternative policies that will affect individuals differently. Such personal impacts are an element of both political issues and political attitudes. However, they do not define them. Political attitudes (sometimes called "political opinions") are individual evaluations of all issues.<sup>2</sup> Political issues are evaluations of the government policies proposed or enacted about a personal issue at a point in time. Attention is often focused on changes in political attitudes.

Student political attitudes have long been a topic of interest and research because they show how education, socialisation and personal growth interact dynamically.<sup>3</sup> Students are exposed to a wide range of factors that develop their political attitudes and ideas as they proceed through their academic careers. These factors include peer relationships, media intake, family histories and the actual school setting.<sup>4</sup> In particular, the college or university setting is an essential place for the development of political ideas. During their time in college or university, students are frequently exposed to a variety of viewpoints and critical thinking techniques, which can cause a big change in their political views. The classroom often transforms into a forum for exchanging, testing and refining ideas and thus becomes an instrument of larger society discussions. Teachers are essential in this process because of their ability to either support or contradict



preexisting student beliefs through their own viewpoints and pedagogical approaches.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, extracurricular activities and student organisations give activism and political engagement forums. Students' political consciousness is further shaped by these groups, which allow them to investigate and promote a range of topics, from social justice to environmental sustainability.<sup>6</sup> Students are encouraged to challenge and reassess their previous views because the campus environment offers a special combination of intellectual independence and social engagement. Furthermore, it is important to take into account the larger social background while analysing students' political attitudes. Student perceptions of political issues are influenced by a variety of factors, including economic situations, cultural trends and national and international events.<sup>7</sup> The quick spread of information in the digital age via online news sources and social media also significantly impacts how people feel about politics. With their unparalleled access to knowledge, today's students are frequently at the vanguard of digital activism, organising, mobilising and expressing their political opinions via technology.<sup>8</sup>

Students' political attitudes are dynamic and constantly determined by a variety of circumstances. An extensive approach that considers the interaction of individual experiences, educational settings and larger societal processes is necessary to understand these attitudes. Students' political attitudes will probably keep changing as they interact with the world around them, reflecting the constant process of learning, development and adaptation.

#### **4.2. Perceptions of the Student**

Students Union is a formal body consisting of student representatives to administer governance in educational institutions. Most of the Higher Educational Institutions in India, comprising chiefly of Colleges and Universities, have their Student Unions.<sup>9</sup> The Students Union, on the one hand, ensures participation of students in the process of governance; while on the other, provides students the means to select or elect members from among them to administer the governance of the institution to which they are enrolled.<sup>10</sup> The Union members customarily hold significant posts concerning various activities, programmes and apex bodies of the parent organization; and contribute a great deal to the process of decentralization in Higher Education Governance.<sup>11</sup> The members of the Union are either selected following a rudimentary procedure of merit-based nomination or are elected

through a direct (Parliamentary) or indirect (Presidential) form of election.<sup>12</sup>

In the context of education, student unions have a special and influential role as the voice and delegates of the student body. Their responsibilities affect larger societal and political spheres and go well beyond the walls of academic institutions.<sup>13</sup> These organisations and people, who exemplify advocacy, activism and leadership, are frequently the impetus behind meaningful social change.<sup>14</sup> Student unions have developed into essential forums for student involvement, giving students an organised means of addressing their issues and influencing university policy.<sup>15</sup> Student unions are responsible for representing their peers, fighting for their rights and building a sense of community and collective identity. Organising protests and sit-ins, and promoting equal rights were all made possible by student activists. Student leaders have been crucial to the advancement of democracy and human rights in many regions of the world, frequently taking great risks and encountering persecution as a result of their political activity.

Student leaders and unions still play a crucial role in today's society. They cover a broad range of topics, including tuition costs, scholarship, educational reforms, mental health and safety on campuses and more. Student leaders frequently work on more general societal issues like political freedom, social justice and climate change in addition to these localised ones.<sup>16</sup> Due to their special position, they can mobilise sizable youth populations by capitalising on the fervour and idealism that are frequently present in student populations.<sup>17</sup> The capacity of student unions to promote a feeling of community and group action is one of their other advantages. They give students a place to gather, exchange stories and collaborate to achieve shared objectives.<sup>18</sup> To develop a supportive and involved student population that can affect change both inside and outside of their educational institutions, this sense of unity is essential.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Contest in Student Union Elections**

Participating in an extracurricular activity while attending college and university provides significant professional benefits; nevertheless, graduate employers frequently seek something more. It is beneficial to become more involved in the student union and its many groups and sports clubs. There are numerous elected positions available, some demanding more participation than others. While societies and sports clubs offer elected volunteer positions to supplement your studies, the students' union provides full-time sabbatical posts,



such as president, vice president, general secretary, etc. Students participate in student elections for a variety of reasons. Some compete for their gain, while others compete to shape their

personal development and leadership. The extent to which they participate in and contest elections varies.

**Table No. 1. Contesting in the Student Union (SU) Elections**

S/N	Question	Respondents (210)		
		No	Yes	No Idea
1.	Did you contest in the SU elections?	122 (58.10%)	68 (32.38%)	20 (9.52%)
2.	Have you ever considered contesting for the SU elections?	132 (62.86%)	62 (29.52%)	16 (7.62%)
3.	Did you receive financial assistance while contesting in elections?	133 (63.33%)	72 (34.29%)	5 (2.38%)

Source: Fieldwork

Student elections are an essential part of campus life, functioning as an example of larger democratic processes. These elections allow students to have a say in their government, advocate for their needs and develop leadership abilities. Contesting student elections can be a transforming experience, teaching significant lessons about leadership, campaigning and civic involvement. According to Table No. 1, 32.38% of the respondents have contested the SU elections. They mostly did so because they loved the college and wanted to better themselves (personal improvement). Nonetheless, more than half of the respondents (58.10%) do not intend to run for office. One of the primary reasons is that they place an absolute premium on their academic work as opposed to taking part in extracurricular activities like SU.

Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents (62.86%) stated that they had no intention of running for office in the student union elections. Besides, just a small percentage of respondents (29.52%) had thought about running for office while they were still students. Also, 63.33% of respondents said they did not get any financial support while contesting in elections. All they use as campaign money is their own pocket money and personal costs. Nonetheless, a small percentage of respondents (34.29%) said they got financial help for their election campaign from friends, family, and/or political parties.

### Politics as a career

People who are motivated to change public policy, bring about change and give back to the community are drawn to a career in politics since it is an intriguing and diverse field. A special combination of abilities, such as negotiating, leadership, a thorough understanding of public administration and political processes, are needed for this line of work. Those who choose this route frequently have a strong sense of public service, a strong drive for advocacy and an unwavering devotion to bettering society. Politics is fundamentally about making decisions and governing. Politicians are employed by local, state, federal, and even foreign governments at different levels of government.

Although every role has a unique set of duties and difficulties, they are all united in the desire to influence the course of their nations and communities. A political career mostly appeals to people who want to be change agents. Legislation that can improve people's lives can be introduced and passed by politicians in the areas of healthcare reform, education policy, environmental protection and economic development. For many people entering the sector, the chance to have a real, concrete difference is a tremendous motivator. But achieving success in politics is not without its challenges. Participating in local government, volunteering for campaigns, or campaigning for



certain causes are examples of grassroots involvement that frequently starts the journey. Establishing credibility and winning over supporters is essential, and this calls for not just diligence but also a sincere relationship with the community. A political career requires a lot of preparation, which includes education. Although many people may opine that politicians do not need really need academic degrees, those who want to be in these positions are often found to study political science, law, public administration, or related subjects. These fields offer a strong basis for comprehending legal frameworks, governmental processes and the difficulties involved in formulating public policy. During studentship, involvement in student organizations is a good training ground for future political career. College and university programmes must prepare students for careers in politics and government. They should be motivated to get themselves involved in public life and assume leadership positions in the future through teaching them about leadership, democracy and government

and uniting politically interested students from around the different educational institutions on one platform. The idea that a career in politics is out of reach needs to be challenged among the students of Mizoram. They should also be leading the charge in shaping the state's future as well as the future of a nation like India. Leaders who are sensitive, sincere and have higher moral standards and strong ethical principles are desperately needed. One of the main reasons why young people are not interested in politics is that they need to see more role models in this field.<sup>20</sup> It is crucial to provide the necessary guidance and support to the next generation of leaders through enhancing their knowledge and capacity building.<sup>21</sup> Education should not be limited to one-dimensional academic teaching; instead, follow a holistic approach that develops critical thinking abilities as much as other faculties of knowledge.<sup>22</sup> This is particularly important in politics, where the ability to think critically and engage in constructive dialogue is essential.<sup>23</sup>

**Table No. 2. Politics as a career**

S/N	Question	(210)		
		Yes	No	No Idea
1.	Do you want to make politics as a career?	24 (11.43%)	174 (82.86%)	12 (5.71%)
2.	Do you think it is a good career for the youth?	57 (27.14%)	117 (55.71%)	36 (17.14%)
3.	Is it your opinion that more young people should pursue careers in politics?	75 (35.71%)	109 (51.90%)	26 (12.38%)

Source: Fieldwork..

According to the study, many young people, especially those who live in cities, have little interest in politics. Instead, they would choose careers in government sectors, information technology, private business and other corporate sector industries. While this may be somewhat understandable, young people should be actively involved in politics and public affairs, particularly in light of the complex and varied issues facing our nation. When questioned about whether or not they would pursue a career in politics, the majority of respondents (82.86%) stated that they would rather pursue a job in another field. However, only a relatively small percentage of respondents (11.43%) would consider a career in politics. They added that they would enter politics and alter the political structure. They believe that it is their civic

responsibility as concerned citizens to engage in politics.

### Political Participation

Politics is narrowly and popularly defined as the actions of political parties, governments and individuals. A more comprehensive interpretation encompasses the interactions among individuals - men and women, youngsters and their parents, and people with and without disabilities - as well as the exercise of power at all points of human contact. Developing and expressing thoughts on the world and its governance, as well as trying to influence and participate in decisions that have an impact on their life, are all part of political participation, which encompasses a wide range of activities. These activities include thinking about disability or other



social issues on an individual or family level, joining organisations and groups that support disabled people, and running campaigns locally, regionally, or nationally. They also include formal politics, like voting, joining a political party, or contesting in elections.

Political participation encompasses a wide range of activities that individuals can engage in to influence government and political processes. Political participation encompasses a wide range of activities that individuals can engage in to influence government and political processes. Political participation can be identified into six types, including electoral participation involving party activities, participation in social movements, community action, participation manipulated by governments, participation as a means of controlling resources and state institutions, and participation in government decision-making structures. These forms of participation can vary in their political content and are shaped by the diverse objectives and contexts in which they occur. It is essential to recognize that political participation extends beyond electoral actions and involves complex power dynamics among different actors. Moreover, participation is not synonymous with authority or

the state but rather involves a multifaceted power relationship where individuals assert their interests, aspirations, and values. This multifaceted nature of political participation underscores the complexity of the phenomenon, emphasizing the need to consider various forms of participation within political systems.<sup>24</sup> These forms of participation can vary in their political content and are shaped by the diverse objectives and contexts in which they occur. It is essential to recognize that political participation extends beyond electoral actions and involves complex power dynamics among different actors.

There is much more to participating in democratic processes than just casting a ballot. The freedoms of speech, assembly, and association; involvement in public affairs; and the chance to register as a candidate, run for office, win an election, and occupy office at all levels of government are the foundations of political participation. Men and women have an equal right to fully engage in all facets of the political process. In actuality, though, women frequently find it more difficult to exercise this prerogative. Women often face additional obstacles to involvement in post-conflict societies, and more attention must be paid to ensuring that their rights are upheld in this context.

**Table No. 3. Level of political participation between men and women**

Questions	Students (210)					
	Male (112)			Female (98)		
Have you participated in political activities such as rallies, protests, demonstrations, campaigns, etc. in the last few years?	Yes	No	No Idea	Yes	No	No Idea
		62 (55.36%)	42 (37.50%)	8 (7.14%)	48 (48.98%)	38 (38.78%)

Source: Fieldwork

Men are more engaged and well-represented in political roles than women in Mizoram, where there is a clear gender gap in political participation. This pattern is a reflection of the region's larger cultural standards and societal norms, where women's participation in politics can often be limited by traditional roles and expectations. Table No. 3 demonstrates that male students (55.36%) participated in and engaged in more political activities than female students (48.98%). This shows that men are more cognisant of and interested in political concerns. In Mizoram, women's participation in politics is on the rise, yet

there are still major obstacles. It will take ongoing efforts from a range of stakeholders, including political parties, the government and civil society to address these issues.

**Attitudes of the students towards the government**

Many factors, including personal experiences, cultural influences, and political, social and economic circumstances, influence student's views and perceptions of the government.<sup>25</sup> Students typically have a combination of hope, scepticism, and a yearning for change when it comes to governance. They frequently doubt the efficacy and



morality of political figures and organisations, and they frequently have doubts about the intentions and acts of the government.<sup>26</sup> Politicians' broken promises, alleged corruption and a lack of transparency can all contribute to this scepticism. Scandals from the past and present, together with depictions of governmental wrongdoing in the media, serve to further solidify this suspicion.<sup>27</sup> Students also frequently have an optimistic and idealistic outlook, thinking that civic involvement and group efforts may bring about change. They are more likely to back progressive movements and policies that reflect their beliefs, such as campaigns for social justice, equality, human rights and advocacy against climate change. Their idealism stems from a desire to improve the future and take up causes they feel have been overlooked by previous generations. Students' opinions of the government are significantly influenced by

economic concerns as well; high rates of underemployment, job uncertainty and youth unemployment all lead to demotivation and disillusionment.<sup>28</sup>

Students' voices have been amplified by social media and digital communication, which have given them a platform to voice their opinions, organise, and push for change.<sup>29</sup> They can be more informed and critical of government activities since information is easily accessible to them. But it also exposes kids to false information and divisive viewpoints, which can tilt their perceptions even further. Even if there is a great deal of doubt and disappointment, there is also a strong sense of hope and a desire for real change. The influence of digital media, societal issues and economic difficulties are all significant factors in the formation of these attitudes.<sup>30</sup>

**Table No.4. Perceptions and attitudes of the students towards the government**

S/N	Question	Respondents (210)		
		No	Yes	No Idea
1.	Do you have trust in the present government (ZPM)?	89 (42.38%)	98 (46.67%)	22 (10.48%)
2.	Are you satisfied with the performance of the government?	82 (39.05%)	95 (45.24%)	33 (15.71%)
3.	Do you believe the government is accountable and transparent?	79 (37.62%)	92 (43.81%)	39 (18.57%)
4.	Do you believe that the state will be self-sufficient and independent in the future based on the work of the current government?	74 (35.24%)	87 (41.43%)	49 (23.33%)

Source: Fieldwork

Table 4 shows that 46.67% of respondents believe in the current administration, which is governed by the ZPM. One of the reasons is that they are first-timers and are hoping for changes in the system, which they have high hopes for. On the other hand, 42.38% of respondents do not trust the current government. The reason for this is that ZPM party members are typically from the former ministries of MNF and Congress, both of which people distrust. The party may be new, but its members are not. Because of this, they find it difficult to trust them.

In terms of student satisfaction with the government, 45.24% of respondents said they are content right now, and the current government is just beginning to exercise authority over the state, and they are doing well with the tasks and promises they have made. On the contrary, 39.05% of respondents are dissatisfied with the government's performance. They claim that, even though the ZPM party is only in its first year after winning the general elections, they occasionally keep their promises and the job they do sometimes falls short of their expectations. Furthermore, 15.71% indicated that they were



unable to comment because the ZPM is merely taking steps and they claim that they will only know after 5 years. Moreover, 43.81% of respondents believe that the government is more transparent and accountable than the previous ministry. On the other side, 37.62% of respondents believe that the current government is not transparent and accountable to its citizens, although there may be certain changes in the system that are not significantly different from the previous government.

In response to the question of whether the state would be self-dependent and self-sufficient in the future based on the work of the current government, 41.43% of respondents said that there is a possibility for self-dependence rather than merely depending on the centre and the neighbouring states. Farmers and the associated agricultural operations are receiving priority from the current government in particular. This means that there's a possibility of becoming self-sufficient later on. Conversely, 35.24 per cent believe that there is little likelihood of the state ever becoming self-reliant. Their belief that the government is not making enough investments to enable self-reliance is one of the causes.

## II. Conclusion

There is a wide range of sentiments among students regarding politics, from apathetic to very engaged. A lot of students see politics as a way to voice their opinions, push for reform, and shape the

future. Some, on the other hand, can experience disillusionment or disconnection and believe that politics is complicated or unrelated to their current problems. Overall, some students may need encouragement to realise the benefits of political activity for their lives and communities, whilst others may be strongly driven to join. In addition, the government needs to be more accountable and open to win over students' trust. According to the study, the majority of students has less faith in the government at large.

They believe that politics and politicians are the main sources of corruption, which is one of the reasons. This caused them to be hesitant and disheartened about pursuing a career in politics. Furthermore, this contributed to the students' low degree of political participation. Educating students about politics is crucial to producing responsible, knowledgeable and engaged citizens. It gives young people the values, abilities and knowledge they need to make meaningful contributions to society. The advantages of being involved in politics outweigh the disadvantages, notwithstanding certain difficulties, such as juggling political and academic obligations. Students who are encouraged to get involved in politics and become politically conscious will grow up to be better informed, responsible and engaged citizens, which will strengthen and animate democracy.

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