

Voting Behaviour and Perception in Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections

Zoramthanga

Research Scholar, Department of Pol. Science, Mizoram University

Abstract:

This study examines the voting behaviors and perceptions of the urban youth in Aizawl District during the Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections of 2013. Focusing on two urban neighborhoods, Vaivakawn and Zemabawk, it analyzes the political engagement and affiliations of 60 young voters using Simple Random Sampling. The research categorizes these individuals by occupation and investigates their attitudes towards political parties and their influences on voting decisions. Results show a significant detachment from political parties among the urban youth, with a large majority displaying a lack of trust in political entities and a low interest in the electoral processes outside of election periods. Key factors influencing voting behavior include family affiliations and the effectiveness of party manifestos. The study reveals a stark apathy towards politics among the young urban electorate, suggesting a need for political parties to engage more effectively with this demographic to enhance their participation in democratic processes.

Keyword: Voting Behavior, Urban Youth, Aizawl District, Mizoram Legislative Assembly, Election 2013, Party Affiliation, Political Apathy, Political Participation, Party Manifestos

Introduction

Free and fair elections serve as the foundation of democracy, which is built on popular will. People vote in elections to select leaders and representatives, as well as to influence decision-making and the formation of governments. Voting is a specific impact that encourages people to express their opinions about politicians, political parties, socio-economic, cultural, and political issues. Thus, voting activity reflects voters' preferences, alternatives, opinions, concerns, agreements, and programmes on social and national issues. Understanding voter behaviour can help explain how and why legislators, public officials, and voters made decisions. Since, research on voting behaviour investigates why voters vote the way they do, it has become an important component of election analysis. This study investigates the voting patterns and attitudes of youths in urban areas of Aizawl District during the Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections in 2013.

Elections in Mizoram

Mizoram, erstwhile Lushai Hills was annexed by the British in 1890. When India attained independence from the British rule in 1947, the Lushai Hills became a part of the Indian union and was placed under the administration of Assam. After Mizoram became a Union Territory in January 21, 1972, the first State Legislative Assembly elections were held on April 18, 1972, thereafter, three elections were held in 1978, 1979 and 1984 before the region was granted statehood.

With the signing of the Mizo peace accord on June 30, 1986, Mizoram became the 23rd state of the Indian union, and since then nine State Legislative Assembly elections were held in 1987, 1989, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018 and 2023. And, in these elections the Mizo National Front and the Indian National Congress dominates the political scene by winning the elections four times each.

The Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections:

The seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections were held on November 25, 2013 in 40 Assembly constituencies. The contesting political parties in the elections were the Indian National Congress, Mizo National Front, The Bharatiya Janata Party, Mizoram People' Conference, Maraland Democratic Front, Zoram Nationalist Party, Nationalist Congress Party and Jai Maha Bharath Party. There were 1,126 polling stations and 6,90,860 electors. The results were announced on 9th December, 2013. The Indian National Congress won a large majority of 34 out of the 40 Assembly seats; Mizo National Front and Mizoram People's Conference won five seats and one seat respectively.

The study area: Aizawl District

Aizawl is the capital of Mizoram. As a district, it is the largest and the most densely populated of all districts of Mizoram, and is the centre of administration and businesses. There are 14 constituencies within Aizawl District, viz., Tuivawl, Chalfilh, Tawi, Aizawl North-I, Aizawl North-II, Aizawl North-III, Aizawl South-I, Aizawl South-II, Aizawl South-III, Aizawl East-I, Aizawl East-II, Aizawl West-I, Aizawl West-II and Aizawl West-III. The District is classified into urban and rural areas and according to the 2011 census; out of the total population of the District, 21.37% or 85,555 of the population lived in the rural areas while 3,14,754 of the population lived in the urban areas. For this study, the urban area comprising of 78.63% of the District population has been selected to study the voting behavior and perception of the urban youth.

Methodology

The study investigated the voting patterns and attitudes of young individuals in the urban regions of Aizawl District, with a specific focus on two neighbourhoods, Vaivakawn and Zemabawk. A total of 60 individuals were selected using the Simple Random Sampling method, with an equal number chosen from each of the two localities. The participants were categorised according to their occupation into the following groups: students, self-employed individuals, employed individuals, unemployed and government servants. Each group was represented equally of 20% of the total respondents, except for the unemployed group which made up 25% of the participants, and the employed group which made up 15%.

The study focused on participants within the age range of 18 to 35 years since they correspond with the demographic of voters in the 2013 Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections.

Result and analysis

The following discussion illustrates the behavioral condition and perception of urban youth in the elections and electoral politics of the Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections of 2013.

Table 1 : Affiliation to political party.

Respondents	Variables in Percentage		If Yes, the reason is	If No, the reason is
	Yes	No		
Students	16.5	83.5	Party affiliation of family	No interest in politics, No trust in existing political parties.
Employed	11.5	88.5	Party affiliation of family,	No interest in politics, Does not deliver expected results
Unemployed	6.5	93.5	Party affiliation of family, interest in political party's policy and program	Does not believe in party system, No trust in existing political parties.
Self Employed	8.4	91.6	interest in political party's policy and program, expectation of benefit	No interest in politics, No trust in existing political parties, Does not deliver expected results
Govt. Servants	-	100	-	No reason

Source : Field Survey

Table 1 demonstrates that 83.5% of urban student respondents were unaffiliated with any political party due to a lack of trust or confidence in the current parties and a lack of interest in politics. Conversely, 16.5% of individuals were associated with specific political parties due to their family's involvement in some capacity.

Out of the employed youth, a significant 88.5% do not have any association with a political party, while just 11.5% openly recognise their connection. This data suggests that the majority of young people are apathetic towards politics, except during election periods. The decline in party affiliations can be attributed to the belief among young people that political parties fail to provide the desired outcomes once they acquire power, and many of them just lack interest in politics.

The urban unemployed youth demonstrate a clear lack of interest in politics, as evidenced by the fact that 93.5% of them have no affiliation with any political party. Only 6.6% of them are affiliated with a political party, driven by their interest in the party's policies and programmes. This fact might be regarded as a manifestation of apathy towards politics, as well as a lack of trust in the established political parties and the party structure that governs the political process.

Out of the self-employed urban youth, a significant majority of 91.6% were not associated with any political party, whereas a little 8.5% were attached. The primary factor determining their political party membership is predominantly the influence of their family, whereas the absence of interest in politics is the main cause for their non-affiliation. Moreover, the independent urban youth lack faith in political parties and consider that the current political parties have failed to meet their expectations. All respondents categorised as government servants affirmed their lack of affiliation with any political party, indicating their strict adherence to the standards of conduct for government servants.

In fine, Table 1 indicates that a significant proportion (91.42%) of the urban youth are not associated with any political party, either directly or indirectly. This is because they lack interest in politics and do not have faith in the existing political parties to meet their expectations. 8.58% of urban youth who were associated with political parties reported that their affiliation was influenced by their family's connection

and their personal interests in the party's policies and programmes, with the intention of gaining direct or indirect personal benefits.

Table 2 : Factor facilitating choice in voting.

Respondents	Variables in Percentage				
	Elections awareness campaign	Political party's campaign/ rally	Manifesto	Canvassing	None of them
Students	25	-	58.5	-	16.5
Employed	44.2	-	33.3	-	22.5
Unemployed	53.4	-	20	6.6	20
Self Employed	25	2	33.5	6	33.5
Govt. Servants	8.5	-	50	8	33.5

Source : Survey Questionnaire

According to Table 2, the primary factor that influenced 58.5% of student respondents in their voting decision was the attractiveness of party manifestos. Conversely, 16.5% reported that election campaigns, party manifestos, rallies, or canvassing had no impact on their voting decision; 25% cited election awareness campaigns typically organized by NGOs as influential. Urban students demonstrated greater intellectual engagement and sincerity about politics, critically assessing political parties and their action plans.

Among employed youth, 44.2% stated that election awareness campaigns and public meetings, mostly organized by NGOs, were pivotal in guiding their voting decisions. About 33.3% were influenced by the policies and programs outlined in party manifestos, while 22.5% felt that these components did not influence their choice.

When considering unemployed urban youth, 53.3% were swayed by NGO-led awareness campaigns in their voting decisions for the Legislative Assembly elections; 6.6% were influenced by canvassing, and 20% said they were unaffected by any political campaigns or manifestos. Another 20% relied on party manifestos to make their decisions.

For self-employed urban youth, 33.5% based their voting decisions on political party manifestos, and 25% were influenced by NGO-organized awareness campaigns. However, another 33.5% indicated that no electoral process or activity swayed their decision.

Government servants reported that their voting decisions were primarily influenced by the distribution of pamphlets and party manifestos, with 50% affirming this. About 33.5% stated that NGO campaigns, rallies, and other campaign activities did not affect their decision, while canvassing and awareness campaigns each influenced 8.5% of respondents.

In summary, an analysis of Table 2 revealed that party manifestos were most crucial in influencing urban youth's voting decisions. Following manifestos, election awareness campaigns, where candidates had the opportunity to speak and be interviewed, ranked as the second most influential factor. However,

there was a noticeable disinterest among urban youth towards political campaigns, rallies, and canvassing.

Table 3 : Whether change of government facilitates change in day to day living.

Respondents	Variables in Percentage			
	Make a difference	Not much difference	No difference	Can't say
Students	-	67	16.5	16.5
Employed	-	55.5	22.5	22
Unemployed	26.5	33.5	26.5	13.5
Self Employed	-	58.5	16.5	25
Govt. Servants	16.5	25	58.5	-

Source: Survey Questionnaire

Table 3 reveals that, while 67% of the urban students could not confirm whether any change or development occurred for them as a result of the change in administration, they did affirm that they were somehow affected. Of the students, 16.5% said that a change in government did not facilitate change or progress in their day-to-day lives. The statistics demonstrated that, despite the perception of very slight changes brought about by a change in government, urban pupils do demonstrate awareness of the political system. Of all the young people who were employed who responded, 55.5% said that a change in the political party in power had little to no impact on their daily lives, while 22.5% said it had no effect at all.

The urban young without jobs expressed contrasting opinions: 26.5% said that a change in administration had no bearing on their day-to-day lives, while another 26.5% claimed that they were. 13.5% of respondents said they had not noticed any changes in their life, while 33.5% said they had only been marginally impacted.

A total of 58.5% of respondents who identified as self-employed said that they were impacted in some way whenever the political party in power changed; in contrast, 16.5% of respondents said that the change in government had no bearing on their day-to-day activities, and 25% said they always noticed a difference when the political party in power changed. When there was a change in power from one party to another, 58.5% of respondents who were government employees stated that it had no bearing on their day-to-day lives. Of those who responded, 25% thought that changes or differences had occurred, and the remaining 16.5% said that they had.

To sum, Table 3 indicates that nearly 50% of the youth respondents felt that they did not notice any difference when the political party in power changed, and over 25% of the respondents said they did not notice any difference when the administration changed. Thus, it is clear that a vast majority of the Aizawl District's urban young do not see any appreciable changes in their daily lives.

Table 4 : Whether special focus for the welfare of the youth is essential.

Respondents	Variables in Percentage			
	Very Important	Somehow Important	Not Important	Can't Say
Students	66.5	16.5	8.5	8.5
Employed	55.5	33	-	11.5

Unemployed	60	26.5	8	13
Self Employed	58.5	25	-	8.5
Govt. Servants	58.5	33	-	8.5

Source: Survey Questionnaire

Many political parties included a youth programme in their manifestos to gain support during the Assembly elections. According to Table 4 Urban students answered that 66.5% thought such measures were crucial for youth, 16.5% thought they were somewhat necessary, and 8.5% had no perspectives. Additionally, 8.5% of respondents consider it unnecessary and unimportant.

The fact that 55.5% of employed youth thought a political party's policy should include a youth plan showed their support for such policy. The remaining 11.5% had no assumption, while 33.3% thought it was unnecessary. 60% of unemployed youth felt that such a policy was needed, 26% disagreed, and 13% were unsure.

Self-employed respondents (58.5%) believed a policy for youth was necessary. 8.5% of respondents have no opinion, while 25% believe it is necessary. 58.5% of government employees surveyed said a party's youth policy was extremely important, 33.5% said somewhat important, and 8.5% were unable to determine its importance for attracting younger voters.

Table 4 shows that over 50% of youth participants value political parties prioritising youth well-being. Although a tiny minority of youth respondents argue that the policy is unneeded, a quarter still believe it is important.

Summary of findings and conclusion:

The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the voting patterns and political perceptions among urban youth in Aizawl during the 2013 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections. The study primarily focuses on how young voters in urban settings, ranging in age from 18 to 35, engage with political processes and their reasons for supporting or not supporting various political parties. It utilizes data collected through surveys from two specific neighborhoods in Aizawl, examining factors like political affiliations, motivations behind voting preferences, and the perceived impact of political changes on daily life.

The survey revealed that most urban youth—students, employed, unemployed, self-employed, and government servants, have no political party identification. Specifically, 83.5% of urban students, 88.5% of working youth, 93.5% of unemployed youth, 91.6% of self-employed youth, and all questioned government personnel did not identify with a political party due to a lack of faith in political parties and a general indifference in politics. Few youth, influenced by family or party policies are associated with political parties. Overall, 91.42% of urban youth claimed no political connections, indicating general disinterest towards politics and scepticism regarding political parties' promises.

Urban youth voted mostly based on party manifestos, with 58.5% acknowledging them. An NGO-led electoral information campaign swayed 44.4% of employed youth, whereas 33.3% appreciated party programme and policies. Urban unemployed youth prioritised NGO campaigns (53.3%) over party manifestos. Self-employed youth were equally influenced by manifestos and NGO initiatives, with 33.5% unaffected by elections. Pamphlets and party manifestos impacted most government staff although many were indifferent to NGO campaigns and other political commitments. Urban youth are influenced by party manifestos, but they are less interested in traditional political campaigns and more interested in NGO-led activities.

Many urban youths in Aizawl District do not observe that political administration changes affects their daily life. While 67% of urban students were unsure of any significant effect from an administration change, 16.5% specifically declared no impact. When the government changes, 55.5% of employed respondents had little to no impact on their daily routines, whereas 58.5% of self-employed and government employees did. Most young people are disengaged or unaffected by political changes, as 50% of those surveyed indicated no noticeable differences with changes in the prevailing political party. Urban youth, employed, jobless, self-employed, and government employees prefer Assembly election manifestos with youth-focused policies. Over 50% of urban students, employed, and self-employed youth supported such policies. The unemployed and government-employed also stressed the importance, with large majorities believing these policies will attract younger voters. A significant proportion had no view or deemed the measures unnecessary, however more over half of young acknowledge political parties that prioritise youth well-being.

Overall, this study provides insight into the condition of youth involvement in Mizoram's political scene and emphasises the urgent requirement for political parties and policymakers to cultivate a political atmosphere that is more inclusive and responsive, aligning with the aspirations and concerns of the younger population.

References:

1. Hazarika, B. (2015, October). Voting Behaviour in India and Its Determinants in India. IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Sciences (IOSR-JHSS), 20(10), 22-25. doi:10.9790/0837-201042225
2. Himmelwett, H., Humphreys, P., Jaeger, M., & Katz, M. (1981). How Voters decide. New York: Academic Press INC.
3. Hrahsel, L. (2014). Mizoram Statistics 2014. Aizawl: Author.
4. Lalchungnunga. (1994). Mizoram-Politics of Regionalism and National Integration. New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House.
5. Lalnithanga, P. (2006). Political developments in Mizoram. Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press.
6. Nag, Chitta Ranjan. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernisation*. Delhi : Kay Kay Printers.
7. Padhy, K., & Tripathy, P. (1994). Voting Behaviour of Tribals in India. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, Distributors.
8. Pakem, B. (1999). Coalition Politics in North East India. New Delhi: Regency Publication.
9. Prasad, R. (1987). Government and Politics in Mizoram. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.
10. States and Union Territories of India. (2020, July 17). In Wikipedia. Retrieved July 20, 2020 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/States_and_union_territories_of_India
11. Statistical Handbook Mizoram 2010. (2011). Retrieved February 2, 2015, from Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Aizawl: <http://desmizo.nic.in/file/hanbook2010.pdf>
12. 2013 Mizoram legislative assembly elections. (2020, March 13). In Wikipedia. Retrieved July 13, 2020 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_Mizoram_Legislative_Assembly_election
13. Assembly Elections Results of Mizoram. (2021, March 6). In Wikipedia. Retrieved June 26, 2021 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/States_and_union_territories_of_India
14. Elections in India. (2020, July 21). In Wikipedia. Retrieved July 14, 2020 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_Mizoram_Legislative_Assembly_election