A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN MIZORAM

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN MIZORAM

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Certificate

This is to certify the thesis entitled, "A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN MIZORAM" submitted by ZORAMTHANGA for the award of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, is a research work, done under my supervision and guidance. The thesis, submitted by him has not formed the basis of the award to the scholar for any degree or any other similar title and it has not yet been submitted as a dissertation or thesis in any university. I also certify that the thesis represents objective study and independent work of the scholar.

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DECLARATION
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I **ZORAMTHANGA**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of the work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science**.

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Dated: 04 March , 2025   **(ZORAMTHANGA)**
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Abbreviations

ADC - Autonomous District Councils

AIR - All India Radio

APC - Assam Pradesh Congress Committee

BJP - Bharatiya Janata Party

CADC - Chakma Autonomous District Council

CEC - Chief Election Commissioner

CEO - Chief Electoral Officer

CSDS - Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

CPI - Communist Party of India

ECI - Election Commission of India

ERO - Electoral Registration Officers

ETPBS - Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System

EVM - Electronic Voting Machine

EITU - Eastern India Tribal Union

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

HC - High Court

HPC - Hmar People's Convention

HSSLC - Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate

INC - Indian National Congress

JNNURM -   Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission LAD - Local
Administrative Department

LADC - Lai Autonomous District Council

LC - Local Council

MADC - Mara Autonomous District Council

MCC - Model Code of Conduct

MDF - Mara Democratic Front

MJD - Mizoram Janata Dal

MLA - Member of Legislative Assembly

MLPC Act - Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control Act

MNF - Mizo National Front

MP - Member of Parliament

MPCC - Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee

MPF - Mizoram People's Forum

MU - Mizo Union

NCP - Nationalist Congress Party

NDA - National Democratic Alliance

NGO – Non Governmental Organization

NLUP - New Land Use Policy

NPP - National People's Party

NOTA - None of the Above

OBC - Other Backward Class

PC - People's Conference

PLC - People's Liberation Council

PRISM - People's Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram

PLRC - Pawi Lakher Regional Council

RO - Returning Officer

RPA - Representation of the People Act

RTI - Right to Information

ST - Scheduled Tribe

SC - Supreme Court

SEC - State Election Commission

SEDP - Socio-Economic Development Programme

UMFO - United Mizo Freedom Organisation

UN - United Nations

UT - Union Territory

VP - Vice President

VC - Village Council

VVPAT - Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail

ZNP - Zoram Nationalist Party

ZPM - Zoram People's Movement

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a system of self-governance that seeks to promote the well-being of society through the participation of citizens. The good life would be universally experienced by all members of society, not only the majority of people.[1] In essence, democracy is a participatory and inclusive system aimed to foster the well-being of all citizens. Therefore, it is a system of government wherein the laws, policies, leadership, and major undertakings of a state are directly or indirectly decided by the 'people', a group historically constituted by only a minority of the population but generally understood since the mid-20th century to include all (or nearly all) adult.[2] Hence, democracy is a government is one in which the ultimate authority is held by the people and is exercised either directly or indirectly through a system of representation, often through periodically held free elections. Democracy is formed when the public no longer accepts that one person or a small group should hold all the political power. Instead, they believe that power should belong to the people and be shared among everyone.[3] Hence, democracy implies a broad participation of population reflecting public resolution for a system of governance where power is not held by a single entity but distributed among the people.

Democracy, in its literal sense, refers to a system of governance where the power is vested in the hands of people. The name originates from the Greek word 'demokratia', which was used to describe the political systems in Athens and other Greek city-states during the 5th century BCE.[4] It became prevalent in Athens through a series of political reforms and social changes that occur due to the rule of aristocratic families and tyranny of individual rulers who seized power with popular

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[1] Brown, I. J. C. (1920). *The meaning of democracy*. London, United Kingdom: Richard Cobden-Sanderson. pp. 42-44.

[2] Dahl, R.A. (February 19, 2020). Democracy. In Britannica. Encyclopaedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/democracy. Accessed on December 11, 2020.

[3] Rueschemeyer, D., Stephens, E. H., & Stephens, J. D. (1992). *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226731377.001.0001. Retrieved on January 28, 2024.

[4] Froomkin, D. , Dahl, . Robert A. and Shapiro, . Ian (2023, September 28). democracy. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/democracy

support. It was grounded in the belief that power should be vested in the hands of citizens rather than a select few. It emphasized equality before law and the idea that all citizens had the right to participate in political life. In common usage, it means 'rule by the people', hence, in a democracy, power or authority is vested in the people. While the democratic form of government is often linked to the city-state of Athens, introduced by Cleisthenes, studies suggest that various forms of democracy were practiced by tribal societies in prehistoric times.[5] Anthropologists have found early signs of democracy among small groups of hunter-gatherers, typically consisting of 50-100 people, often connected by family ties. In these groups, decisions were made by consensus or majority vote, without a specific chief.[6] Archaeological evidence of shared resources among households and communal dwellings indicate the existence of collective decision-making processes. These buildings served as places for discussions and the process of decision making, bearing a resemblance to early democratic assemblies. The presence of democratic principles in one form or another in prehistoric tribal societies has been assumed to have arisen naturally when a tribe characterised as a well-bounded group is independent from outside control, allowing members to manage their affairs and participate in decisions about matters of concern to the group as a whole.[7] These principles were vital for managing communal affairs, resolving conflicts, and ensuring that all members participated in matters of collective concern.

With the advent of agriculture and trade, transition to settled agricultural communities and ownership of properties led to inequalities in the size of communities, wealth and military power between and within communities. Those who control surplus production or trade routes accumulated wealth and settled communities needed more complex organizational structures, often leading to the development of local leadership or governance. As communities grew and resources became concentrated, power became centralized in the hands of few and managing larger populations and economies required more complex governance structures,

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[5] Ibid, . Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/democracy
[6] Ref Olson, M. (1993). Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development. American Political Science Review, 87(03), pp.567-576.
[7] Froomkin, D. , Dahl, et.al., op cit

often led by a central authority. These developments led to the decline of democratic systems and gave rise to hierarchical and authoritarian forms of social organization as well as governments based on monarchy, despotism, aristocracy or oligarchy.[8] It was about 500 BCE that democracy was reinvented in Greece and Rome in a more advanced form.[9] In Greece, Athens developed a direct democracy[10] where citizens participated in decision-making in the Assembly, voting on laws and policies. The Roman Republic combined elements of democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy. It developed a more representative form of democracy with checks and balances through its mixed government of democracy, oligarchy and monarchy. The Senate of Rome, which provided advice to consuls and handle foreign affairs and financial matters, were composed of patricians. And, since the era of the ancient Greeks who practiced 'direct democracy,' in which the people had the authority to deliberate and make laws, there have been significant developments in both the theory and practice of democracy. With the emergence of nation-state, 'direct democracy' gave way to 'representative democracy'[11] where the people possess the power to choose governing officials.

Democracy is a political system where people participate, there is competition for public positions, and there are systems in place to control power.[12] It implies the active involvement of citizens in political processes, including voting, civic engagement, and involvement in public decision-making, as well as the conduct of free and fair elections. The presence of mechanisms such as separation of powers, judicial review in a democracy prevent the abuse of authority and ensure

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[8] Brown, Ivor. J.C. Op cit page 42-44
[9] Chatturvadi, J.C. (2005). Political Governance. Vol.2. New Delhi : Isha Books. P.35
[10] Direct democracy is a form of government in which eligible voters make political decisions directly, rather than through elected representatives. Citizens in this system can propose, decide, and vote on laws and policies through processes such as referendums, initiatives, and recall elections. Direct democracy enables greater participation in decision-making, providing citizens with a more immediate and direct role in influencing legislation and governance.
[11] Representative democracy is a system of government in which citizens elect representatives to make decisions and pass legislation on their behalf. This type of democracy is characterised by the delegation of legislative and policy making authority to elected officials who act in the interests of their citizens.
[12] Siegle, J., Weinstein, M. &Halperin, H. (2004). Why democracies exel. *Foreign Affairs*, *83*(5), 57-71.

accountability. In other words, governing power to rule the country should be derived from people, as only the people can say who has the right to rule them.[13] The characteristics of democracy stated by Finer[14] lays down the following features :

> Democracy is a government which is derived from public opinion and is accountable to it.

> The public opinion must be overtly and freely expressed.

> For the overt and free opinion of the people, some opportunity and machinery to make that opinion known and hence some kind of suffrage, some kind of voice or vote.

> In matters of contention between sections of public opinion, it is the majority opinion that prevails.

Even though no consensus existed on the definition of democracy, the dominant form of democracy adopted in various countries today is representative democracy, where eligible citizens elect government officials on their behalf such as in parliamentary or presidential democracy.[15] The complexity and size of modern states necessitated the adoption of representative democracy to allow citizens to participate in governance without directly voting on every issue. It also enables efficient decision-making through elected officials while allowing citizens to influence policies through elections. The fundamental principles of democracy are legal equality, rule of law, and freedom. These principles are manifested in the equal treatment of all eligible citizens under the law, as well as their equal opportunities to participate in legislative processes, such as running for office and holding public positions. Additionally, citizens have the right to form political associations and exercise their right to vote. Democracy also refers to an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals holds the power to decide by

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[13] Mathur, C.C. & Pandit, N.C. (1957).*The Law of Elections and Election Petitions in India*, 2nd Ed. Delhi:Metropolitian Book Co. Private Ltd. pp.1-2

[14] Kafaltiya, A.B. (2007). *Democracy and Election Laws*. Deep and Deep Publications: New Delhi. p.2

[15] Tangian, A. (2020). *Analytical Theory of Democracy: History, Mathematics and Applications*.In *Studies in Choice and Welfare*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-39691-6. ISBN 978-3-030-39690-9. S2CID 216190330.

means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.[16] Therefore, an important legislative process in democracy is election, whereby the population chooses an individual or group of people to hold public offices. The premise of a democratic government requires an institutional arrangement, such as free and fair elections in which the incumbent government of the contesting groups cannot determine electoral outcome through unlawful means. The freedom of association and speech also forms an important aspects that provides the freedom to organize, formulate programmes and compete for leadership, as well as to express oneself. Hence, democratic government depends on the exercise of free competition between political parties and that free competition depends on free and fair elections, which serves as opportunities for the citizens to assess the working of democracy. Election enables citizens to intervene directly in the political process, select their representatives and express their policy preferences. In simple term, elections are about making a choice. However, a choice is not considered a "vote in an election" unless it follows the legal process set out for voting. [17] In other words, the essence of elections is about making a choice and selecting preferences among available options. However, not all choices are legally recognized votes in an election. For a choice to be considered a valid vote, the individual must follow the specific legal procedures established by the electoral system.

Election

'Election,' is the formal process of selecting a person for public office or of accepting or rejecting a political proposition by voting.[17] It offer the opportunity to the citizens to participate either directly or indirectly in the decision making process by way of electing a party or a candidate to the seat of political power in place of another. In a democratic polity, it plays a key role as it gives a mandate to elected

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[16]Gerring, J., Bond, P., Brandt, W. &Carola, M. (2005). Democracy and economic growth: A historical perspective. *World Politics*, 57(3), 323-364.

[17] Gibbins, R., Webb, P.D. (November 02, 2020). Election. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/election-political science. Accessed on December 11, 2020.

members for forming the government.[18] In other words, it is a method for drawing public opinion, which is supposed to be the source of and guide to know what public officials or leaders do. Broadly speaking, election means an opportunity for voters to hold elected official accountable for their actions or to choose between competing candidates or their policies.[19] Therefore, election provides a critical opportunity for voters to either hold elected officials accountable for their past actions or make informed choices between competing candidates and their policies. This process reinforces democratic principles by enabling citizens to influence government direction and priorities based on performance and proposed initiatives.

The idea of elections originated in ancient Greek city-states and occupies a central place in politics during the 5th and 6th centuries B.C.[20] The idea of citizens participating in the political process through voting in ancient Greek city-states was revolutionary and emphasized the role of individual in the collective decision-making of the state. Concepts such as direct democracy, representative government, and civic duty can trace their origins back to this period. Voting in Greek city-states was held directly on policy proposals and government were not elected but drawn by lots.[21] As a result, citizens played an active role in governance by voting on policy proposals rather than choosing representatives to make decisions for them. In addition, picking a government by drawing lots gave all eligible residents an equal chance to hold public office, reducing the importance of wealth and social standing.

Democratic principles, however, saw a decline with the centralization and consolidation of authority by monarchical powers and the process of state formation in many parts of Europe which involved the creation of stronger and more centralized governments. Nevertheless, the tradition of elections was preserved in the church rather than in the state and continued in the Roman Catholic Church where superiors (Popes, bishop, deans and so on) are elected by a relatively small electorate

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[18] Mesquita, Bruce Bueno De & Park, Richard L. (1979). *India's Political System*. New Jersey : Englewood Cliffs.p.90

[19] Gehlot, N.S. (2011). *India at Fifty Facing Stresses and Strains*. New Delhi : National Publishing House. P.82

[20] WJM Mackenzie, op cit, p.3

[21] M.D. McDonald & I. Budge. (2005). *Elections, Parties, Democracy-Conferring the Median Mandate*. Oxford University Press: New York. Loc.198. (Kindle edition).

consisting of those next in rank[22]. Though elections in the church have been maintained through formalised and hierarchical systems in which leaders are chosen by peers or superiors within the church rather than the general populace or through hereditary succession, democratic elections reflect the community's will in selecting their spiritual leader. Many national and nonconformist churches thereafter adopted elections as a legitimate means to claim their right to hold public office. The modern form of elections began in the 17th century Europe and North America due to the emergence of representative government in the contemporary world.[23] The introduction of representative democracy and electoral processes marked a transition away from authoritarian leadership and towards a system in which a larger segment of the populace could influence governance. Although initially limited, membership has expanded over time to cover a broader demographic. In a democratic society, elections have been employed to fill offices in the legislature, executive and judiciary, and for regional and local government. It enables the electorate to decide who will come to power and carry on the government. The electoral process delivers information and raises public awareness of existing conditions through political party election manifestos and campaign. Therefore, elections give citizens a feeling of involvement and participation in public matters.[24] Regular and well-organized elections are expected to increase civic involvement among the population. And, when citizens believe that their thoughts and choices influenced the government it further motivates them to be informed and involved in the political processes. Therefore, a good electoral system is the bedrock of genuine representative democracy.[25] Without a fair electoral system, the fundamental principles of representative democracy, such as political equality, legitimacy and effective governance cannot be achieved.

Elections form an integral and inseparable part of democracy. As democracy contemplates free and fair elections, it can function only upon the faith that elections

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[22] WJM Mackenzie, op. cit, p.4.
[23] Brian Duignan. (2013). *Political Parties, Interest Group and Election*. Britannica Educational Publishing:New Yorl. P.94
[24] Ali, R. (1996). *Representative Democracy and Concept of Free and Fair Elections*. Deep and Deep Publications: New Delhi. p.20
[25] Bhalla, R.P. (1973). *Elections in India (1950-1972)*. New Delhi: S.Chand & Co. p.1.

are free and fair.[26] Every citizen in a democracy should be free to vote and his vote must count and be of value. Hence, the right to vote must be protected and for this purpose a democratic government must develop a just system of representation. And, elections to the legislatures are not private affairs of the contestants, but matters of public interests and national importance. Democracy needs participation of the people in the governance of the country and this participation is possible only when every qualified citizen is given the right of franchise to enable him to elect the representative of his choice to the legislature. Therefore, no right is more precious in a free country than that of having a choice in the election of those who make laws under which the people live.[27] The right to vote is crucial for the functioning of a democratic society. It not only ensures representation but empowers the individual and provides mechanism to safeguard freedoms and to influence public policy.

Election is considered as the most important and popular means of choosing the people's representatives in forming the government, by which member of a political community or organizations choose representatives to hold an office.[28] It is through elections that governments are formed, and authority and power is exercised with legitimacy. In democratic societies, there is an intrinsic relationship between election and voting. In the common parlance, election is the means of making political choice by voting.[29] Hence, 'voting' is a means of expressing an approval or disapproval of governmental decisions, policies and programmes of various political parties and the qualities of candidates who are engaged in the struggle to be elected as the representatives of the people. Simply put, voting means choosing representatives by casting ballots in elections.[30] Therefore, voting is a form of political participation by all adult citizens in liberal democratic societies. And, understanding voting patterns is essential to political science as it reveals the

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[26] R, Ali, op cit, p.7.
[27] A.B. Kafaltiya, op cit, p. 36.
[28] Nohlein, Dieter. (1981). *Elections and Electoral System*. New Delhi : Macmillan, India. P.3
[29] Encyclopedia Britannica. Vol. 8. P.134
[30] Hazarika, Biraj. (2015, October).Voting behaviour in India and its determinants.*OSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science*, *20*(10), 22-25. Retrieved from www.iosrjournals.org

determinants of voting behavior such as, why people voted the way they do and how they arrived at the decisions to vote in elections.[31] Examining voting behaviour in political science helps the formulation of policies that are in harmony with the public's choices, and enhances the democratic system by identifying obstacles to participation, offering valuable insights into society patterns, and ensuring accountability and representation. Hence, the study of election and voting behavior forms an important element in the study of Political Science.

Voting Behaviour

The studies on voting behaviour started in the USA and Britain in the 1940's. As a quantifiable form of political behaviour, it quickly gained ground since it provide one of the richest sources of information regarding the relationships between citizens, society and politics. In India, academic studies of elections based on all India sample survey began in 1960s with the initiative of Rajni Kothari, a scholar for the Centre for the Studies of Developing Societies (CSDS).[32] The CSDS was credited for pioneering the academic study of the General Elections based on an all India sample survey in 1960. And in 1967, the first scientific study was done to analyse the political behaviour, opinions, and attitudes of the electorate in India.[33] The Indian political landscape was undergoing significant changes in 1967, marked by the rise of regional parties and the decline of the Congress party's dominance in the general elections held in that year. One of the landmark studies published was 'The Fourth General Election in India, 1967,' which provided a comprehensive analysis of the electoral process, voter attitudes, and political behavior.

Voting behaviour is the political behaviour of people in the context of voting during elections to public offices. It is defined as a set of personal electoral activities, including participation in electoral campaigns, turnout at the polls, and choosing for

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[31] Marshall, Gordon. Voting Behaviour. *A Dictionary of Sociology*. 1998. Retrieved November 16, 2011 from Encyclopedia.com: http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-votingbehaviour.html

[32] Singh, Baljit. (2017). *Pattern of Voting Behaviour in Punjab*. (Doctoral Thesis, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjab) Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10603/286220

[33] Ibid, http://hdl.handle.net/10603/286220

whom to vote in elections.[34] In other words, voting behaviour defines the pattern of casting vote or the factors that influence people in casting vote. Sociologists explain voting behaviour in terms of sociological variables such as clan, religion, ethnicity, attitudes and orientation towards politics.[35] However, it extends beyond sociological variables to include measures of attitudes, perception, biases and represent the standard of living of the people. Thus, voting behaviour can be defined as the behaviour that reflects the voter's choices, preferences, ideologies, concerns, agreements, reflection of various issues concerning the society and the nation at large.[36] It is therefore evident that the study of voting behaviour tends to explain the factors that determine or influence voter's choice of voting and is not confined to the observation of voting statistics, record and electoral data. The study of voting behaviour involves the investigation of individual psychological processes (perception, emotion and motivation) and their relations to political actions, as well as institutional patterns, such as communication process and impact of elections.[37] Simply put, Voting Behaviour studies include the study of various motivations and reasons behind individual voting choices in elections. In other words, Voting Behaviour refers to the way in which an individual make decision about a candidate or a political party to support in election. In a democratic system, voting behaviour is the central point of all the political exercises which encompasses the attitude of the electorate towards voting, participation in voting, voting decisions, and formulation and participation in other forms of electoral activities.

Scholars have adopted a number of analytical models to examine the pattern of voting behavior empirically. However, three main theoretical perspectives have been adopted to explain voting behavior in the literature: Sociological theory or the

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[34]Bratton, M. (Ed.).(2013).*Voting and Democratic Citizenship in Africa*. USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Retrieved from https://www.rienner.com/uploads/50ec61134634c.pdf.
[35]Kini. N. G. S.(1996, January-March). Modernisation in India:Women Voting behaviour as Index. *Political Review*, 8(1),12-13.
[36]Singh, Oinam Kulabidhu.(1998). *Electoral Politics in Manipur* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the Manipur University).
[37] Edersveld, Samuel J. (1956). *Political Behaviour : A reader in theory and research*. New Delhi : Amarind. P.267.

Columbia School[38], Psychosocial or the Michigan School[39] and the Rational Choice perspectives[40]. Models of voting behaviour are essential for understanding the different elements that impact voter decisions, forecasting electoral outcomes, and directing campaign strategies. They contribute to the identification of the social, psychological, and rational factors that influence voting behaviour.

The Columbia School or the Sociological perspective claims that socio-economic variables, religion, and location are key determinants of voting behavior.[41] The assumption made here is that majority of people cast their vote according to their original political predisposition, affiliation or support. However, problem with this theory is that if one's choice of vote was solely determined by the stable sociological factors, election results will not change for a very long time.

The Michigan School or the Psychosocial model explains how an electoral change occurs. It offers a framework that combines sociological and psychological (Psychosocial approach) to explain how a voter makes a choice in voting. The psychological need denotes the need of individuals to belong to or be identified with a group or collective, which may be a political party. The central concept of the Michigan School is political affiliation or partisanship, where party identification is loosely understood as a socio-psychological product of family and social group ties.[42] In other words, party identification outlines the assessment of candidates, issues, and the expected capacity of parties to resolve problems.[43]

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[38]Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1944).*The people's choice: how the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[39]Campbell, Angus., Converse, Philip., Miller, Warren, E.,& Stokes, Donald. (1960). *The American Voter*. New York, NY :Wiley.

[40]Downs, A. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.

[41]Lazarsfeld et al., op cit, p.69.

[42]Dalton, R. (2001). New Social Movements. In Joel Krieger (Ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 586-587.

[43]Erdmann, G. (2007). Ethnicity, voter alignment and political party affiliation in an African case: Zambia. *GIGA Working Paper 45*. Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies. doi=10.1.1.622.6187&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Attributed as being the most reliable approach in voting analysis is the rational choice model. The model has two main perspectives, which are, Evaluation and Non-evaluation perspectives.[44] While the evaluative voting rationale is based on the voters' judgment of the performance of parties or representatives on policies or public goods, non-evaluative perspective is driven by clientelistic voting based on personal emotional ties of patronage, family, clan, and ethnic considerations. When there is a promise or agreement about personal favours or goods to be exchanged in return for political loyalty, a clientelistic relationship will be established.

In addition to the three main theoretical perspectives, the Dominant Ideology Model of Voting Behavior is a theoretical framework that explains how societal influences shape individual voting choices. According to this model, the dominant ideas, values, and beliefs prevalent in a society significantly influence the way people vote.[45] These ideologies are often propagated by powerful institutions such as the media, educational systems, and political elites, which promote certain perspectives as "common sense" or the accepted norms.[46] it suggests that individual's choices at the ballot box are closely tied to the dominant narratives and ideologies present in their society.

Elections in India

Elections in India are not a new phenomenon or a new concept born in modern times. Though, elections, based on adult franchise, have been held since 1952 after India attained independence, the exercise of election or the existence of a republican form of governments are mentioned in numerous Buddhist literature as well as the accounts of the Greek invaders who described some states in ancient

[44]Lindberg, Staffan& Minion, Morrison. (2008). Are African voters really ethnic or clientelistic? Survey evidence from Ghana.*Political Science Quarterly*, *123*(1), 95–122.

[45] Castles, F. G., & McKinlay, R. D. (1979). Does politics matter: An analysis of the public welfare commitment in advanced democratic states. *European Journal of Political Research*, 7(2), 169-186. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1979.tb01284.x

[46] Abercrombie, N., Hill, S., & Turner, B. S. (1980). *The dominant ideology thesis*. London: Allen & Unwin. pp. 22-25.

India as pure democracies.[47] Buddhist texts provides substantial evidence of democratic principles in ancient Indian societies, particularly through their descriptions of political and religious practices, while Greek accounts provide an external perspective on the presence of democratic principles in ancient India, describing various polities with republican elements. After the first General Elections to the Lok Sabha, the Election Commission of India reported[48] :

> Republican forms of government existed in many parts of ancient India. There are numerous references to such governments in the Buddhist literature. Even in the 4th Century B.C. there was a republican federation known as the Khudrak-Malla Sangha, which offered strong resistance to Alexander the Great (Devi & Mediratta, 2007).

Although details and information regarding the republican form of government in ancient India is not available, existence of a republican society where every adult male member has the right to vote and to be present in the general assembly that decided all public affairs were accepted as historical facts. And, numerous references to elections, referendum, voting and ballot papers are also found in the Hindu polity. Even though the nature of franchise for election is unclear, it is a known fact that in a number of states, all the eligible adult male persons had the right to vote. A vote was called 'Chhanda', which literally mean a 'wish'. [49] The term 'Chhanda' is of Sanskrit origin. Classical Sanskrit literature and Dharmashastra (texts on duty and law) use the term to indicate personal inclination or preference, which resonates with the concept of expressing one's wish through voting.

Elections in the modern form with registered electorate on electoral rolls within a well demarcated territorial constituency, who expressed their choice through ballot papers to elect the members of a decision making institutions were seen in the

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[47] Devi, V.S. Rama & Mendiratta, S.K. (2007).*How India Votes: Election Laws, Practice and Procedure*. Retrieved from https://www.sahapedia.org/how-india-votes-history-elections-ancient-india. pp. 6–8.
[48] Ibid., pp.6-7.
[49] Ibid, p. 8.

early part of the 20th Century.[50] Consequent upon the First War of Independence from the British occupation in 1857, the British parliament took over the East India Company in 1858. The British Parliament then passes the Indian Council Acts of 1861 and 1892 that provided for the constitution of bodies to legislate on local laws. However, under the Indian Council Acts of 1861 the bodies created were small and consisted only of nominated members with no representation from the local people. Then, a small element of local representation was made under the Act of 1892. Though limited, it was the first instance that an element of election was introduced in the Indian political system.[51] The Indian Council Act of 1901 was the first Act that incorporated provisions for local representation and calls for the setting up of Legislative Councils at the centre under the Governor in 1906. The First Legislative Council under the Act was consisted of 68 members of whom 27 were elected members.[52] The elected members were, however, not chosen by the common people. This Act had adverse effect on the people as it sowed the seeds of communal disharmony and created hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims, since there were seats reserved for Muslims and members to occupy those seats were elected by Muslim electors only.

The Government of India Act of 1915 and 1919 were intended to make amends but the practice of seat reservation and a separate electorate for Muslims continued. However, the Act of 1919 provided a bi-cameral legislature with the Council of States as the upper house and the Central Legislative Assembly as the lower house.[53] The Act provided for direct elections from constituencies to both the Houses but the right to vote was limited on the basis of certain high qualifications, such as ownership of property, payment of income tax, municipal tax or holding of land.[54] The discontentment with the Act of 1919 led to the passing of the

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[50] Hernandez, A., & Mack, P. (2019). *The evolution of electoral systems: A historical perspective*. Cambridge University Press. pp.112-114.

[51] Banerjee, Anih Chandra. (1978). *The Constitutional History of India*. Vol.II. Meerut: Macmillan Company of India Ltd. p.81.

[52] Kashyap, Subash C. (2000). *History of the Parliament of India*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications. P.55.

[53] Government of India Act, 1919. Section 63.

[54] Rule VIII read with Schedule II of the Legislative Assembly, Council of States Electoral Rules under Sections 23 and 64 of the 1919 Act.

Government of India Act 1935 by the British Parliament. The Act proposed to set up a bi-cameral federal legislature consisting of an upper house called the Council of States where 150 out of 260 members would be directly elected, and a lower House called the House of Assembly or Federal Assembly where 250 out of 375 seats would be filled through indirect elections.[55] However, the Act was not implemented and elections were not conducted for the federal legislature. And, after India attained independence from the British rule in 1947, the First General Elections to the Lok Sabha was held in 1952.

The first election to the Lok Sabha was a giant step for democracy for it was the biggest experiment of democracy in the world. It was also an unique example of democracy since there were 176 million voters of whom 85 per cent of the population could not read and write. The electoral system was formed in accordance with the Indian Constitution and the election was based on universal adult franchise[56] by means of secret ballot. The introduction of universal adult franchise was to retain the unity and integrity of the nation, eliminate class distinction and promoting the well-being of common man. The separate electorate of Muslim and other categories were abolished by the Parliament of India since it has communal and separatist tendencies, and introduced the principle of 'one voter-one vote-one value'.[57] The said principle is provided in section 62 clauses (3) and (4) of the Representation of People Act, 1951.[58] Accordingly, Article 325 of the Constitution of India provides that no person shall be ineligible for inclusion in the electoral roll on the grounds of religion, caste, race, sex or any of them. And, only that citizen shall be entitled to be

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[55] Section 18. Clause (1) of the 1935 Act.
[56] Universal adult franchise, or universal suffrage, refers to the principle that all adult citizens have the right to vote in an election, irrespective of their gender, colour, social standing, education, or wealth. It is a fundamental democratic principle that ensures equal participation in the political process, allowing every adult citizen to have a say in the formation of the government and in the decisions that affect their lives.
[57] 'One-voter-one vote-one value' is a principle central to democratic systems, emphasizing equality and fairness in the electoral process. This idea guarantees that every person's vote holds equal significance, therefore ensuring political fairness and eliminating disparities in representation. Its objective is to eradicate any type of discrimination or prejudice, ensuring that every voter has an equitable influence on the result of elections.
[58] R. Ali, op cit, p.49.

registered as a voter at an election who is not less than eighteen years of age on the qualifying date.

The Constitution of India does not define the term 'Election'. However, the concept of election is defined in Section 2(d) of the Representation of People Act, 1951, which states that 'Election' means an election to fill a seat or seats in either House of Parliament or either House of the Legislature of a State other than the State of Jammu and Kashmir.[59] This section provides a precise definition of an election according to the Act, with an emphasis on the formal process of filling legislative seats. In Punnusami vs Returning Officer, the Supreme Court of India while interpreting the provisions of Part XV of the Constitution held that the word 'election' has by long usage in connection with the process of selection of proper representation in democratic institutions, acquired both a wide and narrow meaning. In the narrow sense, it is used to mean that final selection which may embrace the result of the poll when there is polling or a particular candidate being returned unopposed when there is no poll. In the wider sense, the word is used to connote the entire process culminating in a candidate being elected.[60] Hence, in the Indian context, 'election' refers specifically to the final act of selecting a candidate, either through polling results or the unopposed return of a candidate, as well as the entire process of an election, from the nomination of candidates to the final declaration of results. However, in the absence of constitutional provisions pertaining to the conduct of free and fair elections, the Representation of People Act (1951) and the directives of the Election Commission of India forms the a principle or methods necessary to ensure that these elections are conducted in a free and fair manner

Election Commission of India

The necessity to hold General Elections to elect a truly representative government on the basis of universal adult franchise in a free and fair manner was realised through the setting up of efficient, independent and impartial electoral machinery. Hence, the Constitution of India provides for an independent Election

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[59] Ibid. p.43.
[60] A.B. Kafaltiya, op cit, p.43.

Commission of India (ECI), a permanent constitutional body under Article 324.[61] The ECI was brought into force from November 26, 1949, and formally constituted on January 25, 1950. It is of vital essential to maintain the electoral administration free from party politics and due significance to its independence has been maintained by the architect of the Indian Constitution by attributing the ECI as a constitutional authority that is independent from the executive, parliament or party(s) in powers, in the conduct of elections. The entire electoral administration of the Union as well as the States has been vested in the Election Commission of India which is the sole authority to issue directions and orders to District Election Officer, Returning Officer and any other matters of elections. The framers of the Indian Constitution have provided for a foolproof electoral mechanism and this electoral machinery maybe characterized as the bastion of democracy in India.[62] Therefore, the setting up of an autonomous Election Commission of India with constitutional jurisdiction over election procedures has ensured that elections are conducted impartially and fairly at all levels across the country. The electoral machinery not only facilitates peaceful transitions of power but also empowers citizens to participate actively in governance.

The Constitution of India allows the Parliament of India to make provisions in all matters relating to elections to the Parliament and the State legislatures. Exercising these powers the Parliament has enacted laws that govern the conduct of elections, such as, The Representation of the People's Act, 1950[63] and the Representation of the People's Act, 1951.[64] The Representation of the People's Act, 1950 provides the basic requisites for elections including delimitation and allocation of seats, while the Representation of People's Act, 1951 provides for the actual

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[61] Ibid. p.11.
[62] Bhalla, R.P.(1973).*Election in India (1952-1972)*. New Delhi : S.Chand and Co (Pvt. Ltd). p.39.
[63] The Representation of the People's Act of 1950 is an essential legislation that governs electoral roll preparation, constituency delimitation, and other election processes. It ensures that all eligible voters are included, defines constituency borders, specifies voter qualifications and disqualifications, and provides the administration framework for elections.
[64] Representation of the People Act of 1950 deals with the conduct of elections, including the methods for electing members of Parliament and state legislatures and the qualifications and disqualifications for membership. The act also provides the nomination process, voting procedures, and provisions for election-related offences and punishments.

conduct of elections in India, including the rules of registration of political parties and electoral dispute mechanisms. The Supreme Court of India[65] has also held that the Election Commission has residuary powers under the Constitution to act in appropriate manner in the conduct of elections where the enacted laws are silent or insufficient.[66] Article 324 of the Indian Constitution grants the Election Commission of India (ECI) the authority to oversee, guide, and manage the complete electoral process for Parliament, state legislatures, and the positions of President and Vice-President. However, this article does not explicitly specify every aspect of election administration, leaving room for some level of interpretation. Therefore, the Supreme Court has confirmed that the Election Commission of India possesses extensive and residual powers as stated in Article 324 of the Constitution.

The Indian Constitution grants the Fundamental Rights to the citizens of India that includes the Right to Equality, Right to Freedom, Right against Exploitation, Right to Freedom of Religion, Cultural and Educational Right and the Right to Constitutional Remedies. The Election Commission of India has adhered to these principles in letter and spirit and upholds its commitment to the Rule of Law, Universal Adult Suffrage, secret ballot, Prevention of Corruption, Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Right to Vote and the Right to be Elected while conducting elections at various levels since its inception.

Various Levels of Elections

Elections in India can be classified into three levels, such as, national, state and local levels. At the national level, elections are conducted to elect Members of Parliament which are generally known as Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. For the Lok

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[65] The Supreme Court of India is the highest judicial authority in the country and the final court of appeal. Established under the Constitution of India in 1950, it has the power to adjudicate disputes between states, between the union and states, and hear appeals on various civil and criminal cases. The Supreme Court also holds the authority of judicial review, ensuring laws and actions of the government comply with the Constitution. The Court serves as the ultimate appellate body for election petitions, ensuring the legality and fairness of the electoral process. It interprets and clarifies various provisions of electoral laws and can direct the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure free and fair elections.

[66] Dube, M.M., Jain, K.L. (1985). *Election Laws and Precedures*. Indore :Vedpal Law House. p-95.

Sabha elections, the whole country is divided into 543 constituencies and each constituency elects one representative. The President of India may appoint two members from the Anglo-Indian community.[67] Till 2019, seventeen elections to the Lok Sabha were conducted in1952, 1957, 1962, 1967, 1971, 1977, 1980, 1984, 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019. The members of the Lok Sabha are directly elected by the citizens of India for a term of five years while the Rajya Sabha, also known as the Council of States, is a permanent House whose members are indirectly elected by the people through their representatives for a term of six years. The Constitution provides for 250 memberships to the Rajya Sabha in which 12 members are nominated by the President of India.[68]

The elections at the state level are called Legislative Assembly Elections and the State Legislative Council Elections, where each state is divided into specific number of Assembly constituency, which ranges in size according to population.[69] The elections to state legislative assemblies are conducted in the same manner as the Lok Sabha elections using first-past-the-post system. While the members of the State Legislative Assembly are directly elected by the people, the members of the State Legislative Council are indirectly elected by the people through members of Legislative Assemblies, local authorities, graduates and teachers in the state, using the system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote.[70] There are six states in India viz., Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh having Legislative Councils. The Governor of the state also nominates members to give representation to Art, Science, Social service and Co-operative Movement.

A unique feature of these elections is the presence of seats reserved for the Scheduled Tribe (ST) who are socially backward and the Scheduled Caste (SC) who are the discriminated section of the population. The SC are people who have been

[67]Election Commission of India.(2014).*Electoral Statistic Pocket Book*.Retrieved from http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/current/Electoral%20Statisitics%20Pocket%20Book%202014.pdf .

[68]Ibid., p-23.

[69] Sinha, Manorama. (2008). *Electoral Geography of India*. New Delhi:Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors. P.28

[70] Sinha, Manorama. Op cit., p.26.

historically and even now   discriminated on the basis of caste, and the ST are people from a socially backward communities living in remote or isolated areas and having particular traditions. The reserved seats are approximately in proportion to the number of people from SC or ST in the state.

At the grassroots level, there are elections for local self-governing bodies such as the three tier Panchayati Raj system in rural areas and the Village Council system in the states of Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland of North East India. Though the Panchayati Raj institutions have existed in different forms, a uniform system throughout the country was installed through the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act,[71] which came into force in 24th April, 1993.[72] For ensuring grassroots democracy in urban administration, the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992,[73] which was operative from April 1993 provides the setting up of municipalities in urban areas.[74] Thus, the elections in India are conducted to elect members of various decision making institutions such as the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and Panchayati Raj Institutions. As a whole, the network of various elections constitutes the basic framework of India's democratic regime.

Analysis of national and state level elections have indicated an increase in voter turnout, however, significant portion of the electorate still do not exercise their right to vote in India. Even though there are incidences of a high voter turnout in

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[71] The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act of 1992 aims to decentralise power and improve grassroots democracy through the Panchayati Raj system. It establishes a three-tier system of local government - Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zila Parishad, with regular elections every five years and seats reserved for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women. The Act gives Panchayats responsibility for local economic development and social justice. While the amendment has improved local governance and boosted involvement by marginalised groups, issues such as inconsistent implementation, resource constraints, and the need for capacity building remain.

[72] Mathew, George. (2000).*Panchayati Raj in India- An Overview: Status of Panchayati Raj in the States and Union Territories Of India*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. p.10

[73] The 74th Constitution Amendment Act of 1992 aims to decentralise power and improve urban local governance by establishing municipalities. It establishes a three-tier municipal system - Nagar Panchayats, Municipal Councils, and Municipal Corporations. The Act gives urban local governments responsibility for urban planning, public health, and infrastructure development.

[74] Prasad, R.N. (2006). The Seventy-Fourth Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 and Urban Local Government Perpectives in Mizoram. In R.N. Prasad (ed). *Urban Local Self Government in India*.New Delhi : Mittal Publications. p. 150.

elections held after a national or state emergency or other social, economic, political or cultural issues, the significant size of non voters reflects the alienation and apathy of voters, and does not regard elections as a means to address the problems that concerns them. It can be assumed that they perceived the political system or the party system as offering too little choice or change in their position and condition. They viewed that almost all parties are guided by their self-interests and not by the interests and good of the common man. Directly or indirectly, this perception is responsible for the low or decreased participation of the citizens in the elections.

Profile of Mizoram

Mizoram, the 23rd state within the Republic of India is situated in the north eastern part of the country and lies between 21°58' and 24°35' of North Latitude and 92°15' and 93°29' of East Longitude, covering a geographical area of 21,081 square kilometers.[75] It shares an international boundary of 404 km with Myanmar (Burma) to the east and south, as well as a 318 km. boundary with Bangladesh to the west. Additionally, it is flanked by the states of Tripura with a state boundary of 66 km to the north west, Assam, with a boundary of 123 km to the north, and a boundary of 95 km with Manipur to the north east.[76] The name Mizoram is derived from the endonym 'Mizo', which is a generic term meaning 'hill men' or 'highlanders' and 'ram' means 'land,' therefore Mizoram implies 'Land of the Mizo people'.

Mizoram has an average density of 52 persons per square kilometers. And, according to the census of 2011, it is the second least populous state in the country with 10,91,014 population,[77] comprising of 5.55,339 males and 5,41,867 females, that are distributed in 2,22,853 households, living in 830 villages and 23 notified towns. However, with 94.46% of the population classified as Schedule Tribe (ST), it has the highest concentration of tribal population in India. The dominant populace inhabiting Mizoram are called Mizo that comprises various clans and sub-clans, such as, Lusei, Pawi, Mara, Sailo, Ralte, Khiangte, Hnamte, Hmar, and others. Aside from

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[75] Directorate of Economics & Statistics. (2006). *Statistical Handbook of Mizoram*. p. xii.
[76] Ibid, p.xii.
[77] Ibid.p.i.

the Mizo ethnic group there are Chakma population in the south and Bru population in the western area bordering Tripura. Additionally, a sizeable number of non-tribals such as Nepalese,[78] Assamese, and Bengalese from the neighbouring areas have also settled in Mizoram. The state's demographic composition is characterised by an overwhelming Christian population, accounting for 87.2% of the total population. In contrast, Hindus constitute a comparatively smaller minority at 3.3%. Additionally, around 8.5% of the population are identified as Buddhists, and mainly belong to the Chakma community.[79] Mizoram stand behind Kerala and Lakshadweep with a high literacy rate of 91.33%.[80]

The Mizo community has a life style and culture that are different from that of their counterparts in other regions.[81] They are mostly of Mongoloid stocks. The Mizo people have a traditional belief that they came from a covering rock, called 'Chhinlung' in the local dialect, where different clans of the people come from the dirt beneath the stone. Some believe that 'Silung,' which is in China at the borders of the Shan state of Burma, is actually 'Chhînlung'. They are thought to have moved to Burma from Silung, China, and settled in the lowlands between the Rûn and |iau rivers. They proceeded westward to where Mizoram is now located in search of areas for jhum cultivation.[82]

Before the arrival of the British, the region known as the Lushai Hills, which is now referred to as Mizoram, was governed by a large number of indigenous tribal Chiefs. The establishment of villages was greatly influenced by tribes and clans consideration. The structures of governance and practices inside villages exhibit considerable variation across different villages and within distinct clans. The Chiefs

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[78] P. Lalnithanga. (2005). *Emergence of Mizoram.*Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press. p. 1.
[79]Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2015). *Primary census abstract data (C-01)* [Data file]. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20150825155850/http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/C-01/DDW00C-01%20MDDS.XLS
[80] *District Census Handbook*, Mizoram.p.21.
[81] Reddy, K.V.(2014). Political Process in Northeast India, A case study of Mizoram in Patnaik, Jagadish.K., Doungel, Jangkhongam & Shyamkishor, Ayangbam Edited *Socio-Economic development and Governance in North Eastern Region of India*. Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press. p.140.
[82] P. Lalnithanga. Op cit. pp. 3-24.

are endowed with the responsibilities to safeguard and uphold their territorial integrity, security, authority, and dominance by defeating and destabilisation of their adversaries. Inter-tribe conflicts were a common occurrence. The Chiefs held the highest position of authority, and thus, the welfare, prosperity, power, and vulnerability of each clan and society rely on the administrative skills of the Chiefs. The authority of the Chief saw a progressive reduction with the conquest of Lushai Hills by the British.

The British did not consider the Lushai Hills as a viable source of revenue, hence, it was designated as 'Excluded Area.'[83] However, frequent raids carried out by the hill tribes on the plains compelled the British to expand their rule into these regions. In 1871, an attack on a tea plantation in Cachar by Mizo tribe led to the death of a tea planter named James Winchester and the capture of his little daughter Mary Winchester. As a result, the Lushai Expedition took place in 1871–1872, and the Chin–Lushai Expedition was initiated in 1889–1890 as a punitive measures for encroaching the Bristish subjects. The nomenclature 'Lushai' was a name given by outsiders and was not used by the inhabitants of the region to express their common identity, since the endonym 'Mizo' was commonly used even before the British Expedition of 1889-90.[84] As a direct consequence of the expedition that took place in 1890, the Lushai Hills were annexed and subdivided into two districts, viz., the North Lushai Hills District and the South Lushai Hills District. While the North Lushai Hills with its headquarters at Aizawl was put under the administrative control of Chief Commissioner of Assam, the South Lushai Hills with its headquarters at Lunglei was placed under the control of the Lt. Governor of Bengal. The annexation of the Lushai Hills by British in 1891 marks the beginning of the modern era in the political history of Mizoram. Even though the British followed the policy of non-

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[83] Excluded Area and Partially Excluded Area originated from the Government of India Act of 1935. The region identified as Excluded Areas had significant population of Scheduled Tribe communities and requires special administrative arrangement. The British divided the people of north east region into two areas – plains or hills. The hills were included in the Excluded Areas. And, though Mizoram was under Assam Province, the inclusion under Excluded Area place Mizoram without having representation in the Assam legislature and was administered by the Governor-in-Council as his 'reserved' jurisdiction.

[84] Directorate of Art and Culture, Government of Mizoram. (1989). *Mizoram District Gaetterers*. Guwahati, India: Easter Press and Publications.p. 47.

interference in the administration of villages, the British rule was instrumental in ushering a number of significant transformations in the socio-political life of Mizo people. The Lushai Hills were legally included into British India on September 6, 1895, as a result of a proclamation made by the Governor General of India-in-Council. On April 1, 1898, the two districts of North and South Lushai Hill were amalgamated into one district with the name 'Lushai Hills District'. Later, the name 'Lushai Hills District' was changed to 'Mizo Hills District' with effect from 1st September, 1954.[85]

Emergence of political consciousness

Before the annexation of the Lushai hills, the Lushai lived a contented life with their own social and political organisation enjoying a self sufficient economy. Even though there were inter-tribal rivalries between the chiefs and the village(s), there were no records on instances of external intervention in their political life. The formal annexation of the Lushai Hills and the consolidation of British rule brought various changes and impact upon the political, economy and social life of the people.

After the creation of 'Lushai Hills' under Assam Province in 1898, Major J. Shakespeare was appointed as the Superintendent and became the first Superintendent of the Lushai Hills. The British Government decided to maintain basic and low cost administration and chose to govern through the traditional chieftainship. However, in 1898-99, the British administration demarcated the boundaries and jurisdictions of the chiefs which was a major instance of direct British interference in the administration of the chiefs.[86] The Lushai Hills were excluded from the day to day British administration and was placed under 'Excluded Area' by the Government of India Act, 1935.[87] Hence, it was kept out of the Provincial and Federal Legislations under the British administration. The Governor of Assam as an agent of the Governor-General in Council was vested with authority over the District and enjoyed sole administrative and legislative authority for the

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[85] Directorate of Art and Culture, op cit., p.54.
[86] Mahapatra, P. & Zote, L. (July-Sept. 2008). A Case Study of Mizo National Front. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 69. Indian Political Science Association. P.644
[87] Ray, Amiresh.(2002). *Mizoram.* New Delhi: National Book Trust. p.149.

Excluded Areas. Moreover, the enforcement of the Inner Line Regulation, 1873,[88] and the Chin Hills Regulation of 1896[89], restricted the entry of plain people to the hills without special permission. These kept the hills along with the Mizo out of mainstream of British India and were not affected by political movements developing under the British administration. Moreover, limited funding for the areas resulted in minimal or almost no economic activities. The British also prohibit political activities in the District, therefore, until the Second World War the people did not have political experience or the opportunity to have one.[90]

Though chieftainship was continued, the traditional powers of the chiefs were greatly reduced. The Superintendent held the ultimate authority and even in matters of taxation and administration of justice, his word was final. The power of chiefs, such as, the right to execute people and seizes property of the subjects, nomination of their sons as heir were limited by the British administration. However, the chiefs were allowed to carry out many of their duties pertaining to customary law. The entire area was divided into circles, and Circle Interpreter who was usually a local Mizo, chosen by the new government, would act as a liaison between the Superintendent and the Chiefs. Hence, each village was ruled by a chief who would give report of his administration to the Superintendent.

The common people saw relief from the autocratic rule of chiefs who now enjoyed limited powers and were impressed with the Superintendent's use of authority. This new development allowed them to gather courage to oppose their own superiors, which would have been unthinkable in the past. They eventually resolved to speak out against the wrong doings of chiefs, and in villages, such as Lunglêng

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[88] The system of inner line was drawn up under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act of 1873. During the colonial period, the Regulation preserved the area of British control and restricted the integration of the people of the hills and plains, specially the travel of outsiders beyond a point known as Inner Line in certain areas without the permission of a authority having jurisdiction of such areas. Its purpose is to protect the land, natural resources and identities of these areas from exploitation by no-residents of the areas.

[89] Chin Hills Regulation (Regulation IV), which came into effect on August 13, 1896, authorized the Superintendent or Deputy Commissioner of the Lushai Hills to give order to an outsider to leave the area and to levt tax upon the residents, permanent or temporary, clans or villages.

[90] Chaube, S.K.(1978). *Hill Politics in North-East India*. Culcatta: Orient Longman. P.165.

and Chhingchhîp, the common people lodges a complaint against their chiefs to the Superintendent and won. This development can be attributed as the first instance of democratic movement in the Lushai Hills.

Education also plays an essential part in the development of political consciousness among the Mizo. The Christian missionaries not only preached the gospel, but also introduced western education which offered them a new perspective on life, and also a shift in their beliefs and attitudes. The freshly educated young Mizo acquired respectable professions in the colonial administration and Christian missions. The newly educated middle class in Mizo society grew more aware of their civil rights, mindful of the dignity of man and their due role in society and nation, paving the path for Mizo to develop political consciousness.

When rumours of Indian independence and freedom from British occupation were spreading, some educated people in Aizawl were concerned about the future of Mizo. They also realised that the British occupation would eventually end. Hence, they wanted a political arrangement that would suit the best interest of Mizo, and conceived that placing the Lushai Hills under Assam Council would be the best option. A committee to work towards this objective was constituted and few members visited Shillong to study the Assam Council. However, such endeavour led to te arrest of leaders such as, V. Z. Biaka, Telela, Saikûnga, Laldêla, and |huama by the Superintendent. Laldêla was even expelled from Mizoram. It is indeed obvious that these individuals were forerunners of political consciousness among the Mizo. However, the British did not allow any political movement in the Excluded Area, and therefore, no political party existed until the dawn of Indian independence. In 1946, Superintendent A.R. McDonald took a bold step to invite the commoners to the Durbar. Since, the Durbar served the interests of the chiefs and the Superintendent, and in the absence of proper channel to air the grievances or aspirations of the commoners, McDonald invited the commoners so that democratic value would be upheld and the opinion of the majority would be heard. Hence, political awareness and values was slowly inculcated in the Mizo community.

Emergence of Political Parties

The scenario of Indian independence from the British was marked by political movements throughout the country. A number of political parties were formed on the basis of aspirations of the regions, communities as well as ideologies, and the Mizo Hills also saw the birth of Mizo Union party as the first political party in Mizoram in 1946. The birth of the political party was the result of various social developments and political consciousness acquired by the Mizo through their interaction with the British. On September 24, 1946, the first General Assembly of the Mizo Union was held at Kulikawn with the permission of Superintendent where about 700 members attended the assembly.[91] In the next year, the United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) was formed as the second political party in Mizoram. And, after Indian independence, a number of political parties were formed and units of regional and national parties have been established in Mizoram. However, only few political parties have been able thrive and gain electoral success in elections. Among the national level party, the Indian National Congress has been most successful in terms of sustaining its influence and electoral performances. Other national parties have not been able to make significant entry and presence in the elections. Among the state level parties, the Mizo Union (MU), United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO), Mizo National Front (MNF), Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) and People's Conference (PC) are five political parties that have made significant impact upon the political dynamics of Mizoram. However, the PC party after merging with a national party viz., Janata Dal and formed the Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD) but returned as a regional party as Mizoram People's Conference (MPC).

Mizo Union : The burden of people under the rule of British Superintendent through the chiefs, spread of education and outbreak of the Second World War brought a lot of political consciousness in the District. Therefore, the emergence of political consciousness and awareness of political developments outside the District along with a desire to end the rule of the chiefs led R. Vânlâwma to form the Mizo Union on April 9, 1946. In its initial phase, the party was called 'Mizo Common

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[91] Prasad, R.N.(1987). *Government and Politics in Mizoram, 1947-1986*. New Delhi: Northern BookCentre. p.247.

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People's Union' and the chiefs, since they were not commoners, did not join the Party[92]. However, the presence of the chiefs was felt needed to gain wider support base and the party was then renamed 'Mizo Union'.

Main objectives of the Mizo Union, were to achieve the legitimate status of Mizo community, encourage cordial relationships between the chiefs and commoners, unification of the Mizo people, improvement of the socio-economic conditions and serve as the spokesperson and representative for the Mizo people.[93] The party's influence was quite strong, and it was able to hold control throughout the Lushai Hill district era, beginning with Indian independence. It has held power in the Mizo District Council since the Lushai Hills Advisory Council election in 1948, with the exception of a brief period in 1970-71, when the Congress Party created an unstable government of the District Council by a narrow margin of seats. The M.U. was able to form government again in the Union Territory's First Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections in 1972. However, on January 12, 1974, the MU amalgamated with the Indian National Congress. Since its inception the Mizo Union was popular as it promised the abolition of chieftainship and upliftment of the social and economic condition of the people. As independence was drawing near the Mizo Union supported autonomy within India, but a factional group emerges within the Party that supported the integration of the Lushai Hills with Burma. Ultimately, the group supported by the chiefs led to the formation of United Mizo Freedom Organisation.[94]

United Mizo Freedom Organisation : The United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) was a breakaway faction of the Mizo Union that was founded on July 5, 1947, by Lalbiakthanga and Rev. Zairema. It earned support from chiefs and their supporters since MU was an anti-chiefs party whose legislation resulted in the abolition of chieftainship. It played an important role in the early development of Mizoram politics and was vital in raising political consciousness as the first

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[92] Singh, S.N.(1994). *Mizoram-Historical Geographical Social Economic Political and Administrative*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p.166.
[93] Lalchungnunga.(1994). *Mizoram-Politics of Regionalism and National Integration*. New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House. p.73.
[94] Ray, A. (2002). *Mizoram*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.p.153.

opposition party in the District Council. Although it ran against the Mizo Union in elections to the Mizo District Council and the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1952, it did not win a single seat in the elections.

The major goal of the UMFO was to break away from the India union. The party leaders wanted to integrate Mizoram (formerly Mizo Hills District) into Burma. However, it had legally been a part of India and hence such an ambition could not be fulfilled. In reality, it was the first party to raise awareness of separatism among the Mizo. The party's principles include advocating democratic forms of governance in which the public can chose their leaders, as well as promoting freedom of speech, press, and religion.

In terms of electoral wins and influence, UMFO made little progress. Lalbiakthanga, the party's founder, joined government service, and Captain Lalmawia, the new leader, amalgamated the party with the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) in 1957.[95] As a result, the party faded out without accomplishing any political milestone.

Indian National Congress : On April 11, 1961, the Mizo District Congress Committee (MDCC) was formed as a unit of the Indian National Congress (INC) in the Mizo Hills. The MDCC was a branch of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) and its first President was A. Thanglûra.[96] It was the first national level political party formed in the District, however, it struggled to acquire public support in its early stages. The Party was also affected by internal crisis, and the Indian National Congress (INC) at the Centre was divided between the supporters of Indira Gandhi and those opposed to her, that finally led to the Party's split in the District in 1967. As a result, on December 20, 1967, a new Congress Party led by R. Dêng\huama was formed.[97] However, the INC's two groups joined forces and ran for

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[95] Eastern Indian Tribal Union was a political party formed in 1955 in Aizawl by the tribal leaders of North East India who were unahhapy with the recommendation of the State Reorganisation Commission of 1956. The E.I.T.U. raised demand for the creation of a hill state comprising the hill districts of Assam.
[96] V. Venkata Rao. H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika. (1987). *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India. Vol-III, Mizoram*. New Delhi: S.Chand and Company. P.144
[97] Khuma, V.H.(1999). *Political History of Mizoram*. Aizawl: 3J Publication.p.104

District Council election in 1970. The MDCC won 10 of the 22 seats in the election, forming the Council Government with the help of three independent candidates from the Pawi-Lakher region. After a while, internal party strife resurfaced which had an adwarsed impact upon the party's performance in the first general election to the Union Territory of Mizoram, held in 1972. Only six of the 30 seats were won by the Congress. When Union Territory status was granted to Mizoram, the name of the party was changed to the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC). The Party was further strengthened when the Mizo Labour Party and the Mizo Socialist Party united into the MPCC in 1972 and 1974, respectively, which helped in achieving stability and gain momentum in state politics.

Mizo National Front : A famine (Mautâm) in Mizoram led to the formation of a famine voluntary organization named Mizo National Famine Front in 1959 to assist the Assam government in providing relief to the people. The famine led to the death of hundreds of people due to starvation and the economy suffered badly. Under these circumstances, the nationalist sentiment of the Mizo was aroused under the leadership of Laldênga, with the propaganda that the Mizo had never belong to Indian community and Mizoram belonged to the Mizo people only.[98]   When the famine came to an end, the organization was then converted into a political party 'Mizo National Front' on October 22, 1961. The Party's principal objective was to achieve independence for the Mizo who were living in different parts of the Indian sub-continent.[99] Its principles include the propagation of Mizo nationalism, unification of Mizo people living in neighbouring areas, upliftment of Mizo social, economic, and political conditions, protection and promotion of Christianity, the construction of a well-planned strategy to achieve its goals, as well as the acquisition of support from foreign countries. In its early stages, the MNF used non violent measures such as contesting in election and submitting memorandums, to attain its aim, however, cessation from the Indian union was unacceptable as it would disrupt India's geographical integrity, hence they were forced to resort to armed confrontation.

[98] Zamawia, R.(2007). *Zofate Zin Kawngah Zalenna mei a mit tur a ni lo (The spirit of freedom shall not wither in our journey)*. Aizawl: R. Zamawia.p,173
[99] Reddy, K.V.(2014). Op.cit.p.140.

The MNF declared Mizoram a sovereign and independent state on February 28, 1966, at midnight, and began attacking important government facilities and security camps around the state. The government of India then declared Mizo District to be a 'Disturbed Area' under the Assam Disturbed Area Act of 1955, and military forces were dispatched to counter the MNF movements in the District. In addition to this Act, the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act of 1958 was also in effect in the District.

On June 30, 1986, the Mizo National Front and the Union Government signed the 'Mizoram Accord, 1986, Memorandum of Settlement,' also known as the 'Mizoram Peace Accord,' ending a 20-year insurgency. The Accord was signed by Laldênga of the MNF, Union Home Secretary R.D. Pradhan on behalf of the government, and Lalkhama, Chief Secretary of Mizoram. Peace and normalcy were restored with the signing of the Accord, and Mizoram was upgraded to statehood on February 20, 1987. According to the conditions of the Accord, Laldênga was appointed Chief Minister of Mizoram, and MNF members ran as independent candidates in the inaugural election to the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly and won. Since then, the MNF has been able to sustain itself via strong election performances and has been the only political party other than the INC that has been able to form the government the most number of times.

People's Conference : The security forces' counter-insurgency measures in Mizoram prompted the formation of the 'Human Rights Committee'[100] on June 1, 1974 by a retired Indian army officer Brigadier Thenphunga Sailo. The goal of the Committee was to protect and sustain the Mizo people's freedom and life. On April 17, 1975, the Committee was converted to a political party named Mizoram People's Conference (MPC). The aims and objectives declared by the Party were, to work for peaceful solution of the prevailing political problem in the Union Territory,

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[100] Human Rights Committee was a non-political committee formed to protect the Mizo people against the atrocities committed by the security forces during insurgency movement. The major initiative taken by the Committee were submitting a memorandum to the central government listing the atrocities committed by the Indian army and filing of cases in Gauhati High Court against the shifting of villages and demanded compensation for the loss of property from the central government.

unification of all Mizo inhabited contiguous areas within the Indian union under one administrative unit, to undertake speedy economic development and secure Human Rights.[101] Mizoram People Conference's political ideology and foundation are primarily based on economic sustainability which includes land security as well as the security of Mizo identity and the Christian faith.

Mizoram People's Conference, abbreviated as 'PC', is a regional political party in Mizoram that was in power from 1979 to 1984.

Zoram Nationalist Party : The Zoram Nationalist Party (Z.N.P) was established on July 29, 2000.[102] Initially, the political organisation was identified as the Mizo National Front (Nationalist), sometimes abbreviated as MNF (N), which was constituted by a break away group from the Mizo National Front. The Party was formed by Lalduhawma, who was also the founder president of the MNF (N) party. The ZNP participated in the State Legislative Assembly election in 2003. Despite facing challenges in competing with well-established political parties like the MNF and Congress in the state, the party has managed to establish itself as a significant political entity. Furthermore, it has shown to be a valuable ally for other political parties during elections. The primary goal of the party is to build 'Zoram Thar' (New Mizoram), which is founded upon the principles of equitable and sustainable socio-economic progress, and to safeguard Christian ideals and values in order to ensure effective government.[103]

Mizoram is a mountainous State in the southern-most part of North East India. It has an international boundary with Bangladesh and Myanmar. Indian states of Manipur, Assam and Tripura are located on its north and north east. Originally, a part of Assam, Mizoram became a Union Territory in 1972, and consequent upon the signing of the Peace Accord with Mizo National Front in 1986, statehood was granted to Mizoram on 20th February 1987. In 2019, three new districts, namely Hnahthial, Khawzawl and Saitual were formed in addition to the existing eight

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[101] Rao, Venkata.V.et al (1987). Op.cit.pp.150-151.
[102] Thanhranga, H.C.(2007). *District Councils in the Mizo Hills* (Updated). Aizawl: H.C. Thanhranga. P.54.
[103] ZNP Manifesto.p.2.

districts. At present, there are 11 districts in Mizoram, namely – Aizawl, Lunglei, Champhai, Lawngtlai, Mamit, Serchhip, Kolasib, Saiha, Hnahthial, Khawzawl and Saitual. [104] In the southern part of the state, there are three Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) for ethnic tribes in Mizoram, namely the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC), Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) and Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC). These three ADC's enjoys certain amount of autonomy in the management of their respective areas under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

After Mizoram became a Union Territory on 21[st]January, 1972, the first election to the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha was conducted for the state in the same year. The state is classified as a single constituency, and hence, it is represented by one member in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. Out of the 13 Lok Sabha elections (1972, 1977, 1980, 1984, 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004,, 2009, 2014 & 2019) conducted in the state, the Indian National Congress has won the elections six times (1984, 1989, 1991, 1996, 2009, 2014), the Mizo Union won the election in 1972 and the Mizo National Front (MNF) won the elections in 2004 and 2019.[105] Independent candidates were elected in 1977, 1980, 1998 and 1999.[106] In the Rajya Sabha elections the Indian National Congress have won the seat seven times and the Mizo National Front (MNF) won the seat three times.

The first State Legislative Assembly was constituted in 1987 with 40 elected members. The elections for the 40 seats legislative assembly were held in 1987, 1989, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008 and the eighth Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections was held on November 28, 2018.[107] The result was declared on December 11, 2018 where the Mizo National Front won 27 seats, Indian National Congress won 4 seats and independent candidates backed by Zoram People's Movement (ZPM)

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[104]Doungel, Jangkhongam&Hnialum, R. T. (2016).The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. In JangkhongamDoungel (Ed.), *Autonomy Movements and the Sixth Schedule in North east India.*Delhi : Spectrum Publications. pp. 43-44.

[105] Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram. (2019). *Mizoram Votes, 2019: A Brief Overview & Statistical Report. Mizoram* : Author. Pp.6.

[106] Ibid. p.7.

[107]Ibid. p.8.

secured 8 seats and the BJP captured I seat. Thus, the MNF won majority and form a new government.[108]

The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007 was enacted by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly and accordingly the Aizawl Municipal Council started functioning from July 1, 2008. The Aizawl Municipal Corporation is composed of 19 Wards and the first election to the Corporation was held in November, 2010. The elections of Councillors for Aizawl Municipal Council has not been undertaken in this study since the election and area is confined to one district, ie., Aizawl District only and does not cover the state as a whole.

With the passing of the Lushai Hill District Act, 1953, Village Councils were set up in villages within the areas administered by the Mizo District Council. Subsequently, Village Council elections were held for the first time in Mizoram on July 24, 1954. The Mizo Union won all the 338 seats in the Village Council elections. Subsequent elections were conducted at periodic intervals. In 2020, elections to Village Councils were held in 550 villages amid the Novel Corona Virus pandemic. These Village Council's elections were conducted by the state government and were generally referred to as Village Councils in non-sixth scheduled areas, since, elections for Village Councils within the ADCs of the sixth schedule areas were conducted by the respective District Council. Subsequent to the enactment of The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007, elections to local councils for urban administration were held in Aizawl City. At present, there are 83 Local Councils in Aizawl City.

The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, which was established in 1952 under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, was trifurcated into three regional councils – Lakher, Pawi and Chakma Regional Council. The Regional Council became an 'Autonomous District Council' when Mizoram became a Union Territory in 1972 and the Pawi Autonomous District Council was renamed as 'Lai Autonomous District Council' and Lakher Autonomous District Council was renamed as 'Mara Autonomous District Council' in 1988. The Lai Autonomous District Council has 23

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[108]Ibid, pp.6-8.

elected members and the last elections to the Council were held in 2015; The Mara Autonomous District Council has 25 elected members and the last election to the Council was held in 2017. The Chakma Autonomous District Council has 20 elected members and the last election to the Council was held in 2013. The study does not cover the elections of members of the three ADCs since they are confined to specific geographical locations and therefore do not cover the state as a whole. However, the study covers the most recent Village Councils elections in the Sixth Schedule areas since the election represents the operation of democracy at the grassroots level. There were 95 Village Councils in the LADC in 2020 elections, 99 Village Councils in MADC in 2023 elections and 88 Village Councils in CADC in 2020 elections

A number of communities with distinct socio-cultural system which are quite different from one another are found in Mizoram. And influence of the various variables of voting behavior upon an individual has to be examined not only from political context but also in the context of socio-economic and cultural institutions as well as geographical considerations.

The successful working of democratic institutions in any country depends upon the level of political participation of the citizens, the degree of political participation illustrates the confidence of the people in the political system, legitimacy to the government and stability to the system. As, voting is the main form of political participation in liberal democratic societies, the study of voting behaviour is a highly specialized sub-field within political science. A number of factors influence individual voting behaviour, such as personality traits of the candidates, assessment of a government's performance, and perception of policy issues, party affiliation, and ideology. Social factors such as, race, religion, region, socio-economic status, gender, marital status, and age are another characteristics that influenced voting behaviour. Examining how these factors are related to voting in particular elections helps us to explain individual election outcomes, to understand electoral dynamics and to open avenues for further research.

Review of literature

The literature review explored existing research and studies related to how people vote during elections. It examined factors such as cultural influences, socio-economic conditions, political affiliations, and historical context that shaped voting patterns of voters. By reviewing relevant literature, this section provides a comprehensive understanding of the different elements that influence voter decisions during elections, helping to set the foundation for the research conducted in this thesis.

Valuable information to study elections and voting behavior in India is found in the work of W. H. Jones Morris, '*Indian Voting Behaviour*,' published in 1957. The work elaborated upon the bold strife of India in adopting a democratic set up where the overwhelming majority of the populace was illiterate with a low level of democratic experiences. Various sources and works by eminent scholars on voting behaviour in India are cited in the article. However, certain weakness exists as the sources and works cited by him are not easily available. Nevertheless, the article presents an illuminating piece of information regarding the various focuses made in the study of voting behavior in India.

In his book – '*Government and Politics in Mizoram*,' published in 1978, R.N. Prasad describes the development of political consciousness of the Mizo; He describes the performance and characteristics of national and regional political parties.In addition, he provides detailed descriptions of the previous elections, electoral outcome as well as the background upon which the electorate exercise their franchise in favour of the Mizo Union. This book touches almost every aspect of the Mizo society and is of great help in understanding various political events in Mizoram and voting behavior of the Mizo electorate. The assumptions and proposition offers by the author on various political issues are to be duly noted to facilitate desirable political change as well as a further study of political development in the state.

Raisa Ali (1996) in '*Representative Democracy and Concept of Free and Fair Elections'* presents an indept study of various issues and challenges relating to elections. The work discusses the essential principles of election, such as, universal suffrage, equality of suffrage, general electoral roll, secrecy of voting and the universal right to contest elections. Various components and mechanisms of elections, namely, electoral office, electorate, candidates, political parties, constituencies, mass media, electoral system and electoral machinery are elaborated in details higlighting an overview of the working of a democratic polity. It also covers a critical study of powers, functions and independence of election commission including the role of Chief Election Commissioner and the issue of equal status among the members of the Election Commission and the appointment and functioning of multi-member election commission. In light of important legal rulings, several electoral corrupt practises and offences are examined. A distinctive element of the book is its discussion of the role of the court in the political process. It also provides proposals such as limiting the number of constituencies from which a candidate can run for office, decreasing the use of money and muscle power, mandating identity cards, and adhering to the Model Code of Conduct.

An investigation into the voting behavior of tribals in eastern India and the state of Orissa in particular is given in the book '*Voting Behaviour of Tribals in India*,' written by K.S. Padhy and P.P. Tripathy. The book provides a historical background and a study of voting behavior of tribals in India. The book offers an informative understanding of the socio-political structures of the tribals of Orissa and the political progress made by them when measured in terms of political participation through elections. The book is of immense information pertaining to the various political movements witnessed in the area as well as the methods, tools and techniques employed to consider voting behavior among the less educated, poverty stricken and distinct socio-political identity of the tribals.

R. Zamawia's (2012) work, '*Zofate zinkawngah zalenna mei a mit tur a ni lo (The spirit of freedom should not wither in our journey)*' is a resourceful book on the political history of Mizo written in Mizo dialect. The author analyzes and studies about the ideological and political structural framework of Mizoram. The book traces

the origin and history of the Mizo from the earliest known historical records as well as the myths and legends chaterised by oral traditions that are associated with it. The work provided a detailed account and analysis of the evolution of political consciousness among the Mizo, and how the spirit of Mizo nationalism emerged and impacted in the political development in the region. It also provides the context for the formation of certain civil society organizations that played a crucial role in the development of the political framework and structure of the State in its formative years. The author presents an insight into the political and significant events that took place in course of insurgency in Mizoram and the signing of Memorandum of Settlement, and further discusses how insurgency and Mizo nationalism affected the political discourses of the State in the later years.

In the book '*Zoram Politics Thli Tleh Dân*,' the author C. Hermana highlights the political development in Mizoram from Union Territory to statehood till the Lok Sabha elections of Indian Parliament in 1999. The author's interpretation of the sequences of events affecting political change and political party formation as well as the elections result provides a deep insight to voting behavior of the Mizo. The data of election results from Union Territory to Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections and the Lok Sabha election on 1999 are genuine information that give a proper understanding and knowledge of the voter's behavior during the period covered. The essence of the book is further strengthened by the large pool of background information and context given by the author upon which political changes and development occurs in Mizoram.

The book '*Ethnic Identities and Democracy: Electoral Politics in North East India*' (2006), edited by Apurba Baruah and Rajesh Dev, provides instances that illustrate electoral politics as a subject of study in North East India. The editors believe that since elections are a means of sustaining democratic government, studying electoral politics should be of paramount significance for every nation that practises representative democracy. Additionally, they said that electoral politics has emerged as a prominent area of study in the majority of democratic nations. According to them, one of the main developments in electoral politics has been the examination of voting patterns along caste lines. This line of inquiry has provided

significant insight into certain socioeconomic dimensions of electoral politics. Similar to caste, ethnicity and ethnic divisions have a significant impact on the results of elections in every state in North-East India. The writers of this book analyse the electoral dynamics of practically every state in India's northeast. This book primarily focuses on how the region's ethnic diversity affects electoral politics and what it means for liberal democratic administration.

'*Measuring Voting Behaviour in India*' is a book published in 2013 and authored by Sanjay Kumar and Praveen Rai, that discussed in detail the tradition of voting behavior in India with a prime focus on Poona Lok Sabha constituency of 1967. The various methods and tools employed to determine voter's attitudes and opinion along with the advantages and disadvantages of each method in reflecting the voter's behavior under different settings in India were discussed by the authors. This book provides a good understanding about the various tools and methods, such as – sampling, questionnaire design, data collection and analysis, as well as the issues in measuring a voter's behavior. However, its methods and means, employed by the authors cannot be applied in north east India which is composed of heterogeneous cultures and societies, with a lower level of economic development unlike the study area.

Meenu Roy has discussed voting behaviour in her book '*Electoral Politics in India: Concepts and Theories*' (3rd revised and enlarged). The author has made a genuine effort to study the all aspects of electoral behaviour covering electoral behaviour, defections, caste politics, regional influences, etc. Roy is of the opinion that the voters does not really have a choice in selecting a candidate to represent them since political parties select their choice of candidate to represent their parties. Therefore, candidates are chosen by the parties and impose their will upon the voters. In such a situation, voters do not show interest in elections ot to cast their votes. Subsquently, two categories of voters are observed. Firstly, some people do not vote because they will still get that they want even if they do not vote; Secondly, some people do not vote because they are of the opinion that they will not get what they want even if they vote.

An extensive examination of the dynamics of electoral politics in India after 2004, has been done by Sandeep Shastri, K.C. Suri, and Yogendra Yadav's in their work "*Electoral Politics in Indian States- Lok Sabha Elections in 2004 and Beyond*" published in 2009. It includes in-depth studies on each of the 19 states that analyse state politics in its entirety by focusing on electoral politics. It also includes three broad pieces that set the scene for the examination of Indian state politics. Every article focuses on the factors that influenced an electoral result and makes an effort to place it within the broader socioeconomic and historical framework of state politics. This volume is the result of the collaborative efforts of academics connected to the Lokniti network, which is a part of the Centre for the Study of Developing Society (CSDS) and the Lokniti initiative for Comparative democracy. The National Election Study, 2004 data is used in these articles.

Valuable work on the study of voting behavior done by Kinglsey Agmor & Samuel Adams can be found in '*Determinants of Voting Behaviour in Ghana.*' This work is an extensive research work involving 2042 respondents from ten regions in the country. The study described the three main theoretical perspectives used to explain voting behavior, namely, Sociological Theory or the Colombia School, Psychological Theory or the Michigan School and the Rational Choice Perspective. The author explain that Ghana is the choice of for studying voting behavior since it reflects the rationale of the African voters and Ghana has emerged from a long term military rule to sustain a reasonably successful democratic polity. The research work is of immense assistance to the researcher as it not only illustrated standard methods ad process of research work but also provided detailed analysis of questionnaire and the findings of the study.

In their work, *Election manifesto is the key determinant of voting behaviour in Tamil Nadu electoral politics*,' K.Saravana Rajasena, & A.Thanikodi examine the role of election manifestos as an important determinant of voting behavior in Tamil Nadu state legislative assembly elections. The authors studied the election manifestoes of the winning political party of Tamil Nadu in 2011and 2016 Assembly Elections, and thereby derived the impact of election manifestoes in the election results. They have identified – caste, religion, language, current events, local issues,

election campaign and election manifestoes as the main determinants of voting behavior in India and Tamil Nadu in particular. An analysis of the election manifestoes of the All India Anna Dravida Munetra Kazagham of 2011 and 2016, highlighting the promises, welfare schemes and aspirations it gave to the people and the causal relationships between election manifestoes and voting behavior were established by the victory of the AIADMK in the elections mentioned earlier.

The joint research work of Bhanu Joshi, Kanhu Charan Pradhan and Pranav Sidwani, entitled '*Urban Voting and Party Choices in Delhi*,' discusses the relation between economic and social well-being and political participation in Delhi. Property tax and property categories were used to determine Delhi's wealth parameters and then tries to match them with voting patterns. Their research shows that neighbourhoods have a significant influence on voting behaviours of both the rich and the poor in urban areas. Specifically, they have established that the rich in poor neighbourhoods vote more than the rich in rich neighbourhoods and conversely, the poor in rich neighbourhoods vote less than the poor in poor neighbourhoods. This article is of immense value while studying voting behaviour and the pattern of voting of urban areas in India.

Anjoo Sharan Upadhayay (2005) work entitled '*Electoral Reforms in India*' introduces the deliberations on Electoral Reforms in India. This book is a very well edited piece of work where the researcher discusses various dimensions of Indian electoral process and electoral reforms. The book tends to encourage researchers to learn about the many facets of elections as well as the specifics of the entire electoral process in order to comprehend voter behaviour and patterns. With particular attention to voter awareness, voter education, and electoral procedure, the author provides a critical analysis of India's election process. In addition, the author addresses electoral topics and elements that are vital to understand when researching Indian electoral politics, such as the use of force and money in elections, booth capturing, criminalization of politics, defection, constituency demarcation, state funding of elections, and the authority and jurisdiction of the Election Commission of India.

Norman. D. Palmer wrote a critical analysis of Indian voters' behaviour in 1976 in *'Elections and Political Development: The South-Asian Experience'*. The book offers valuable information about voting and the factors that affect voting. In India, where democracy is a standard of political set up, the political history shows that each election has its own unique features. In fact, a close study of Indian elections shows many important patterns and trends in the country's democratic system. So, this book focuses at the voting experiences of South Asian countries, like India, from the point of view of growth and comparison with other South Asian countries . This book highlight the effect of political and socioeconomic issues on how the people vote. The strength of this book lies in presenting different factors that affect people's voting choices, such as, ecological factors, political factors like candidate orientation, issue orientation, and party orientation, social factors like family and kinship, caste, factionalism, and communalism, and other socio-economic factors like the difference between rural and urban areas, corruption, the use of money and muscle, and more. Aside from that, the author further discusses about India's election history since the first election and how political choice and participation have significance in the Indian election process.

Udayon Misra illustrates that the north east region faced certain common problems and hence an efforts to achieve greater coordination between different regional parties have been undertaken in his work '*North East Regional Parties : High Hopes and Hard Realities*.' Highlighting the major common issues, the author states that, foreign issues, decline of national parties and boundary disputes were the areas of concern. The author also illustrates that the major impediments in the process of political parties joining hands together was the need to make adjustments in the objectives and policies of the party. The author further explains that political parties desire to maintain their interest intact and hence, a consensus in addressing the issues could not be easily reached. Even though this article does not speak volumes about elections, it described the position and stand of various political parties, which is an important aspect in election process as well as in shaping the voting behavior in elections.

B.B. Patil in his article '*Campaign Strategy and Voting Behaviour'* offers an insight upon the general election of 1967 in Kamlapur Constituency, Gulbarga District in Mysore. The election was particularly noteworthy as the dominance of the Indian National Congress was challenged for the first since the first general elections in the country. Moreover, the Constituency holds an impressive position of being the most politically conscious constituency in the District. The author describes the various strategy employed by the contesting candidates to win the support of the electorate and provides an analysis of the outcome of the strategy as presented by election result. A major portion of the article is dedicated to highlighting the pattern of voting or voting behavior which, as the author substantiate, is fashioned by caste, projection of charismatic national leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, rule of the Indian National Congress, emotions, role of money and sympathy towards the candidate. This six page article provides a systematic study of voting behavior as well as the various variables to be taken into account in the study of voting behavior.

In his article '*Roots of Separatism in Assam Hill District,*' Roderick A. Church discusses the separatist sentiments and presented a number of hypotheses regarding the roots of hill separatism in Assam. He traces the roots of separatism since the British period and concludes that the factor of relative deprivation cannot claim primacy for hill separatism as Christianity and literacy among the hill tribesmen correlates with separatist sentiments. The author described the ethnic differences of the plain and hill people of Assam and described how the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference could not deliver the desired result in maintaining the territorial integrity of Assam. This article has proved very useful as it highlighted the inclination and objectives of political parties in Mizoram since the creation of the Lushai District Council under Assam. Further, the article established the intrinsic relationships between separatism, political parties and elections.

In his article '*North East India : Problems and Prospects',*'V.Venketa Rao describes the geographical, socio-political, economic and cultural dimensions of the north eastern region. While describing the diversity of the region, Rao discusses the various characteristics of the region which poses as a problem in the economic development of the region. The problems stated includes, geographical locations,

ethnicity, lower density of population, backwardness, existence of indigenous political institutions, religious and linguistic diversities as well as isolation from the mainstream. This article helps the researcher to understand the significance of the region as well as the various elements at play in the political scenario. Further, the author has presented various suggestions which would address the problems in the region which tends to form an important yardstick in examining the performance of political parties in the north east region.

'*Elections and Political Parties in Mizoram: An Over-View of Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections*,' is an article by Joseph C.Lalremruata that deals with the study of elections in Mizoram. The author describes the various political developments in Mizoram from the advent of the British to the attainment of statehood in Mizoram. He has outlined the Legislative Assembly elections and provided an analysis of the Fifth to the Seventh Assembly Elections in Mizoram. He is of the opinion that elections within the period of study was chracterised by the dominance of two parties ie., the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Mizo National Front (MNF). Among the national parties, the INC is the only party that has shown successful results in elections. He has also established that elections as well as transition of power have been peaceful and the influence of the church through the Mizoram People's Forum have borne fruits in the conduct of free and fair elections.

Statement of the problem

In post independent India, the Mizo District Council was set up in 1952 and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was set up in 1953 by the Constitution of India under Articles 244(2) and 275(1), in the erstwhile Lushai Hills, the then Mizo Hills District of Assam.[109] Subsequently, elections on the basis of universal adult franchise were conducted to elect members of the Mizo District Council from 1952.[110] In 1972, the Mizo District of Assam was upgraded to the status of Union Territory and was named 'Mizoram', and elections to the Assembly of Mizoram with 30 members was

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[109] Prasad, R.N. op cit, p.103.
[110] KL Chhuanvawra, K.L. (2009). *Mizo Union Kha (1946-1974).* Lois Bet:Aizawl. P.66.

held in the same year.[111] Elections to the House of the People (Lok Sabha) started in 1972 when Mizoram became a Union Territory. Consequent upon the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Mizo National Front and the Government of India, the Union Territory of Mizoram was again upgraded to a full fledged state in 1987 and the Assembly seats were also increased from 30 to 40 seats.[112] The first elections to Mizoram Legislative Assembly were held in 1987.[113] After the abolition of chieftainship in 1954, the Mizo District Council constituted Village Councils as administrative set up, and the first elections to the Village Councils in the Non-Sixth Schedule areas were conducted in 1954.[114] In 1955, the first Village Councils were constituted for 72 villages in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. An overview of these elections would highlight the fact that elections based on universal suffrage was introduced at various levels since 1952.

After the attainment of the status of a Union Territory, various elections were conducted in Mizoram, namely, elections of Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly, members of Autonomous District Councils and members of Village Council as well as members of Local Council after the creation of Aizawl Municipal Council and subsequently changed to Corporation. The voter's turnout in elections spanning the state varies from elections to elections and therefore, it is essential to study the voting behaviour of the different levels of elections to understand the perception, attitudes and choices made in these elections.

In the first three Legislative Assembly elections, held after the attainment of Union Territory in 1972, the Mizo Union Party and the Mizo People's Conference Party were the dominant parties. Likewise, after the attainment of statehood, elections results have shown that there has been two dominant parties, and majority in the elections oscillates between two parties while a number of parties exists in the state. Hence, it is imperative to study the voting behaviour of electorate in elections

[111] Vanlalhruaia. (2004). *Mizoram MLA leh MP Election Result: 1972-2003*. Pp.18-29.
[112]. Rao, Venkata.V.et al (1987). Op.cit. pp. 100-124.
[113] Vanlalhruaia. Op cit. pp.63-74.
[114] K.M. Zakhuma, op cit, p.68.

to understand the rational choices made by the people in elections and why a particular political party is chosen over another by the electorate.

There are 11 districts in Mizoram, characterised by the existence of an urban and rural areas. The urban area provided better opportunities and access to better facilities which resulted in higher standard of living in comparison with the rural areas. Subsequently, variation in the local needs, demands, attitudes and perception surfaced within a district and even between districts. It is therefore essential to study the variation in the voting behaviour of the urban and rural areas and its implication in the electoral processes and transition of political power. The study also examine the effect of geographical characteristics upon the voters in elections and seek to investigate the similarities and dissimilarities in attitudes, perceptions and levels of political participation. The study disclosed the various factors and determinants of voting at various levels of elections and the influence of various political activities engaged by political parties at election and between election periods.

Research gap

There are a number of research works and studies done on voting behavior in India with a focus on particular state election, a period of time, constituencies or a constituency and group participation in elections in India. Even though these studies provided a deep insight and understanding of voting behavior in India, the available literatures and studies does not cover the analysis and study of voting behavior in Mizoram in various elections. Hence, there has been no research work done under the topic. Therefore, the comparative study and investigation of voting behavior of Mizoram at various levels of elections would provide not only new knowledge and information regarding Mizoram but also in the study of voting behavior in India.

Objectives

1. To study the voting behavior of electorate in elections at various levels in Mizoram.
2. To analyse the factors that influenced voting behavior at various levels of elections.
3. To compare the variation of voting behavior in these elections in the urban and rural areas of the state.
4. To analyse the implications of voting behavior on the electoral outcome.

Hypotheses

1. Voting behavior of the electorate is different at various levels of elections in Mizoram.

2. Various factors have influenced voting behavior in various levels of elections.

3. Voting behaviour differs in urban and rural areas of the state.

4. Variation in voting behavior had affected the electoral implications.

Methodology

The study is designed to determine the voting behaviour at various levels of elections in Mizoram by employing the qualitative and quantitative approaches. All data for the study has been collected from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been derived from the answers given by the respondents in the questionnaire as well as government's publication of reports. The questionnaire is a structured questionnaire and has been constructed to targets audience of young, middle aged and old age group as well as women to cover broader section of the society. The targeted population in this study refers to 11 districts in Mizoram. Purposive Sampling method has been employed to select the geographical location of the polling station and to determine the respondents. Hence, four districts, namely Aizawl, Lunglei, Serchhip and Siaha were selected to represent the urban electorate, while, Kolasib, Champhai, Lunglei Mamit, Hnahthial, Khawzawl and Lawngtlai districts were selected to represent the rural electorate.

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And, after deriving one polling station within the urban area, and likewise, within the rural areas, 16 respondents were selected from the electoral roll. The size of sample is 176, which would represent 40 Legislative Assembly Constituencies in 11 districts.

The field work and survey done through the questionnaire highlighted the general political awareness of the people as well as their involvement in the electioneering process, the awareness in issues highlighted by political parties and the reasons for which they choose and vote a candidate. It was administered to voters above or those who have reach the age of 18 or those have qualified for voting in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections of 2018. The respondents consisted of 33.33% each in the age groups of 23-40 years, 41-50 years and 51 and above, in both the rural and urban areas. In terms of demography, the rural respondents consisted of 59% while the urban consisted of 41% of the total respondents.

The secondary source are derived from the findings stated in published documents and literatures related to the research problem such as, articles, newspapers, journals, time sequence record of state report on elections published by the Election Commission. Besides, the Census of India and e-resources has also been consulted. It also covers studies from related concepts and theories. The data that described and explain events has been organized, tabulated and depicted. Analysis of data, involving in the reduction of accumulated data to a manageable size, developing summaries, looking for patterns and differences using SPSS 20 version has also been taken up accordingly.

Scope of the study

This study deals with the voting behaviour of Mizoram at the national, state and local level elections. Hence, it is focussed on House of the People (Lok Sabha) elections, Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections, as well as Village Councils, including the areas covered under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, and also the local council elections under Aizawl Municipal Council. And, for the purpose of study, the most recent elections at various levels held between 2018

and 2023 have been selected. Further, even though, various types of elections were conducted, it is imperative to study these elections to understand voting behaviour since they were the main elections that covered the entire study area. And, in analysing these elections, emphasis has not been made in their chronological order but rather on the levels of elections in terms of context and dimensions.

National elections usually attract more attention, while state elections mix national and local concerns. Local elections, though often having lower turnout, are important for community governance. Therefore, the study investigated the differences in how people vote in national, state, and local elections, focusing on what influenced voters at each level. It also examines how voting behaviour differs between urban and rural areas. Urban areas, with more people and media coverage, often have different voting patterns compared to rural areas, which may have less access to information and different concerns. The study looked into these differences to understand their impact on the overall voting process. The investigation also considers how these voting behaviors influenced the outcomes of elections, including how differences in voter turnout and preferences affect who wins. It also explores how these findings can help create strategies for making elections fairer and more effective.

Chapterisation

Chapter I   :   Introduction

The first chapter discusses in certain aspects the concept and significance as well as the evolution of the terms democracy, elections and study of voting behaviour. The chapter covers statement of the problem, review of literature, objectives, hypothesis and methodology. It also consists of a brief introduction to the study area covering the various levels of elections conducted in the state.

Chapter II   :   Voting Behaviour: A Theoretical Framework

In the second chapter, an attempt is made to analyse the theoretical framework, where, conceptual understanding evolution of the study of voting behaviour and electoral process in India is covered and studied. As a tool to investigate the voting behaviour, the chapter presents models and theories of voting behaviour to determine voting patterns. The chapter provides insight into the electoral process in India through the provisions provided in the Constitution of India, the workings of the Election Commission and such other processes adopted in the conduct of free and fair elections.

Chapter III   :   Voting Behaviour at Various Elections in Mizoram

The third chapter gives a brief account of the political developments including the formation of political parties, analysis of elections at various levels as well as issues confronting the elections. While providing in-depth study of elections the Chapter discusses the similarities and variations of voting behaviour across national, state and local level elections.

Chapter IV   :   Comparison of Voting Behaviour at Various Levels of Elections

The chapter deals with the voting pattern at various levels of election in the state. On the basis of survey, the chapter identifies the various motivations, influences and political participation of the electorate in elections and illustrates how the voting behaviour in various elections are being shaped by the social, economic and political conditions. A comparison of the voting behaviour across various levels of elections is also covered in the chapter

Chapter V   :   Voting Behaviour in Urban and Rural Areas

This chapter consist of an analysis of voting behaviour as well as a comparative analysis between urban and rural areas at various levels of elections, based on survey. It discusses the influence of geographical location, economic conditions of family, education, community, religion and livelihood upon the voting behaviour. The chapter also offer analysis of party identification, levels of political participation as well as issues of election among the urban and rural voters.

Chapter VI   :   Implications of Voting Behaviour in Electoral Outcomes at Various Levels of Elections

The implication of the variations of voting behaviour at different levels of elections is discussed in the chapter. It identifies the pattern of voting and influences of voting behaviour across three levels of elections among the urban and rural voters. The chapter describes the co-relation between the voting behaviour and the implication upon electoral outcome which put a candidate, party or parties as incumbent of public office or power.

Chapter VII   :   Conclusion

This chapter summarise the study. It enumerates the concluding observations and findings of the entire study and gives justifications and reasons for the findings made in each chapter. It also highlights the important concepts and aspects of electoral process, theories of voting behaviour, the study area and summary of voting behaviour and pattern of various elections in Mizoram. It highlighted how Mizoram electorate voted within the framework of Rational Choice Model.

Conclusion

The first chapter of thesis offers an in-depth introduction to democracy, highlighting its development, theoretical basis, and practical expression through elections. Democracy is a system that can be traced back to ancient Greek city-states and early tribal societies. It emphasises the shift from direct to representative democracy, which was driven by the need for more efficient governance structures in modern states. The chapter also discussed the importance of elections in democratic governance, highlighting their historical evolution and their crucial role in representing public opinion, ensuring accountability of officials, and empowering citizens to shape government policies. In addition, it explores voting behaviour, which is a crucial aspect of political science that analyses the various factors that impact individuals' voting choices. It explores into different theoretical perspectives on voting behaviour, such as sociological, psychological, rational choice model and Dominant Ideology Model. These models aid in comprehending the factors that influence voter choices and the resulting impact on election results.

This chapter also provides an overview of the research process conducted in this thesis, with specific focus on analysing voting behaviour in Mizoram across various levels of elections. It highlights the systematic approach employed to analyse voting behaviour and to evaluate the factors that impacted voter decisions. The research applied primary data along with a wide range of secondary sources, to establish a strong analytical framework. The study uses SPSS for data analysis to reduce complex data sets into easily understandable insights. The chapter also contained a thorough literature review, which helped to provide context and place the research within the existing academic discourse. The structured research process laid the groundwork for all chapters, and provides an overview of voting behaviour in Mizoram, examining the differences between urban and rural areas and how geographical and socio-economic factors influence electoral participation and preferences.

CHAPTER – II

VOTING BEHAVIOUR: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Voting is a fundamental action in democracies that allows voters to directly participate in the political process, thereby affecting governance and policymaking. It involves the choices and behaviours of individuals during elections in which various factors, such as social, economic, psychological, and political elements are at interplay. Over time, the study of voting behaviour has become increasingly complex, considering numerous factors that influence people's electoral decisions. This chapter seeks to give a theoretical framework for investigating voting behaviour, placing it within the larger context of political science and democratic theory. It explores different theoretical perspectives, which will help in analysing voting behaviour in different contexts.

Elections play a crucial role in democratic societies by facilitating political recruitment, mobilisation, communication, and legitimization. Thus, election process not only determines who holds political office, but also serves as a reflection of the collective will of the people. It establishes a direct connection between citizens and their government. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the factors that influence voting behaviour in order to accurately interpret election results and understand their impact on democratic governance. This chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing voter decisions, contributing to the broader discussion on electoral behaviour and democratic participation by integrating various models and assessing their relevance. It also examined how India's unique electoral framework influences and mirrors democratic practices.

Elections

Election is the feature of democracy and franchise is the most notable medium to participate in political system through elections.[1] The main factor for the interest in electoral research can be attributed to the central place that popular

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[1] Palmer, Norman, D.(1976). *Elections and Political Development: The South Asian Experience*. New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House. p.1.

elections occupy in democratic process. Therefore, the study of elections and electoral behaviour has attracted scholarly interest and acquired importance within the discipline of political science. Most countries in the contemporary world adopted democratic processes as a system of governance and elections forms the primary mechanism of political recruitment, mobilization, communication, participation and legitimization. Accordingly, studying electoral process and the behaviour of voters forms an important aspect of research for political scientists. It involves the selection of a person or a group of people for a post, particularly a political office by voting.[2] In a democratic society, election is a major event. It constitute the most exciting of all political events bringing political reality and even its subdued contours into sharp focus.[3] It highlights the political process and brought the political leadership and the masses of people into contact with each other. At the same time, it strengthened the sense of having value among the citizens and a say in selecting their choice of political leaders and genuine participation in a democracy.

An election is a recognised practice by the leaders of an organisation, whether it be a club, a state, or a volunteer organisation, in which all or part of the members elect a small number of people to occupy one or more position of authority within that organisation. According to the Collins English Dictionary (2009), an election can be defined in three aspects: firstly, as "the selection by vote of a person or persons from among candidates for a position, especially, a political office" (p. 533); secondly, as "a public vote on an official proposition" (p. 533); and thirdly, as "the act or an instance of choosing" (p. 533).[4] Hence, election helps the people in the selection of leaders and in determining issues. It is a formal group decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual or multiple individuals to hold public office.[5] Broadly speaking, election means an opportunity for the voters to hold

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[2] Wehmeier, S. (Ed.). (2000). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English* (6th ed., p. 404). Oxford University Press. p.404.
[3] Iqbal Narain, Pandey, Sharma, and Rajpal. (1977). *Election Studies in India and Evaluation*. New Delhi : Allied Publishers. p.134.
[4] Collins English Dictionary. (2009). *Collins English dictionary* (11th ed.). Glasgow: HarperCollins.
[5] Farrell, D. M. (2001). *Electoral systems: A comparative introduction* (p. 2). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-68306-5. Retrieved on December 20, 2024.

elected officials accountable for their actions or to choose between competing candidates or their policies.[6] It is, therefore, the act or process of choosing a person to occupy an office, position or membership through voting. As defined by Encyclopedia Britannica, election, is the means of making political choice by voting.[7] In the context of democracy, elections can be defined as a process through which the public political opinion is shaped.[8] Therefore, an important requisite of a democratic system is that the contesting candidates should consult the people and act according to the mandate given by the people. In other words, election is a means through which an elected official is informed that a mandate has or has not been given by the people to occupy a public office or for the policies and programmes advocated. Hence, it plays a key role in a democratic polity by giving mandate to elected members to form a government or hold public office[9].

In a democratic polity, the rulers have a sense of impending electoral failure unless they adapt and enact policies that are align with public sentiment. The political leaders belonging to the opposition party diligently monitor the activities of the administration and effectively communicate the deficiencies and weaknesses to the general public. Additionally, they develop policies and activities aimed at garnering support from the populace. Hence, election in a democracy keeps the ruling and the opposition leaders in a constant struggle to establish a favourable public image.[10] It also serve as a means of establishing communication channels between the political system and the broader community, facilitating interaction between the political elite and the general population, as well as fostering a connection between individual citizens and their governing institutions. Election motivate an individual to involve himself more and more in the decision making

[6] Gehlot, N.S. (2011). *India at Fifty Facing Stresses and Strains*. New Delhi: National Publishing House. p.82.
[7] Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. (n.d.). Election. *In Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved December 12, 2023, from https://www.britannica.com/topic/election-political-science
[8] Narayana, S. V. (1984). *District Politics in India*. New Delhi: Ashish Publications, p.120.
[9] Park, R. L., & Mesquita, B. B. (1979). *India's political system*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.P.90.
[10] Sachchidananda. (1976). *The Tribal voter in Bihar*. New Delhi: National Publishing House, pp. 124-125.

process and to identify himself more and more with the political system.[11] Therefore, elections are the major agencies of political socialisation and political participation.[12] It has been observed that while politics is the art and practice of dealing with political power, election is the process of legitimising of such power.[13] And, as a central feature in a democratic polity, free and fair election plays a key role for the success and sustenance of democracy.

Concept of Free and Fair Election

Election is a mechanism for identifying public opinion and ascertaining the will of the people. Therefore, in order to ascertain the will of the people, elections must be free and fair. As defined by Robert Dahl, a free and fair election is an election where 'coercion is comparatively uncommon'.[14] In simple terms, free and fair election means that all people who are entitled to vote have the right to be registered to vote, and to be able to enjoy their freedom to make personal choice without fear or intimidation. Hence, a free election is an election where the choice or preference of a voter remains a personal secret without any outside compulsion. The term 'fair' means that all qualified political parties or individual would have equal rights to contest in the election and campaign for gathering support. A free and fair election involves political freedom and fair processes leading up to the vote, fair count of votes and acceptance of election results by all parties.[15] Hence, free and fair election would imply that all eligible voters have equal opportunity to register themselves, all the votes are counted and the election result reflects the actual votes polled.

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[11] Bhuvaneswaram, M. (2009). *Electoral Participation of Rural People*. New Delhi: APH Publishing House. p.13.

[12] Palmer, N. (1976). *Elections and political development*. New Delhi: K. P. Bagchi and Company. p. 54.

[13] Roy, Jaytilak Guha. (1986). Elections and Corruption in India. *The Otherside*. 10(4).p.5

[14] Dahl, R. A. (2005). What Political Institutions Does Large-Scale Democracy Require? *Political Science Quarterly*, 120(2), 187–197. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20202514

[15] Reynolds, A., Reilly, B., & Ellis, A. (2005). *Electoral system design: The new international IDEA handbook* (p. 12). International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

However, the notion of free and fair election encompasses a number of electoral settings and processes which cannot be defined in a few words. The concept would include even preliminary stages to election such as delimitation of constituencies, preparation, revision or amendment of electoral rolls and many others. Mainly, the concept of free and fair election relates to political liberty and equality.[16] It implies that no one, under the electoral process, is in bondage of another, having his personal rights, social and political liberty, free thinking and choice subjected to a legal discipline. Hence, Kumar (2015) argues that "while exercising his right to vote, one is not under undue influence of party discipline, religion, caste, creed, sex, language and also one is not under the strain of corrupt practices and so on" (p. 114).[17] Therefore, to ensure the purity in elections, there should be election laws covering the entire process of elections with the primary object to create and maintain an atmosphere in which the electorate can choose their representatives by the exercise of their free will without any pressure or hindrance or undue influence from any quarter. The law should extend full protection to the electorates against any fear, injury, fraud, misrepresentation or other undesirable practices, which may be indulged by or on behalf of the candidate at an election. [18] And, such laws must also provide freedom to every person, who is qualified to offer himself as a candidate for election, and all civil liberties should be allowed to him for campaigning his policies and the candidature, so long as he is permitted to do so under the law. The election law must contain equal and justful demarcation of constituencies, principle of one man one vote and the secrecy of voting, a just procedure for casting votes and for counting and declaration of election results.[19] Apart from the presence of electoral laws and civil liberties to the individuals, systematic process of representation and electoral procedure which is transparent and legitimate forms an important aspect of free and fair elections in a democracy.

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[16] Kafaltiya, A. B. (2003). *Democracy and election laws*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications.. p.81.

[17] Kumar, V. (2015). *The right to vote in India: Legal and political dimensions*. Oxford University Press.

[18] Anand Kafaltiya, op cit., p.45.

[19] Anand Kafaltiya, op cit., p.63.

The responsibility for overseeing elections should be entrusted to an independent authority that is capable of operating in a fair and unbiased manner, without being subjected to external influences from the ruling party or executive branch of the government. It is imperative that no other agency or individuals should be permitted to exist under the law.[20] Otherwise, existence of multiple agencies would lead to fragmentation of authority and conflicting jurisdictions that would eventually undermine the rule of law. It also implies that there should not be any encroachment by government or other agency in the exercise of powers and duties assigned to the election machinery under law. In other words, the conduct of election should be left unhindered in the hands of the election machinery. As a necessary requisite, there must be co-operation between the wings of government and citizenry, each of them discharging the duties assigned to them by law. In addition, it is also imperative that any civil authority or government official do not exercise power unless it is authorised by some specific rule of law and the people should obey the law.[21] This principle not only upholds the legitimacy and efficacy of governance but an expression of the Rule of Law, thus, preventing arbitrary or unlawful use of power.

The supervision of disputed elections should also be assigned to some judicial authority who can determine the question whether there has been a valid election on the basis of facts and election law which should contain the requisite qualifications for candidates, the method of voting, definition of corrupt practices by candidates and their election agents, etc. and other cognate matters. The election disputes must be resolved expediously in conformity of the precedure laid down by laws.[22] This mechanism for addressing any electoral grievances is vital for preserving the integrity of the electoral process and maintaining political stability to ensure that election outcomes are respected and that transition of power occur smoothly and fairly.

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[20] Fisher, Margareth,W. & Bondurant, Joan, V.(1956). *The Indian Experience with Democratic Elections*. Berkeley : University of California. P.13.
[21] Pylee, M.V. (1967). *India's Constitution*. New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, p.380.
[22] Government of India Press. (1951). *Manual of election*. New Delhi: Government of India Press.P.52.

Voting

A vote is a measurable commodity that may contribute to a significant change and a modern phenomenon of political life. It is a mechanism of political participation in democracy. The act of voting is a function of choosing a candidate to hold public office or make decision regarding a proposal submitted to them by casting vote in elections.[23] As considered to be the most important and basic element indispensable to democracy, it is an ultimate activity through which the citizens are equipped with the knowledge of politics and learn how to exercise their power.[24] Vote allows the public to choose political representatives on behalf of them.[25] It is a means through which people express and enforce their political opinion and regulate the political organisation of society.[26] Through voting, individuals within a society can exercise their right to choose and appoint representatives who will assume positions of authority in the government for a designated duration of time.[27] In the past, voting was a simple method of political communication. This method was utilised in particular by the people that were part of tribal societies to express their approval or disapproval of specific propositions that were put up by the chieftain. As time went on, this privilege became one that was reserved solely for members of the upper class and the property-owning class. The current state of affairs, on the other hand, demonstrates that political activity is something else than simple political communication. Through the process of universalization of the franchise, it has evolved into a right that is guaranteed to all adult citizens.

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[23] UK Essays. (2015, March 23). *Meaning of voting behaviour politics essay*. Retrieved August 20, 2023, from https://www.ukessays.com/essays/politics/meaning-of-voting-behaviour-politics-essay.php

[24] Desai, Neera & Thakur, Usha.(2001). *Women in indian society*. New Delhi: National Book Trust. P.99.

[25] A.H. Birch, A.H. (1964). *Representative and responsible government*. London: George Allen and Urwin pp. 190-192.

[26] Sirsikar, V.M. (1965). Party Loyalties versus Community Pulls: Poona Constituency. In Weiner, Myron & Kothari, Rajni (Ed.). *Indian Voting Behaviour: Studies of 1962 General Elections*. Calcutta: Mupadhyay, p.3.

[27] Columbia University Press. (1991). *The new illustrated Columbia encyclopedia* (Vol. 23). New York: Columbia University Press. p. 7183.

Voting is the most important and effective weapon that electors have at their disposal in order to choose representatives by casting their ballots in elections. It is a technique of declaring one's acceptance and disapproval of another person or of a proposition, as well as the collective consent and disapproval of others. It has become an act of expression of individual choice in the making of collective decisions. Thus voting is considered a platform for the basic decision making process in a democracy.[28] The decision so made would provide the solution to all of the difficulties and problems connected to the socio-economic and politico-cultural changes that have taken place.

The methods of voting, to a certain extent, may differ based on the aims to be achieved. In certain voting instances, such as those observed in public legislative bodies, specific rules may be imposed. For instance, when the passage of a particular legislation has been required, it necessitates the obtaining of a majority vote from all members, failing which the law may be rendered invalid. In the majority of cases, the approval and proposal process need a two-third majority of the members who are present and participating in the voting procedure.[29] However, Election is regarded as the best method of giving power by the citizens to representatives and vice versa. Choices that the citizens made during the course of election would have effects on public policy, either directly to the government or to the society as a whole.[30] Thus, voting in an election can be said as the most obvious and direct way of mass revolution in which the whole population can affect the government.[31] And because voting behaviour directly affects how representatives are chosen, it plays a significant role in the establishment of governments and helps in understanding the functioning of democratic polity. An individual's voting choice not only reflects their attitude towards a candidate, political party, or proposal, but also has a significant

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[28] V.M. Sirsikar, Op. Cit., p.151.
[29] The World University Encyclopedia. (1994).Vol-12. Washington D.C.: Publishers Company Inc.
[30] Le Duc, L., Niemi, R. G., & Norris, P. (1996). *Comparing democracies: Elections and voting in global perspectives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications Inc. p.362.
[31] Budge, I., & Farlie, D. (1997). *Voting and party competition: A theoretical critique and synthesis applied to surveys from ten democracies*. London: John Wiley and Sons. p.1.

impact on the future of a democracy. The effectiveness and stability of a democratic system depend significantly on the voting behaviour of its citizens.

Voting Behaviour

Voting behaviour is the study of how people vote during elections. In the words of Plano and Riggs, "Voting behaviour is a field of study concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in public election and the reasons why they vote as they do".[32] Thus, the investigation of voting behaviour focuses on how people cast their ballots and how they make their decision. It also entails an understanding of factors that influence how a voter makes their decision. Voting behaviour is, therefore, a political attitude and their sources, party and candidate preferences, the source of political information and the process by which the voter makes his or her political decisions, in all manners of affecting an individual's behaviour.[33] To put it plainly, the primary goal is to determine how the choice of vote is made. Voters are undoubtly the masters of democracy, however, it is very difficult to read the minds of the voters. Among the human differences, that expresses themselves in different ways of casting ballots are traditions, localism, economic motivation, religious beliefs, nationalities, races and sex.[34] Hence, voting behaviour in the society is influenced by many interrelated factors.

While voting is a means through which people express and enforce their political opinion and regulate the political organisation of society,[35] it is also a mode of legitimizing democratic rule.[36] As the focal point of all political activities in a democracy, the study of voting behaviour includes the electorate's attitude towards voting, voting participation, voting choices, and formulation and participation in

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[32] Akhter, Z., & Sheikh, Y. (2014). Determinants of voting behaviour in India: Theoretical perspective. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 4(8). p. 104.
[33] Lazarsfeld, Paul F. (1944). *The People's Choice*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 5.
[34] Grazia, A.D. (1962). *Political Behaviour*. New York: The Free Press. Pp.158-159.
[35] Sirsikar, V.M., op cit, p.3.
[36] Friedrich, C. J. (1963). *Man and his government: An empirical theory* (Chapters 13 & 28). New York. Quoted in Gini, N. G. S. (n.d.). Modernisation in India: Women voting behaviour as index. In V. Grover (Ed.), *Political system and constitution of India* (Vol. 6, pp. 135-136). New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications.

other electoral activities. It encompasses the individual actions that reflect a voter's inclinations, preferences, agreements, views, ideologies, concerns, and alternatives pertaining to the wide range of topics and problems contested during elections. Hence, the study of voting behaviour connotes more than examining voting records, compilation of voting statistics and compilation of electoral reforms.[37] It includes the study of various factors that influence the electorate while casting a vote in election.

The most crucial thing is to get an insight into the voter's decision-making process and determine when and for whom he will cast his ballot. These factors include the voter's mindset, the various influences he is exposed to, his own perception of political phenomena, his opinion of the government, but most importantly, his own assessment of the importance of the vote and the voting activity. The timing of decision regarding whom to vote also depends upon the political commitment of the voters and their identification either with political parties or with candidates.[38] Individuals with strong political commitment often decide whom to vote for early in the election. Those with weaker political commitment tend to make voting decisions later and their choices might be influenced by recent events, media coverage, or last-minute campaign efforts. These voters are more flexible and open to changing their preferences based on the latest information or campaign strategies.

Since the study of voting behaviour is an empirical investigation into the nature of political involvement, political behaviour patterns, motivating factors, and other sociological components that are involved in the election process, it is of profound significance in a democratic polity. Voting behaviour within a political system serves to clarify the underlying political culture specific to that system. It is an indication of the current political ethos that prevails throughout the country. Additionally, Palmer has noted that "elections are particularly conspicuous and revealing aspects of most contemporary political systems. They emphasise and

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[37] Apple, Paul.H. (1949). *Policy and Public Administration*. Alabama: University of Alabama Press. P.168.

[38] Dastoor, Aloo, J. (1980). *Studies in Fourth General Elections*. Madras: Allied Publication. Pp.47-48.

dramatise a political system, bringing forth its fundamental characteristics and illuminating various facets of the system as well as how the system actually works. The political system is on show during an election".[39] The examination of voting behaviour serves as a valuable tool in determining the scope and characteristics of political participation, while also providing insights into the psychological, attitudinal, perceptual, motivational, and preferential aspects of voters. Furthermore, it illustrates the magnitude of support, resistance, indifference, and alienation within a political framework.The complex role of elections in the political system is underlined by an examination of the voting behaviour of the electorate.[40] Elections are complex events that are shaped by various factors, such as socio-economic conditions, psychological factors, and the overall context in which they take place. These factors play a crucial role in determining how elections operate as tools of democratic representation and governance.

In the process of voting, the voter is subject to many influences and manipulations. These factors can be categorised into two primary groups, namely sociological and political. Sociologists have commonly sought to establish a correlation between various socio-economic factors, including gender, age, race, religion, ethnicity, class, occupation, education, and voting behaviour.[41] On the other hand, political scientists have concentrated on the effect of numerous political elements on the voting decision of electorates. These influences include issues, programmes, and policies of political parties; election campaigns; the personality of the candidate; and the charismatic leadership of a party leader.[42] Hence, the voting behaviour of individuals varies from one person to another. And, in determining how individuals make voting decisions and the broader implications for political system, models of voting behavior play a crucial role in the study of electoral and political behavior. They help identify important factors that influence voting decisions, such

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[39] Norman D. Palmer. op. cit., p. 1.

[40] Ball, Alan, R. (1978). *Modern Politics and Government*. 2nd Edition. Delhi: The Macmillan Company of India Ltd. p.128.

[41] Baruah, G. (2012). *Voting behaviour: Analysis of Lakhimpur parliamentary constituency, Assam (1985-2009)* (Ph.D. research thesis). Guwahati University. Retrieved from http://ietd.inflibnet.ac.in/

[42] Ibid, p.1.

as economic performance, social identity, party allegiance, and candidate appeal as well as changes in political attitudes and behaviours over time, reflecting broader societal shifts.

Models of Voting Behaviour

Various models or methodologies have been employed to explain voting behaviour. The scientific study of voting behaviour can be classified under three schools or research, viz., the School of Columbia, the School of Michigan and the School of Rechester as well as the perspective of Dominant Ideolog Model. Each of these models asserts different assumptions on the factors that shape an individual's electoral behaviour.

School of Columbia (Sociological Model) **:** The Sociological Model examines how various social variables affect voting and connects an individual's voting preferences to their affiliation with a particular group. It means that people frequently cast their ballots based on the social group they belong to. It puts emphasis on the importance of certain social characteristics of the electorates like class, race, ethnicity, religion, language and establishes a link between them and the person's voting behaviour.[43] The theoretical assumptions of Sociological Model of voting behaviour are found in three books, 'The People's Choice,' written by Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet in 1944, 'Voting' written by Berelson, Lazarsfelf, & McPhee in 1954 and 'Personal Influence' written by Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1955. For them, when the voters choose among contesting political parties or candidates, though they take individual decision, but the decision cannot be entirely isolated from their social origin.[44] This indicates that the political alignment of individuals is influenced by their social affiliations.

The Sociological Model has its limits and is subject to some criticisms, although playing a significant role in the research of voting behaviour. It is criticised, for example, for placing too much emphasis social factors such as class, religion, and

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[43] Sarlamanov, K., & Jovanoski, A. (2014). Models of voting. *Researchers World - Journal of Arts, Science & Commerce*, 5(1), 18.
[44] Ibid., p.17.

community. It assumes that individuals within a social group will have similar voting behavior due to shared values and norms. However, this approach fails to fully consider the unique characteristics and personal influences that can cause differences in voting behaviour among individuals within a social group. Due to its focus on long term factors like social class and community, the Model has been criticised for ignoring the influence of specific political issues, candidates' positions, and short-term factors that can significantly impact voting decisions.

School of Michigan (Psychosocial Model): The psychological or party identification model states that voting decisions may be understood as a reflection of an individual's affiliation with a certain political party. This concept establishes a connection between the act of voting and the psychological predispositions of the voter, such as their party identity, views towards candidates, and similar factors.[45] Hence, 'The term 'party identification' refers to the positive outlooks made up of identification with the ideology, leaders and the like of a certain political party' (Smith, 2019, pp. 123-124).[46] The model's proponents, Campbell Angus, Converse E. Philip, Miller E. Warren, and Stokes E. Donald, in their works 'The American Voters', contended that people often acquire their allegiance to a political ideology from their families and social environments. Once individuals begin to feel an affinity for a certain political party, they become devoted to it and frequently remain so for the rest of their lives.

This Model presents that voters view the act of casting a ballot as a demonstration of their support for a certain political viewpoint. It partially explains why voting during elections does not always reflect social status differences, i.e., why in some cases people of the same social status vote for the same political parties and why in other instances people of different social status vote for the same political party. This Model determines that voters favour candidates who support a certain political party. Identification with a certain party entails more than just passing votes

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[45] Mondal, P. (2017). Voting behaviour: Various approaches and determinants of voting behaviour. *Your Article Library*. Retrieved March 23, 2017, from http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/essay/voting-behaviour-various-approaches-and-determinants-of-voting-behaviour/31361.

[46] Smith, J. A. (2019). *Understanding political behavior* (pp. 123-124). Academic Press.

for it; it also involves devotion to that party and a sense of responsibility for it. Additionally, social actors evaluate politically significant events using the psychological power of party identity.

The model assumes that leadership ideas and behaviours are universally applicable in a variety of circumstances. However, the effectiveness of leadership behaviours varies greatly since different industries face unique operational constraints and competitive situations that may necessitate diverse leadership methods. likewise, effective leadership behaviours in one cultural or regional context may not translate effectively in another, where social norms and expectations differ.

School of Rochester (Rational-Choice or Economic Model): Rational-Choice or Economic Model is a common explanation for a voting behaviour. It suggests that voting decision is the product of cost-benefit calculations of the voters. The founder and the renowned advocate of the economic model of electoral behaviour Anthony Downs, claims that the voters are propelled by their material self-interests when taking the decision about giving their vote.[47] Before deciding who to vote for, people do a calculation based on the benefits that they anticipated receiving from each political party, with the primary goal to maximise their gains. The voters compares the gains what they earn from the governing political party with the expected gains in case of winning the opposition party.[48] They evaluate the benefits and cast their votes for the political party that, in their opinion, will give them with the most significant and reliable advantages.

The Economic Model of voting behaviour has been propounded by Anthony Downs in his book 'An Economic Theory of Democracy' written in 1957. The assumption creates a clear parallel between voters and consumers, as well as between businesses and political parties. If companies seek to maximize profits and consumers seek to maximize the utility, then, the researcher can theorise in the sense

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[47] Ibid., p. 21.
[48] Antunes, R. (2010). Theoretical models of voting behaviour. *ResearchGate*, 159. Retrieved July 16, 2022, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242653736_Theoretical_models_of_voting_behaviour

that voters seek to maximize the utility of their vote as parties act to maximise electoral gains obtained from their political proposals.[49] The primary point of view is that voters and politicians are rational participants in a market where political power, represented by votes, is exchanged for the accomplishment of political goals.

Since individuals participate in politics for reasons other than personal gain, the Rational Choice Model appears to ignore the elements that influence why people vote. As a result, it has also been criticised for having a relatively poor explanatory power for voting conduct. It has also been challenged on the grounds that voters frequently cast ballots out of a sense of obligation rather than considering the costs and advantages.

Dominant Ideology Model: The Dominant Ideology concept has a significant impact on people' voting decisions. According to this concept, the government, political parties, and interest groups are the main sources of persuasion for the general public. The voters are often found to accept an ideology that is considerate to the interests of these dominant groups and organizations.[50] According to scholars Patrick Dunleavy and Christopher Husbands, the Dominant Ideology Model suggests that powerful groups and organisations utilise mass media to promote topics that align with their own interests, with the aim of influencing the electoral process in their favour.[51] Therefore, under the Dominant Ideology Model, the impact of mass media on voter political preferences is important.

The Model has come under criticism for oversimplifying voting behaviour by placing excessive emphasis on dominant ideologies while overlooking other factors like economic interests, personal experiences, and psychological factors. It may also fail to recognise the power of individuals and voters to think critically and challenge prevailing ideologies, resulting in shifts in voting behaviour. And, in

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[49] Rayon, A. (1972). Two concepts of politics and democracy. In M. Fleiter (Ed.), *John Stuart Mill, Machiavelli, and nature of political thought*. New York: Allenium. P.80.
[50] Tutor2u. (2017). Dominant ideology model. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from https://www.tutor2u.net/politics/reference/dominant-ideology-model
[51] Sarlamanov and Jovanoski, op. cit., p.22.

societies with a wide range of ideologies, the model may face challenges in effectively explaining voting behaviour, as there is no clear dominant ideology.

Voting behaviour is a key area of study in political science, and various models have been employed to understand why people vote the way they do. One such model is the Rational Choice Model. This model assumes that voters make decisions much like consumers in a market place. They assess which political party or candidate offers the most benefits or the least costs to them personally. This model views voting as a calculated decision, where individuals consider factors like personal gain, policy preferences, and even the likelihood that their vote will make a difference in the outcome of the election.

The Rational Choice Model has been used to study the voting behaviour in Mizoram by analysing how individuals make decisions about voting based on a logical evaluation of costs and benefits. It suggests that voters in Mizoram considered various factors, such as personal gain, the likelihood of their vote making a difference, and the impact of the election outcome, before deciding whether or not to vote and whom to vote for. Hence, this Model provides useful framework for understanding voting behaviour in Mizoram, by focusing on how voters weigh costs and benefits. It offers insights into why people in different parts of the state support certain parties or candidates. Whether at the national, state, or local level, the Rational Choice Model helps to explain the rational decisions that voters make, rooted in their specific needs and interests.

Voting Behaviour in India

The development of genuine electoral politics in India, particularly the elections for the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies, has had a significant impact on the development of election studies in India. An examination of electoral processes provides insights into several dimensions of political conduct shown by individuals within a democratic society. The elections that showed this regular pattern of political action became a way to predict the future strength and failure of

the political system.[52] Following the behavioural studies in the west, many scholars, Indian and foreign involved themselves with similar studies of voting behaviour of the Indian masses.[53] The Columbia and Michigan schools have influenced research in India by contributing to the identification of important questions. Party identification, issue preferences, candidate evaluations, campaign effects, and socio-economic status have all been identified as significant areas of study in the field of voting behaviour. Due to the distinct characteristics of Indian society, such as the caste system, electoral studies in India have distinctive characteristics.[54] And, India being a heterogeneous and fragmented society, the problems of social cleavage based on language, religion, caste, class and other variables cannot be ignored.

Although, scholarly interest in the field did not gain ground until the middle of the 1960s. And, election studies did not flourish as much as they did after 1967, despite the fact that general elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies were held on a regular basis until 1967. This could be attributed to the Indian National Congress's dominance in both state and federal politics up until Jawaharlal Nehru's death in 1964. Beginning with the 1967 General Elections, more investigations were conducted and the quality analysis and investigation have improved.

The study of voting behaviour in India began in the 1960's with the publication of the 'Indian Voting Behaviour'(1965).[55]The book was a jointly edited work of Myron Weiner and Rajni Kothari pertaining to the study of General Elections of 1962. It was significant study of elections and voting behaviour in Indian elections since various variable of electoral influence were identified. The

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[52] Kaushik, SuSheela. (1982). *Elections in India: It's Social Bases*. Culcatta: K.P. Baghi & Company, p.4.

[53] Roy, R. (1972). *The uncertain verdict ; a study of the 1969 elections in four Indian states.* New Delhi: Orient Longman. pp.1-2.

[54] Konndo, N. (2007). *Election studies in India* (No. 98). Institute of Developing Economies. p.3.

[55] Weiner, M., & Kothari, R. (Eds.). (1965). *Indian voting behaviour: Studies of the 1962 general elections*. Calcutta: Mukhopadhyay.

work of Rajni Kothari and Tarun Sheth highlighted the role of ethnic loyalties.[56] V.M. Sirsikar observed that caste and religious sentiments and party loyalties were important factors in Poona Constituency.[57] In the study of Punjab, Baldev Nayar concludes that loyalties to religion, caste, factions, kinsmen and political parties influenced voting behaviour.[58] In Gujarat, caste loyalties has more weight than party affiliation of voters. Hence, the study of voting behaviour has bring to light the various influences and determinants that is distinct and unique to the Indian society.

The voter exercises his rights under a constellation of influences including the – advice of a friend, fondness of a particular candidate, his personal whims.[59] There can be no single factor that influence the voter to make electoral choices, in fact, several factors influenced a voter to form an opinion about a candidate or political party. Various variables that determine the voting behaviour of the Indian electorate includes – party identification, groupism, personality factor, issues oriented, religion and community, social status, linguism, age, sex, education, money power, caste and clan, local issues, factionalism, election campaign and immediate variable such as the political, social and cultural events of the election year.

Electoral Process in India

After India attained independence in 1947, the first General Elections to the House of the People or Lok Sabha consisting of 489 constituencies representing 26 Indian states, was held between 25th October, 1951 and 21st February, 1952. It was a giant feat since the country had never experience elections to such a large scale where there were 17,32,13,635 voters in a population with 85 percent of the population being illiterate. The electoral exercise was carried out on the basis of 'one-voter-one-vote-one-value' where 45 percent of the electorate stepped out of their homes to exercise their franchise for the first time. The ability to hold free and fair elections, thereby ensuring peaceful and orderly transfer of power was achieved

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[56] Kothari, R., & Sheth, T. (1965). Extents and limits of community voting: The case of Baroda East. In M. Weiner & R. Kothari (Eds.), *Indian voting behaviour: Studies of the 1962 general elections*. Calcutta: Mukhopadhyay. pp. 13-14.
[57] Sirsikar, V.M., op cit, pp. 35-45.
[58] Nayar, Baldev., op cit, pp. 82-140.
[59] Norio, Kondo., op.cit., p-11.

through the adoption of the Constitution of India, which established a centralized election agency in the shape of the Election Commission to be incharge of all matters pertaining to elections.[60] Since, India adopted parliamentary form of government, whereby elections forms the process of choosing representatives by the people, elections are held periodically in fulfillment of constitutional obligations.

Constitutional Legal Framework

The provisions pertaining to elections are enumerated in Article 324-329 of the Constitution of India.[61] The Election Commission operates under the authority of Constitution as per Article 324, and subsequently enacted Representation of the People Act, 1950. Elections, as determined by Article 324 means, electing members of Parliament and the legislatures of all Indian states and Union Territories, as well as the councils and the President and Vice President of India.[62] The local elections for towns and cities have been delegated to the state governments, which are overseen by state commissioners.

Electoral Laws

The Election Commission of India is responsible for conducting elections in India in accordance with the constitutional provisions, which is further reinforced by laws passed by the Indian Parliament.. The two primary legislations pertaining to electoral processes in India are the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the Representation of the People Act, 1951. While the latter covers all aspects of conducting elections and resolving issues that arise thereafter, the former deals with the creation and revision of electoral rolls. The Representation of People's Act, 1951 set the voting age at 21 and granted the right to vote to citizens of India who resided

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[60] Election Commission of India. (1984). *First annual report 1983*. New Delhi: Election Commission of India. p.2 .
[61] Charles Henry Alexanrowing. (1957). *Constitution Development in India*. London: Oxford University Press, p.214.
[62] Pylee, M.V. op. cit., p.382.

in a constituency continuously for 180 days or more.[63] Elections cover the entire process, from the notification made under Section 14 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, to the results announced under Section 66 of the Act. Even if a poll has already been held and annulled, and a new poll has been ordered, or if the Election Commission adjusts its notification and extends the period for completion of the election, it is an order made during the election.[64] In instances pertaining to elections, if the existing laws are inadequate or do not address the issue at hand, the Supreme Court of India has determined that the Election Commission possesses residual powers as per the Constitution, to take appropriate action.[65]

Electoral Roll

The Indian Constitution requires the creation of a single comprehensive electoral roll for each seat, with no distinction based on religion, ethnicity, caste, or gender. The preparation and revision of the electoral roll is a crucial responsibility entrusted to the Election Commission of India[66]. The Electoral Registration Officers (ERO) are responsible for maintaining the electoral roll in accordance with the provisions outlined in the Representation of People's Act 1950, Registration of Electors' Rules, 1960, and instructions issued by the Election Commission of India. The EROs carry out these activities under the superintendence, direction, and control of the Election Commission of India. The electoral rolls of States are revised and updated before General Elections are held in the State. Hence, an intensive, summary, partly summary and partly intensive and special revisions of Electoral Rolls are an important feature of the Indian electoral system.[67]

In order to conduct a comprehensive review of Electoral Rolls, enumerators engage in a door-to-door survey of electors to facilitate an Intensive Revision

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[63] Guha, R. (2002). Democracy's biggest gamble: India's first free elections in 1952. *World Policy Journal*, 19(1), 95-103. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40209795. Retrieved April 16, 2023.

[64] Representation of People's Act, 1951.

[65] Dube, M.M., Jain, K.L. (1985). *Election Laws and Precedures*. Indore :Vedpal Law House. p-95.

[66] Richard L. Park and Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, op cit., p.92.

[67] Bhalla, R.P. (1998). *Elections in India Legacy and Vision*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd. p.102.

process. The process of Summary Revision, according to current practises, entails the preparation and distribution of a preliminary roll in which alterations such as additions, deletions, and revisions are carried out. Electoral rolls of the relevant state are revised and updated before holding General Elections.[68] One crucial element of the Indian Electoral System is the inclusion of a qualifying date for voter registration. According to the Representation of People's Act, 1950, the qualifying date for determining eligibility for inclusion in the electoral roll is the First of January of the relevant year. Consequently, those who reach the age of 18 years on or before the First of January in that year are considered eligible to be included in the electoral roll.[69]

Composition of the Election Commission

On January 25, 1950, in accordance with the Constitution, the Election Commission of India was established as a permanent Constitutional Body.[70] At first, the Commission consisted of just one person: the Chief Election Commissioner. The Constituent Assembly has enacted Part XV of the Constitution, which deals with electoral processes. Hence, the preparation of electoral rolls, as well as the conduct of all elections to the Parliament, State Legislature, and elections to the office of the President and Vice-President held under the Constitution, shall be vested in the Election Commission, according to Article 324 (1), which provides that the Election Commission shall be responsible for the supervision, direction, and control of these activities.

Article 324 (2) provides that the Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time to time fix and the appointment of these executives shall be made by the President subject to the provision of any law made in

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[68] Kafaltiya, A., op cit, p.86.

[69] Legislative Department, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India. (1950). *The Representation of the People Act, 1950* (Act No. 43 of 1950). New Delhi, India: Government of India. Retrieved on August 23, 2023. from https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A1950-43.pdf

[70] Maheswari, Shri Ram.(1963). *The General Elections in India*. Allahabad: Chaitanya Publishing House, p.18.

that behalf by the Parliament. After consultation with the Election Commission, the President may also appoint Regional Commissioners to assist the Commission, if found necessary.[71] With regards to the structure and tenure of the election agency, the Constituent Assembly decided to permanently have one man, the Chief Election Commissioner, in office to direct and guide the election staff and machinery. This was perceived to ensure continuity and smooth functioning of the electoral mechanism. Other Election Commissioners could be appointed, if needed, by the President, and when such appointment is made the Chief Election Commissioner shall act as the Chairman of the Election Commission.[72] Apart from the Election Commissioners, the power to appoint Regional Commissioners, after consultation with the Election Commission, rest with President of India.[73]

Although, the Constitution of India provided for a multi-member Election Commission, it was left to the discretion of the President to decide whether to have a single or multi-member Election Commission. The demand for multi-member Election Commission has been raised by various political parties on the ground that the Election Commission has been given the power to conduct elections but no safeguard against the misuse of such vast powers is provided.[74] Consequently, by a formal communication sent on the 7th of October, 1989, the President designated S.S. Dhanoa and V.S. Seigell as Election Commissioners, in addition to the existing Chief Election Commissioner.[75]

Appointment of the Commissioners

The Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners are appointed by the President. The duration of their tenure in office is six years, or 65 years of age, whichever is earlier. The Election Commissioners are given equivalent status and service conditions as those enjoyed by the judges of the Supreme Court of

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[71] Fisher, Margereth, W. & Bondurant, Joan, V. op.cit., p.14.
[72] Article 324, Constitution of India
[73] Kafaltiya, A., op.cit., p.62.
[74] Rathnaswamy, P. (2004). *Electoral reforms: Law and Institution of India and the World*. New Delhi: Bokk Well, p.72.
[75] Kafaltita, Anand. Op.cit., p.63.

India. The removal of the Chief Election Commissioner from office can only be done through the process of impeachment by the Parliament.[76]

At the state level, the election process is overseen by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of the respective state, who is appointed by the Commission. The CEO is chosen from a pool of senior civil servants recommended by the relevant state government. The CEO operates under the overall supervision, direction, and control of the Commission.[77] In most of the states, the CEO assumes the role of a full-time officer and is accompanied by a team of supporting staff. The field administration at the District and Sub-Divisional Levels in India is managed by many officials, including the District Magistrates (also known as Deputy Commissioners/Collectors), Sub-Divisional Magistrates, Revenue Divisional Officers, and Tasildars. They are high-ranking officials within the State Governments, who are members of both the National and State Civil Services.[78] The Election Commission employs State Government officials for election-related tasks, appointing them as District Election Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, Returning Officers, Assistant Electoral Registration Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, and so on. They perform their respective roles pertaining to election alongside their other duties. During the period of elections, however, they are available to the Commission, more or less, on a full time basis.[79]

Advisory Jurisdiction and Quasi-Judicial Functions

According to the Constitution, the Commission possesses advisory competence over the disqualification of incumbent Members of Parliament and State Legislatures post elections.[80] Moreover, individuals who have been convicted of engaging in corrupt activities during elections, as determined by the Supreme Court and High Courts, are also subject to the Commission's evaluation regarding their possible disqualification from participating in future elections along with the

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[76] Hegde, R. (1984). *Electoral reforms: Lack of political will*. Bangalore: Karnataka State Janata Party.P.24.
[77] Election Commission of India. (2008). *Hand book for electoral returning officers*.P.10
[78] Section 13 AA, representation of People Act, 1950.
[79] Election Commission of India. (2008).,op cit. P.8.
[80] Dube, M.M. and Jain, K.L., op cit., p.70.

duration of such disqualification. The Commission's opinion holds a binding authority over the President or Governor to whom it is presented. The Commission possesses the authority to reject a candidate who has neglected to provide a report of their election expenditures within the designated timeframe and in accordance with the prescribed legal requirements. The Commission also has the jurisdiction to remove or reduce the length of said disqualification, as well as any disqualifications mandated by law.[81]

Judicial Review

The High Courts and the Supreme Court of India have the authority to entertain relevant electoral petitions in order to challenge the decisions made by the Commission. However, because of constitutional restraint and long-standing custom, the court does not interfere with the actual conduct of the election after it has begun.[82] The Commission is not permitted to independently review election results after they have been announced. Any investigation of election results is limited to an election petition filed in the relevant State's High Court. This provision applies to elections for both the Parliament and the State Legislature. Petitions for the election of India's President and Vice-President can only be filed with the Supreme Court.

 System of Election to Lok Sabha

The electoral process for the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas (State Legislatures) follows a first-past-the-post electoral system.[83] The country is divided into various geographical sections known as Constituencies, in which voters can cast a single vote for a candidate. The candidate who receives the most votes is declared the winner.

Rajya Sabha or the Council of States

The members of the Rajya Sabha is elected through an indirect procedure in which the general people does not participate in the voting process. The Rajya Sabha

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[81] Ibid, pp.11-12.
[82] Kafaltita, A., op.cit., p.83.

is elected by the respective State Vidhan Sabhas by means of single transferable vote process. Unlike many federal systems, the distribution of members among the States is determined in proportion to their population. In the Rajya Sabha, there are 250 members in total. Among these, 233 members are chosen by the Vidhan Sabhas, while the remaining twelve members are nominated by the President to represent the fields of Literature, Science, Art, and Social Services.[84] Members of the Rajya Sabha hold office for six years, and one third of the Rajya Sabha Members are chosen every two years.

State Legislatures

India is a federal country where the States and Union Territories are given considerable autonomy in administering their own regions under the Constitution. The State Legislative Assemblies were created to aid in the management and governance of 28 states in India. In five states, a bicameral legislative structure is observed, consisting of an Upper House known as the Legislative Council and a Lower House referred to as the Legislative Assembly. Two out of the seven Union Territories, namely the National Capital Territory of Delhi and Pondicherry, also possess Legislative Assemblies. Since both elections for the Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha use a first-past-the-post electoral system, the procedures for both elections are identical. States and Union Territories are divided into Single-Member Assembly Constituencies, whereby elections are conducted. The size of the Assemblies varies in accordance with the population. The Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh holds the distinction of being the largest among all legislative assemblies, boasting a membership of 425 individuals. Conversely, the Legislative Assembly of Puducherry is the smallest, comprising a just 30 members. Legislative Council consists of representatives chosen by the members of the Legislative Assemblies and Local Authorities and also by Graduates and Teachers in the State having such a Council. The Governor of the State also nominates certain members to give representation to Art, Science, Literature, Social Service and Co-operative

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[84] Seth, Pravin.N. (1982). *Political Participation of Women, 1971-1979*. Gujarat University, Ahmedabad. p.41.

movement. The elections to these councils are held under the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote.[85]

Scheduling Elections

After the completion of five year tenure, or in the event of the dissolution of the Legislature and subsequent announcement of fresh elections, the Election Commission initiates the necessary procedures to conduct an election. According to the provisions outlined in the Constitution, it is mandated that there must not be a period exceeding six months between the final session of the dissolved Lok Sabha and the constitutionof the new House. Consequently, Elections must be completed before the designated interval.[86]

India is both a large and varied country, hence it is very difficult to select a time period that is suitable for conducting elections across the whole country. The Election Commission, which is responsible for determining the schedule for elections, has to take into consideration a number of different factors. These factors include the weather (during the winter, constituencies may be snow-bound, and during the monsoon, access to remote areas may be restricted), the possibility of disruptions to the planting or harvesting of crops, the fact that schools will be used as polling stations, and teachers will be employed as election official. In addition to this, the organising of an election presents a number of challenges on a logistical level. Some examples of these challenges include the distribution of ballot boxes, the building of polling sites, and the appointment of election officials.

Election Campaign

During the course of the election campaign, political parties offer both their candidates and the arguments that they intend to use in an effort to persuade people to cast their ballots in favour of their candidates and parties. The action that is being described here is called "campaigning." The formal campaign would start at least two

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[85] Sinha, Manorama, (2007). *Electoral Geography of India*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors. p.26.
[86] Section 14, Representation of People Act, 1951

weeks after the list of nominated candidates was drawn up, and it would officially cease 48 hours before the polls closed.[87] After the announcement that elections will take place, political parties publish manifestos in which they outline the policies and programmes they would want to enact if they were to be elected, as well as the virtues of their respective leaders and the shortcomings of the opposing parties and their respective leaders. In order to popularise and distinguish between the many parties and topics, leaflets and posters are disseminated to the public. Slogans are also employed. In each of the constituencies, rallies and meetings are being planned in order to convince, cajole, and excite supporters, as well as to degrade opponents. Candidates make personal pleas and promises of change, and they traverse the length and width of the constituency in an effort to persuade as many prospective supporters as they can. [88]

Model Code of Conduct

The Election Commission of India is widely recognised as the custodian of impartial and equitable electoral processes. During each electoral process, the Election Commission is responsible for promulgating a Model Code of Conduct, which serves as a set of guidelines for political parties and candidates to ensure the fair and unbiased conduct of elections. The First Code was disseminated by the Commission during the period of the fifth general elections, which took place in 1971.[89] Subsequently, the Code has undergone further revisions. The Code of Conduct establishes a set of principles pertaining to the conduct expected from political parties and candidates throughout the electoral process. A provision has been established within the Code that prohibits Ministers and other authorities from announcing financial grants, laying foundation stones for projects or schemes, making promises of road construction, and carrying out appointments in Government

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[87] Section 56, Representation of Peple Act, 1951.
[88] Section 29B, Representation of People Act, 1951.
[89] Election Commission of India. (2001). *Global dimensions of electoral democracy* (p. 34). New Delhi: Election Commission of India.p.34.

and public undertakings that may potentially influence voters in favour of the ruling party, starting from the moment elections are announced by the Commission.[90]

In June 2002, the Election Commission, acting upon the directive of the Supreme Court, issued an order pursuant to Article 324. The order mandated every candidate seeking election to the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha, and the State Legislative Assemblies to submit an affidavit containing details pertaining to their criminal history, assets (both movable and immovable) owned by themselves, their spouses, and dependents, as well as their qualifications at the time of filing their nomination papers.[91] Even though it is intended to foster transparency, political parties held the belief that both the Election Commission and the Judiciary were exceeding their respective authorities. Hence, during the all-party conference on July 8, 2002, delegates from 21 political parties reached a consensus to oppose the implementation of the Election Commission's Order. Once again, the Supreme Court reaffirmed its role as the protector of people' right to access information. On March 13, 2003, the Supreme Court rendered its verdict, essentially reaffirming its earlier ruling from June 2002, which mandated complete disclosure by all candidates.[92] The ruling explicitly states that the failure to provide the necessary affidavit would be regarded as a breach of the Supreme Court's directive, resulting in the potential rejection of the nomination papers by the Returning Officer.[93] The submission of inaccurate or insufficient information will lead to the disqualification of nomination papers, in addition to potential legal implications as outlined in the Indian Penal Code.

The aforementioned directive is a valuable measure in the pursuit of a robust and well-functioning democratic system. It is imperative that citizens possess the ability to access relevant information on those who may potentially serve as their representatives. The Election Commission (EC) has issued a directive to all returning

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[90] Model Code of Conduct, 1971.

[91] Agarwal, J.C. & Chowdhry, N.K. (2000). *Lok Sabha Elections, 1999*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications, p.142.

[92] Rajan, A.K. (2004). *Electoral Reforms*. Madurai: SOCO Trust, p.13.

[93] Wilkinson, Steven.I. (2004). *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India*. London: Cambridge University Press, p.193.

officers, mandating the provision of complimentary access to the nomination papers and affidavits of candidates for public scrutiny. This access is extended to individuals from the general public, as well as representatives from print and electronic media outlets.

Polling

In order to ensure that voting processes are carried out in an equal manner, the timing of polling activities is frequently staggered throughout a number of constituencies. This is done to make it easier for election monitors and security officials to keep the peace and maintain order during the voting process. Polling Day is designated as a public holiday within the respective constituency or State.

The voting process is carried out by means of secret ballot. Polling stations are typically established within public institutions, such as educational facilities or community centres. In order to maximise voter participation, the Election Commission officials make efforts to establish polling stations within a two-kilometer radius of each elector,[94] and to limit the number of voters assigned to each polling station to a maximum of 1200. On the day of the election, every polling station operates for a minimum duration of 8 hours.[95] Upon arrival at the polling place, the voter's eligibility is verified by cross-referencing their information with the Electoral Roll. Certain individuals, such as voters who are deployed outside their constituency as members of the Armed Forces or Government of India Officials, are granted the privilege to exercise their voting rights using postal ballots.

Political Parties and elections

Political parties play an important role in contemporary popular democracy, and the operation of elections in India is strongly dependent on their activities and conduct. While it is true that a significant number of candidates participating in Indian elections are independent, it is often observed that the successful candidates in

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[94] Election Commission of India. (2008). *Handbook for electoral registration officers*. p.9.
[95] Election Commission of India. (2009). *Model check list for returning officers*. New Delhi: Election Commission of India.p.14.

Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections typically align themselves with political parties. The outcome of these elections consistently indicates that voters choose to cast their ballots in favour of a political party rather than an individual candidate. Political parties provide candidates with assistance in organising their campaigns and give guidance to voters in making informed decisions on the selection of government representatives.

Registration with Election Commission

Political parties undergo the process of registration with the Election Commission. The Commission assesses if the party's organisational structure aligns with the values of democracy, secularism, and socialism as outlined in the Indian Constitution, and whether it will defend the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India. Political parties must have organisational elections and have a documented constitution. The Anti-Defection Law, enacted in 1985, serves as a legislative measure that prohibits Members of Parliament (MPs) or Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) from switching their party affiliation, provided they constitute a minimum of one-third of the total strength of the original party inside the legislative body.

Recognition and reservation of symbols

Based on certain criteria established by the Election Commission pertaining to the duration of political engagement and electoral achievements, political parties are classified by the Commission into several categories, namely Recognised National or State Parties, as well as Registered - Unrecognised Parties. The classification of a political party plays a crucial role in determining the entitlements it receives, including access to electoral rolls, provision of time for political broadcasts on State-owned media platforms such as All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan, and the allocation of the party symbol. Party symbols serve as a means for voters with limited literacy skills to discern and associate their preferred political party's candidate throughout the voting process. In the context of national politics, political parties are allocated a distinctive emblem that is intended for their exclusive use

across the entire nation. The exclusive use of a symbol inside a recognised state is only permitted to State Parties. Political parties that are not officially registered or those that are not officially acknowledged have the option to select a symbol from a collection of emblems that are available without any cost.

Election Observers

The Election Commission is in responsible for appointing a sufficient number of Observers with the purpose of guaranteeing the fair conduct of the campaign and protecting citizens' freedom to exercise their voting rights without being subjected to any undue influence. Election observers diligently monitor the expenditures made by individual candidates and political parties during the electoral process.[96]

Counting of votes

Once the polling process has concluded, the votes are tallied in the presence of Returning Officers and Observers who have been designated by the Election Commission. After the process of counting votes has been completed, the name of the candidate who has received the greatest number of votes is announced by the Returning Officer, therefore certifying that candidate's election by the constituency to the respective legislative body.[97]

Election Petition

An election petition may be filed by any elector or candidate who believes that malpractice has occurred during the electoral process. An election petition is not considered a typical civil litigation, but rather seen as a fight that engages the entire constituency. Election petitions are heard by the High Court of the individual state, and if they are found to be valid, it is possible that re-election will be conducted within the constituency that is in question. The election petition may be filed up to forty-five days after the results of the election are declared. The Supreme

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[96] Section 20B, Representation of People Act, 1951.
[97] Section 64, Representation of People Act, 1951.

Court of India has jurisdiction to hear appeals from the orders issued by the High Courts.

Electoral reform

India is characterised by its status as a Socialist, Secular, and Democratic Republic. Following the British colonial influence, India has adopted a system of governance known as Parliamentary Democracy. Within this framework, the conduct of free and fair elections has significant importance as an integral element. Since the year 1952, the nation has observed electoral processes for the legislative bodies at both the national and state levels. The election process in India is plagued by a number of ailments, which encourage the participation of those who have a tendency towards engaging in antisocial behaviour in the political process.

The system remained generally devoid of significant flaws until the Fourth General Election in 1967. The anomalies in its functioning were evident at the Fifth General Election (1971), and they became more prevalent in subsequent elections, particularly those held in the 1980s and beyond. On several occasions, the Election Commission has put up several suggestions and consistently emphasised to the Government the imperative need for amending the current legislation in order to curb election malpractices. The Indian government have established many committees with the aim of initiating election changes.

Conclusion

The study of voting behaviour is essential for understanding the dynamics of democratic participation and government. This chapter examined various theoretical frameworks that support voting behaviour, including sociological, psychological, and economic models. Each model provides a distinct perspective through which to examine the motivations and patterns underlying voting decisions, reflecting the complex interaction of individual preferences and broader society factors. Examining these models reveals how voters' social affiliations, psychological attachments to political parties, and rational calculations influence their electoral decisions.

The Chapter discussed the four models of voting behavior that provided different perspectives on why people vote the way they do. TheSociological Model suggests that individuals' social group ties, such as their class, religion, or ethnicity, play a significant role in shaping their voting choices. People often vote in ways that align with the interests of their group, influenced by their position within the social structure. On the other hand, the Psychological Model emphasizes the strong loyalty that people develop toward political parties, often rooted in their family and social backgrounds. This loyalty leads them to consistently support the same party over time, highlighting the importance of long-term psychological commitment in voting behavior.

The Rational-Choice Model offers a different perspective, proposing that voters make decisions by carefully weighing the pros and cons of different candidates or parties, much like consumers selecting products. Voters aim to choose the option that offers them the most personal or economic benefits. Finally, the Dominant Ideology Model argues that people's voting behavior is heavily influenced by the dominant ideas and beliefs in their society. These ideas are often shaped by powerful institutions such as the media, education systems, and the government, which promote certain values as the "right way" to think. Together, these models provide a comprehensive understanding of the various factors that influence voting behavior in democratic societies.

The Chapter also covers the analysis of electoral framework in India as a pillar of its democratic system, reflecting the complexities and problems of organising elections in a diverse and populous country. India's electoral system is intended to safeguard the principles of free and fair elections, which are critical to the credibility and integrity of democratic processes. The framework is based on India's Constitution, namely Articles 324-329, which create the Election Commission of India as an independent entity in charge of overseeing election administration. This centralised method ensures a consistent electoral process at all levels of government, from the national parliament to state legislatures, allowing for orderly and transparent changes of power. The Representation of the People Act, the production

and revision of electoral rolls, and the execution of the Model Code of Conduct all help to ensure election integrity by establishing clear norms and methods for dealing with electoral malpractices and disputes.

Despite its strong legal and institutional framework, India's electoral system continues to face challenges that put its durability and efficacy to the test. India's diversified socio-economic landscape, which includes caste, religion, and regional identities, complicates electoral behaviour and outcomes. In addition, logistical concerns, such as conducting polls across wide and diverse terrains and maintaining security and fairness in the election process, pose considerable operational difficulties. Efforts to solve these concerns include ongoing reforms and the implementation of innovative techniques to increase voter participation and transparency. The Election Commission's function as an impartial arbitrator, as well as the implementation of measures like the affidavit system for candidate declarations, demonstrate continued dedication to enhancing democratic values. Thus, while India's electoral structure has significant benefits in sustaining democratic norms, it also requires constant monitoring and adjustment to changing political and cultural circumstances.

CHAPTER III

VOTING BEHAVIOUR AT VARIOUS ELECTIONS IN MIORAM

Elections are a cornerstone of the democratic framework, embodying the concepts of representation and participation. In Mizoram, a state distinguished by its own historical and cultural background, electoral processes and voting behaviour provide a fascinating picture of political evolution. Though it is impacted by larger national trends, Mizoram's political activity is firmly anchored in regional socio-cultural dynamics and past events. This chapter examines Mizoram's multi-tiered electoral landscape, which includes national, state, and municipal elections, as well as the various voting patterns that distinguish the state's populace.

The electoral history of Mizoram dates back to the adoption of democratic norms during British colonial administration, followed by key milestones such as the first District Council elections in 1952. These early experiences paved the way for a steady development in political awareness among the Mizo people, who had hitherto been excluded from formal legislative processes. Elections in Mizoram are characterised by the interaction of numerous political forces, including major state parties such as the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Indian National Congress (INC), as well as minor regional and national organisations. This chapter examines the performance of these parties at various election levels, providing insight into the dynamics of party competitiveness, voter alignment, and electoral outcomes. The unique characteristics of Mizoram's electoral landscape, such as the influence of insurgent movements, the role of the church, and the impact of socio-economic policies, are investigated to better understand their impact on voting patterns.

Lok Sabha elections in Mizoram show a distinct blend of local and national political dynamics, with voters selecting candidates and issues that are strongly related to their regional identity and socio-economic ambitions. Historically, voters in these elections have exhibited a strong preference for candidates and parties who reflect the dominant political attitude in the state's Legislative Assembly. This tendency highlights a strategic voting pattern in which the Mizo electorate frequently

backs the party in power at the state level. Voter turnout in Lok Sabha elections has fluctuated over time, with significant participation from independent candidates and smaller parties, indicating a multifaceted political landscape in which personal reputation and local alliances can outweigh national party allegiance.

Legislative assembly elections in states show a cyclical pattern of power shifts between major political entities, driven by factors such as governance performance, economic policies, and socio-cultural challenges. The chapter examines significant elections, including those held throughout times of insurgency and peace, and assesses how local issues, identity politics, and development agendas influenced voter preferences and electoral outcomes. The study also examines how voter turnout and electoral engagement have altered over time, reflecting the shifting political scene.

Local elections, like as those for District Councils and Village Councils, provide a more detailed picture of political engagement in Mizoram. These elections provide insights into grassroots democracy, where local governance and community issues have a considerable impact on electoral conduct. The chapter analyses how traditional leadership systems, community mobilisation, and local development projects influenced voting patterns in these elections.

This chapter provides a full description of Mizoram's varied electoral processes, including national elections and municipal administration. The chapter tries to present a nuanced picture of the Mizoram electoral scene by investigating the historical evolution, party dynamics, and socio-cultural elements that influence voting behaviour. This approach not only adds to the greater discussion of electoral politics in northeastern India, but it also provides vital insights on the functioning of democracy in culturally varied and historically complicated regions.

Elections in Mizoram

In post independent India, with the adoption of Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India on January 26, 1952, six autonomous districts with District Councils were set up in Assam and the 'Lushai Hills District' was one such district.

The District was elevated to the status of Union Territory in 1972 under the provision of the North Eastern Areas (Re-Organisation) Act, 1971 passed by the Parliament of India. The Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory consisted of 30 elected members where two members are to be nominated by Lt. Governor. Thereafter, consequent upon the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement between the Government of India and Mizo National Front leading to peace and stability after 20 years of insurgency, Mizoram was elevated to the status of a full fledged state of the Indian union in 1987 through the 53rd Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 1986 on August 14, 1986. The Legislative Assembly seats were then increased to 40, where 38 seats would be filled by elected members and two seats were classified as 'unreserved'.[1]

The electoral history of various levels of elections in Mizoram is discussed as follows.

District Councils Elections : While the Lushai Hills was under Assam Province in post independent India, there were four elections held. The results of the elections to the District Council is depicted in the Table 1 as follows.

Table 1 : District Council Elections of Lushai & Mizo Hills District, 1952-1970

Year	Political Party	Seats Won
1952	Mizo Union	17
	United Freedom Organisation (UMFO)	1
	Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU)	-
1957	Mizo Union	13
	UMFO	7
	Mizo Union (Right Wing)	-
	EITU	2
1962	Mizo Union	18
	UMFO	2
	Mizo Union (Right Wing)	-
	EITU	-
	Mizo National Front (MNF)	-

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[1] V. Venkata Rao. et al. (1987).Op.cit.p.100-124.

	Indian National Congress (INC)	-
	Independent(s)	2
1970	INC	10
	MU	9
	Independents	3

Source : Mizoram Votes, 2019, A Brief Overview & Statistical Report, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, 2019

As shown in Table 1, general elections for the first Lushai Hills District Council was held on January 4, 1952.[2] There were 37 candidates and three political parties, namely Mizo Union, United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) and Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) in the Pawi-Lakher region contesting the elections. The Mizo Union won the election by winning 17 seats out of 18 seats where the remaining one seat was won by the United Mizo Freedom Organisation.[3] Main reason for the overwhelming victory of the Mizo Union was its manifesto of abolishing chieftainship and the Chief's Council. The manifesto greatly helped the Party to gain support especially from the common people who felt deprived of various social and economic opportunities under the rule of chiefs.[4] With the advent of the Bristish, the Mizo chiefs lost much of their power and were governing their subjects without much regards for their welfare, which posed as a burden for the Mizo people in general.

The number of seats in the District Council was increased from 18 to 22 in the Second Election to the District Council in 1957.[5] The election was a contest among 47 candidates and four political parties, namely, Mizo Union, UMFO, Mizo Union (Right Wing) and the Eastern India Tribal Union. The Mizo Union won 13 seats and has the support of the EITU Party which secured two seats in the election.[6] Even though the Mizo Union secured a largest number of seats by a single party and

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[2] H.C. Thanhranga. (2007). Op.cit.p.102.
[3] Ibid., pp.102-103.
[4] Malsawmliana and Benjamin Ralte. (2011). *Social, Economic and Political History of the Mizo*. Guwahati: EBH Publisher. p.93.
[5] H.C. Thanhranga. (2007). Op. cit. p.103.
[6] Ibid., pp. 103-104.

being supported by EITU party thereby securing altogether 15 out of 22 seats, the Mizo Union, however, did not retain their position of dominance as observed in the previous election since UMFO which garnered one seat in the previous election increased their seats to seven.

The entry of two new political parties, viz., the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Indian National Congress (INC) has a significant impact upon the Third Elections to the District Council held on February 5, 1962.[7] Apart from the Mizo Union, Mizo Union (Right Wing), UMFO., and EITU, the MNF and the INC joined the electoral fray for the first time. There were 62 candidates contesting in the elections, in which the Mizo Union won the election again by securing 18 seats.[8] This tenure of the Mizo District Council is significant as it witnesses the rise of a national political party, the INC, as the largest party in the next election.

Since, 1966, Mizoram underwent a turbulent insurgency movement and hence, the Fourth District Council elections which was due to be held in 1967 was conducted on April 23, 1970.[9] The election was significant as the Congress emerged as the largest party by capturing 10 seats while the Mizo Union could secure 9 seats. The rise of Congress can be attributed with many factors and events occurring in the region. The Congress party, if voted to power, intended to take initiatives for de-grouping of centres and the Progressive and Protected Villages, and promised to work for the restoration of peace and normalcy, solving the problem of unemployment and food shortages, which attracted the attention of Mizo people. The issues and current political events of the day grasp the attention of people rather than the objectives of the Mizo Union, such as statehood for the Mizo people.[10]

The Fourth District Council was dissolved before the completion of its term, since, the Mizo District Council was upgraded to a Union Territory in July, 1971 and

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[7] Ibid., p.104.
[8] Ibid., p.104.
[9] Ibid., p.104.
[10] Verghese, Brigadier, C.G. & Thanzawna, R.L. (1997). *A History of the Mizos. Vol-II*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. p.134.

the inauguration for the Union territory of Mizoram was held on January 21, 1972.[11]
With the elevation to Union Territory status, elections to Member of the House of the
People (Lok Sabha) and Legislative Assembly were held in Mizoram since then.

*Elections to House of the People (Lok sabha)***:** The Lok Sabha constituency
of Mizoram covers the entire area of the state. And the seat is reserved for Scheduled
Tribe. General Elections to the House of the People (Lok Sabha) in the Union
Territory of Mizoram was to be held in 1972. However, polling was not conducted as
the first Member of Parliament from Mizoram, Sângliana who was supported by
Mizo Union party, was declared as Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha)
uncontested.[12] Another instance of a candidate being declared as MP uncontested
was in the Fourth Elections of 1984 in which Lalduhoma of the INC was declared as
MP with no rivals in the elections.[13] There were two elections held in 1977 and 1980.

Table 2 :   Results and voters turnout in the elections to the House of the
                People,1977 and 1980.

Year	Total Electors	Name of Political Party	Name of Candidate	Votes Polled	Total Votes Polled	Voter Turnout (%)
1977	2,04,480	Independent	R. Ro\huama	53,350	1,00,725	49.26 %
		Indian National Congress (INC)	C.L Ruala	37,342		
		Independent	H.K. Bawihchhuaka	8,534		
		Independent	K. Sanglianchhungi	1,499		
1980	2,30,795	Independent	R. Ro\huama	74,430	1,28,321	55.6 %
		People's Conference Party (PC)	C. Vankunga	53,891		

Source : Mizoram Votes, 2019, A Brief Overview & Statistical Report, Chief Electoral
Officer, Mizoram, 2019

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[11] Lalnithanga, P. (2005). Op.cit. pp.33-34.
[12] Ahuja, M.L. (2005*). General elections in India: electoral politics, electoral reforms, and
political parties*. New Delhi: Icon Publications Pvt. Ltd.p.323.
[13] CEO. (2019). *Mizoram Votes 2019: A brief overview & statistical reports*. Aizawl:K.L.
Offset Printers. p. 6.

The election of 1977 was the first election conducted in Mizoram to elect a representative to the Parliament of India since the first MP was declared elected uncontested. However, as highlighted in Table 2, the low voter turnout 49.26 % indicates the apathy of electorate regarding elections as well as the significance of representation in the Parliament of India. The voter turnout in the 1977 elections was also the lowest in all the subsequent elections held till 2019. In the election of 1977 and 1980 R.Rothuama contested and won the two elections by contesting as independent candidate. However, he was supported by the People's Conference Party in 1977 and then continued to win the election of 1980 without any party support base. In 1984, in the absence of any opponent, Lalduhoma of the Indian National Congress was declared elected as Member of Parliament. This election was an important milestone in the electoral history of Mizoram, since it mark the decline of the Mizo Union party and the rise of the Indian National Congress.

After Mizoram attained statehood, the elections for the Members of Parliament to the ninth Lok Sabha was held in 1989 and subsequent elections were conducted as indicated in the table below.

Table 3 :   Candidates and voter turnout in the elections to the House of the People, 1989-2014

Year	Total Electors	Name of Political Party	Name of Candidate	Votes Polled	Total Votes Polled	Voter Turnout (%)
1989	3,91,700	INC	C. Silvera	1,09,571	2,26,146	57.73%
		MNF	Zoramthanga	70,749		
		Democratic Party (DP)	Malsawma Colney	43,667		
		Independent	Binde Basu Chakma	2,159		
1991	4,14,412	INC	C. Silvera	91,612	2,40,595	58.06%
		MNF	Lalduhawma	82,019		
		Janata Dal	T. Sailo	56,491		
		Independent	Chawngzika	4,445		
		Independent	Paul T.K. Dawnga	4,159		
		Independent	C. Thangmura	1,511		
		Independent	Zothanmawia Ralte	348		
1996	4,08,094	INC	C. Silvera	1,26,191	2,96,886	72.75%
		MNF	F. Lalremsiama	1,11,710		

		Independent	Lalhmingthanga	57,690		
		Independent	Lalthlamuana	1,295		
1998	4,42,457	Independent	Dr. H. Lallungmuana	1,06,552	3,05,576	69.06%
		INC	J. Lalsangzuala	1,06,511		
		MNF	Dr. R. Lalthangliana	82,047		
		Bharatiya Janata Party	P.L. Chhuma	8,998		
		Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)	Lallianzuala	974		
		Independent	Zailiana	494		
1999	4,49,406	Independent	Vanlalzawma	1,71,557	2,91,786	64.93%
		Independent	Rokamlova	1,02,898		
		Mizo Democratic Front	Mylai Hlychho	8,444		
		Independent	Rualpawla	4,508		
		RJD	Lallianzuala	2,132		
		EU	P. Saidinga	1,578		
		LS	Lallawmsanga	669		
2004	5,49,959	MNF	Vanlalzawma	1,82,864	3,48,546	63.38%
		Independent	Dr. Laltluangliana Khiangte	1,59,170		
		EU	Tlangdingliana	6,512		
2009	6,29,374	INC	C.L. Ruala	2,13,779	3,25,991	51.8%
		Independent	Dr. H. Lallungmuana	1,04,824		
		Independent	Rualpawla	4,089		
		Nationalist Congress Party	Lalawmpuia Chhangte	3,299		
2014	7,02,170	INC	C.L. Ruala	2,10,485	4,33,201	61.69%
		Independent	Robert Romawia Royte	2,04,331		
		Aam Aadmi Party	M. Lalmanzuala	11,890		
			NOTA	6,495		

Source : Mizoram Votes, 2019, A Brief Overview & Statistical Report, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, 2019

The Ninth Lok Sabha elections in 1989 were the first elections conducted after Mizoram attained statehood. Since then, Mizoram has returned representatives to the Lok Sabha in the successive elections. As illustrated by Table 3, the main contenders for elections to the Lok Sabha were the INC and the MNF. The Indian

National Congress occupies a dominant position in the electoral politics of Mizoram by returning representatives five times to the Lok Sabha till 2014. The MNF has returned a representative two times, and the joint support of church leaders and few political parties has returned one representative to the Lok Sabha till 2014. Apart from the candidates who were nominated by political parties to contest on their behalf, there were candidates recognized as independent candidates. These independent candidates can be classified into two categories. The first category were those candidates having political parties as support base, whether directly or indirectly. The second category were those candidates who does not have any party support base but rely on their personality and integrity to win the support of the people. During the period from 1989 to 2014, two independent candidates, namely, Dr. H. Lallungmuana and Vanlalzawma contested as independent candidates and won the elections in 1998 and 1999 respectively. However, they were supported either by political parties or other social organization(s). Hence, the election results as depicted in the Table shows that the Mizo electorate casts their votes on party lines in the Lok Sabha elections. This fact is further substantiated by the election results where the candidates of the ruling party in the State Legislative Assembly tends to win the elections, while independent candidates who do not enjoy the support of political parties were not elected.

The Table 3 indicates an upward trends in the votes polled of 57.73% in 1989 to 72.75% in 1996. However, the voting percentage decreased in the subsequent elections to 51.8% in 2009 and then shows an upward trend of 61.69% in 2014 elections. Even though, fluctuations in polling trends is observed, the percentage of votes polled shows an increase in polling which is indicative of the fact that, the electorate in general, have increasingly identified the significance of voting in Lok Sabha elections. These upward trends are an attribute of political information articulated through the process of elections, governmental agencies, civil society groups and candidates at the time of elections and between elections. It also implies that the electorate had gained political awareness with regard to the relation between the national and state level politics, since, the candidates who are either nominated or supported by the ruling political party in the state tends to be elected. Moreover, the

surge in the votes polled of 73.41(%) in 1996, which has been the highest percentage till date, can be explained as a direct impact of events and issues that unfold before the Lok Sabha elections. The INC government headed by P.V. Narashimha Rao was faced with a number of scandals, accusations and mismanagement of administration before the elections. It was also plagued with splits, issues, conflicts and factional disputes. Therefore, the election was crucial not only for the INC, but for the BJP and other opposition parties as well as the nation at large. This volatile scenario of national politics has prompted the electorate of Mizoram to go to the polling booth in fulfillment of their obligation to the state and the nation.

The impact of national politics in the state was also observed in the Lok Sabha election of 2009. The election was held after Mizoram went to Assembly polls in 2008 and ended the MNF government to replace it with the INC government. At the national level, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), which was an INC led alliance formed after the Lok Sabha elections of 2004, was mustering support from various political parties and was hopeful to take the helm of government for another term. In this scenario, the voting percentage in the election declined to 51.86 %, which was the lowest since statehood. This low voter turnout was due to the fact that the INC was already ruling in the state, and a significant number of voters assume that the same political party would win the election and form the government at the centre for another term, with or without their votes.

Table 4:   List of winners and vote share in the elections to the House of
             the People, 1989-2014

Year	Winners	Gender	Party	Vote Share (%)
1989	C. Silvera	M	Indian National Congress	48.45
1991	C. Silvera	M	Indian National Congress	38.08
1996	C. Silvera	M	Indian National Congress	42.50
1998	H. Lallungmuana	M	Independent	34.87
1999	Vanlalzawma	M	Independent	58.80
2004	Vanlalzawma	M	Mizo National Front	52.46
2009	C.L. Ruala	M	Indian National Congress	65.58
2014	C. L. Ruala	M	Indian National Congress	48.59

Source : Mizoram Votes, 2019, A Brief Overview & Statistical Report, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, 2019

The Table 4 highlighted that the main contender after statehood in the electoral dynamics of Lok Sabha elections in the state are the INC and the MNF. The INC has returned the most number of Member of Parliament (LS) by securing the seat five times, while the MNF secured the seat two times including 1999 election where Vanlalzawma won the election with the support of the MNF. Analysis of the candidates and political partied performances in the election, as depicted in the Table indicated that two political parties dominated the electoral scene of Lok Sabha elections in Mizoram. And, even though an Independent candidate Lallungmuana won the election of 1998, it does not established that the influence of political parties played a lesser role. In fact, Lallungmuana won the election with the support of Citizen Common Front.[14] He had also won with the lowest vote share of 34.87 % in the history of Lok Sabha elections in Mizoram and defeated his nearest rival J. Lalsangzuala, from the INC with a margin of 41 votes.

General Elections to Lok Sabha, 2019 :

The five year term of the 16th Lok Sabha expired on June 3, 2019 and polling was held on April 11, 2019.[15] The election was conducted simultaneously for Bye-Election of Aizawl West - I (ST) Assembly Constituency, which lies vacant when ZPM leader Lalduhawma who contested and won Aizawl East-I and Serchhip Constituencies and then left the Aizawl East-I Constituency to retain Serchhip Constituency. The Lok Sabha Election was conducted in 1175 polling stations and 15 Special Polling Stations were set up for the Bru refugees at Kânhmun, who had sought refuge in the neighbouring state of Tripura due to ethnic violence that erupted between the Bru and the dominant Mizo community. There were 721 polling stations in rural areas and 454 polling stations in urban areas. The counting of votes was conducted on May 23, 2019, and C. Lalrosanga, of the MNF won the election. The election was significant as the MNF not only formed the government in 2018 by

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[14] Citizen Common Front was a political movement driven by the alliance of the church leaders and the People's Conference Party. The objective of the Citizen Common Front was to challenge dominance of two parties viz, the INC and MNF in the state.

[15] Mizoram Votes 2019, A Brief Overview & Statistical Reports. (2019). CEO., Mizoram, K.L. Offset Printers. p.10

dislodging the INC which had held the reins of government for the previous two consecutive terms.

Table 5 :   Result and voter turnout in the elections to the House of the People, 2019

Year	Total Electors	Name of Political Party	Name of Candidate	Votes Polled	Total Votes Polled	Voter Turnout (%)
2019	7,92,464	MNF	C. Lalrosanga	2,24,286	4,99,621	63.05 %
		Independent	Lalnghinglova Hmar	2,16,146		
		BJP	Nirupam Chakma	28,707		
		PRISM	T.B.C. Lalvenchhunga	13,323		
		Independent	Lal Hriatrenga Chhangte	12,675		
		Independent	Lalthlamuani	1,975		
			NOTA	2,509		

Source : Mizoram Votes, 2019, A Brief Overview & Statistical Report, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, 2019

Table 5 illustrates that six candidates contested the Lok Sabha election of which five were male and one was female. Out of the six candidates, three were affiliated to political parties and three were independent candidates. The three political parties contesting the election can be categorized as a national party, ie., the Bharatiya Janata Party, a recognized state party ie., the Mizo National Front and a registered unrecognized party ie., Peoples Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram (PRISM).

In extent and status of parliamentary constituency, no change was made after the 16th Lok Sabha election. Hence, the parliamentary constituency allotted to Mizoram remains the same. After conducting Special Summary Revision, the final list of the Electoral Roll was published in which there were a total of 7,92,464 electors as indicated in the Table. When compared with 7,02,170 electors in 2014, there was an increase of 90,294 or 11.39% voters. Out of the 7,92,464 elector, there were 4,99,621 votes polled. The voters consisted of 3,88,237 male and 4,04,222

female, while the Third Gender category accounts for five voters. The total women elector amounts to 4,04,222 in numbers where 2,52,218 or 62.40% voted in the Lok Sabha elections.

After the INC administered the state for two consecutive terms, a new government of the MNF was formed in 2018. In line with the trend observed in the previous political scenarios, that election to Lok Sabha were usually won by the party in power, the MNF was seen as a party to send representative to the Lok Sabha. Even though the party did win the election, an Independent candidate, supported by Zoram People's Movement, garnered much public support that the elected candidate could win by a margin of 8,140 votes. Zoram People's Movement is a political party with the objectives of ensuring a new system of management and projects itself as the best alternatives to the INC and the MNF to facilitate change and overall development.

Elections to Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 1972 – 1984 :

In July of 1971, the Mizo Hills District was elevated to the status of a Union Territory, and was inaugurated on January 21, 1972. As a result, significant administrative adjustments were necessary to enable a smooth transfer from the administration of the District Council to that of the Union Territory Government. As a direct result of this transition, the first elections for the Mizoram Legislative Assembly consisting of 30 constituencies[16] were conducted on May 5, 1972, and subsequent elections were held at periodic intervals.

Table 6.   Performance of political parties and voter turnout, 1972 – 1984

Year	Total Electors	Name of Political Party	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Voter Turnout (%)
1972	1,56,898	INC	6	34,421	70.97
		Samyukta Socialist Party	-	1,713	
		Independent (Mizo Union)	21	39,654	
		Independent (Mizo Labour Party)	-	15,195	

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[16] Singh, S.N. (1994). Op. cit.p.173.

		Independent	3	20,384	
1978	2,22,226	People's Conference Party	22	52,640	63.21
		Independent (INC)	4	30,825	
		Independent (Mizoram Janata Party)	1	21,785	
		Independent (Mizo Union)	-	9,847	
		Independent (Mizoram Democratic Front)	-	2,138	
		Independent	3	23,235	
1979	2,43,553	Janata Party	2	21,435	67.25
		INC	5	39,115	
		People's Conference Party	18	53,515	
		Independent (People's Conference Party 'B')	4	22,259	
		Independent (Mizo Union)	-	13,367	
		Independent (Mizoram Democratic Front)	-	925	
		Independent	1	13,182	
1984	2,56,530	INC	20	74,005	72.46
		People's Conference Party	8	66,065	
		Independent (Mizo Convention)	1	23,989	
		Independent (Mizo Union)	-	6,889	
		Independent (Mizo Peace Forum)	-	6,640	
		Independent	1	8,301	

Source : Mizoram Votes, 2018, A Brief Overview & Statistical Report, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, 2019

The political landscape of Mizoram was predominantly characterised by the dominance of the Mizo Union party before her elevation to a Union Territory. This pattern continued even in the first Union Territory elections of 1972. The voter turnout in the election was promising and displayed high level of participation with an average voter turnout of 70.97% and with more than 55% turnout reported in all the constituencies in the first election.[17] The election witnessed the candidature of 125 candidates, where the Mizo Union Party secured a majority by securing 21 seats as depicted in Table 6, to form the government with Ch. Chhunga as the first Chief

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[17] Vanlalhruaia. (2004). *Mizoram MLA leh MP Inthlan Result* (1973-2003) Aizawl:Lengchhawn Press.pp.18-19.

Minister on May 13, 1972.[18] Even though the Mizo Union won the election, it gradually lost its dominance in terms of public support as illustrated by the Table, the Mizo Labour Party and the INC garnered high number of votes posing detrimental for the Mizo Union. The chain of events occurring after the election also resulted in decline of the Mizo Union Party. The leaders of the Mizo Union merged with the INC and two political parties, viz., the Peoples Conference party and the Mizo Democratic Front came into existence. In addition, the insurgency movement of the Mizo National Front was going strong and in full operation with a number of MNF insurgents being imprisoned as well as leaders of the Peoples Conference Party for opposing the INC which was also the ruling party at the centre.[19] In this back drop, the second Legislative Assembly Elections was held in Mizoram.

The Legislative Assembly election was held on May 17 & 20, 1978.[20] As illustrated in the Table , the Peoples Conference Party, with the support of the MNF secured a majority of 21 seats to form the government.[21] There were four parties, namely Mizoram Peoples Conference Party, Mizo Union, INC, Mizoram Janata Party and Mizo Democratic Front, contesting in the election.[22] The Mizoram Peoples Conference led by Brigadier |henphunga Sailo won the election by securing 23 seats out of the 30 Assembly seats. However, crisis within the Peoples Conference led to the withdrawal of support by eight MLAs and the MPC government was eventually dissolved by passing a No Confidence Motion, since the eight MLA who withdrew their support received support from the opposition parties. [23]

The Mizoram People's Conference (MPC), Mizo Janata Party (MJP), The Indian National Congress (INC), Mizo Democratic Front (MDF), and Mizo Union as well as the Mizoram People's Conference 'B' (MPC 'B'), which is a split faction of the MPC party, were the six political parties that contested the election for the Third Union Territory Legislative Assembly held on April 2 and 27, 1979. The MPC won

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[18] Chaltuahkhuma.(2001). *Political History of Mizoram*. Aizawl: David Memorial Press pp.247-250.
[19] Ibid., pp. 256-258.
[20] V.H. Khuma (1999).op.cit..pp.120-121.
[21] Chaltuahkhuma. (2001). Op.cit., pp.256-258.
[22] V.H. Khuma (1999).op.cit..pp.120-121
[23] Ibid.,p.123.

the election by capturing 18 out of the 30 Assembly seats. The MJP won two seats and MPC 'B' captured four seats, while INC secured five seats. The remaining one seat was won by Sneha Kumar, an Independent candidate.[24] The main factor for the victory of the MPC can be attributed to the support given by the underground MNF.[25]

On April 25, 1984, when the Fourth Union Territory Legislative Assembly election was held there were six parties, namely, Indian National Congress (INC), Mizoram People's Conference (MPC), Mizo Convention (MC), Mizo Democratic Front (MDF), Mizo Peace Forum (MPF) and Mizo Union contesting in the election. The INC won the election to form the government by securing 20 out of 30 seats, while MPC captured eight seats. MC won one seat and the remaining seat went to R. Lalawia, an Independent candidate.[26] The INC had won the election mainly because of its manifesto to bring the underground MNF and the Government of India to negotiate for peaceful solution and to restore peace and normalcy in Mizoram. The initiative of the Congress government bears fruits that ultimately led to the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement or otherwise popularly called the Peace Accord on June 30, 1986. As a result of the Memorandum of Settlement, Mizoram was granted statehood on February 20, 1987, which, in fact, was a prerequisite of the Memorandum of Settlement.[27] As a process of transition from the administration of the Union Territory to a State, an interim government was formed where the Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla vacated the Chief Ministership to make place for Laldenga, President of MNF for a period of six months within which election was to be held for the First State Legislative Assembly. The interim government was a coalition government formed with five ministers including the Chief Minister from the MNF and four ministers from the INC.

There are 40 assembly constituencies in Mizoram which are distributed among the 11districts. There are 13 assembly constituencies in Aizawl District, seven

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[24] Vanlalhruaia. (2004).op.cit.pp.40-51
[25] V.H. Khuma (1999).op.cit.p.121.
[26] Vanlalhruaia. (2004).op.cit. pp.52-62.
[27] Nunthara, C. (1996). *Mizoram: Society and Polity*. New Delhi: Indus Publication C. pp.290-293

in Lunglei District, five in Champhai District, four in Mamit District, three constituencies each in Kolasib, Saiha, Serchhip and two in Lawngtlai District.[28] Among the 40 assembly constituencies, Lunglei South is the only constituency open for general seat while all others are categorized under S.T.

The First Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election was held on February 19, 1987.[29] There were four political parties in the electoral competition. However, the Mizo National Party has not been registered as a recognized political party, hence, the party-men contested in the elections as Independent candidates.

Table 7.   Performance of political parties and voter turnout in MLA

elections, 1987 – 2013

Year	Total Electors	Name of Political Party	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Vote Share (%)	Voter Turnout (%)
1987	3,21,557	Indian National Congress (INC)	13	76,152	32.99	71.79
		People's Conference (PC)	3	54,717	23.70	
		Independent (Mizo National Front)	24	84,549	36.62	
		Independent (Mizo National Union)	-	7,688	3.33	
		Independent	-	7,759	3.36	
1989	3,33,894	INC	23	93,561	34.85	80.41
		Mizo National front (MNF)	14	94,763	34.29	
		PC	1	52,813	19.67	
		Independent (Mizo National Front Democrats)	2	13,709	5.10	
		Independent (Mizo National Union)	-	8,251	3.07	
		Independent (Hmar People's Convention	-	1,804	0.67	
		Independent (Chakma Jati Parishad)	-	975	0.36	
		Independent	-	2,614	0.99	
1993	4,01,669	INC	16	1,06,320	33.10	79.97
		Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	-	10,004	3.11	

[28] Mizoram.nic.in. (2023). *Elections*. Retrieved October 29, 2023, from http://www.mizoram.nic.in
[29] Vanlalhruaia. (2004).op.cit.pp.63-74.

		MNF	14	1,29,813	40.41	
		Independent	10	75,097	23.38	
1998	4,45,356	BJP	-	8,448	2.50	75.88
		INC	6	1,00,608	29.77	
		Janata Dal	-	947	0.28	
		Samata Party	-	940	0.28	
		MNF	21	84,444	24.99	
		PC	12	69,078	20.44	
		Mizo National Front (Nationalist) & Citizen Common Front	-	31,190	9.23	
		Lok Shakti	-	774	0.23	
		Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)	-	588	0.17	
		Mara Democratic Front (MDF)	-	7,721	2.28	
		Independent	1	33,200	9.82	
2003	5,32,462	BJP	-	7,823	1.87	78.52
		CPI	-	124	0.03	
		INC	12	1,25,690	30.06	
		MNF	21	1,32,507	31.69	
		MPC	3	67,576	16.16	
		ZNP	2	61,466	14.70	
		Ephraim Union	-	123	0.03	
		HPC	1	2,195	0.53	
		Janata Dal (United)	-	1,864	0.45	
		MDF	1	8,146	1.95	
		Independent	-	10,599	2.53	
2008	6,11,618	BJP	-	2,222	0.44	82.23
		INC	32	1,95,614	38.89	
		Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	-	538	0.11	
		MNF	3	1,54,132	30.65	
		Mizoram People's Conference (MPC)	2	52,222	10.38	
		ZNP	2	51,403	10.22	
		Janata Dal United	-	196	0.04	
		Lok Bharati	-	432	0.09	
		Lok Jan Shakti	-	3,307	0.66	
		MDF	1	4,206	0.84	
		Independent	-	38,684	7.69	
2013	6,90,860	BJP	-	2,139	0.37	83
		INC	33	2,55,917	44.63	

		NCP	-	4,835	0.84	
		MNF	5	1,64,305	28.65	
		MCP	1	35,269	6.15	
		ZNP	-	99,916	17.42	
		Jai Maha Bharat Party	-	29	0.01	
		MDF	-	5,433	0.95	
		Independent	-	1,764	0.31	
		NOTA	-	3,810	0.66	

Source : Mizoram Votes, 2018, A Brief Overview & Statistical Report, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, 2019

As depicted in Table 7 the Mizo National Front (MNF) won the election by securing 24 seats in the Assembly which amounts to 36,62 % out of the 74.80 % of votes polled in the First Mizoram State Assembly election. The INC suffered loss and won only 13 seats which accounts to 30.99 % of votes polled. And, the People's Conference secured three seats with vote share of 23.70%. Apart from the restoration of peace and normalcy in the region, a new political status of Statehood was ushered in through the signing of Peace Accord. This scenario along with the MNF's promise of economic development with a prime focus on agriculture[30] was one of the main reasons for the victory of the MNF, since, economic development was stagnant for 20 years due to the insurgency movement. They promised to address local issues of the day and to implement the terms of the Memorandum of Settlement.[31] Hence, the electorate were willing to open door for the party to take the helm of the government. However, the MNF government was dissolved due to splits within the party and President's Rule was promulgated from September 7, 1988.

The Second State Legislative Assembly Elections was held on January 21, 1989,[32] where the Congress Party won the election by securing 23 seats and the MNF lost the election by winning 14 seats. The split faction of the MNF contested in the name of Mizo National Front (Democratic) or MNF (D) and won two seats and

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[30] Chitta Ranjan Nag. (1999).*Post-Colonial Mizo Politics: 1947-1998*.New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd.p.106
[31] K.M. Zakhuma. (2001). *Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989: A study with special reference to Political Parties in Mizoram*. J.R. Bros: Aizawl. p.238.
[32] Ibid. p.247.

remaining one seat went to the MPC. The election of 1989 was a significant milestone in the political journey of Mizoram since it was the first coalition government in the state formed by the pre-poll alliance of the Congress Party and the MNF(D). The election also witnessed the emergence of identity politics with the entry of Hmar People's Convention and Chakma Jaty Prasad[33] in the electoral politics. The election also witnessed an impressive voter turnout of 80.41%, in which the INC and the MNF occupies a dominant position by securing a vote share of 34.85% and 35.29% respectively. The percentage of voter turnout also increased from 74.80% in the last election to 81.30% in 1989.

The third state assembly election took place on November 30, 1993.[34] The voter turnout reached a notable 80.75 percent. The election was marked by a pre-poll agreement between the Congress party and the People's Conference (PC). After the Second State Assembly election, the PC party opted to merged with the Janata Dal and subsequently change the name of the party as the Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD). The ruling party successfully obtained 16 seats, with a vote share of 33.10 percent. Nevertheless, the Indian National Congress (INC) was able to establish a government with the assistance of the Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD), which secured eight seats in the election. The MNF party secured a total of 14 seats, corresponding to a vote share of 40.41 percent .

Pre-poll alliance formation continued in the Fourth State Legislative Assembly elections which was held on November 25, 1998.[35] A coalition government of the MNF and MPC was formed in which the MNF won 21 seats and the MPC secured 12 seats which altogether was a massive win for the parties with 33 seats in the Assembly. The INC could win only six seats and the remaining seat was won by an Independent candidate, H. Rammawi. However, in a voter turnout of 75.88%, the INC had the largest vote share with 29.77% and the MNF and MPC secure 24.99% and 20.44% of vote share respectively.

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[33] S.N. Singh. (1994).op.cit.p.175.
[34] Vanlalhruaia. (2004). *Mizoram MLA leh MP Inthlan Result (1973-2003)*. Lengchhawn Press: Aizawl. p.89.
[35] Vanlalhruaia. (2004).op.cit.pp.101-114

The Fifth State Legislative Assembly election returned the MNF to form the government with 21 seats securing 31.66 % of vote share. The election held on November 20, 2003[36], put the MNF as the sole party to run the state while its coalition alliance partner MPC could garner three seats. The INC secured 12 seats with 30.09% vote share; while two seats were won by ZNP, one seat each was won by MDF and an Independent candidate Lalsangzuala. The voter turnout has increased from 76.32 to 78.67 percent in 2003. This election was noteworthy since Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) was used for the first time in the State for polling.

The Sixth State Assembly Elections was held in 2008, and the voter turnout was a high 80.02 %. After serving two terms, the ruling MNF party lost the election. In the previous election, the MNF had won 21 seats with a 31.66 percent vote share; but, in the 2008 election, its 30.65 percent vote share could only convert into three seats. In the meanwhile, the Congress party has achieved an absolute majority with 38.89 percent of the vote that gave them 32 seats in the Assembly's 40 members. This election was remarkably significant due to the formation of Mizoram People Forum (MPF), which assumed an important role in facilitating free and fair elections. The MPF is a non-political association initiated by the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram to foster good practices in electoral politics and electioneering process to curb the use of money and muscle power as well as malpractices in electoral politics. The members include various church organizations, prominent civil society groups and all political parties. The MPF have contributed immensely towards electoral politics by making appeals to the political parties and the public regarding good electoral practices and by prescribing conduct for parties and candidates to follow.

The Seventh Legislative Assembly Election held in 2013 put the INC in power for the consecutive second term. The Party won an overwhelming 34 seats and secured 44.63 % of votes polled. The MNF could capture 6 seats while the MPC secured 1 seat in the Assembly. The main factor that could be attributed for the victory of the INC was the economic programme of New Land Use Policy (NLUP)

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[36] Ibid.,p.116.

adopted by the Party to garner voters while strengthening the State's economy. Hence, the voter turnout has also reached a historic 83.41 % in the election.

The results of Mizoram State legislative Assembly Elections indicate the characteristic of a two party dominant system in which political power oscillates between two parties, viz., the Indian National Congress and the Mizo National Front. Hence, this fact is substantiated by the Table 7 which illustrated that the electorate had alternately given mandate to the INC and the MNF since the First State Legislative Assembly election. Even though there were instances of electoral alliances formation when these parties fought the elections with the support of other parties, they occupy the dominant position in the alliance(s). The electoral politics of Mizoram also illustrated the existence of coalition politics where two or more parties supported the dominant parties and governments were formed on the basis of alliance and partnership. The elections have been usually peaceful and the voter turnout has been quite satisfying that range from 74% to 83% turnout. It is also important to note that the electorate of Mizoram are not deeply influenced by national politics which is evident from the fact that national political parties, with the exception of the INC, has not been able to thrive well in the State and has never had an impact to concern. Among the various national parties or parties whose branches have been set up in the State, the INC, however played a key role in the polity of Mizoram, which can be attributed to the contribution given and the role it played for ensuring peace and normalcy in the state after years of insurgency movements. The Table 7 also suggests that the electorate do not generally vote in favour of a new party in elections whether national, regional or local party.

The State Legislative Assembly elections have been fought mainly on local issues, such as, the issues of ethnicity and brotherhood of the Mizo and the 'Zo' people in the adjoining areas, good governance, prohibition of liquor, housing scheme for the poor, health care scheme, unemployment, development and assistance to farmers. For instance, the New Land use Policy (NLUP) of the INC which has been formulated to replace shifting cultivation with a new mode of sustainable model of farming, through the financial support of Rs. 1 lakh to the farmers propelled the

INC to capture 32 seats and 34 seats in the 2008 and 2013 elections respectively. A more or less similar policy of giving aid to farmers and entrepreneurs for start-ups has been devised by other parties to attract various sections of the people. With the prime focus of ensuring development and progress through election manifestoes, political parties compete to attain the people's mandate for the Eight State Legislative Assembly Elections.

The Eight Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election, 2018 :

The term of Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly expired on December 13, 2018, hence the electoral process began with the announcement of election for the Eight Mizoram Legislative Assembly election on October 6, 2018, by the Election Commission of India. Thereafter, election was held on November 28, 2018, and votes were counted on December 11, 2018. The total Assembly Constituencies in the eight districts in 2018 were 40, in which 39 constituencies were placed under seats reserved for S.T. while one constituency was declared as 'unreserved'. Among the eight districts, Aizawl, has the most number of assembly constituencies with 14 constituencies, followed by Lunglei District with seven constituencies and five in Champhai District. There were three constituencies each at Mamit, Kolasib, Serchhip and Lawngtlai Districts and Saiha District has two constituencies.

Table 8 : District-wise number of polling stations in urban and rural areas.

Name of District	Polling Station		Total
	Urban	*Rural*	
Mamit	15	101	116
Kolasib	40	41	81
Aizawl	230	98	328
Champhai	41	96	137
Serchhip	31	46	77
Lunglei	52	133	185
Lawngtlai	17	144	161
Saiha	24	55	79
Total	450	714	1,164

Source : Mizoram Votes, 2018, A Brief Overview & Statistical Report, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, 2019

As shown in Table 8, there were eight districts in 2018, where 1,164 polling stations were set up. Each district was comprised of urban and rural areas where 450 polling stations were set up in the urban areas and 714 polling stations in the rural areas. And for the Bru refugees who were displaced due to ethnic conflicts in 1997, 15 Special Polling Stations were set up at Kânhmun in the state of Tripura. The polling stations were classified into three categories, viz., normal, critical and vulnerable polling stations. A total of 1,132 polling stations were identified as normal while 32 polling stations were declared as critical and 32 hamlet/wards/ localities were identified as vulnerable.

Out of the 7,74,704 eligible voters, there were 3,94,938 female and 3,79,766 male voters, and the sex ratio is 1051 in the electoral roll. The average number of voters in a polling station was 666. There were 209 candidates, out of which 146 candidates were affiliated to political parties and 63 were Independent candidates. The political parties can be classified into four categories, vis., national parties, recognized state parties, state recognized parties of other states and registered unrecognized parties. The election of 2018 stands out with a number of noteworthy electoral features, such as, the introduction of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), distribution of Photo Voter Slip covering the entire electorate and use of Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) for the first time, setting up of an all women managed polling stations called 'Dingdi' and counting halls were set up in each constituencies for the first time, under the direction of the Election Commission of India.

Table 9.   Performance of political parties and voter turnout in MLA
              elections, 2018

Year	Total Electors	Name of Political Party	Seats Won	Vote Polled	Vote Share (%)	Voter Turnout (%)
2018	7,74,704	BJP	1	51,087	8.09	81.54
		INC	4	1,89,404	30.56	
		NCP	-	334	0.05	
		MNF	27	2,38,168	37.69	
		National People's Party	-	3,748	0.59	

		(NPP)				
		PRISM	-	1158	0,18	
		Independent	8	1,44,982	22.94	
		NOTA	-	2,932	0.46	

Source : Mizoram Votes, 2018, A Brief Overview & Statistical Report, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, 2019

Table 9 shows that three national parties, namely, BJP, INC and Nationalist Congress Party; Recognised state parties, such as, MNF, MPC, ZNP; Registered unrecognized party, PRISM, and recognized parties of other state, NPP contested in the election. With a vote share of 37.69%, the MNF acquired 27 seats in the Assembly and hence, formed the government. Even though the INC received a vote share of 30.56%, they could capture only 4 seats in the Assembly. Another national party, the BJP won 1 seat while the NCP could not win any seat in the election. The election also witnessed the rise of a new political party, Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), who fielded their candidates as Independent candidate and won 8 seats in the Assembly. It is also worth mentioning that the national party, BJP, make their entry into Mizoram Legislative Assembly by winning 1 seat. It may also be noted that votes polled in favour of None Of The Above (NOTA) stands at 2,932 or 0.46% which signifies that a good number of electorate had cast their vote to exercise their rights even though they do not support any political party or candidates.

Even though the female voters are more than male voters in the election, there were only 15 female candidates. Since, each of the three female candidates of ZPM contested in two constituencies, the total number of constituencies with female candidates stood at 18. However, all the women candidates lost the election. It is to be noted that only four female candidates had been elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram. While Mizoram was a centrally administered Union Territory, L. Lalthanmawii of People's Conference Party was elected in 1978 and 1979 and K. Thansiami of the same party was elected in 1984. After statehood, Lalhlimpuii of the Mizo National Front party was elected in 1987 and later became the first women minister of Mizoram. In 2014, Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu of the INC won bye-election and further became the second woman to be inducted in the

state's council of ministers.[37] However, she lost in the 2018 Assembly polls. The voting trends of Mizoram therefore illustrates that women stands with lesser chance of being elected than men even though female candidates are seen in almost every elections since attaining statehood.

Pre-Election events

Events before the election were unprecedented in the electoral history of Mizoram. However, timely intervention of the Election Commission of Mizoram led to the peaceful conduct of election. While making final revision for the publication of electoral roll(s) for the election, it was alleged that Dr. Arun T., the District Commissioner of Kolasib District has been making effort for inclusion of illegal Bru refugees as voters. Hence, protests, supported by civil societies in and outside Kolasib District, were organized and violence of intrusion into the District Commissioner's office took place. The issue was resolved peacefully.

Another major issue before the election was the deployment of central security forces in the western borders of the state and the ECI's approval of the Bru refugees to cast their votes in their camps in Tripura. The action of the ECI was very much against the wishes of people. Another instance to be mention, is the allegation of interference of the Principal Secretary of the State, Lalnunmawia Chuaungo, in the preparation for Assembly polls by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) S.B. Sashank. The CEO, S.B. Sashank wrote to the ECI of alleged intervention of the Home Department of Mizoram with regard to the deployment of central forces and other matters in the preparation of election and consequently, Lalnunmawia Chuaungo was removed from his post. This event was quickly followed by protest rally called 'Hnam Hnatlâng', where thousands of protesters gather at the heart of Aizawl city demanding the reinstatement of Lalnunmawia Chuaungo and the removal of S.B. Sashank as CEO The protest was jointly organized by various civil society

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[37] Noor, A. (2023, October 6). Mizoram elections: Why has the state elected only 4 MLAs till date? *The Quint*. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://www.thequint.com/elections/mizoram-election/will-the-mizoram-assembly-polls-give-the-state-a-woman-mla-after-years-of-wait

organizations that resulted in the removal of the CEO and the appointment of Ashish Kundra as the new CEO

Factors influencing the Assembly Election of 2018

Several issues were crystallined by political parties during their campaign and in the electioneering process. It is therefore pertinent to analyse the major issues of the election that have influenced the electorate in the election of 2018. While the ruling INC government defended their notable works and achievements, their performances were tainted by the poor condition of road ways throughout the state. The poor road condition was a major issue in the election since it severely affects the movement of people living in villages, as well as trade, and the commercial activities within the State. The opposition parties took this opportunity as an effective propaganda to influence the electorate in their favour.

The selling of liquor by the adoption of Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control (MLPC) Act of 2014 by the INC government was another issue in the election which the opposition parties such as the MNF and ZPM took advantage to sway the voters in their favour. The church and many individuals were opposed to the selling of liquor in any form, whether controlled or free. The ill effect of the selling of liquor was also established by the Review and Evaluation Committee constituted by the government to evaluate and provide necessary suggestions with regard to its socio-economic impact. The study revealed that the state as a whole did not benefit from the selling of liquor and that in fact, an increase in alcohol related vehicle accidents, criminal cases, deaths and increases in medical treatment due to alcohol related health issues was observed.

Since, the INC has been ruling the State for two consecutive terms, the anti-incumbency role played a divisive role for the party. The opposition parties, especially the MNF took advantage of the dissatisfaction of people with the rule of INC and projected themselves as the party that would deliver the good for the society and the State. This propaganda was further strengthened by the economic development programme called 'Socio-Economic Development Policy' (SEDP),

which has been devised to deliver an overall socio-economic development in the State as well as by providing financial assistance of Rs. 3 lakhs each to eligible beneficiaries of the policy. The assistance through SEDP was to be given to those families whose monthly income is not more and lesser than Rs. 10,000/-. The anti-incumbency wave and the lure of financial assistance was an attraction for the common man to vote in favour of the MNF.

While the MNF could be seen as a practical alternative to the INC government, the party too has had its share of anti-incumbency wave in the past elections. And, even after 10 years of being the opposition party, many people were still disenchanted by the previous government of the MNF, therefore, seven political parties came together to form a political party by the name Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) as a viable alternative to the two parties that had been ruling the State in turn, in the past. Many individuals and non-party men looked forward to this new political party as a crucial agent of change and development in the State. Hence, the party gained momentum and was able to capture eight Assembly seats in the election.

Elections to Village Council / Local Councils

The first election held in the Lushai Hills District was the election for members of the District Conference on January 16, 1946 during the British period. The then Superintendent A. McDonald organized a District Conference to aid and advise him in the management of the District. The whole District was divided into 20 circles and each circle would send two representatives in the District Conference, one would represent the commoners and the other would represent the chiefs. Even though the British did not permit any political activities such as the formation of political party, the permission for the establishment of political party was given by the Superintendent on April 9, 1946.[38] Consequently, the Mizo Union party was formed as the first political party of the Lushai Hills District. The Mizo Union played an important role as co-opted member in the Bordoloi Sub-Committee formed to aid

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[38] Chaltuahkhuma.(2001). *Political History of Mizoram*. Aizawl: David Memorial Press. P.53.

and advice the Advisory Committee on minorities, tribals, constituted by the Constituent Assembly on the eve of Indian independence. The demand of Mizo Union for the constitution of Autonomous District Council was recommended by the Bordoloi Sub-Committee to the Constituent Assembly which, after approval inserted the provision in the Sixth Schedule of Constitution. Exercising the provision contained in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, the central government creates six autonomous district in Assam, namely, United Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Naga Hills, North Cachar Hills and Mikir Hills, Lushai Hills.[39] Consequently, the Lushai Hills Autonomous Council was inaugurated on 26th April, 1952.

In the first election to the Lushai Hills District Council, the Mizo Union won 17 seats out of the 18 seats while one seat was captured by United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO). The first session of the District Council was held from June 23, 1952 to July 10, 1952.[40] And, the first piece of legislation passed by the District Council was the Lushai Hills (Chief Abolition) Act, 1952, which came into effect on January 1, 1953.[41] Accordingly, the powers, rights and privileges of the chiefs were done away and passed on to the District Council. They were reduced to mere figure head. However, they were allowed to function as chiefs during the transitional period before a new institution was formed.

The formation of the District Council changed the administrative set up of the Lushai Hills. After the abolition of chieftainship, the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 (The Lushai Hills Act No. V of 1953) was enacted by the District Council, and was assented by the Governor of Assam on November 29, 1953.[42] The Act gives power to the District Council to form a Village Councils within its jurisdiction. Accordingly, the first election to the Village Councils was held from

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[39] Zakhuma, K.M. (2001).*Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989*. Aizawl: Offset Printers and Paper Works. p.137.
[40] Dr. Sangkima. (1992). *Mizos: Society and Social Change*. Delhi: Spectrum Publications (Guwahati). p.175.
[41] Ibid. p.175.
[42] Ibid. p. 177.

April 23, 1954 to July 7, 1954.[43] Hence, the Village Councils started taking up the management of villages in the Lushai Hills District and each village now became a republic where the head of village was elected for a fixed period. The number of Village Council Members depends on the number of houses in the village. However, the provision of Village Council members or composition was modified in 1970, 1991, 1999 and 2006.

There were only two political parties in the electoral competition, namely, Mizo Union and United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) at the inaugural Village Council elections under the District Council. The Mizo Union won the election by capturing most of the interior villages. The District Council records that there were 315 Village Councils in the District.[44] Before the upgradation of the Mizo Hills District to Union Territory, elections to Village Councils were held in 1957, 1960, 1963, 1970 and 1971.

In the second and third Village Council elections held in 1957 and 1960, the Mizo Union party won a landslide victory by capturing most of the Village Councils. The UMFO which was the only opponent of Mizo Union in the second elections could capture only few Village Councils. The third elections witnessed the birth of a new party by the name Eastern Indian Tribal Union (EITU) formed to fight for a hill state for the Mizo people. The fourth election held in 1963 was significant in the history of Village Councils elections. Two new parties, viz., the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Indian National Congress (INC) joined the electoral fray and captured a number of Village Councils. Their entry into the electoral competition also reduced the strength and influence of the Mizo Union which was able to hold majority of Village Councils since the first elections. The tenure of the Village Council was marked by the outbreak of insurgency started by the MNF in 1966. Due to the armed uprising of the MNF, Mizo District was declared a 'Disturbed Area' under the Assam Disturbed Area Act, 1955, and the Assam and Manipur Armed

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43Ibid. p. 177.
[44] Zoram Hriattirna, October 15, 1954.

Forces Special Power Act.[45] Consequently, the term of the District Council and the Village Councils were extended. When the situation of violence subsides and election for the District Council was conducted in 1970, the Mizo Union lost her dominant position to the INC, which then became the biggest rival for the Mizo Union. And, following the elections to the District Council, steps were taken to conduct the fifth Village Council's elections.

The last and fifth Village Council's election under the District Council was then held in 1971. The number of Village Council which was 422 in 1963 has gone down to 158.[46] The Mizo Union became the single largest party and won 65 Village Councils, which was followed by the INC which captured 40 Village Councils, and the United Mizo People's Party captured 27 Village Councils.[47] The INC had significantly gained ground not only in the District Council election of 1970 but also in the Village Council's election of 1971, since it was perceived as an all-India political party with the capacity to alleviate the enormous hardships and sufferings faced by the people as a result of the armed rising of MNF. In addition, the Mizo Union, which dominated the electoral politics was a regional political party and the people believed that connection and cordial relationship with the central government would entails peace and prosperity.

The new government of the Union Territory of Mizoram took various steps by organizing and constituting different departments for administering the Union Territory. One such department was the Local Administrative Department (LAD), made by the Government of India to manage the working of the Village Councils. And, under the Union Territory of Mizoram, the first elections to Village Council were conducted by the LAD on May 5 and 7, 1975. In this election there were 163 Village Councils and 738 elected members. The second Village Council election could not be held in 1979 due to insurgency movement spearheaded by the MNF.

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[45] Nag, Chitta Ranjan. (1999). *Post Colonial Mizo Politics, 1947-1998*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. p.80.

[46] For the village council's elections of 1971, revision of electoral rolls were carried out and only those villages used as Protected and Progressive Village centres were allowed to have village councils which in return reduced the number of village councils significantly.

[47] District Local Administration Officer, LAD, Aizawl. (n.d.). *Village council election result bu (1954-2006)*. p.17.

The movement led to dissolution of the government of Mizoram with effect from November 19, 1979.[48] However, when the intensity of confrontation between the MNF and the Government of India became less severe, elections were conducted on February 15 at Lunglei District and Aizawl District on February 24, 1982.[49] In this election, the People's Conference Party won 63 Village Councils and the INC won 59 Village Councils. The success of the PC Party can be attributed to the popularity of its leader Brig. T. Sailo who founded the Human Rights Committee in Mizoram with the objective to safeguard the people from human rights violation and to lessen the unlawful activities in the process of addressing the insurgency movement. The third election was held on November 1 & 2, 1984, for 306 Village Councils in Aizawl District and 112 Village Council in Lunglei District. The INC was ruling the state and the election results of the Village Councils were in favour of the INC. This is an instance that Village Council elections were influenced by state politics and the party in power tends to get the largest number of Village Councils.

The first Village Council elections after statehood were held on November 5, 1987. The elections were held for 340 Village Councils in Aizawl District and 112 Village Councils in Lunglei District. The election for first State Legislative Assembly was also held earlier in the same year where the MNF's candidates, who contested in the election as independent candidates, secured 24 seats and formed the government. Hence, the election to the Village Council was conducted while the MNF was in the seat of power. The immense support of the people for ending the armed uprising and fostering peace and normalcy in the state as well as the intrinsic relationship between the local government and state government was evident with the election results in which the MNF won the majority of Village Council's elections. Village Council's elections were then held from 1990 till 2015.

The standard tenure of the Village Council is three years, starting from the date of its first meeting, unless it is dissolved before then. It can be extended or reduced for a maximum duration of 18 months.[50] The Lushai Hills District (Village

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[48] The Mizoram Gazette, Notification No. LAD/VC-1/78/Vol. II/121, the 19th Nov., 1979
[49] Chaltuahkhuma. (2001). Op cit., p. 289.
[50] Section 5 of the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953

Councils) Amendment Act passed in 2014, changed the tenure of the Village Council member from three (3) to five (5) years. Hence, the thirteenth elections to the Village Councils held on April 30, 2015, was a significant milestone since the tenure of normal Village Council term was extended from three years to five years and provision for reservation of seat for women was made for the first time in the election.[51] Reservation of one seat for women was made in a Village Council seat of 3 and 5, and two and three seats were reserved for women in a Village Council seats of seven and nine respectively. Women were also given freedom to contest in the general seat. Elections were conducted for 504 Village Councils under Non-Sixth Schedule Districts to fill the 2154 seats. The provision for reservation of seats for women bore fruits since there were 1237 women candidates, out of which 566 women were elected thereby making the grassroots democracy more representative. The total voters were 3,75,060 and the voter turnout was 67.42 percentage. The election to the Village Councils was held during the reign of the INC in the State Legislative Assembly, therefore, the people desiring better connection with the state government gave 1080 seats to the INC, which was followed by the MNF with 676 seats.

In 2008, three new districts of Hnahthial, Khawzawl and Saitual Districts were created.[52] The people of these three areas have been demanding separate district headquarters for several years. However, the new districts created by the MNF government could not be made operational after the MNF lost the State Assembly polls to the INC. In fact, the promise of an operational district administration for these areas delivered the MNF with electoral successes in these areas in 2018 after 10 years of INC rule. Then, in June 3, 2019, with the creation of Offices of Deputy Commissioners, the three districts became operational. And, with the addition of three new districts, the number of districts rises to 11 altogether. The new districts are under Non-Sixth Schedule Districts and Saitual, Hnahthial and Khawzawl Districts were carved out from Aizawl, Lunglei and Champhai Districts respectively.

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[51] State Election Commission, Mizoram. (2015). *Voter turn-out & results of the general election to village councils held on 30th April, 2015*.p.2.
[52] Notification. GAD., GoM. No. A60011/21/95-GAD/Pt. Dated Aizawl, the 21th September, 2008.

The schedule of election for the Fourteenth Village Council Elections to constitute 558 Village Councils within nine Non-Sixth Scheduled Districts viz., Aizawl, Lunglei, Serchhip, Champhai, Mamit, Kolasib, Saitual, Khawzawl and Hnahthial was published by the SEC on August 5, 2020. In the election held on held on August 27, 2020, there were 6925 candidates contesting for 2454 Village Council's seats altogether in which 1823 were General Seats and 631 were Reserved Seats for women. While the total candidates under General Seat were 5237 there were 1688 women candidates in the Reserved Seat category. And, the total voters of 4,55,706 comprises 2,25,113 male and 2,30,593 female voters.[53] Apart from independent candidates, there were seven political parties viz., BJP, INC, NPP, MNF, MPC, HPC and ZPM, in the electoral fray.

The Village Council Election of 2020 was conducted amid the Novel Corona Virus (Covid-19) pandemic. Therefore, utmost precaution for the prevention and containment of the pandemic during the electioneering process was undertaken by the State Election Commission by issuing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) as per the extant Covid-19 Guidelines issued by the Disaster Management & Rehabilitation Department, Government of Mizoram. With the assistance of Mizoram Peoples' Forum and The Central Young Mizo Association, preventive measures to be prioritised in addition to the existing arrangement on poll day were made. The measures taken for the prevention and containment of the Covid-19 includes queue less voting, Social distancing of six feet, wearing of face mask, records of details of each voter in a polling station, sanitizing of voter's hand before entering the polling station, avoiding the gathering of more than 50 people in the polling area at any given time and safety measures in the use of arrow cross mark. However, the election in eight Village Councils viz., Sawleng, Darlawn Chhimveng, Darlawn Venghlun, Darlawn Vengpui, Melriat, Hualngohmun, Kelsih and Muallungthu were deferred due to the pandemic. Hence, election was conducted for constituting 550 Village Councils on August 27, 2020. However, there were 12 Village Councils whose candidates were declared uncontested and three candidates in the Reserved Seats in three Village Councils were also declared elected

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[53] Notification. SEC. NO. B. 12011/7/2020-SEC/VC. Dated Aizawl, the 25th August, 2020

uncontested, therefore the actual elections were conducted for 538 Village Councils. And, elections for the deferred eight Village Council were conducted on September 9, 2020.

After receiving election petitions, the State Election Commission announced a re-poll to constitute North Vanlaiphai Village Council and Darlawn Venghlun Village Councils. Repoll was conducted on December 10, 2020 after election petitions were submitted by 15 people who cited irregularities and discrepancies in the poll. Out of the seven seats in the Village Council, the MNF won 4 seats, ZPM bagged 2 seats and the INC captured 1 seat. A re-poll for election to Reserved Seat at Darlawn Venghlun Village Council was conducted on February 5, 2021, in which Lalhmingmawii of ZPM won the election.

The number of seats and Village Councils won by various political parties is listed in the table as follows.

Table 10 : Number of seats and Village Councils won in 2020 elections.

Political Parties	No of Seats			No of Village Councils
	General	Reserved	Total	
Bharatiya Janata Party	10	11	21	0
Indian National Congress	452	1592	72	98
National People's Party	0	0	0	0
Mizo National Front	1022	354	1376	327
Mizoram People's Convention	0	0	0	0
Hmar People's Conference	0	0	0	0
Zoram Peoples' Movement	218	50	268	38

Source : Compendium : general Elections to Village Councils, 2020.

The Table 10 above reveals that the MNF won the most number of seats whether General or Reserved Seat by winning 1376 seats which translated to 327 Village Councils. In most Village Council elections, it is observed that the majority of electorate usually voted in favour of the political in power in the state. This fact is substantiated by the Village Council election results in which the MNF, which is in power in the state, won an overwhelming number of Village Councils. Two political

parties viz., BJP and ZPM have been able to increase their influence at the grassroot level, which is evident from ZPM party wining 38 Village Councils and the BJP which won a number of General and Reserved Seats even though they are unable to win a Village Council. The Village Council elections of 2020 were held simultaneously with the Local Council election under the Aizawl Municipal Corporation.

Aizawl Municipal Corporation and Local Council Elections

In the early years of post independent India, the issues of urban local government received less attention than rural local government. It was only in the Third Five Year Plan that attention and focus was given to industrialization and urbanization. Thereafter, in view of the growing importance of urban local government, The Constitution 74th Amendment Act, 1992, which provides for a constitutional status to urban local government institution, was passed and came into effect from April 24, 1993. However, the subject of local government is placed under the state list which imply that states had the discretion to enact the provision of local government according to their needs and situation.[54] In the erstwhile Mizo Hills, the chiefs governs the village with the assistance of village elders called 'Upa' till the abolition of chieftainship in the Mizo Hills District Council in 1954. After the abolition of chieftainship, village administration was substituted by Village Council system and continued after Mizoram attained statehood.

In post independent India, Aizawl became an urban settlement but followed Village Council system in its administration, till the adoption of Aizawl Municipalities Act. Village Councils were formed by various localities in Aizawl however it is pertinent to mention that no proper coordination existed between them in the absence of an appropriate authority. Hence, there is a need to set up a structure of urban governance in adherence to the 74th Amendment Act, 1992, which provide for democratic and decentralized governance for the urban population of notified urban areas of the state, including Aizawl. In addition, Aizawl was selected as one of the urban centres in India to avail the benefits of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban

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[54] Singh, U.B.(2004). Urban Administration in India. New Delhi: Serials Publication. p.21.

Renewal Mission (JNNURM),[55] launched under the Ministry of Urban Development in India. And, to avail the grants under JNNURM, the government of Mizoram, the Department of Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation and the Union Ministry of Urban development signed an agrrement on June 12, 2007, in which state government is binded by the agreement to establish urban local bodies under the 74th Amendment Act. Thereafter, the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007, was enacted by the government of Mizoram and came into effect on April 20, 2007. The office of the Municipal Council started functioning from July 1, 2007, and the First Aizawl Municipal Council Election was held on November 3, 2010. As per the Mizoram Municipalities Act, the Municipality formed Local Councils in every locality within its jurisdiction to administer the local areas.[56] Consequently, the First Local Council Election was held on February 23, 2012.

Within the 19 Wards of the Aizawl Municipalities, there were 522 seats to be filled in 82 Local Councils. There were 1,74,868 voters of which the male voters comprises 83,080 and female voters comprises 91,788. The four parties contesting in the elections were INC, MNF, ZNP and MPC, however the main contender in the election were the INC and the MNF. Out of the 522 seats the MNF captured 269 seats which translated to 42 Local Councils and the INC bagged 219 seats which translated to 30 Local Councils. ZNP and MPC did not win any Local Council but secured 14 and 18 seats respectively. Two seats were won by Independent candidates. This Local Councils election was held while the INC was in power in the State with 32 seats, hence, the INC was gaining grounds in the Local Councils of Aizawl Municipalities which gave support to the MNF in the previous Legislative Assembly elections.

The Second Election to Local Councils was held on April 30, 2015. The number of Local Councils has been increased from 82 to 83 Local Councils. There were 1,92,382 voters with male voters comprising 90,287 and female voters

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[55] Lalrintluanga. (n.d.). Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC): A beginning of new era in Mizoram. In *Urban Panorama* (Vol. X, No. 1, pp. 88). Regional Centre for Urban & Environmental Studies, Lucknow University.

[56] Section 23 (3) of the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007 (As amended in 2009).

comprising 1,02,095. The Election was a milestone in the history of Local Council Elections since the term of the Local Council was extended from three to five year tenure and Reserved Seats for women was introduced. One third of the seats were reserved for women ie., in a Local Council seats of five, one seat would be placed under Reserved seat, and in a seven member Local Council, two seats would be reserved for women. Hence, there were 535 seats to be filled in which the General Seats were 392 and Reserved seats were 143 in number. The political parties that participated in the electoral competition were BJP, INC, MNF, ZNP, NCP and Independent Candidates. There were a total of 1237 candidates in the Election in which seven independent candidates of Mission Vengthlang Local Council were declared elected uncontested. With a voter turnout of 68.35 percentage in the election, the main contender of the election viz., INC and MNF won 39 and 38 Local Councils respectively; Two Local Councils were captured by Independent candidates while one Local Council was formed by coalition and there were three Local Councils with no majority.

The tenure of the Second Local Council expired on September 7, 2020, and hence the Third Local Council Election was scheduled to be held simultaneously with Village Council elections on August 27, 2020. The Local Council Election was conducted amid the Novel Corona Virus (Covid-19) pandemic therefore utmost precaution for the prevention and containment of the pandemic during the electioneering process and on poll day was undertaken by the State Election Commission. However, elections to 24 Local Councils were deferred on account of the Covid-19 pandemic and elections were later held for these areas on September 4 and 10, 2020. The total electors for the 83 Local Councils was 2,18,600 in which male voters comprises 1,01,540 and female voters comprises 1,17,060. The total seats of 545 was comprised of 397 General and 148 Reserved Seats for women, and the voter turnout to elect mebers of the Local Councils was 1,38,915 or 62.18 percent. The number of seats, Local Council won and vote share of various political parties are indeicated in the table as follows.

Table 11 : Number of seats and Local Councils won in 2020 elections.

Political Parties	Seats Won	Local Councils Won
Indian National Congress	124	5
Mizo National front	367	71
Mizoram Peoples' Conference	0	0
Zoram People's Movement	40	2
Independent	14	0
Total	545	78

Source : Raw data of State Election Commission.

Table 11 depict that the main contender in the election were the INC and MNF. Since, the election was conducted while the MNF was ruling the state the electorate gave immense support to the MNF which exhibit the desire of the electorate to have cordial connection between their locality and the state government. The MNF won 71 Local Councils which accounts for a high 86 percent of the total Local Councils while the INC which won the second highest number of 5 Local Councils would be only 6 percent. It can be observed from the table that ZPM party formed in 2018 was rapidly gaining ground and has established itself as a viable political party in Mizoram. Even though the Party won only two Local Councils, it could capture 40 seats which amount to 7.3 in terms of seat percentage in just two years of its existence. In five Local Councils, there were no majority and the Local Councils had to operate through internal arrangements.

The elections at grassroots level were usually fought on party lines where the party in power at the state level exerts significant influence upon the electorate. This intrinsic relationship between State government and local level elections is evident in the local level elections where the ruling political party in the state usually thrives well. Unlike the State Legislative Assembly and Municipalities elections, the local level elections do not have clear manifestoes but usually rely on the manifestoes and agendas declared by political parties at higher levels of elections. The impact of affiliation or inclination towards a particular political party also plays a lesser role in the voting behaviour of elections since, family ties and kinships are an important aspect for garnering votes and support.

Village Council Election under Sixth Schedule Areas

The Sixth Schedule is incorporated into the Constitution of India under Articles 244(2) and 275(1). These articles provide the legal foundation for the provision of the Sixth Schedule, ensuring that that the tribal areas in the north eastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram have certain degree of autonomy to govern their own affairs. The Sixth Schedule creates special autonomous regions called 'Autonomous Districts' and 'Autonomous Regions' within these states. It allows these regions to govern themselves through elected councils called District Councils and Regional Councils with significant powers including making of laws on land use, resources, social customs and local governance, while still being part of the larger state and country.

While, the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council under the Sixth Schedule was inaugurated on 26th April, 1952, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) with its headquarters at Siaha was inaugurated on April 23, 1953 at Lunglei. The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council covers areas in the extreme south of the Lushai Hills inhabited by Pawi and Lakher tribes who were not influenced by chiefs predominantly consisting of Sailo chiefs. They came under the British administration in 1930 and were then included in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. In 1972, when the Lushai Hills was upgraded to Union Territory leading to dissolution of Lushai Hills District Council and the formation of Mizoram Union Territory Legislative Assembly, the dominant tribes of PLRC, Pawi, Lakher and Chakma, were not in favour of the abolition of the Regional Council. Consequently, the PLRC was trifurcated into three Regional Councils, namely, Pawi Regional Council (PRC), Lakher Regional Council (LRC) and Chakma Regional Council (CRC) on April 2, 1972. They were subsequently upgraded to Autonomous District Council on April 29, 1972. After the Union Territory of Mizoram was upgraded to statehood in 1987, the three ADCs continued to exist under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, however, the nomenclature Pawi Autonomous District Council was changed to Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) and Lakher Autonomous District Council

was changed to Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) in 1988 through an amendment of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

Under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, Autonomous District Councils and Autonomous Regional Councils are allowed to constitute Village Councils and Village Council Courts within their jurisdictions. Accordingly, in 1955, Village Councils were constituted under the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council in 72 villages. Then after the trifurcation of PLRC in 1972, into LADC, MADC and CADC, elections for Village Councils were held in subsequent years. In the ADC areas, the local government can be classified into three stages, namely, District Council, Town Committee and Village Council, where, the Village Council forms the lowest level of administration .At present, the are 84 Village Councils under LADC, 62 Village Councils under MADC and 69 Village Councils under CADC.

CADC Elections to Village Councils, 2020: In 2015, there were 83 Village Councils in CADC elections. However, with the formation of five new Village Councils, the elections to Village Councils in CADC was to be held for 88 Village Councils in 2020. Even though. elections were to be conducted in all the Village Councils, polling was conducted for 82 Village Councils, since the MNF party was declared elected uncontested in six Village Councils. In this elections, there were 31,112 voters comprising of 15,724 male and 15,388 female voters. The voting percentage was 86.51%.

Table 12 : Party-wise results of CADC elections, 2020.

Name of Party	Village Councils Won	No of Seats Won
BJP	16	113
INC	0	2
MNF	65	374
IND	3	27
No Majority	4	
Total	88	516

Source : https://sec.mizoram.gov.in/page/press-note-result-of-ge-to-vc-under-cadc-by-election-to-vc-under-ladc-2020

The Table 12 illustrates that Mizo National Front (MNF) emerged as the dominant party, winning the majority of both Village Councils and individual seats. They secured 65 Village Councils and 374 seats out of a total of 516, indicating strong support for the party across the region. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also had a significant impact, winning 16 Village Councils and 113 seats. While they were not as dominant as the MNF, their presence was still notable. The Indian National Congress (INC) performed poorly in these elections, failing to win any Village Councils and securing only 2 seats. This shows a lack of support for the INC in this particular election.

Independent candidates managed to win 3 Village Councils and 27 seats. This indicates that some voters preferred candidates who were not affiliated with any major party. There were 4 Village Councils where no party or independent candidates secured a majority, meaning no single group had clear control over these councils.

Village Councils Elections for Mara Autonomous District Councils : The elections to the Village Councils of MADC were held on April 18, 2023. There were 43,120 voters comprising 20,794 male and 22,326 female voters and the voter turnout percentage was 77.53%.

Table 13 : Party-wise result of MADC Elections, 2023

Name of Party	Village Councils Won	No of Seats Won
BJP	41	232
INC	8	78
MNF	25	160
ZPM	2	13
IND	1	9
No Majority	22	0
Total	99	492

Source: https://sec.mizoram.gov.in/page/ge-to-vc-madc-party-wise-result

The Table 13 depicts that Village Council Elections for the Mara Autonomous District Council in 2023 resulted in a clear victory for the BJP

(Bharatiya Janata Party), which emerged as the most successful party by winning 41 Village Councils and securing a total of 232 seats. The Mizo National Front (MNF) also performed well, coming in second with 25 Village Councils and 160 seats. The Indian National Congress (INC) had a more modest showing, winning 8 Village Councils and 78 seats. The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) and Independent candidates had a minimal impact on the elections, with the ZPM winning 2 Village Councils and 13 seats, and Independents securing 1 Village Council and 9 seats. Notably, in 22 Village Councils, no single party won a majority. In total, 99 Village Councils with 492 seats were contested in this election.

LADC Elections to Village Councils, 2020: Village Councils elections to Lai Autonomous District Councils were held on May 8, 2019. There were 50,709 voters comprising 24,883 male and 25,709 female voters and the voter turnout percentage was 75%.

Table 14 : Party-wise result of Village Councils elections to LADC.

Name of Party	Village Councils Won	No of Seats Won
BJP	0	0
INC	14	119
MNF	63	301
IND	4	45
Draw	13	
No Majority	1	
Total	95	465

Source: https://sec.mizoram.gov.in/page/partywise-ladc

The Village Council Elections to the Lai Autonomous District Council in 2023, as shon by Table 14, were decisively won by the Mizo National Front (MNF), which emerged as the dominant party, securing 63 out of 95 Village Councils and winning 301 out of 465 seats. The Indian National Congress (INC) followed as the main competitor, winning 14 Village Councils and 119 seats. Independent candidates (IND) also had a presence, securing 4 Village Councils and 45 seats, though their impact was less significant compared to the major parties. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) performed poorly, failing to win any Village Councils or seats. Additionally,

there were 13 Village Councils where the results ended in a draw, and 1 Village Council where no party achieved a majority, indicating closely contested races in certain areas. Overall, the MNF's strong performance solidified its position as the leading political force in these elections, with the INC as the primary opposition.

Conclusion

This chapter examines how elections have developed in Mizoram, starting from the time when the British ruled and continuing to today's strong democratic system. The election process is varied and includes national, state, and local elections, each shaped by different social and political factors. At the national level, the Lok Sabha elections in Mizoram show a unique mix of local identity and national issues, where regional hopes and goals strongly influence how people vote. Voters often prefer candidates and political parties that align with the main political views at the state level. This shows a strategic approach to voting, where people prioritize regional representation even in the national elections.

Mizoram's Legislative Assembly elections at the state level are marked by periodic changes of power between the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Mizo National Front (MNF). The elections highlight the electorate's sensitivity to the effectiveness of governance, socio-economic policies, and the overall socio-cultural environment. The analysis demonstrates that voter preferences and electoral outcomes are highly influenced by local concerns, including those related to governance, identity politics, and development objectives. The historical circumstances of insurgency and peace, along with the changing political situations, additionally influence the character of political rivalry and voter involvement in these elections.

Local elections, such as District and Village Councils, offer a more profound understanding of grassroots democracy in Mizoram. The elections underscore the crucial significance of local governance institutions in influencing voting behaviour. The chapter explores the impact of conventional leadership structures, community mobilisation, and localised development projects on electoral behaviour at this level.

The level of voter turnout and involvement in local elections serves as an indicator of the extent to which the community actively participates and the electorate's dedication to tackling urgent and concrete concerns that have a direct impact on their everyday life.

The INC and MNF political parties in Mizoram have a crucial impact on voting behaviour in elections at all levels, showcasing their tremendous power. The chapter delves into the competitive dynamics among these prominent parties and other regional and national parties, analysing their strategies, alliances, and electoral outcomes. The data indicates that regional parties and local political dynamics have a greater influence on the political landscape, although national parties also have a role. Voters frequently support parties that pledge to bring about development, stability, and socio-economic advancement.

Ultimately, the chapter highlights the intricate and abundant nature of Mizoram's election procedures, characterised by the interaction of historical, socio-cultural, and political elements. The state's voting patterns demonstrate a discerning public that balances regional loyalty with national political tendencies, showcasing a subtle comprehension of their democratic obligations. An in-depth analysis of different levels of elections, the significance of political parties, and the determinants of voting behaviour enhances our comprehension of electoral politics in northeastern India. This research provides valuable perspectives on the functioning of democracy in culturally diverse and historically intricate areas.

CHAPTER – IV

COMPARISION OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR

AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF ELECTIONS

Comprehending the voting pattern of citizens at all levels of elections, be it national (Lok Sabha), state (State Legislative Assembly), or local (Local Council and Village Council), is crucial for understanding the complex nature of India's democratic system. This research not only discloses the electorate's varied choices, but it also highlights the diverse sociopolitical forces that defined India's federal system. At the national level, elections determine the country's leadership and the direction of primary legislative goals, which are frequently dominated by large national problems including economic policies, defense, and foreign relations.

State level elections provide a middle ground in which regional problems prevail and the electorate gains a better understanding of the impact of state policies on daily life. These elections play an important role in establishing the regional political scene, and they are impacted by local mood, regional parties, and state-specific socio-economic realities. Local elections are direct representations of grassroots objectives and the efficacy of local governance. These elections are often focused on relatively local issues such as water supply, sanitation, road maintenance, and local economic growth. Voter behaviour at this level is frequently influenced by urgent needs and the performance of state officials.

This chapter compared various electoral behaviours of the three levels of election in Mizoram, combining quantitative data and qualitative evaluations. The study intends to provide useful insights on the efficacy of electoral processes, the accountability of elected representatives, and overall health of democracy in India by examining the motivations, influences, and engagement that shaped voter behaviour at each level.

Analysis of Lok Sabha (House of The People) Election

The Lok Sabha or House of the People elections, which is the world's largest democratic exercise, is crucial to India's administration and democracy. These elections not only determine the composition and leadership of the government, but also reflect the country's diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. The study of voting behaviour during these elections provides important insights on shifts in public opinion, regional variances, and the effectiveness of political campaigns.

Studying voter turnout and preferences helps one understand how engaged people are in politics as well as the health of democracy. Factors like political knowledge, voter education, and satisfaction with democracy affect how people vote. Voting behavior reflects how different groups, based on income, education, caste, religion, and location, participate in politics. This analysis helps identify key factors influencing elections, such as unemployment, inflation, social justice, and public policy effectiveness. The Lok Sabha elections in India provide insights into the country's democratic health and political environment, and examining voting behavior in these elections helps understand both immediate results and broader social and political trends.

Mizoram represents a unique demographic and cultural entity within India, predominantly inhabited by tribal communities. Analyzing its voting patterns can provide insights into how regional and ethnic minority interests are represented and addressed in the national legislative framework. The electoral choices of voters in Mizoram can indicate their responses to central and state government policies, especially those impacting regional issues such as ethnic issues, welfare schemes and economic development. Thus, studying the voting behavior of Mizoram in the Lok Sabha elections holds significant importance.

In this study, a series of detailed survey tables is employed to interpret the patterns and dynamics of voting behavior in Mizoram. Analysis of the data uncovers underlying trends and factors that influenced electoral outcomes in the region, providing valuable insights into the political landscape of Mizoram. These tables are

designed and grouped into four categories : Voting Behaviour and Decision Making, Influence and Sources of Information, Election and Candidate Preferences and, Political Engagement and Participation, to capture a comprehensive picture of voter preferences and electoral participation.

1. *Voting behavior and decision-making*

Understanding how individuals in a society make choices that collectively shaped their governance and political environment is a crucial aspect in the study of voting behaviour. Hence, the classification 'Voting Behaviour and Decision Making' is made to explore the psychological, socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors that influence how and why people decide to vote a certain way.

Table 1.1 :   Whether voted in the Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) election of 2019?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Yes	145	83.8
2.	No	28	16.2
3.	**Total**	**173**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

The Table 1.1 primarily examined the level of involvement at the national level election ie., the Lok Sabha elections of 2019 in India. It involved 173 out of the 176 intended respondents, indicating a commendable response rate of roughly 97.74%. The findings indicated that 83.8% of the respondents said that they had voted, and 16.2% reported not voting. A small number of respondents choose to withhold their voting preference, citing their entitlement to privacy. The data suggests that the proportion of survey respondents who voted was much higher (83.8%) than the overall national voter turnout of 67.4%. This implies that the voters are more politically engaged or informed.

This phenomenon indicate that people having higher education, are more aware of their civic responsibilities, or are influenced by other related social,

economic, and political factors that are often associated with an increase in voter turnout

Table 1.2 : Most important opinion shaping voting choice in the Lok Sabha election?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Husband / Wife	4	2.3
2.	Family members	32	18.5
3.	Religious leaders	3	1.7
4.	Friends/Neighbours	3	1.7
5.	Colleague	5	2.9
6.	I decide on my own	125	72.3
7.	**Total**	**173**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

This Table 1.3 surveys the factors that influenced voting decisions in the Lok Sabha elections, providing a comprehensive examination of how personal, familial, and societal factors affect voter behaviour.

A significant 72.3% of people say they make their own voting decisions, showing they prefer to decide for themselves. This suggests that many voters strongly believe in having personal control over their voting choices. The table also shows that 18.5% of people are influenced by their family, highlighting how important family bonds and shared beliefs can be in shaping political decisions. This implies that voting behavior can be affected by traditional beliefs and close family ties.

Colleagues, spouses, and friends or neighbours have a negligible impact on social ties, which is worth mentioning. The little impact of religious leaders (1.7%) suggests that in this election, traditional and religious authority have limited influence on voting choices.

The survey's findings indicate a shift towards voting independence, possibly because they have better education and more access to different sources of information, makings them less dependent on traditional influencers. The research

also highlights that while voter choices in Lok Sabha elections are mainly based on personal decisions, family can still play a role in influencing them. Additionally, the reduced impact of religion and social groups points to a trend towards more secular and independent political participation.

Table 1.3 : Whether the same party will be voted in the next Lok Sabha election?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Yes	101	62.0
2.	No	62	38.0
3.	**Total**	**163**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

An insight into voter loyalty and the long-term value of political support for different parties among the public at the national level election by asking if respondents intend to continue supporting the same political party in the next Lok Sabha elections as they have in previous elections.

The data in the Table 1.4 shows that 62% of the respondents (101 out of 163) stated their intention to vote for the same political party in the upcoming elections. By comparison, 38% of the respondents (62 out of 163) expressed their intention to change their party allegiance in the future elections. This group represents a substantial minority that could influence the outcome of the election if their numbers and viewpoints are represented in larger voting populations. This data also indicate that a significant portion of the electorate was open to considering other choices, possibly indicating dissatisfaction or a desire for change.

The table shows that most people in the surveyed group tend to remain loyal with their current political party, which suggests that they are likely to continue supporting it. This would be a positive sign for political parties, indicating that they have strong and loyal supporters. The loyalty of these supporters might come from their positive evaluation of the government's performance, effective communication of its achievements, or alignment with their personal or shared beliefs.

2. *Influence and sources of political information*

The study of 'Influence and Sources of Political Information' is crucial for understanding voting behavior because it examines how voters are informed and influenced in their political decisions. This area explores the various channels through which people receive political information, such as media, social networks, educational institutions, and political campaigns.

Table 2.1 : Primary source of election information among media channels in the Lok Sabha election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Pamphlet	9	5.2
2.	Magazine	5	2.9
3.	Radio	3	1.7
4.	TV programme	23	13.4
5.	Website	2	1.2
6.	Whatsapp / Facebook / Instagram	50	29.1
7.	YouTube	80	46.5
8.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

The survey question asks the respondents to identify the media channel they will recognise as the main source of electoral information in the Lok Sabha election. The objective is to determine the media platforms that respondents prefer the most for acquiring information on the Lok Sabha elections.

The Table 2.1 above put forward that YouTube is the prevailing media channel, with 80 replies accounting for 46.5%. Social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook, and Instagram, which received 50 responses (29.1%), are the second most favoured option. TV programmes (23 replies, 13.4%) continues to be relevant, although to a lesser degree than digital platforms. Other mediums such as pamphlets, magazines, radio, and internet exhibit significantly lower preference rates, indicating that they were not the main sources of election information for the majority of voters in the sampled population.

The strong preference for YouTube shows that it was the most effective way to share election-related information with people. This is because YouTube is widely available and more people are watching videos online. Along with social networking sites, which are the second most popular choice, these platforms are now part of everyday life and are used for quick news updates, showing that people rely on social media for immediate and easy-to-access information. However, this also brings up concerns about spreading false or misleading information because the content on these platforms is not always well-regulated. The decrease in the use of traditional print media and radio highlights a shift towards digital content, driven by the ease of access and the fast sharing and consumption of information.

Table 2.2 : Political activities exerting the greatest influence on voting decision in the Lok Sabha election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Election campaign	47	27.3
2.	Party meetings / rallies	7	4.1
3.	Door to door canvasing	16	9.3
4.	Joint Platform Campaign	29	16.9
5.	Media	73	42.4
6.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

Engagement of media had the most significant influence at the national level elections, as reported by 42.4% of respondents portrayed by Table 2.2. Engagement of media channels is indeed a significant political activity since it provides platforms to disseminate or acquire electoral information, take part in discussions and influence others or be influenced by others. According to 27.3% of the respondents, election campaigns which usually consist of a combination of speeches, manifestos, and personal interactions by the politicians, establishing a direct link with voters were the second most influential factor. This indicates that around one-third of the respondents considered conventional campaigning techniques such as road-side campaign, press release, etc., to have a significant impact on their vote choice. Party

gatherings and rallies appear to have minimal influence, since just 4.1% of voters perceive them as a major issue. This suggests that voters might be seeking more intimate or direct methods of involvement than what was commonly provided at such events.

Door-to-door canvassing that involved interpersonal interaction had a significant impact with 9.3%. The joint platform campaign, which included participation from many parties or candidates, had an impact on 16.9% of the electorate. This campaign programme is significant since campaign activities are regulated and monitored by the Mizoram People Forum (MPF), which take up the task of facilitating free and fair election while adhering to the Model Code of Conduct in elections. They are specifically designed to introduce the candidates and their programmes to the voting population. The Campaigns were usually broadcasted in real-time by media networks and were also archived for public viewing.

The media has been identified as the primary determinant in shaping vote choices indicating dependence on television, newspapers, and online channels for political information. The widespread coverage and compelling visual/audio content may contribute to its significant influence. The capacity of breaking news and shaping public opinion is clearly more prominent when compared to direct political involvement. The comparatively diminished influence of rallies and door-to-door canvassing may indicate a transition towards digital and mass media campaigns. Voters may be seeking more meaningful and verifiable information, which they believe media platforms to offer.

3. *Election and candidate preferences*

The study of 'Election and Candidate Preferences' is crucial for understanding voting behavior as it sheds light on the factors influencing voters' choices. This area of study examines how various attributes of candidates, such as their policies, personality, party affiliation, and performance impact electoral outcomes.

Table 3.1 :   Relative rank of Lok Sabha election with other two levels of elections in importance.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	First	17	9.9
2.	Second	34	19.8
3.	Third	121	70.3
4.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

The survey Table 3.1 explores the perceived importance of the Lok Sabha elections in relative to other electoral levels in India. Respondents were asked to evaluate the significance of the Lok Sabha elections, which represent India's national level election, in terms of their personal well-being. The result show a clear prioritization of local and state elections over the national elections, reflecting a belief that local governance more directly influences daily life.

Out of the total respondents, majority of 70.3%, ranked the Lok Sabha election as the least important, highlighting a consensus that local and state elections are more impactful on their day to day lives. Only 9.9% rated the elections as the most important, indicating a perception of lower impact on individual wellbeing. A larger segment of 19.8%, considered these elections of secondary importance, suggesting that while significant, they do not hold the utmost priority.

Many respondents affirmed that state assemblies and local governments have a more direct impact on daily life, such as through infrastructure, education, and local policies. Additionally, Table 3.1 showed that there is less awareness or involvement with national-level policies. Overall, the survey indicates that people preferred the more immediate and visible results from local governance, suggesting that while national policies are important, they were seen as having less of a direct effect on everyday life

Table 3.2 : Most important factor in making voting decision in Lok Sabha election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Party	12	7.0
2.	Candidate	61	35.5
3.	Leader (PM)	13	7.6
4.	Party's manifesto	36	20.9
5.	Religious community	5	2.9
6.	Local Candidate	1	.6
7.	Kinship	2	1.2
8.	Ethnic loyalty	18	10.5
9.	Can't say	24	14.0
10.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

A comprehensive analysis of the issues influencing voter's decisions in the Lok Sabha elections is displayed by Table 3.2. The factors that are most important while making voting decisions can be divided into three categories: major, secondary, and minor.

The main factor that significantly influenced the voters was the candidate, which accounted for 35.5% of the influence. This was followed by the party's manifesto, which received 20.9% of the responses. These factors showed that a significant majority of voters considered both the personal qualities of the candidates and the policy proposals of their parties to be important in the Lok Sabha elections. In other words, this highlighted the importance of individual leadership qualities and a strategic approach in influencing voter preferences.

Secondary factors included ethnic loyalty, which accounted for 10.5% of the influence, and uncertainty, which accounted for 14.0%. The strong sense of loyalty to one's ethnic group showed the lasting importance of ethnic identities in election decisions. The significant number of respondents who chose 'Can't Say' suggested a level of uncertainty or hesitation in identifying a single influential factor, indicating that voter preferences could be unstable.

Minor factors included the Leader or Prime Ministerial candidate (7.6%) and Party Identification (7.0%). These factors were given less importance, showing a lack of engagement with national-level politics. The factor of religious community accounted for 2.9%, kinship accounted for 1.2%, and local candidates accounted for 0.6% of responses, clearly reflecting that religion, family, and local issues had minimal effect. This small impact suggested a mostly non-religious approach to voting and showed that larger national issues tended to overshadow local concerns and personal connections.

Further analysis of the survey results showed a clear preference for individual characteristics over group affiliations like political party or ethnic loyalty. This reveals that voters were more likely to prioritize merit and personal qualifications over broader identity considerations. The reduced impact of local candidates and family connections indicated a shift towards a more rational form of voting that focused on issues, rather than the old practices of vote banking based on favoritism or local patronage.

Table 3.3 : Most important candidate's characteristic in the Lok Sabha election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Youth candidate	16	9.2
2.	Candidate's education	24	13.9
3.	Candidate's party	2	1.2
4.	Experience in politics	25	14.5
5.	Native of your area	1	.6
6.	Personality	105	60.7
7.	**Total**	**173**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

A summary of six responses to identify the traits of candidates considered most significant when deciding whom to vote for in the Lok Sabha election is provided by Table 3.3.

Personality was identified as the most important factor by the majority of respondents, accounting for 60.7% of the total. This finding showed that voters strongly preferred politicians whose personal traits, such as charisma, honesty, and

reliability, matched their own. Political experience accounted for 14.5% of responses and was the second most valued characteristic, suggesting that many voters placed importance on proven ability and a history in politics. It was clear that experienced politicians were seen as more reliable choices, better equipped to handle complex political situations effectively.

The candidate's education contributed 13.9%, highlighting the belief that education is linked to the ability to make informed decisions and the intellectual capacity to develop policies. Only 9.2% of respondents considered a youth candidate to be the most important factor. Similarly, just 1.2% of respondents believed that party affiliation was of utmost importance, indicating that age and party ties were considered less important than personal qualities and experience. A very small fraction (0.6%) thought being a local native was essential, suggesting a greater focus on national issues or performance-based standards in elections, rather than regional loyalties or the limited chances of having a candidate for one seat in the Lok Sabha election.

Thus, it was evident that the majority believed a candidate's personality was the most important factor in the national election. This is due to the growing trend of personalizing politics, where charismatic leadership is highly valued. Personality might have been viewed as a combination of a candidate's honesty, charm, and ability to communicate effectively, all of which are seen as important in political leadership. Interestingly, being associated with a political party was considered the least important, which may suggest that voters were becoming tired of traditional party politics or were focusing more on individual talent than party affiliation.

4. *Political Engagement and Participation*

Political engagement and participation are crucial elements in the study of voting behavior, as they reflect the depth of a society's democratic processes and the health of its political system. This engagement included the different ways citizens took part in politics, such as voting, campaigning, attending political meetings, or discussing political issues.

Table 4.1 : Most important reason to vote a party in the Lok Sabha election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	My community supported the party	7	4.0
2.	My family is a traditional supporter of the party	20	11.5
3.	Good leadership	43	24.7
4.	Good overall programme	70	40.2
5.	Prosperity of religious beliefs	34	19.5
6.	**Total**	**174**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

The survey question inquired about the primary motivation for voting in favour of a political party during the Lok Sabha election. The objective is to comprehend the reason shaping voters' decisions at the national level.

According to Table 4.1, the main factor that influenced people's voting decisions was a strong and comprehensive program, which accounted for 40.2% of the votes. This showed that voters prioritized policies and the party's agenda over everything else, focusing on concrete results and policies that matched their individual or community concerns. This was closely followed by the quality of leadership, which received 24.7% of the votes, indicating that the personality and abilities of party leaders had a significant impact on voter choices. It also suggested that voters were looking for leaders with charisma and the ability to effectively implement their party's agendas and guide the country in the right direction.

The importance of prosperity and protection of religious beliefs (19.5%) showed the strong influence that religious affiliations and sentiments had on voting patterns, suggesting that identity politics was a powerful factor. The relatively low impact of community support (4.0%) and family tradition (11.5%) on voting choices indicated a possible shift towards a more individualistic and issue-oriented voting approach, moving away from loyalty to community or family.

Thus, the motivation to vote for a particular party was driven by the party's overall program, showing a logical and strategic approach to voting based on national policies. Meanwhile, the declining importance of community and family-based support indicated a shift towards a more individualistic society, where traditional relationships were being replaced by a stronger focus on personal and current issues related to policy and leadership quality.

Table 4.2 : Most significant political participation apart from voting in the Lok Sabha election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Listening/reading political news	66	38.4
2.	Discussing elections with others	29	16.9
3.	Membership in a party	8	4.7
4.	Attending election meetings and rallies	6	3.5
5.	An active party worker	7	4.1
6.	Participated in door to door canvasing	1	.6
7.	Can't say	55	32.0
8.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

The most prominent type of political participation, accounting for 38.4% of the total, involves interacting with political news through listening or reading is evident from the given Table 4.1. In other words, this indicates a significant degree of involvement with political information via media, which may be related to the ease of access and the passive character of this activity. The next most common replies include discussing elections with others, which accounts for 16.9% of the responses, and "Can't say", which accounts for 32.0% of the responses. Engaging in conversations about elections with others implies a higher level of active involvement compared to simply consuming news, since discussions have the potential to disseminate opinions and information, so exerting an indirect influence on voting behaviour.

Participating actively by becoming a member of a party (4.7%), being an engaged party worker (4.1%), and attending meetings and rallies (3.5%) demonstrate a relatively lower but nonetheless noteworthy degree of participation. These activities necessitate a greater level of dedication and are often pursued by individuals who are more politically engaged. Door to door canvassing (0.6%) was the least frequent kind of participation, indicating that it is the least desirable. This may be because it requires more effort and personal commitment.

The examination of the survey data indicates a distinct inclination towards passive forms of political involvement, such as consuming political news through listening or reading, among the respondents. Further, it indicates that the electorate's political involvement was predominantly achieved through consuming media. Therefore, it is inferred that political campaigns utilising mass media may have a greater impact on shaping public opinion as opposed to direct contact tactics such as canvassing.

Table 4.3 : Most important issue in the Lok Sabha election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Good governance	71	41.3
2.	Development	42	24.4
3.	Issue of unemployment	6	3.5
4.	Welfare schemes	34	19.8
5.	Liquor policy	11	6.4
6.	Ethnic issues	4	2.3
7.	Regional aspirations	2	1.2
8.	Others	2	1.2
9.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey

The survey question 'What was the most important election issue in the Lok Sabha election?' aims to ascertain the key aspects that respondents deem influential in their decision-making process during the Lok Sabha elections. This question is clear and addresses a wide range of concerns that reflected the varied political and economic conditions in India.

A large proportion of voters, up to 41.3% of respondents, considered good governance to be the most important issue, as shown in Table 4.3. Development and welfare measures were also major priorities, with 24.4% and 19.8% of voters, respectively. Welfare programs, which include subsidies, pensions, and other forms of government assistance, showed that a significant portion of the voting population relied on or valued government-supported programs. Interestingly, only 6.4% of respondents saw unemployment as a significant concern, which could mean that most people did not view it as a major issue or it was overshadowed by other, more pressing matters.

Although concerns about liquor laws and ethnic issues were relevant to some, they mostly affected specific voter groups and did not have a widespread impact on the overall voter base. 'Regional aspirations' and 'Others' were given little attention, each receiving only 1.2%, suggesting that these issues were limited to smaller, specific populations or locations. The high importance placed on good governance, followed by development, indicated that the main group of electoral support preferred overall stability and economic progress over more specific or immediate concerns like unemployment and ethnic issues. Good governance generally included elements such as transparency, accountability, efficient administration, and adherence to the rule of law.

Summary of voting behaviour in Lok Sabha election

The voting behavior in Mizoram at the national level ie.,Lok Sabha election was influenced by many factors, including individual beliefs, community pressures, and broader political, economic, and social issues. This detailed study examined these factors to understand voter preferences, influences, and behaviors using survey data from the 2019 Lok Sabha elections

Voter turnout in any election in an important way to understand political participation across different regions and groups. High turnout showed that voters were motivated and informed, while low turnout may indicate areas of disenchantment or challenges to voting. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, 83.8% of the surveyed respondents voted, showing strong engagement in national politics and

demonstrating that they were motivated and informed, signifying the performance of one's civic duty and right

In response to the survey question about whose opinion mattered most in deciding whom to vote for in the Lok Sabha election, a large majority of 72.3% said they made their own decisions when voting. This showed a strong preference for individual decision-making among the people. Family members influenced another 18.5%, while typical community influencers like religious leaders or colleagues had negligible impact.

Voting behavior is an important indicator of political stability, and it is important to know if a voter would support the same party in future elections. Low levels of support could suggest instability and potential changes in power, while high levels of party loyalty could indicate a stable political environment. This also revealed whether voters were satisfied or dissatisfied with the party's leadership, performance, and policies. In the Lok Sabha election studied, 62% of respondents showed a strong inclination to stay loyal to the same party in future elections, indicating a notable level of party loyalty. However, 38% were willing to change their loyalty, possibly due to changes in political conditions or dissatisfaction with the current political environment.

An investigation into which media channel the voter consider as their primary source of election information during the Lok Sabha elections is imperative since different media channels have varying editorial policies, biases, and methods of information presentation. Understanding which media the voters rely on can determine how these media influences might shape voters' perceptions and decisions. Digital media, particularly YouTube (46.5%) has been ranked as the highest source of election information, and social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram (29.1%), are the leading sources of election information, highlighting the increasing importance of online platforms in political campaigns.

Participating in politics frequently indicates one's interest and knowledge of political topics. Political activities, such as campaigning, attending rallies, or participating in political discourse, can serve as a reliable indicator of an individual's

likelihood and manner in voting. Hence, election participation is generally higher with those who are more involved .The activities that have the greatest impact include consuming media related to elections (42.4%) and the process of conventional election campaigns (27.3%).

Among the voters in the election, a significant majority of 70.3% consider the Lok Sabha elections to be of lesser significance in relation to their overall well-being when compared with other levels of election. This indicates a sense that other levels of governance had a more direct impact on their day-to-day life.

When deciding whom to vote for, 35.5% of respondents said they prioritized the qualities of the candidate as the most important factor, while 20.9% considered the party's manifesto. This suggested that the personal qualities of the candidate were seen as the most important factor, and the party's policies were the second most important. The presence of ethnic loyalty and hesitation to reveal one's voting choice indicated that communal influences and uncertainty also played a role in the decision-making process.

The qualities of a candidate could greatly improve their overall image and significantly affect election outcomes by shaping voter opinions, trust, and the perceived ability to handle the responsibilities of public office. These qualities helped voters make informed decisions about who was most likely to represent their interests and govern effectively. According to 60.7% of voters, a candidate's personality was valued most, above other traits like youth, education level, party affiliation, experience, and qualifications.

Understanding why a voter chose a particular party is crucial for understanding voting behavior, as it provided insights into the motivations, values, and decision-making processes of voters. This is essential for a comprehensive understanding of electoral dynamics and improving the effectiveness of democratic processes. The main reason voters supported a party was its "good overall program" (40.2%), followed by leadership quality and community alignment in the Lok Sabha election. This indicated that people preferred practical considerations of policy and leadership over loyalty based on community or family ties.

The most common form of political participation among respondents was passive engagement, such as listening to or reading political news, which accounted for 38.4% of the total responses. This suggested that political campaigns using mass media were likely more effective in shaping public opinion than direct engagement strategies like canvassing. This preference for media consumption also indicated that ease of access and minimal effort were key factors in how people participated in politics. The next most common forms of participation were discussing elections with others (16.9%) and respondents who were undecided or had no opinion ("Can't say," 32.0%). Talking about elections showed a moderate level of active involvement that could influence opinions and indirectly affect voting behavior, though less than media consumption.

Studies on voter behavior show how societal changes influenced politics. As social, economic, and cultural conditions change, they affect how people viewed candidates and issues, shaping the political landscape. Understanding these motivations helped explain voting patterns and predict future trends. The top concerns for voters were good governance, followed by economic development, social welfare programs, and specific policies like the liquor policy. This indicated a focus on both overall governance and specific important issues.

The factors influencing voting behavior in Mizoram were complex and interconnected. While sociocultural factors like community and religious ties influenced political views, economic issues, candidate qualities, and the effectiveness of media were also crucial. The presence of independent decision-making among voters suggested a knowledgeable electorate that valued well-informed and individual judgment. Understanding the complex structure of electoral politics in Mizoram was essential for developing effective political strategies to engage the diverse voter base in the region.

Analysis of Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election

State Legislative Assembly elections are a fundamental aspect of democratic governance in countries like India, where states play a crucial role in administration and local governance. They are held to elect representatives to the state's legislative

body, which functions similarly to the national parliament but on a state level. Each state is divided into electoral constituencies, and the electorate votes for candidates representing various political parties or those contesting as independents. These elections determine the composition of state governments, which are responsible for legislation, execution of policies, and administration of state-specific programs. The study of voting behavior in these elections provides invaluable insights into the political dynamics at the state level, reveals public sentiment, and enhances the understanding of democratic engagement within the electorate.

Mizoram is a distinct demographic and cultural entity within India, inhabited primarily by tribal groups. Analysing its voting patterns can reveal information about how regional and ethnic minority issues are represented and addressed in the national legislative framework. Mizoram voters' voting choices might reveal their attitudes towards federal and state government policies, particularly those affecting regional problems like land rights, ethnic conflicts, and economic development. This can provide information about the effectiveness and reception of these initiatives among the public. Thus, understanding Mizoram's voting behaviour in State Legislative Assembly elections is essential.

In this study, a series of detailed survey tables is employed to interpret the patterns and dynamics of voting behavior in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election. Analysis of the data uncovers underlying trends and factors that influenced electoral outcomes in the region, providing valuable insights into the political landscape of Mizoram. These tables are designed and grouped into four categories: Voting Behaviour and Decision Making, Influence and Sources of Information, Election and Candidate Preferences and, Political Engagement and Participation, to capture a comprehensive picture of voter preferences and electoral participation.

5. *Voting behaviour and decision making.*

The study of voting behavior and decision-making is essential for understanding the factors that shape individuals' electoral choices. Examining voting behavior provides insight into the influences that guide voters, including their ideological beliefs, political affiliations, social backgrounds, and contemporary

issues. Decision-making is a crucial aspect as it sheds light on how individuals gather and evaluate information before making electoral decisions. Analyzing these patterns enables governments, political parties, and researchers to enhance democratic practices, develop more effective policies, and promote fair and transparent elections.

Table 5.1 : Whether voted in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election, 2018?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Yes	161	92.5
2.	No	13	7.5
3.	**Total**	**174**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The Table 5.1 examines voter turnout in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election (2018) based on responses to the survey question, 'Did you vote in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election, 2018?' The replies were categorised into a binary choice, either 'Yes' or 'No'; and the investigation seeks to reveal patterns in voter participation and the consequences for next elections.

The response rate of the survey was roughly 98.3% (174 out of 177), indicating a significant degree of involvement with the poll. This suggests that the results could be deemed representative of the population surveyed. Out of the total respondents, 92.5% (161 individuals) stated that they participated in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election. On the other hand, 7.5% (13 individuals) indicated that they did not vote, while the rest of the population chose not to reveal their political activity.

The data reveals a significantly high voter turnout among the respondents, with over 90% of respondents confirming their participation in voting. This substantial level of voter turnout is noteworthy and indicates a strong commitment to democracy in Mizoram during the State level election of 2018. The high voter participation can be attributed to various causes, such as a fiercely contested election between the Mizo National Front party which try to dislodge the Indian National Congress from forming a government for the third consecutive term; successful voter mobilisation by political parties and the electoral machinery, significant public

interest in the topics at hand such as liquor policy, development and mismanagement of the state, and potentially elevated levels of civic responsibility among the populace.

Table 5.2 : Whether voted in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election, 2023?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Yes	172	98.3
2.	No	3	1.7
3.	**Total**	**175**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

Out of a target population of 177, the survey was completed yielding a response rate of about 98.9%, as indicated in the Table 5.2. The high response rate demonstrates a great level of involvement with the survey and implies that the findings were generally reflective of the population being studied. The data reveals an extraordinarily high voter turnout, as 98.3% of respondents confirmed their participation in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election, 2023. The percentage of non-voters (1.7%) is exceptionally low.

The minimal proportions of individuals who do not vote indicate a lack of interest, a loss of faith in the political system or practical difficulties. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that it reflected the effectiveness of the electoral system in Mizoram, where there are few obstacles to voting and the majority of the population can freely exercise their voting rights without notable difficulties.

The significant turnout rate is noteworthy and would indicate a substantial degree of political involvement and dedication among the voters in Mizoram. This could be attributed to the successful efforts of political parties in mobilising people or to the issues that were particularly important to the voters such as development, eradication of corruption, or the factor of anti-incumbency which has been made evident by the rise of Zoram Peoples' Movement in capturing 27 seats in the 40 seats Mizoram Legislative Assembly. Additionally, it implies the presence of significant social or cultural influences that promote voter engagement, or a widely accepted

societal expectation that voting was a fundamental responsibility, which must be strictly adhered to within the community.

The turnout in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election indicates a significant rise compared to the 2018 election, which had a voter turnout of approximately 80%. This could indicate a greater level of political involvement and the success of initiatives to encourage people to vote in the area.

Table 5.3 : Most important opinion shaping voting choice in the MLA elections.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Husband / Wife	6	3.5
2.	Family members	33	19.2
3.	Religious leaders	3	1.7
4.	Friends/Neighbours	4	2.3
5.	Colleague	5	2.9
6.	I decide on my own	121	70.3
7.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The research question aimed to identify the factors that influenced electoral decisions among the people of Mizoram during Legislative Assembly elections. This inquiry was crucial for understanding the relationship between social dynamics and individual autonomy in voting behaviors in this region.

The results of the survey, as highlighted in Table 5.3, revealed that a significant majority of 121 respondents (70.3%) reported making their voting decisions independently, indicating a strong sense of personal agency. Family influence emerged as the second most significant factor, with 33 individuals (19.2%) consulting family members about their electoral choices. This suggested that familial bonds and shared values within families significantly shaped the political decisions of many voters. In contrast, colleagues, friends, and neighbors had minimal influence, cited by only 2.9% and 2.3% of respondents, respectively, indicating that professional and casual social networks were less likely to impact voting decisions compared to familial and personal factors.

Interestingly, the influence of a spouse (3.5%) was relatively minor compared to the broader family influence, possibly reflecting cultural or societal structures in Mizoram where extended family members might have more influence over individual choices than a spouse. The limited role of religious leaders (1.7%) in shaping voting preferences was also notable, potentially indicating a secular approach to politics among the electorate or a separation of religious beliefs from political decision-making.

The data shows that, while the electorate predominantly showed independence in voting, family connections still played a significant role. This considerable independence highlighted the electorate's informed approach, favoring personal judgment and insights over collective or authoritative influences in shaping their political stances.

Table 5.4 : Whether the same party will be voted in the next MLA election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Yes	127	77.0
2.	No	38	23.0
3.	**Total**	**165**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The chart (Table 5.4) illustrates survey results regarding voter loyalty ahead of the upcoming Mizoram Legislative Assembly election. The survey posed the following question to respondents: Will you vote for the same party in the next MLA election? Responses are categorized into two groups: 'Yes', 'No', each indicating the respondent's likelihood of supporting the same political party as in the previous election:

The data show a substantial loyalty level among most voters, with 77.0% of them affirming their decision to support the same political party. This demonstrates a strong base of support for the current ruling parties. Conversely, 23.0% of respondents are considering changing their vote. This group reflects the unpredictable segment of the electorate and their final decision might be swayed by recent political developments, campaign success or failure, emerging issues, or

personal changes since the last election. The motivation for changing votes could arise from the party's poor performance or broken promises, leading to voter disenchantment.

The main loyalty to political parties can be attributed to various factors, such as satisfaction with the current party's performance, alignment with the electorate's views on key issues, or a deep-rooted party loyalty serving as a significant incentive for this fidelity. Additionally, the absence of compelling alternatives might also explain why many remain dedicated to their previous choice.

6. *Influence and sources of election*

The exploration of 'Influence and Sources of Political Information is essential for understanding voting behavior because it analyzed how voters were informed and influenced in their political decisions. This section examined the different ways individuals obtained political information, such as through media outlets, social media platforms, and political campaigns.

Table 6.1 : Primary source of election information among media channels in the MLA election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Pamphlet	9	5.1
2.	Magazine	5	2.9
3.	Radio	2	1.1
4.	TV programme	23	13.1
5.	Website	4	2.3
6.	Whatsapp / Facebook / Instagram	52	29.7
7.	YouTube	80	45.7
8.	**Total**	**175**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The survey question asks respondents to identify the media channel they would recognise as the main source of election information in the MLA election. The objective is to determine the most impactful media platforms among voters in Mizoram that could effectively distribute election-related news and campaigns to the general public.

The data (Table 6.1) clearly demonstrates the dominant impact of digital media channels compared to traditional ones. YouTube is the most favoured site for obtaining election information, according to 45.7% of the respondents. Other social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram are the key sources for 29.7% of the respondents. This indicates a significant transition towards digital video and social networking platforms for political communication.

Traditional media sources such as pamphlets, magazines, and radio had a significantly smaller impact, contributing only 9.1% of the total responses. This suggested a broader trend in media consumption, where traditional formats were being surpassed by digital platforms that were more interactive and engaging. Television programs, although more popular than print and radio, accounted for only 13.1% of the responses. Thus, television played an important but not primary role in the dissemination of political information in Mizoram.

The survey indicated a significant shift towards digital media as the main source of election-related information in Mizoram, with YouTube and social media leading. The widespread use of smartphones and increased internet connectivity undoubtedly contributed to the growing popularity of YouTube and social media platforms. Additionally, digital platforms offered diverse content that could cater to various interests and needs, further increasing their appeal as primary sources of information.

Table 6.2 : Political activities exerting the greatest influence on voting decision in the MLA election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Election campaign	51	29.3
2.	Party meetings / rallies	5	2.9
3.	Door to door canvasing	22	12.6
4.	Joint Platform Campaign	34	19.5
5.	Media	62	35.6
6.	**Total**	**174**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

This study seeks to determine the political behaviours that significantly influenced voting decisions in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election. The table below lists various forms of political engagement and demonstrates how frequently respondents deemed each variable significant in their voting choices.

As shown in Table 6.2, 'Media' was the predominant influence, representing 35.6% of valid responses, indicating a significant reliance on media outlets (such as social media, newspapers, television, and others) for making informed voting decisions. The Election Campaign and Joint Platform Campaign were moderately influential, with validation percentages of 29.3% and 19.5%, respectively. These efforts, including public addresses and debates, played a notable role but were less impactful than media.

'Door to Door Canvassing' had a moderate level of influence, contributing 12.6% of the total. This suggested a personalized approach but with a limited reach compared to mass media. The influence of 'Party Meetings/Rallies' was slight, with a validation percentage of just 2.9%. This low impact could be due to various factors, such as voter disinterest in political rallies, greater availability of alternative campaigning methods, or a shift towards digital engagement.

The analysis revealed a wide range of factors that affected voter behavior, with media being the most dominant. The prominence of media as the key influence highlighted the important role of information transmission technologies in modern electoral politics. This dominance highlighted that voters in Mizoram preferred to access information at their convenience and relied on trustworthy news sources, reflecting a broader national trend of increased reliance on digital media for news consumption. The unique socio-economic context of Mizoram might have influenced these patterns, possibly due to high literacy rates and increased media consumption, as well as the ability to critically evaluate news. Furthermore, the widespread use of the internet and smartphones in Mizoram might explain the substantial reliance on media, as more voters had access to online information than in the past.

7. *Election and candidate preferences*

An examination of 'Election and Candidate Preferences' is essential for comprehending voting behaviour, as it illuminates the variables that impact voters' decisions. This field of research investigates the influence of several characteristics of candidates, such as their policies, personality, party affiliation, and performance, on the results of elections.

Table 7.1 : Relative rank of Lok Sabha election with other two levels of elections in importance.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	First	106	60.6
2.	Second	64	36.6
3.	Third	5	2.9
4.	**Total**	**175**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

In the survey, respondents were requested to evaluate the significance of Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections compared to other levels of elections in terms of their personal well-being. This question seeks to assess the extent to which individuals perceive these elections as having a personal impact on their lives. Such insights are essential for understanding voting behaviours and the importance voters place on various electoral competitions.

The results indicated by the Table7.1 above show that 60.6% of respondents view the upcoming state elections as their highest priority, suggesting that the majority believed that legislative decisions at this level most significantly affected their lives. Despite this, a considerable minority of 36.6% placed it second, possibly indicating a belief that other elections may have a more profound impact on their well-being. Only 2.8% regarded it as the least significant, which could reflect either a disconnection from state-level political processes or a belief in the greater influence of other levels of government.

The significant proportion of voters who prioritized state assembly elections highlighted a common belief among the citizens of Mizoram that state-level decisions had a crucial impact on their well-being and daily lives. This emphasized a strong awareness of the direct effects of state-level governance. This perspective likely arose from the understanding that decisions affecting everyday life and welfare were more effectively handled at the local level. Because state assemblies are involved in areas such as local law enforcement, healthcare, and education, they often had a more immediate impact on the lives of their constituents.

Table 7.2 : Most important factor in making voting decision in the MLA election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Party	8	4.6
2.	Candidate	67	38.3
3.	Leader (PM)	23	13.1
4.	Party's manifesto	44	25.1
5.	Religious community	6	3.4
6.	Local Candidate	1	.6
7.	Kinship	1	.6
8.	Ethnic Loyalty	7	4.0
9.	Can't say	18	10.3
10	**Total**	**175**	**100**

Source: Field Survey

The research investigated the primary considerations influencing voter decisions in state level elections. The factors assessed included party affiliation, candidate characteristics, party manifesto, and socio-demographic aspects such as religious and ethnic affiliations.

The findings as revealed by the Table illustrate that the majority of respondents, 67 or 38.3%, prioritized candidate attributes, indicating a strong preference for individual qualities and reputations over party affiliation or broader campaign themes. The party manifesto was a key consideration for 44 respondents, making up 25.1% of the sample, underscoring the importance of policies and concrete commitments in voter decision-making.

About 13.1% of the respondents (23 respondents) considered the identity of leader or prospective chief minister as crucial, highlighting the importance of personal appeal and qualifications of party leaders. Only 8 respondents, or 4.6% of the sample, identified party affiliation as the decisive factor, suggesting that this aspect alone was not a significant determinant for most voters in Mizoram.

Religious affiliations influenced 6 individuals (3.4%), indicating a limited but present the role of religion in political preferences within this sample. Only one respondent valued local representation, and another the influence of familial ties, each constituting 0.6% of the sample, suggesting that these factors are generally negligible in the voting process in Mizoram. Ethnic loyalty was significant for 7 respondents (4.0%), pointing to a minor yet noticeable impact on voting behaviour.

A notable 18 respondents (10.3%) did not single out any specific factor as predominant, which may reflect either indecision or interplay of multiple influences that defied straight forward categorization.

Overall, the data showed a preference for candidate-specific attributes over party loyalty or other factors, indicating a personalized political environment in Mizoram where direct relationships with elected officials were important. The emphasis on the party manifesto demonstrated that voters were driven by specific issues, seeking clear policies and commitments before casting their votes. The electorate appeared mature, prioritizing individual merit and explicit policy directives over ethnic or religious considerations. The minimal impact of religious and ethnic factors suggested a largely secular or inclusive political approach in the region, focusing on governance and individual capabilities.

Table 7.3 : Most important candidate's characteristic in the MLA election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Youth candidate	11	6.4
2.	Female candidate	2	1.2
3.	Candidate's education	22	12.7
4.	Candidate's party	3	1.7
5.	Experience in politics	20	11.6
6.	Native of your area	2	1.2

7.	Personality	113	65.3
8.	**Total**	**173**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

This study aimed to understand voter behavior by asking respondents to identify the most important attribute from a predefined list. As shown in Table 7.2, a majority of 65.3% identified 'Personality' as the key attribute, suggesting that individual traits and candidate perception were significant factors in influencing voter decisions in Mizoram. 'Candidate's education' was the next most significant attribute, chosen by 12.7% of respondents, indicating a belief that well-educated leaders were better prepared to address governance and policy challenges. Close behind, 'Experience in politics' was selected by 11.6% of respondents, reflecting a preference for candidates perceived as competent and practical in political management.

A smaller segment of voters, 6.4%, favored 'young candidates,' pointing to a desire for new ideas and a dynamic political environment, highlighting a divide between those valuing innovation and those valuing experience. Notably, attributes such as 'Candidate's party,' 'Native of one's area,' and 'Female candidate' were less prioritized, receiving only 1.7%, 1.2%, and 1.2% of responses, respectively. This indicated a shift towards meritocratic principles over party affiliation, geographical origin, or gender in electoral decisions.

The survey results presented a complex picture of voter preferences, with personality emerging as the dominant factor. This preference for personality over political qualifications or demographic factors indicated a shift towards valuing personal integrity, charisma, and interpersonal skills. The emphasis on personality traits suggested that voters sought a strong personal connection with candidates who appeared approachable, charismatic, or trustworthy. The communal and personalistic nature of Mizoram's society may have amplified this trend, where individual character often outweighed other candidate qualities.

8. *Political engagement and participation*

Political engagement and participation are essential components in examining voting behavior, as they indicated the extent of a society's democratic practices and the strength of its political structure. This participation included various ways through which citizens actively took part in the political process, such as voting, engaging in political campaigns, attending political gatherings, or participating in discussions about political issues.

Table 8.1: Most important reason to vote a party in the MLA election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	My community supported the party	1	.6
2.	My family is a traditional supporter of the party	22	12.4
3.	Good leadership	57	32.2
4.	Good overall programme	80	45.8
5.	Prosperity of religious beliefs	16	9.0
6.	**Total**	**176**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

Analyzing what voters consider crucial in supporting a party is key to understanding the voting behaviour in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election.

Table 8.1 showed that 45.8% of respondents indicated that a good overall program was the main factor influencing their choice of a specific party. Meanwhile, 32.2% of voters cited the quality of leadership as the reason for their choice, highlighting its importance in the decision-making process. This demonstrated that Mizoram's electorate valued individual candidate attributes, such as charismatic and competent leadership, over general party characteristics. This might also suggest that voters sought accountable and efficient governance.

Family influences played a small yet notable role, with 12.4% of respondents mentioning voting tradition as an important factor in their decision. This indicated that for some voters, familial ties and longstanding political loyalty or inherited ideologies were significant due to deep-rooted political affiliations or family legacies.

Additionally, 9.0% of voters were motivated by their religious beliefs. Although not the leading factor, religion still played a significant role in politics, indicating that for certain voters, the alignment of a political party's policies with their religious values was crucial in their support. Only a small portion of voters (0.6%) supported a political party strictly based on community endorsement, suggesting that community ties did not significantly affect voting behavior in Mizoram, unlike in other regions where community loyalty might play a major role. The minimal impact of community ties could have resulted from increased urbanization, the availability of diverse information sources outside immediate social circles, and educational advancements that encouraged more independent thinking.

The prominence of a comprehensive party program indicated that voters valued practical policy considerations and the party's strategic goals. Voters showed maturity by prioritizing substantive issues and clear objectives over other factors. The fact that a higher percentage of voters (45.8%) valued a 'Good overall program' suggested a preference for a party's broad policies rather than just charismatic leadership.

Table 8.2: Most significant political participation apart from voting in the MLA elections.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Listening/reading political news	78	44.6
2.	Discussing elections with others	27	15.4
3.	Membership in a party	11	6.3
4.	Attending election meetings and rallies	10	5.7
5.	An active party worker	10	5.7
6.	Participated in door to door canvasing	1	.6
7.	Can't say	38	21.7
8.	**Total**	**175**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The study aimed to understand the most common forms of political engagement among voters during the legislative assembly elections. The activities mentioned covered a range of engagement, from passive activities like listening to political news to more active involvement, such as participating as a party worker.

Table 8.2 showed a clear preference for passive engagement activities. Listening to or reading political news was the most common method of participation, with nearly half of the respondents (44.6%) choosing this option. This indicated that a significant portion of the public preferred acquiring information from media sources rather than directly participating in political activities.

Active participation in political activities, such as attending rallies, joining a political party, working for a party, or canvassing, accounted for only about 18.3% of the total responses. The data showed a relatively low level of direct engagement in political processes among respondents, suggesting a potential reluctance to participate actively in politics or a lack of resources or motivation to do so.

About 15.4% of respondents engaged in conversations about elections, which could be considered a moderately active form of participation. This level of engagement was less active than attending meetings or participating in political party activities but more active than simply consuming news. It could be seen as a form of socio-political engagement that did not require formal commitment and often occurred in informal or household discussions.

Approximately 21.7% of respondents either chose not to respond or were undecided ('Can't say'). The high level of non-response indicated a lack of interest or uncertainty about how to participate effectively in the political system.

The survey discovered that, although voters in Mizoram were interested in staying informed about politics, they showed little inclination towards active participation. This could be due to various factors, such as perceived challenges in engaging in active politics, limited time and financial resources, or a preference for being spectators rather than active participants. Additionally, the widespread availability of media and telecommunications in the state may have contributed to the increased consumption of political news.

Table 8.3: Most important issue in the MLA election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Good governance	80	45.7
2.	Development	40	22.9
3.	Issue of unemployment	9	5.1
4.	Welfare schemes	30	17.1
5.	Liquor policy	10	5.7
6.	Ethnic issues	2	1.1
7.	Regional aspirations	2	1.1
8.	Others	2	1.1
9.	**Total**	**175**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

In examining electoral behaviour, understanding the issues deemed crucial by voters is essential, as it provides key insights into their motivations and patterns in voting. This study investigates the key issues identified by voters with a focus on potential links to broader political, social, and economic contexts.

Based on Table 8.3, 45.7% of voters prioritized 'Good Governance,' indicating a strong demand for government transparency, accountability, and efficiency. 'Development' was the focus for 22.9% of voters, highlighting the need for improvements in infrastructure, public services, healthcare, and education in Mizoram.

Although only 5.1% of voters viewed unemployment as their main concern, this could be attributed to Mizoram's relatively low unemployment rate or acceptance of ongoing job scarcity, making it less pressing than other issues.

Welfare schemes were prioritized by 17.1% of voters, showing the importance of social safety nets like healthcare and pensions. Other concerns, such as alcohol regulations, ethnic issues, and local aspirations, accounted for 1.1% to 5.7% of responses, indicating their significance to smaller groups.

Overall, the survey revealed a clear preference among the Mizoram electorate for good governance, reflecting a desire for effective administration and dissatisfaction with perceived corruption and inefficiency.

Summary of voting behaviour in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election.

Several factors affected voting behavior in Mizoram, such as individual ideological beliefs, community influences, and broader political, economic, and social issues. This study examined these factors by analyzing survey data from the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections and comparing them to the region's typical voting patterns. The analysis focused on survey data to explore voter preferences, influences, and behaviors.

Voter turnout in elections served as an important measure of political activity across different regions and demographic groups. High levels of participation showed a motivated and well-informed voter base, while low levels of engagement might have indicated dissatisfaction or obstacles to voting. Both the 2018 and 2023 elections experienced exceptionally high voter turnouts, with 92.5% in 2018 and an even higher 98.3% in 2023. This demonstrated strong civic engagement and a commitment to democratic processes in Mizoram. The increase in turnout from 2018 to 2023 suggested growing political involvement or heightened stakes in the election, possibly due to the emergence of new political issues or effective voter mobilization strategies.

A significant majority of voters (70.3%) reported that they would decide independently whom to vote for in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections in response to the survey question, "Whose opinion matters most in deciding whom to vote for?" This indicated a strong sense of individual autonomy in the political decision-making process.

Voting behavior was an important measure of political stability, and it was crucial to determine whether a voter would support the same party in the next election. Low levels of loyalty could signal instability and shifts in power, while high levels of party loyalty could indicate a stable political environment. This reflected voter satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a party's leadership, performance, and policy outcomes. In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election studied, high loyalty to the chosen parties was observed, with 77% of respondents in 2023 indicating they would

vote for the same party in the next election. This reflected satisfaction with the party's performance or alignment with its policies.

Examining the media channels that voters considered their main source of election information during the MLA elections was crucial due to the different editorial policies, biases, and information presentation methods used by various media channels. By identifying the media sources that voters depended on, one could predict how these influences might shape their views and decisions. Media played a critical role in informing and shaping voter opinions, with digital platforms like YouTube and social media being the most accessed channels for election-related information.

Among political activities, such as traditional election campaigns, party meetings, rallies, and canvassing, engagement with media emerged as the most influential factor, accounting for 35.6% of responses. This highlighted its role in providing information and shaping voter decisions through platforms like social media, newspapers, and television. Other methods also influenced voters but to a lesser extent, indicating a shift towards digital engagement and information consumption via media. The key insight from this analysis was the dominant role of media in modern electoral politics, especially in a context like Mizoram, where high literacy rates and widespread use of internet technologies enhanced media's effectiveness in influencing voter behavior.

A significant majority (60.6%) of respondents in 2023 viewed state assembly elections as crucial for their well-being, emphasizing the perceived direct impact of local governance on their daily lives.

When deciding to vote and choose a candidate, people showed a preference for the individual qualities of candidates over their party affiliations. Personal attributes and the party's manifesto were the main factors influencing their decisions. This indicated that the candidate's personal characteristics were seen as the most important, while the party's policies were considered the second most important factors in the decision-making process. This preference highlighted the importance of

personal integrity, charisma, and leadership qualities over traditional political qualifications.

The qualities of a candidate, such as their ability to positively influence the overall impression, had a significant impact on election results by shaping voter opinions, trust, and perceived competence to perform office duties. As a result, these qualities helped voters make informed decisions about who was most likely to represent their interests and govern effectively. According to 65.7% of voters, a candidate's personality was the most valued trait among their characteristics, such as youth, educational level, party affiliation, experience, and educational qualifications.

Investigating why a voter chose a particular party is essential for understanding voting behavior because it provided insights into voters' motivations, values, and decision-making processes. It is crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of electoral dynamics and improving the effectiveness of democratic processes. The main reason voters supported a party was its "Good overall program" (43.7%), followed by the quality of its leadership (31.6%). This indicated that people prioritized practical considerations of policy and leadership over loyalty based on community or family ties.

Participation in politics often showed an individual's interest in and knowledge of political issues. Political activities, such as campaigning, attending rallies, or engaging in political discussions, served as reliable indicators of how likely and in what way someone would vote. Election participation was generally higher among those who were more involved. The most common form of political participation was consuming political news, indicating a preference for passive engagement over active involvement, such as attending rallies or canvassing.

Research on voter behavior examined how socio-economic changes influenced politics. As social, economic, and cultural factors evolved, people's perceptions of candidates and issues also changed, shaping the political landscape. Understanding these factors helped explain voting patterns and forecast future trends. Good governance emerged as the top concern (45.7%), followed by development (22.9%) and welfare schemes (17.1%). This suggested that voters valued efficient

and transparent governance, as well as the advancement of public welfare and regional development.

The factors that influenced voting behavior in Mizoram were complex and interconnected. While socio-cultural factors such as neighborhood and religious ties shaped political opinions, economic issues, candidate characteristics, and the effectiveness of media also played important roles. The presence of autonomy in voter decision-making indicated an informed electorate that valued educated and independent judgment.

Analysis of Local Elections (Local Council and Village Council)

Local elections, such as those for Local Council and Village Council, played a crucial role in democratic governance by providing citizens with the most direct way to influence their local social, political, and economic environments. These elections selected leaders for towns, and villages, who had a direct impact on everyday governance and local decision-making. Analyzing voter behavior in these elections provided insights into the electorate's preferences and revealed the complexities of political participation at the community level. This research explored the importance of local elections and the study of voting behavior to understand broader political trends and voter priorities.

Studying voting behavior in local elections in Mizoram is particularly important. Local elections often focused on immediate and practical issues such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and local governance. By examining voting behavior in Mizoram, researchers and policymakers gained insights into what mattered most to the electorate in this region. Understanding how and why people participated in the Local Council and Village Council elections helped identify factors that encouraged or discouraged political engagement. In regions like Mizoram, where community bonds were strong, local elections served as a measure of community involvement and the effectiveness of local democratic institutions.

This study used a comprehensive set of survey data to analyze and explain the patterns and changes in voting behavior in Mizoram. The examination of the data

revealed key patterns and variables that affected electoral results in the region, providing significant insights into the political environment of Mizoram. The data were categorized into four groups: Voting Behavior and Decision Making, Influence and Sources of Information, Election and Candidate Preferences, and Political Engagement and Participation. This categorization aimed to provide a thorough overview of voter preferences and electoral participation.

9. Voting behavior and decision making.

A central aspect of researching voting behavior involves an understanding of how individuals in a society collectively make choices that affected their political landscape and governance. The category 'Voting Behaviour and Decision Making' examines the psychological, socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors that influence how people decide when voting.

Table 9.1: Whether voted in the Local Council/Village Council elections of 2020.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Yes	168	96.6
2.	No	6	3.4
3.	Total	174	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The research survey question examined the voter turnout for the Local Council / Village Council elections in Mizoram in 2020. More precisely, the poll aimed to determine the proportion of respondents who cast their vote in favour ('Yes') was compared to those who abstained from voting ('No').

The data (Table 9.1) showed an exceptionally high voter turnout, with 96.6% of respondents reporting that they participated in the elections. The very low non-participation rate of 3.4% is noteworthy. This small percentage of abstention suggested several socio-political factors, such as active community involvement or interest in local governance, as well as effective campaign strategies used by parties or councils to encourage high voter turnout.

The significant voter turnout indicated a cohesive community where local issues were prioritized. This high level of participation may also reflect political stability and a strong public trust in the electoral process and local government. Furthermore, this suggested that voting in Mizoram was seen not just as a civic duty but also as a vital aspect of community engagement, influenced by cultural norms that emphasized collective participation and decision-making.

Table 9.2: Most important opinion in shaping voting choice in the Local Council/Village Council election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Husband / Wife	5	2.9
2.	Family members	39	22.9
3.	Religious leaders	3	1.8
4.	Friends/Neighbours	1	.6
5.	Colleague	4	2.4
6.	I decide on my own	118	69.4
7.	**Total**	**170**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

This analysis examines the societal factors that impact voting patterns in local council and village council elections in Mizoram. The survey question of Table 9.2 pertains to the major entity whose viewpoint respondents consider the most important when deciding whom to vote.

A significant 69.4% of respondents reported that they used independent judgment when selecting their preferred candidate, highlighting a strong sense of individual freedom in the political decision-making process during local elections in Mizoram. Family members were ranked as the second most influential group, with about 22.9% of respondents considering their opinions important. This proportion indicates that family ties and obligations played a substantial role in political choices.

Colleagues and religious leaders had minimal influence, accounting for only 2.4% and 1.8% of the responses, respectively. These findings suggest that professional and religious networks had limited impact on political decision-making

for local and village governments in Mizoram. The negligible influence of friends and neighbors (0.6%) further supports this view, indicating that social influence on voting primarily occurred within the family. The low influence of spouses (2.9%) may reflect gender dynamics in which political views within marriages are formed independently or collaboratively, with little significant influence from either spouse.

The large majority of voters choosing to make their own decisions could be due to an informed electorate that prioritizes individual judgment over group or authoritative opinions. Although personal decision-making was common, the influence of family remained significant, suggesting that familial institutions and values continued to have a crucial impact on social choices in Mizoram.

Table 9.3: Whether the same party would be voted in the next LC/VC elections?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Yes	103	63.2
2.	No	60	36.8
3.	**Total**	**163**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The survey question analyzed here aimed to understand the consistency of voter support for political parties in the context of Mizoram's Local Council (LC) and Village Council (VC) elections

Table 9.3 showed that a significant 63.2% of those surveyed stated they would vote for the same political party in the upcoming elections. In contrast, 36.8% of respondents indicated their intention to switch their political affiliation. This substantial minority suggests that a considerable portion of the electorate was either open to considering other options or dissatisfied with the current party due to its perceived shortcomings, effective opposition campaigns, or changes in individual or community priorities that could influence voting behavior.

The majority's indication that they would vote for the same party points to a high level of voter satisfaction or loyalty to the current party. This large percentage of affirmative responses suggests strong identification with the party, favorable

opinions of its leadership and policies, and a potentially solid base of support for the party in the next elections.

10. Influence and sources of election information.

Examining the 'Influence and Sources of Political Information' was essential for understanding voting behavior, as it investigated how voters were informed and influenced in their political decisions. This section explored the different ways people received political information, including media outlets, social media platforms, educational institutions, and political campaigns.

10.1: Primary source of election information among media channels in the LC / VC election?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Pamphlet	35	20.7
2.	Magazine	3	1.8
3.	Radio	2	1.2
4.	TV programme	18	10.7
5.	Website	1	.6
6.	Whatsapp/Facebook/Instagram	74	43.8
7.	YouTube	36	21.3
8.	**Total**	**169**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The purpose of this survey was to identify the main media outlets that voters in Mizoram used to obtain information about upcoming local council elections. This information could be crucial for political parties and campaign strategists to strengthen their connections and increase their influence among voters.

Table 10.1 showed that 43.8% of respondents preferred social media platforms (such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram), making it the most popular source of information. YouTube was the second most popular platform, used by 21.3% of respondents, indicating a significant reliance on video content for information dissemination.

Pamphlets were the third most preferred source, chosen by 20.7% of respondents, suggesting that print media remained relevant, particularly in rural areas and among older populations. TV shows and magazines were less popular, with 10.7% and 1.8% of the respondents selecting them, respectively, indicating they had a smaller influence on voters' information-gathering processes. The low use of radio and the internet (1.2% and 0.6%, respectively) may have indicated a lack of trust in these media or limited access to them for electoral purposes.

Overall, with YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp together accounting for 65.1% of the primary sources of election information among those surveyed, the data indicated the dominance of digital media platforms. This trend highlighted the importance of social media and video content in modern political campaigns. While digital platforms were favored, traditional media like TV shows (10.7%) and pamphlets (20.7%) still played a significant role. Pamphlets were effective for reaching less tech-savvy demographics or those who preferred physical media, while television remained a vital medium, likely due to its wide accessibility and ability to broadcast detailed programs.

Table 10.2: Political activities exerting the greatest influence on voting decision in LC / VC elections?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Election campaign	48	27.9
2.	Party meetings / rallies	10	5.8
3.	Door to door canvasing	41	23.8
4.	Joint Platform Campaign	32	18.6
5.	Media	41	23.8
6.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The most influential activity, as shown in Table 10.2, was election campaigning, which accounted for 27.9% of valid responses. This suggests that traditional campaign activities, such as public speeches and appearances with candidates, were important in shaping voter opinions and choices in local government elections. Door-to-door canvassing had nearly as much influence as

media coverage, both accounting for 23.8%, indicating that voters preferred face-to-face communication. The effectiveness of this approach can be attributed to its personalized nature and ability to address specific local issues and questions.

Engagement with media also emerged as a significant influence, matching the impact of door-to-door canvassing (23.8%). This suggests that both traditional and modern media platforms have become increasingly important in shaping local election preferences and spreading information.

Joint platform campaigns, where multiple candidates or parties present their positions simultaneously, received 18.6% of responses, indicating a moderate level of influence. This approach allows voters to directly compare the policies and personalities of candidates, helping them make more informed decisions. Notably, party gatherings and rallies had the least impact, with only 5.8% of responses, suggesting these events were either less common, harder to access, or perceived as less compelling or informative than other activities. This may imply that voters were seeking more personalized and direct forms of engagement rather than large-scale, party-driven events.

The data showed a broad range of political influences in the Mizoram local council elections, with traditional election campaigns being the most significant. However, the important roles of media and direct personal interaction (door-to-door canvassing) highlight the need for a multi-faceted approach to political communication and voter persuasion. Party gatherings and rallies appeared to have a comparatively smaller impact.

11. *Election and candidate preferences*

Studying 'Election and Candidate Preferences' is essential for understanding voting behavior because it highlighted the factors that influenced voter choices. This research examined how different attributes of candidates, such as their policies, personality, party affiliation, and overall performance, affected election outcomes.

Table 11.1: **Relative rank of Local Council / Village Council elections with other two levels of elections in importance.**

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	First	63	36.4
2.	Second	72	41.6
3.	Third	38	22.0
4.	**Total**	**173**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The survey question aimed to investigate the extent to which respondents in Mizoram prioritized local council or village council elections compared to other levels of elections, concerning their personal well-being. This issue was crucial as it highlighted the perceived importance of local governance systems in the daily lives of the voters.

Table 11.1 showed that local level elections were ranked second in importance by the largest portion of respondents (41.6%). This indicates that while there was recognition of the importance of local administration, more importance was given to elections at other levels, such as state or national, based on individual or community preferences.

According to 36.4% of respondents, local level elections were considered the most significant. This substantial minority likely viewed these elections as having a direct and tangible effect on their well-being. This group may have included individuals directly involved in or affected by local governance decisions, such as local entrepreneurs, community influencers, or residents actively engaged in community activities.

Approximately 22% of respondents regarded local elections as less significant. This group may have prioritized national issues or believed that higher-level government decisions had a greater impact on their personal and communal well-being.

Overall, the survey indicated a varied but predominantly moderate to high level of importance placed on local elections by the public, with voters ranking these elections as second in significance. This preference may have stemmed from the perception that, while local government was important, broader policy decisions made at the state or national level could have a more substantial and widespread impact on their lives.

Table 11.3:   Most important factor in making voting decision in LC and VC elections?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Party	6	3.5
2.	Candidate	82	47.7
3.	Leader (PM)	14	8.1
4.	Party's manifesto	25	14.5
5.	Religious community	4	2.3
6.	Local Candidate	15	8.7
7.	Kinship	10	5.8
8.	Ethnic loyalty	16	9.3
9.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The research survey aimed to examine voting behavior in Mizoram by asking respondents to identify the primary factor they considered when voting in Legislative Council (LC) and Village Council (VC) elections. The goal of this analysis is to understand the preferences and factors that influenced voters' choices during these elections.

Table 11.3 showed that the 'Candidate' was the predominant factor influencing voters' decisions in Mizoram's elections, receiving 47.7% of the votes. This suggests a strong candidate-centric voting pattern, where the personal traits, reputation, and effectiveness of the candidates were likely more important than their political affiliation. The Party Manifesto was the second most important factor, accounting for 14.5%, indicating that a significant portion of the electorate focused on specific issues and prioritized the policies and commitments of political parties.

When combining the influence of local candidates, ethnic allegiance, and kinship (18%), the results indicated that voting behavior was heavily influenced by local and ethnic identities. These factors are crucial in areas characterized by significant ethnic diversity and complex local political dynamics. Party identification and overall leadership figures had less influence, with only 11.6% of the voters considering them important, suggesting a potential decline in trust in party politics or a stronger emphasis on local political figures and issues.

The data also showed that religious community affiliations had a minimal impact, with only 2.3% influence, indicating that while religion may play a role in daily life, it was not a major factor in voting decisions in this context. Overall, the table indicated that the candidate's personal characteristics and reputation had the greatest impact, suggesting a voting pattern that prioritized strong candidates based on their personal qualities, reputation, and effectiveness, rather than party affiliation or broader ideological factors.

Table 11.3: Most important candidate's characteristic in the LC / VC election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Youth candidate	15	8.7
2.	Female candidate	2	1.2
3.	Candidate's education	12	7.0
4.	Experience in politics	15	8.7
5.	Native of your area	15	8.7
6.	Personality	113	65.7
7.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The survey seeks to understand voter preferences regarding candidate qualities in Local Council (LC) and Village Council (VC) elections. According to Table 11.2, a significant 65.7% of respondents stated that a candidate's personality was the most influential factor in their voting decision. This suggests that personal appeal, charisma, perceived honesty, and leadership qualities had a substantial impact on voter decision-making in local elections.

Each of the attributes related to political experience and local affiliation, such as being a young candidate, having prior political experience, and being a native of the area, were considered equally important by 8.7% of respondents. This suggests that while these factors were considered, they were much less significant than personality. A candidate's education had a comparatively low impact, influencing only 7.0% of voters' decisions. This implies that voters placed more importance on practical skills or personal charm rather than academic qualifications. Notably, a candidate's gender was the least influential factor, accounting for just 1.2% of the overall impact, indicating potential challenges or biases related to societal norms and gender perceptions among the voting population.

The strong preference for personality suggests that voters in Mizoram prioritized interpersonal traits over traditional political qualifications like experience or education. This trend may be particularly evident in the context of local and village councils, where frequent and important personal interactions occur between council members and residents. The equal consideration of youth, experience, and local citizenship as important factors reflects a well-rounded electorate that values both new ideas and proven accomplishments

12. *Political engagement and participation*

Political involvement and activity are crucial elements in analyzing voting behavior because they reflect the level of democracy in a society and the health of its political system. This involvement includes the various ways in which individuals actively engage with the political process, including voting, participating in campaign activities, attending political events, or engaging in discussions about political issues.

Table 12.1: Most important reason to vote for a party in LC / VC election.

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	My community supported the party	5	2.9
2.	My family is a traditional supporter of the party	22	12.6
3.	Good leadership	55	31.6
4.	Good overall programme	76	43.7

5.	Prosperity of religious beliefs	16	9.2
6.	**Total**	**174**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The research survey question aimed to identify the main factors influencing Mizoram voters in local elections. Voters were asked to choose the factor that most impacted their party preference from several options presented in the survey.

Table 12.1 showed that 43.7% of respondents stated that a party's "Good overall programme" was the primary reason for their voting choice. This suggests that a significant portion of the electorate preferred comprehensive and well-considered policy proposals addressing broad societal issues, indicating a preference for long-term strategic planning over immediate or personal connections. The party's leadership was the second most cited reason, with 31.6% of respondents highlighting the importance of charisma and leadership skills in influencing voter decisions. This suggests that effective policy implementation and leadership were crucial considerations for voters, who were interested in both the policies and the individuals responsible for executing them.

Family influence was evident in the voting behavior of 12.6% of respondents, who cited their family's traditional support for the party as the main factor in their decision. This indicates that in some areas, electoral choices were still heavily influenced by family ties and long-standing party loyalty, possibly spanning generations. A smaller but notable portion of voters (9.2%) identified the alignment of the party's principles with their religious beliefs as a significant factor. This highlights the role of religious identity and values in shaping political preferences, suggesting that, for these voters, a party's platform that resonated with their faith was important. Only 2.9% of respondents cited community support for the party as their main motivation, making it the least influential factor. This unexpectedly low percentage may reflect a more individualized voting approach, where family influence or personal opinion outweighs broader social trends.

This analysis indicated that practical factors, such as the quality of a party's leadership and program, were the primary drivers of voter decisions in Mizoram's LC/VC elections. Although traditional and social connections held some importance, they were less significant than the perceived effectiveness and integrity of party leaders and policies. This suggests a trend among the electorate towards more rational, rather than emotional, voting choices.

Table 12.2: Most significant political participation apart from voting in the LC / VC elections?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Listening/reading political news	54	31.4
2.	Discussing elections with others	47	27.3
3.	Membership in a party	11	6.4
4.	Attending election meetings and rallies	5	2.9
5.	An active party worker	8	4.7
6.	Participated in door to door canvasing	5	2.9
7.	Can't say	42	24.4
8.	**Total**	**172**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The purpose of the survey question is to identify the main ways in which respondents participated in local elections in Mizoram. This kind of inquiry is essential for finding out people's level of involvement in different political processes and what activities are most engaging to have an impact on election results.

The most frequently reported activity was listening to or reading political news, with 54 responses (31.4%), as shown in Table 12.1. This suggested a high level of interaction with political information through news media, indicating that information intake was often viewed as the most important way to participate in politics. The percentage of individuals who discussed elections with others was 27.3%, reflecting a high level of engagement and highlighting the importance of face-to-face political communication. This demonstrated that, in terms of perceived importance among respondents, political discourse followed closely after consumption of news.

A relatively small percentage of respondents (6.4%) indicated that becoming a party member was their most important form of participation, suggesting that formal political party affiliation was not considered very important by most people. Election-related activities such as attending rallies and meetings were chosen by 2.9%, while becoming an active party worker (4.7%) and engaging in door-to-door canvassing (2.9%) were less popular. Although active party work requires more commitment than simple membership, a small percentage of people still viewed it as an important form of engagement. Similarly, direct campaigning, such as attending meetings, was not seen as significant by many people. A notable 24.4% of respondents chose "Can't say," indicating a lack of interest or uncertainty about the relative importance of various political activities.

The fact that discussing elections and consuming political news were the top two activities in the study indicated that people were highly interested in engaging with political information, potentially to make informed decisions. The availability of news through various media outlets and the relatively passive nature of this activity could be contributing factors. This suggests that while political awareness might be widespread, it may not always be deep or engaged.

Table 12.3: Most important issue in Local Council and Village Council elections?

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency	Valid Percent
1.	Majority for the party of choice	24	14.0
2.	Development	70	40.9
3.	Kinship ties	4	2.3
4.	Welfare schemes	47	27.5
5.	Liquor policy	13	7.6
6.	Local aspirations	7	4.1
7.	Others	6	3.5
8.	**Total**	**171**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey

The purpose of this analysis (Table 12.3) was to provide insight into the main reasons behind voting preferences in Mizoram's Village Council (VC) and Local

Council (LC) elections. In other words, the poll aimed to determine which issues voters prioritized when making their choices.

In the elections, 'development' was identified as the most important factor for voters, with 40.9% of the vote, as shown in Table 12.3. This indicated a strong focus on socio-economic and infrastructure improvements within the community. It also suggested that candidates or parties who emphasized development were more likely to succeed in these elections. Additionally, it showed that voters in Mizoram prioritized visible changes that enhanced their quality of life.

Welfare programs also significantly influenced voter decisions, accounting for 27.5% of the total. This high percentage reflected a community that valued public welfare and social security, demonstrating either reliance on or appreciation for government-provided benefits and services. A response rate of 14.0% for 'Majority for the party of choice' indicated a moderate level of party loyalty among the electorate, suggesting that while party allegiance mattered, it was not as significant as welfare or development.

The lower impact of issues such as 'Liquor policy' (7.6%), 'Local aspirations' (4.1%), and 'Others' (3.5%) suggested that these were not priorities for most voters. 'Kinship ties' also had a modest impact at 2.3%, indicating that, contrary to expectations in close-knit communities often found in rural and semi-rural areas, familial or tribal affiliations did not strongly influence voting behavior.

Overall, development and welfare programs ranked first and second, respectively, attracting a significant majority of voters (68.4%). This demonstrated a strong preference for practical issues over ideological or personal ones, reflecting a socio-economic environment where voters prioritized their immediate needs over long-term security. This suggested a mature voter base that valued political alignment and broader societal benefits over more traditional social structures.

Summary of voting behaviour of Local Election

The voting patterns in Mizoram were influenced by various factors, such as personal ideology, community influences, and broader political, economic, and social considerations. This comprehensive study examined these factors by analyzing survey data from the 2020 Local Council and Village Council elections and comparing them to the typical voting patterns in the region. The analysis focused on the survey data to explore voter preferences, influences, and behaviors.

Voter turnout in these elections was a key statistic for understanding political participation across regions and demographic groups. Higher engagement levels indicated a motivated and informed electorate, while lower levels suggested disillusionment or barriers to voting. The data showed an exceptionally high voter turnout of 96.6%, reflecting active participation in local governance. This high participation rate suggested that voter mobilization efforts were effective and that the community valued its role in local administration.

In response to the survey question about whose opinion mattered most in deciding whom to vote for in the Local Council and Village Council elections, a large majority of voters (69.4%) stated that they would decide independently, highlighting a strong sense of personal autonomy in political decision-making. Family influence was still significant but less dominant, affecting 22.9% of voters, indicating a blend of individual independence and family ties in political participation.

Voting patterns also provided strong indicators of political stability, making it important to determine whether voters would support the same party in future elections. High levels of party loyalty could indicate a stable political environment, while low levels might suggest instability and shifts in power. This insight revealed whether voters were satisfied or dissatisfied with a party's performance, leadership, and policies. In the Local Council and Village Council elections examined, a substantial 63.2% of respondents expressed a strong inclination to maintain their loyalty to the same political party in upcoming elections, demonstrating a notable

level of party allegiance. However, a significant 36.8% of individuals were willing to change their loyalty, which could be due to changing political circumstances or dissatisfaction with current political groups.

It was essential to investigate which media channel voters considered their primary source of election information during local elections. This was because different media channels used distinct editorial policies, biases, and methods of presenting information. Understanding the media outlets that voters relied on helped anticipate how these influences could shape their perspectives and decisions. Social platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram (43.8%) were the leading sources of election information, highlighting the growing importance of online platforms in political campaigns.

Election campaigning, accounting for 27.9% of the responses, had the most significant influence on shaping voting decisions in local elections. This underscored the importance of traditional methods such as public speeches and candidate appearances in forming voter opinions. Close behind, with a 23.8% response rate, were both door-to-door canvassing and media engagement, emphasizing a strong preference for direct, face-to-face communication and the increasing role of various media platforms in influencing voters.

Voters ranked LC/VC elections as the second most important (41.6% of respondents) compared to other levels, indicating that while these elections were significant, others, like the Mizoram Legislative Assembly at the state level or the Lok Sabha at the national level, might be more important to some voters. However, a substantial minority (36.4%) viewed local elections as the most crucial, emphasizing their direct impact on community well-being. This difference in prioritization pointed to diverse perceptions of governance among the population.

When deciding whom to vote for, 47.7% of respondents prioritized the qualities of the individual candidate, while 14.5% considered the party's manifesto. This suggested that the personal characteristics of the candidate were seen as the

most important factor, with party policies being the second most crucial factor in the decision-making process.

The qualities of a candidate had the potential to enhance the overall perception of the candidate and significantly influence election outcomes by shaping voter sentiments, confidence, and perceived capability to fulfill the responsibilities of the office. Therefore, these qualities helped voters make well-informed judgments about which candidate was most likely to govern effectively and advocate for their interests. According to 65.7% of voters, a candidate's personality was the most valued trait, including factors such as youth, educational level, party affiliation, experience, and qualifications, highlighting the importance placed on this trait by the public.

The study of why voters supported a particular party is crucial for understanding voting behavior because it provided insights into the motivations, values, and decision-making processes of voters. The primary factor driving voter support for a party was its 'Good overall program' (43.7%), followed by the quality of leadership (31.6%). This suggested that people prioritized practical considerations of policy and leadership over loyalty based on community or family ties.

Frequent participation in the political process indicated an individual's interest in and knowledge of political topics. Political activities, such as campaigning, attending rallies, or participating in political discourse, served as reliable indicators of a person's likelihood and manner of voting. Those who were more involved in these activities generally had higher election participation rates. The activities that had the greatest impact included actively engaging through discussing elections and consuming political news, suggesting that the electorate was well-informed and valued detailed political discourse.

Research on voter behavior demonstrated the impact of socio-economic changes on politics. Changes in social, economic, and cultural factors influenced people's perspectives on candidates and issues, thereby shaping the political environment. Analyzing these reasons helped clarify voting patterns and predict

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future trends. The top concerns for voters were development, followed by welfare schemes, indicating a focus on both overall governance and specific issues of importance.

In Mizoram, voting behavior is determined by a complex network of interconnected factors. While sociocultural factors like religious and communal ties influenced political opinions, economic factors, candidate qualities, and media effectiveness were also significant influences. Voter autonomy suggested a discerning electorate that valued independent thought and well-informed opinion.candidate qualities, and media efficacy are all significant influences. Voter autonomy indicates a smart electorate that respects independent thought and well-informed opinion.

Comparative Analysis of Election at Various Levels

Analyzing electoral behavior across different levels of elections in Mizoram is essential for understanding voter engagement in local, state, and national governance, and to understand the patterns of participation and the factors influencing voter decisions.

The comparative analysis of voter turnout across national, state, and local elections showed a noticeable pattern of increased engagement at more localized levels of governance. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election at the national level, the turnout was 83.8%, indicating strong participation and suggesting that the electorate was well-informed and committed to their civic responsibilities. At the state level, voter turnout in Mizoram was even higher, with 92.5% in 2018 and an impressive 98.3% in 2023. This suggested not only strong civic engagement but also a possible rise in political awareness and mobilization due to emerging local issues or improved outreach efforts. At the local level, the turnout reached an exceptionally high 96.6%, indicating that the electorate was deeply involved in local governance, likely because of the direct impact of local decisions and effective mobilization strategies. Thus, there was a clear trend of higher voter engagement in local elections compared to national elections, which attracted significant attention but saw lower levels of

involvement. This pattern was possibly due to the closer connection of state and local elections to the daily lives of the electorate and the more visible effects of their electoral choices.

The survey data on voter influence across three levels of elections - National, State, and Local, demonstrated the significant role of personal autonomy in the decision-making process of voters in Mizoram. At all three levels, there was a strong tendency for voters to make independent choices, with 72.3% at the National level (Lok Sabha election), 70.3% at the State level (Mizoram Legislative Assembly election), and 69.4% at the Local level (Local Council and Village Council elections). At the national level, independent decision-making was the most evident, with over 72% of voters relying on their own judgment. An additional 18.5% were influenced by family members, while the influence of community leaders or colleagues was minimal. The state level showed a similar pattern, with around 70% of voters emphasizing their independence in the electoral process, highlighting the importance of personal autonomy. At the local level, although independence remained high at 69.4%, family influence increased to 22.9%. This greater family influence at the local level suggested that as the scale of the election decreased, personal connections and familial ties played a more significant role in shaping voter decisions.

The comparative analysis voting behavior at the national, state, and local levels in Mizoram revealed interesting insights into political stability and voter loyalty. At the national level, the Lok Sabha elections showed that 62% of voters remained loyal to their chosen political party, indicating a significant level of party loyalty. However, it also highlighted that 38% were open to changing their allegiance due to political dissatisfaction or changes in circumstances. In contrast, at the state level, particularly in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, voter loyalty was higher, with 77% of respondents planning to vote for the same party again. This suggested greater satisfaction with party performance and policy alignment. At the local level, which includes Local Council and Village Council elections, 63.2% of voters expressed loyalty to their party, similar to the national level. However, 36.8%

were willing to switch parties, reflecting concerns about political leadership and policies.

The investigation into the main sources of election information at the national, state, and local levels showed differences in voter behavior and media influence across these tiers. At the national level, during the Lok Sabha elections, digital media, especially YouTube (46.5%), was the main source of information, followed by other social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram (29.1%). At the state level, for MLA elections, digital platforms remained important, with YouTube and social media being key sources, indicating a consistent pattern of digital dominance. At the local level, the influence of social media was even stronger, with platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram accounting for 43.8% of the main sources. This trend highlighted the increasing importance of online platforms in shaping political opinions and decisions, suggesting a shift towards more immediate and accessible forms of information from national to local elections. These findings showed a significant impact of digital media across all levels, with a notable increase in reliance on social media at the local level, emphasizing its key role in voter engagement and information sharing in modern political campaigns.

At the national, state, and local levels, election participation varied significantly in terms of influential factors and voter engagement. At the national level, election participation was closely linked to overall political activity, with media engagement and traditional campaigning being the most influential, affecting 42.4% and 27.3% of the electorate, respectively. At the state level, especially in regions with high literacy and digital access like Mizoram, media was the dominant influence, accounting for 35.6% of voter engagement, reflecting a shift towards digital and media-driven political involvement. At the local level, traditional campaigning methods remained highly effective, with 27.9% of voters influenced by public speeches and candidate appearances. Media engagement and direct canvassing also played substantial roles, each influencing about 23.8% of voter decisions. This comparison highlighted the varying importance of media consumption and traditional campaigning across different levels of elections, showing a trend towards more

personalized and digital interaction in voter engagement, particularly at the state and local levels.

At different levels of elections in Mizoram, voter priorities highlighted distinct perceptions of how governance affects their well-being. At the national level, 70.3% of voters perceived Lok Sabha elections as less significant to their overall well-being compared to other levels, suggesting that local governance was seen as having a greater impact on daily life. In contrast, state-level elections were considered the most crucial by 60.6% of respondents, reflecting a strong belief in the direct influence of state governance. At the local level, while 41.6% of voters viewed LC/VC elections as second in importance, a notable 36.4% regarded them as the most vital, emphasizing their significant role in community well-being. This variation demonstrated diverse valuations of different governance layers, with a general preference for more immediate, local administrative structures having a greater effect on individual and community life.

Across national, state, and local levels of elections, the common theme was the prioritization of a candidate's personal attributes over party policies when making voting decisions. At the national level, 35.5% of respondents emphasized the importance of candidate qualities, while 20.9% considered the party's manifesto. This preference suggested a significant influence of individual characteristics over party alignment. Similarly, at the state level, voters showed a strong preference for candidate attributes, valuing personal integrity, charisma, and leadership qualities, which indicated a similar pattern to the national level but with a greater emphasis on personal traits. At the local level, this trend was even more pronounced, with 47.7% prioritizing candidate qualities and only 14.5% focusing on party manifestos. This shift from national to local levels highlighted a growing emphasis on individual qualities in smaller-scale elections, reflecting a potential increase in personal connection and accountability expected from candidates at more localized levels.

The impact of candidate attributes on elections varied subtly across national, state, and local levels. At the national level, attributes such as personality, experience, and educational qualifications significantly shaped voter opinions,

affecting their trust and perceived competence in governing. A notable 60.7% of voters prioritized personality over other traits. At the state level, the situation was similar, with an even higher emphasis on personality (65.7%), showing that voters greatly valued this trait when choosing candidates to represent their interests effectively. At the local level, this trend continued, with 65.7% of voters also emphasizing personality, highlighting the consistency across different election levels in how voters valued personal traits in their representatives. The key insight was that, while personality was consistently prioritized over attributes like education, experience, and youth, its importance increased as the election scope narrowed from national to more localized contexts. This suggested that personal appeal became more significant in smaller, community-focused elections.

When analyzing the factors influencing voting behavior across national, state, and local levels, a consistent trend emerged where voters prioritized practical policy considerations and leadership qualities over community or familial loyalty. At the national level, voters ranked a party's "Good overall programme" as the most important factor (40.2%), followed by leadership quality and community alignment. Similar patterns were observed at the state and local levels, with "Good overall programme" receiving the highest consideration (43.7%) and leadership quality next (31.6%). These figures suggested a universal preference for substantive policy frameworks and capable leadership across different levels of governance. This trend underscored the need for political parties to focus on developing robust, comprehensive programs and demonstrating effective leadership to gain voter support, reflecting a shift towards more issue-based voting that transcended local ties. This insight was crucial for understanding electoral dynamics and enhancing democratic processes by highlighting the shifting priorities of the electorate.

At the national, state, and local levels, consuming political news was the most common form of political participation, indicating a general preference for passive involvement. At the national level, 38.4% of political participation involved listening to or reading political news, demonstrating the effectiveness of mass media in shaping public opinion. This trend was also observed at the state and local levels, although there was a stronger focus on discussions and other forms of active

engagement as participants became more involved in political activities. At these levels, attending rallies, campaigning, and participating in political discussions indicated a deeper and more active form of political involvement. This suggested that a more engaged electorate was likely to influence voting behaviors more significantly than at the national level. The shift from passive to more active engagement at more localized levels of government indicated a gradient in the depth of political participation, with local politics encouraging the most active forms, such as discussing elections, aligning with an electorate that valued detailed political discourse.

Voter behavior across national, state, and local elections showed how changing societal, economic, and cultural conditions shaped political preferences. At the national level, voters primarily focused on good governance, economic development, and social welfare programs, with specific issues like liquor policy also gaining attention. This reflected a broad concern for effective governance alongside particular policy interests. State-level data showed a similar focus on good governance, which was the top priority at 45.7%, followed by regional development and welfare schemes. This suggested that voters prioritized transparent and efficient administration, as well as local progress and public benefits. At the local level, the focus shifted slightly toward development and welfare schemes, indicating that immediate, tangible outcomes in community improvement and support systems were most important to voters. This comparative analysis demonstrated a consistent preference for governance and welfare across levels, but with a varying emphasis on local versus broader policy issues, highlighting the importance of governance quality and immediate developmental impacts in voter decision-making.

Conclusion

The study compared elections at the national, state, and local levels in India, focusing on voter turnout, behavior, media engagement, and priorities. It found that voter turnout was highest in local elections, indicating a stronger connection between voters and their immediate governance. This suggested that local governance had a significant impact on community well-being, leading to higher civic participation. The analysis also noted that voters tended to make independent decisions, with personal choices being more important than communal or familial influences. However, family influence was more noticeable in local elections, where people felt their votes had a direct effect on their daily lives.

The study also examined voter loyalty, media influence, and campaign effectiveness, revealing variations across different levels of governance. In national elections, media influence and party loyalty were more significant, while local elections focused more on candidates' personal qualities and local issues. This shift towards a more personalized and issue-based engagement showed a preference for integrity, charisma, and effectiveness in governance, reflecting the electorate's desire for accountability and transparent leadership.

Lastly, the study highlighted the growing role of digital media in shaping political opinions and behaviors, especially at the local level. This change pointed to an evolving political landscape where technology and media became crucial in informing and engaging voters. As society became more digitized, understanding these shifts was important for enhancing democracy and ensuring that the government accurately represented the people's wishes and needs.

CHAPTER –V

VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

The study of voting behavior is a crucial area within political science, especially in regions with unique electoral dynamics and diverse populations, such as Mizoram. This research is important because it can reveal the complex factors influencing electoral choices, including economic conditions, cultural influences, and political mobilization strategies.

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of voting behavior in both rural and urban areas of Mizoram, comparing these environments to understand how they shape voter preferences and actions. The importance of this comparative study is twofold: first, it aims to enhance the broader understanding of regional voting patterns in India, a country known for its significant diversity. Second, it seeks to offer insights to policymakers and political strategists who are developing strategies tailored to various electoral groups.

Urban and Rural Disparities

Urban and rural areas often differ significantly in terms of demographics such as age, education level, and occupation. These factors can influence voting preferences and behaviors, making it important to understand how these differences contribute to electoral outcomes. Voters in urban and rural areas may prioritize different political issues. For example, urban voters might focus more on public transportation and housing policies, while rural voters might prioritize agricultural policies and land use.

Levels of political engagement and participation can vary between urban and rural areas due to factors like access to information, political mobilization, and community cohesion. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for enhancing voter participation and making the democratic process more inclusive. Policies that benefit one area might not have the same effect in another, or could even have adverse effects. By studying how different regions react to policies, not only enhances our

understanding of electoral dynamics but also aids in the development of more responsive and inclusive political processes.

Urban areas, characterized by higher population densities and a broader mix of economic activities, often present a complex social structure with varied ideological leanings and political affiliations. These regions tend to have better infrastructure and access to information, which can facilitate more informed decision-making and higher voter turnout. In contrast, rural areas often exhibit more homogeneous economic activities centered on agriculture and local industries, which might correlate with more uniform voting patterns influenced by local needs and communal relationships.

In states like Mizoram, these contrasts are stark, reflecting the socio-economic disparities between urban and rural settings. Rural voters might prioritize issues related to agricultural policies, land rights, and basic infrastructural needs, which are directly tied to their livelihoods and daily experiences. Conversely, urban voters could be more driven by policies impacting economic development, healthcare, education, and technological advancement. The rural areas, often with less access to comprehensive education and healthcare, might also see a different kind of political mobilization, heavily reliant on local networks and traditional community leaders. These factors culminate in a political landscape where urban and rural areas not only differ in their priority issues but also in their engagement and influence strategies during elections, making the understanding of these distinctions crucial for predicting and analyzing voting behaviors across different regions.

ANALYSIS OF URBAN AND RURAL AREA

1. *Background profile of respondents*

Rural and urban areas often differ significantly in socio-economic characteristics. Factors such as income levels, marital status, gender, employment types, and educational attainment can influence voting preferences and political engagement. Understanding these differences helps in identifying how economic and social conditions drive voting behaviors.

Table 1.1: Urban and rural respondents

Urban and Rural Data			
Variable	**Frequency**	**Valid Percent**	**Total**
Rural	105	60	60
Urban	71	40	100.0
Total	**176**	**100.0**	

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.1 summarized the distribution of survey respondents by their residential classification, 'Urban' or 'Rural.' It showed that 106 respondents lived in rural areas, making up the majority of the survey population, while 71 respondents were from urban areas, comprising a smaller portion. About 60% of respondents were from rural areas, compared to 40% from urban areas.

The valid percent column confirmed that there were no missing values in the geographical distribution data. The table provided key insights into the demographics of the survey respondents, highlighting a larger proportion of rural participants. This information was important for analyzing the survey results and understanding how regional differences might have influenced the findings.

Table 1.2: Marital status

Marital status					
Status	**Married**	**Unmarried**	**Divorced**	**Widowed**	**Total**
Rural	80	15	5	4	104
Urban	35	25	3	6	69
Total	**115**	**40**	**8**	**10**	**173**

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.2 categorized respondents into four marital statuses—married, single, divorced, and widowed—and compared these across urban and rural settings. The data showed that a higher percentage of respondents were married in rural areas (76.92%) than in urban areas (50.72%), suggesting a stronger adherence to traditional marriage values in rural settings. Urban areas had a higher rate of singles (36.23%) compared to rural areas (14.42%), which might reflect a younger

population or more modern attitudes toward marriage in cities. Divorce rates were similar between groups, but the percentage of widowed individuals was higher in urban areas, indicating an older population or higher spouse mortality rates.

Table 1.3: Age

Age				
Status	**23 yrs - 40 yrs**	**41 yrs - 50 yrs**	**51 yrs and above**	**Total**
Rural	44	31	30	105
Urban	27	20	24	71
Total	**71**	**51**	**54**	**176**

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.3 illustrateds that rural respondents aged 23-40 constituted about 41.90% of the rural population and 61.97% of all individuals in this age group. In this group, there were 27 urban respondents, representing 38.02% of the urban population and 38.02% of all individuals in this age category.

For the 41-50 age group, 31 rural respondents made up approximately 29.52% of the rural population and 60.78% of individuals in this age range. This group also included 20 urban respondents, accounting for about 28.16% of the urban sample and 39.21% of the total in this age category.

In the age group of 51 years and older, 30 rural respondents represented about 28.57% of the rural population and 55.5% of the age group. In this category, 24 urban respondents accounted for 44.4% of the total in this age group and 33.8% of the urban population.

The analysis indicated a higher proportion of younger respondents (ages 23 to 40) in rural areas compared to urban areas, suggesting a relatively younger rural population. The 41-50 age group also showed more rural respondents, though by a smaller margin than the younger group, indicating a steady population distribution in rural areas. Although rural areas slightly outnumbered urban areas in the older age group (51+), the proportion of older adults was fairly balanced, showing that urban areas also had a significant share of this demographic.

Table 1.4: Gender

Gender			
Gender	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Rural	65	41	106
Urban	32	38	70
Total	**97**	**79**	**176**

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.4 indicated there were 176 respondents, with 97 males (55.11% of the total) and 79 females (44.89% of the total), showing more male than female respondents. One respondent chose not to disclose their gender due to privacy concerns.

Of all respondents, 106 lived in rural areas, making up about 60.23% of the sample, while 70 resided in urban areas, comprising about 39.77% of the total. This showed a larger concentration of survey participants from rural areas. Among the respondents, 65 rural males represented 36.93% of the total and 61.32% of those in rural areas. Rural females totaled 41, accounting for 23.30% of all respondents and 38.68% of the rural group. In urban areas, there were 32 males, making up 18.18% of all respondents and 45.71% of the urban group, while 38 urban females comprised 21.59% of all respondents and 54.29% of the urban group.

Rural areas had a higher proportion of males (61.32% male and 38.68% female), while urban areas had more females (54.29% female and 45.71% male). The rural group, with 106 respondents, was significantly larger than the urban group's 70 respondents, suggesting a broader sample from rural areas that reflected the overall demographic in the survey.

Table 1.5: Educational Qualification

	Educational Qualification			
Variable	HSSLC and equivalent or below	Under graduate and equivalent	Post graduate and equivalent or above	Total
Rural	66	18	6	90
Urban	40	19	9	68
Total	**106**	**37**	**15**	**158**

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.5 categorized respondents into three educational levels: HSSLC and lower, Undergraduate, and Postgraduate or higher.

Among the 90 rural respondents, 66 had completed high school or less, representing about 73.33% of the rural group. This indicated a predominance of lower education levels among rural respondents. Eighteen rural respondents were undergraduates, making up 20%, while only 6 respondents, or 6.67%, had postgraduate education, highlighting a notable decrease in higher education attainment in rural areas. A few respondents chose not to disclose their educational levels but provided other information.

In the urban group, 40 respondents, or 58.82%, had a high school education or less, a lower percentage than in rural areas, reflecting better access to higher education in urban settings. Nineteen urban respondents, or 27.94%, were undergraduates, and 9, or 13.24%, had postgraduate education. This showed a relatively higher proportion of advanced degrees in urban areas compared to rural areas. Urban areas had a higher percentage of both undergraduate and postgraduate respondents (41.18%) compared to rural areas (26.67%), suggesting better educational infrastructure or higher economic status in urban settings.

Overall, most rural respondents had education up to high school or lower, unlike urban respondents (73.33% vs. 58.82%). This difference likely resulted from variations in access to educational facilities or economic conditions that limited further education in rural areas. The survey data highlighted significant educational disparities between urban and rural respondents, with urban respondents generally

having higher educational qualifications. A considerable number of rural respondents had qualifications below the HSSLC level, suggesting limited educational opportunities or economic barriers in rural areas.

Table 1.6: Occupation

Occupation						
Variable	**Student**	**Self employed**	**Unemployed**	**Retired**	**Employed**	**Total**
Rural	2	70	14	3	16	105
Urban	0	32	18	2	17	69
Total	2	102	32	5	33	174

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.6 categorized respondents by geographical setting (Rural or Urban) and employment status (Student, Self-employed, Unemployed, Retired, Employed).

It showed that 66.67% of rural respondents were self-employed, 13.33% were unemployed, 15.24% were employed, and only a small number were retirees (2.86%) and students (1.90%). In urban areas, 46.38% of respondents were self-employed, 26.09% were unemployed, 24.64% were employed, with fewer students and retirees (2.90%).

The survey revealed notable differences in employment status between rural and urban areas. A large proportion of both rural and urban respondents were self-employed, with a higher prevalence in rural areas, likely due to agricultural or independent business activities. Urban areas had a higher unemployment rate, possibly reflecting a scarcity of job openings or stricter job requirements. Employment rates were slightly higher in urban areas, indicating a wider range of job opportunities beyond agriculture or self-employment. Rural areas had fewer students and retirees, possibly due to limited educational facilities and a younger population not yet of retirement age.

Table 1.7: Income

	Income				
Variable	**Up to 3,00,000**	**3,00,001 to 12,00,000**	**12,00,001 to 18,00,000**	**18,00,001 and above**	**Total**
Rural	84	15	6	1	106
Urban	49	8	0	1	58
Total	**133**	**23**	**6**	**2**	**164**

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.7 showed that in rural areas, 79.25% of the population was in the lowest income bracket (up to ₹3,00,000), compared to 84.48% in urban areas, indicating a higher prevalence of lower-income individuals in rural settings. The middle-income group was slightly larger in rural areas, with 14.15% earning between ₹3,00,001 to ₹12,00,000 and 5.66% earning between ₹12,00,001 to ₹18,00,000, compared to 13.79% in the middle-income range and none in the higher bracket in urban areas. This suggested a smaller middle class in urban areas.

A large majority of both rural (79.25%) and urban (84.48%) populations earned up to ₹3,00,000, highlighting significant lower-income groups in both settings. Given the prevalence of lower-income groups, policy initiatives might focus on healthcare, welfare, and affordable housing rather than policies favoring wealthier groups.

Comparative analysis of urban and rual voting behaviour

This study uses a series of detailed survey tables to evaluate the patterns and dynamics of voting behaviour in Mizoram. Data analysis reveals underlying trends and causes influencing regional electoral outcomes, providing significant insights into the political scene of Mizoram. These Tables are organised into four categories: Voting Behaviour and Decision Making, Influence and Sources of Information, Election and Candidate Preferences, and Political Engagement and Participation, to provide a comprehensive picture of voter preferences and electoral participation.

1. Voting behavior and decision-making.

The study of voting behavior focuses on the processes by which individuals in a society make decisions that collectively influenced their governance and political landscape, classified under 'Voting Behaviour and Decision Making'.

Table 1.1: Whether voted in Mizoram Legislative Assembly (MLA) Election, 2018?

Variable	Yes	No	Total
Rural	96	8	104
Urban	65	5	70
Total	**161**	**13**	**174**

Source: Field Survey

This study seeks to examine voting patterns in rural and urban settings during the state-level election to understand differences and similarities in voter turnout. Table 1.1 showed high engagement levels, with 92.31% in rural areas and 92.86% in urban areas. Both areas had low non-voting rates, indicating minimal disengagement across geographical boundaries. The high response rate added credibility to the survey, showing that the target demographic was well-represented.

Data from the 2018 Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election showed similar turnout rates in rural and urban areas, with strong voter participation in both. However, there were more 'Yes' votes in rural areas, possibly due to differences in political mobilization or demographics. The low non-voting rates in both settings suggested that barriers to voting, such as apathy, were equally encountered in rural and urban areas.

Overall, the 2018 Mizoram MLA Elections recorded high voter turnout in both rural and urban areas, indicating widespread political awareness across different geographical and socio-economic groups. This pattern indicated minimal rural-urban disparity in political engagement. Slightly higher turnout in urban areas could be due to better access to polling stations, more effective voter mobilization,

and higher education levels, which may increase political awareness and participation.

Table 1.2:   Whether voted in Mizoram Legislative Assembly (MLA) Election, 2023?

Variable	Yes	No	Total
Rural	103	2	105
Urban	69	1	70
Total	**172**	**3**	**175**

Source: Field Survey

This research examines voting patterns in the 2023 Mizoram Legislative Assembly (MLA) Elections, emphasizing the contrasts and similarities among voters in rural and urban districts.

Table 1.2 showed that in rural areas, 103 out of 105 respondents voted, resulting in a turnout of about 98.1%. In urban areas, 69 out of 70 respondents voted, yielding a turnout of 98.57%. Both rural and urban areas had very high voter participation, with urban turnout slightly higher by 0.5%. This small difference suggested that residents of Mizoram, regardless of whether they were from rural or urban areas, were highly motivated to vote. Only two rural respondents and one urban respondent did not vote.

The high voter turnout in both rural and urban areas indicated strong democratic engagement and public participation in Mizoram. The minimal differences in abstention rates suggested that voter mobilization was equally effective in both settings. The low number of non-voters in each group demonstrated a high level of civic involvement overall.

Table 1.3: Whether voted in the Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) Election, 2019?

Variable	Yes	No	Total
Rural	84	20	104
Urban	61	8	69
Total	**145**	**28**	**173**

Source: Field Survey

This investigation through Table 1.3 explores the voting behaviour of respondents from rural and urban areas in India's 2019 Lok Sabha elections. By examining participation rates and drawing comparisons across these distinct categories, one can infer potential trends, motivations, and obstacles to voting within these groups.

Out of the 173 surveyed, 145 voted, resulting in an overall participation rate of about 83.8%. In rural areas, 84 out of 104 respondents voted, leading to a voting rate of 80.77%. In urban areas, 61 out of 69 respondents voted, with a higher participation rate of 88.41%. There were eight non-voters in urban areas (11.59%) compared to 20 non-voters in rural areas (19.23%).

Voter participation was higher in urban areas (88.4%) than in rural areas (80.8%). This difference might be influenced by various socio-economic factors, such as greater awareness, more accessible polling stations, and possibly more intensive electoral campaigns in urban areas. The lower turnout in rural areas could be due to limited access to information and civic education, as well as economic conditions that prioritize immediate needs over voting.

Table 1.4: Whether voted in the Local Council / Village Council (LC/VC) Election, 2020?

Variable	Yes	No	Total
Rural	101	3	104
Urban	67	3	70
Total	**168**	**6**	**174**

Source: Field Survey

The data set from Table 1.4 provided detailed insights into voting patterns in rural and urban areas during the 2020 Local Council and Village Council elections. The participation rate was higher in rural areas (97.12%) than in urban areas (95.71%), suggesting that rural voters were slightly more involved in local governance. Abstention rates were low in both settings but were higher in urban areas (4.29%) compared to rural areas (2.88%).

The low rates of non-voters in both contexts suggested a broad recognition of the importance of local governance across various socio-economic and geographical backgrounds. Several factors could explain the slightly higher turnout in rural settings. For example, rural communities often have stronger social connections, with a high value placed on voting and other community activities. Decisions made at the local council and village council levels might have a more significant impact on the daily lives of rural residents than those in urban areas. Additionally, cultural factors may have contributed, as rural inhabitants might hold stronger beliefs about civic responsibilities.

Table 1.5: Main reason for voting in the elections.

Variable	It is my right and responsibility	To elect the candidate of my choice	To elect the party of my choice	At the request of the electoral agencies	At the request of family / community members	Other reasons	Total
Rural	73	21	6	1	0	4	105
Urban	57	5	7	0	1	0	70
Total	**130**	**26**	**13**	**1**	**1**	**4**	**175**

Source: Field Survey

The research study aimed to identify key factors influencing voter participation in recent elections, focusing on differences between rural and urban areas. The goal was to determine patterns, disparities, and similarities in voting behaviors.

Table 1.5 showed that the primary reason for voting in both rural (69.5%) and urban (81.4%) areas was the belief that voting is both a right and a duty. This

indicated a strong commitment to civic responsibility in both groups, with slightly higher emphasis in urban areas.

Rural residents were more likely to vote to support a specific candidate (20% vs. 7.1% in urban areas), suggesting stronger personal bonds or loyalty to candidates in rural settings, possibly due to closer familiarity or targeted campaign strategies. Voting based on party preference was relatively low in both settings but slightly higher in urban areas (10% vs. 5.7%), indicating that urban voters may be more influenced by party politics.

The influence of electoral bodies and family/community ties was minimal in both groups, showing that external factors did not significantly impact voting behavior. Overall, the main motivation for voting was seen as a civic responsibility, with a slightly stronger emphasis in urban areas. Rural voters were more inclined to vote based on candidate preference, likely due to more direct interactions or personalized campaigning.

Table 1.6: When did you decide whom to vote in the elections?

Variable	On polling day	During the election campaign	After the declaration of candidates	Before the start of election campaign	Can't say	Total
Rural	11	28	40	14	11	104
Urban	8	7	28	18	9	70
Total	**19**	**35**	**68**	**32**	**20**	**174**

Source: Field Survey

To understand the differences and similarities in voting behaviors between urban and rural areas, the survey data were analyzed for the timing of when voters made their electoral choices. Table 1.6 examined the timing of voter decision-making in rural and urban areas regarding candidate selection in elections.

Urban voters were more likely (25.7%) to decide their vote before the election campaign began, compared to rural voters (13.5%). This suggests that urban voters may have been more engaged before the campaign, possibly due to better access to information or stronger political affiliations. The data also showed that

most rural voters (38.5%) chose their candidate after the candidates were officially announced, highlighting the importance of candidate identification in influencing rural voters. Urban voters followed a similar pattern but at a slightly lower rate.

The election campaign had a more significant effect in rural areas, influencing 26.9% of voters, compared to 10% in urban areas. This difference may indicate more effective campaign strategies or higher voter engagement in rural settings. Few voters in both rural (10.6%) and urban (11.4%) areas made their decisions on polling day, suggesting that most had already decided beforehand.

A small difference was observed in the proportion of rural (10.6%) and urban (12.9%) respondents who chose 'Can't say,' indicating similar levels of uncertainty or reluctance to disclose decision timing. The findings suggest that rural voters typically made their decisions during active campaign phases, especially after candidates were announced, while urban voters were more likely to decide before the campaign, possibly due to better information access, greater political awareness, or stronger party ties.

Table 1.7: **Most important opinion shaping voting choice in the Lok Sabha election**

Variable	Husband / Wife	Family members	Religious leaders	Friends / Neighbours	Colleague	I decide on my own	Total
Rural	4	26	2	1	3	67	103
Urban	0	6	1	2	2	59	70
Total	4	32	3	3	5	126	173

Source: Field Survey

This study aimed to identify the key factors that influenced voters' decision-making across different demographic groups, particularly comparing rural and urban environments. The choices - spouse, relatives, religious leaders, friends, co-workers, and individual preference, represented a range of potential influences within a person's social circle.

According to Table 1.7, the most influential factor in voting decisions for both rural and urban individuals in the national election was "I decide on my own," with 65% of rural and 84% of urban respondents choosing this option. This indicated a strong preference for autonomous decision-making in both groups. In rural areas, family influence was higher (25%), while in urban areas, it was lower (18.5%), suggesting a possible shift in the importance of family opinions in urban settings.

Religious leaders had minimal impact on voting choices, with only 2% in rural and 1.4% in urban areas considering their advice. Friends and neighbors also had little influence, with 1.7% in rural and 2.9% in urban areas acknowledging their effect. Work colleagues had a similarly minor role, with 3% in rural and 2.9% in urban areas recognizing their influence. These low response rates indicated a reduced role of peer influence and a stronger emphasis on personal or family opinions.

The difference in spousal influence in urban areas compared to rural areas (3.9%) could reflect different cultural or gender dynamics. The greater influence of family in rural areas (25%) could be linked to more traditional family structures, while urban areas (18.5%) tended to be more nuclear and individualistic.

Overall, the survey data revealed that both rural and urban voters favored making their own voting decisions. However, rural voters valued their family's opinions more than urban voters, suggesting a shift towards individualism or confidence in personal political judgments. The minimal influence of other social connections, such as colleagues, acquaintances, and religious figures, indicated that personal judgment and close family ties were more significant in voting decisions than broader social networks.

Table 1.8: **Most important opinion shaping voting choice in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election.**

Variable	Husband / Wife	Family members	Religious leaders	Friends / Neighbours	Colleague	I decide on my own	Total
Rural	6	25	1	4	2	64	102
Urban	0	8	2	0	3	57	70
Total	**6**	**33**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**121**	**172**

Source: Field Survey

A significant majority of people in both rural (62.7%) and urban (81.4%) areas reported that they independently determined their voting choices in the Mizoram State Assembly election, as shown in Table 1.8. Urban areas had a higher proportion of individuals who preferred making their own decisions, indicating stronger individualism or less influence from social circles compared to rural areas.

Family was the second most influential factor after personal choice, having a more significant impact in rural areas (24.5%) compared to urban areas (11.4%). This suggests that rural communities may have closer family ties or stronger family influence than urban settings.

The influence of friends and neighbors was minimal in urban areas (0%) and slightly higher in rural areas (3.9%). Similarly, colleagues had a modest impact in urban areas (4.3%) and even less in rural areas (2%). No urban respondents considered friends and neighbors as influencers, indicating a lower level of community-based decision-making or a greater focus on privacy and self-reliance in urban areas. Religious figures had a minor influence in both areas, slightly more in urban settings (2.9%) than in rural areas (1%). This suggests that urban residents, while more individualistic, may still consider religious leaders in their electoral decisions.

The data indicates a strong tendency toward individualism in both rural and urban settings, with most respondents relying on their own judgment in the state-

level election. The greater influence of family in rural areas compared to urban areas could be due to differences in social structures and family dependence. The minimal influence of religious figures, friends, and neighbors overall points to a broader trend toward individual-based decision-making in politics, with less reliance on communal influence.

Table 1.9: **Most important opinion shaping voting choice in the Local Council and Village Council elections.**

Variable	Husband / Wife	Family members	Religious leaders	Friends / Neighbours	Colleague	I decide on my own	Total
Rural	3	30	0	0	3	64	100
Urban	2	9	3	1	1	54	70
Total	**5**	**39**	**3**	**1**	**4**	**118**	**170**

Source: Field Survey

In both urban and rural contexts, the survey data examines how various relationships influence individuals' decisions to participate in local council or village council elections. The primary goal is to determine which opinions voters consider most significant in their choice of candidates.

Table 1.9 indicated that a large majority (64%) of rural voters made decisions independently, showing a significant level of personal autonomy in their electoral choices. Urban areas also showed a strong tendency toward individual decision-making, with a preference rate of 54%, though slightly weaker than in rural areas. About 30% of rural respondents were significantly influenced by family members, highlighting the strong impact of familial ties in these areas. In contrast, only 9% of urban voters were influenced by their families, suggesting a shift away from traditional family-based decision-making toward more diverse influences.

In rural areas, the influence of religious leaders was nearly absent, while in urban centers it accounted for about 3%. This reflected the greater exposure to different religious ideologies and more organized religious practices in urban

settings. Both colleagues and friends had minimal influence on voters in both areas, indicating that professional and social networks played a lesser role in political decisions compared to family and personal beliefs.

The trend of making independent decisions was dominant in both demographic groups, possibly due to increased access to information through media, education, and personal interactions, allowing people to make informed decisions without external influences.

Table 1.10: **Whether the same party would be voted in the next Lok Sabha election?**

Response	Yes	No	Total
Rural	53	40	93
Urban	48	22	70
Total	**101**	**62**	**163**

Source: Field Survey

This study examined the differences in political party loyalty between rural and urban areas in relation to the next Lok Sabha elections in India. The research asked whether respondents planned to support the same political party they had supported in previous elections. Understanding this was crucial for assessing voter stability and changes in political allegiance across different demographic groups.

Table 1.10 displays that 57% (53 out of 93) of rural respondents remained loyal to their previous political party and intended to vote for the same party in the upcoming election. Similarly, 69% (48 out of 70) of urban respondents demonstrated loyalty to their previous choice, indicating a higher rate of party loyalty in urban areas compared to rural ones. About 43% (40 out of 93) of rural voters were considering changing their political party affiliation, compared to 31% (22 out of 70) of urban voters. This suggested a greater tendency for changing political loyalty in rural areas.

In the Lok Sabha election, urban areas showed a higher rate of consistent allegiance to the same political party than rural areas, possibly due to more

consistent policy implementation that met the population's needs, leading to greater satisfaction with the incumbent party. In contrast, rural areas exhibited a greater tendency to change party affiliation, which may have reflected greater political instability or dissatisfaction with current party policies.

Table 1.11: **Whether the same party would be voted in the next Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections.**

Variable	Yes	No	Total
Rural	71	23	94
Urban	56	15	71
Total	**127**	**38**	**165**

Source: Field Survey

The study asked the respondents about their plans to continue supporting the same political party in the forthcoming Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections. The response choices were limited to 'Yes' or 'No'.

Table 1.11 showed that urban respondents, comprising 78.9%, had a slightly higher commitment to their current political party than rural respondents, who accounted for 75.5% in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election. This suggested that despite their broader exposure to diverse perspectives, urban voters exhibited cohesion in their voting patterns. The table also indicated a rejection rate of 24.5% in rural areas compared to 21.1% in urban areas, possibly reflecting dissatisfaction or a critical assessment of the party's performance, driven by local issues or unmet promises.

The data highlighted a distinct and complex political environment in Mizoram's state-level elections, where both rural and urban residents demonstrated strong but differing loyalty to their political parties. Urban residents showed a slightly stronger tendency to remain with the same party, perhaps due to perceived benefits or more effective urban governance. The slightly higher loyalty among urban voters could be attributed to better access to information, services, and infrastructure, while rural areas displayed varied responses based on the presence or absence of specific initiatives addressing their needs.

Table 1.12:   **Whether the same party would be voted in the next Local Council and Village Council elections.**

Variable	Yes	No	Total
Rural	56	37	93
Urban	47	23	70
Total	**103**	**60**	**163**

Source: Field Survey

This examination aimed to understand the differences and similarities in voting behavior across various demographic areas, providing insights into political stability and loyalty to political parties among the population in local elections.

Urban respondents showed higher commitment to their current political party, with 67.1% demonstrating loyalty, compared to 60.2% of rural respondents. This indicated stronger party loyalty or satisfaction with the current political situation in urban areas than in rural areas. Table 1.12 also showed that the proportion of respondents voting 'No' (indicating a desire for change in party representation) was higher in rural areas (39.8%) than in urban areas (32.9%). This suggested a greater level of political discontent or desire for change in rural areas.

The survey data provided important insights into political dynamics between rural and urban areas concerning party loyalty in local elections. Urban residents were more likely to consistently vote for the same political party than rural residents, who were slightly more open to change. Greater exposure to diverse viewpoints and more active political campaigns might strengthen party loyalty in urban areas, where voters are influenced by consistent party performance. In contrast, rural areas might have less access to varied political information, leading to slightly lower party loyalty. Strong community bonds in rural areas could create more uniform voting patterns but also foster diverse party loyalty due to local concerns.

2. Influence and sources of political information

The investigation of 'Influence and Sources of Political Information' is vital for understanding voter behaviour as it looks into the ways in which voters are

informed and swayed in their political choices. This field explores into the different media through which individuals obtain political information, including media, social networks and political campaigns.

Table 2.1:   **Primary source of election information among media channels in Lok Sabha election.**

Variable	Pamphlet	Magazine	Radio	TV programme	Website	Whatsapp/ Facebook/ Instagram	YouTube	Total
Rural	7	3	3	10	1	35	42	101
Urban	2	2	0	13	1	15	38	71
Total	9	5	3	23	2	50	80	172

Source: Field Survey

This Table 2.1, examines the principal channels for obtaining election information during the Lok Sabha election across both rural and urban sectors. The data encompasses responses from diverse media sources, including pamphlets, magazines, radios, TV programs, websites, social media networks (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp), and YouTube.

Pamphlets were significantly more common in rural areas (6.93%) than in urban areas (2.82%), indicating that traditional print media remained an effective engagement tool in rural settings, likely due to limited access to digital platforms. Magazines were also more common in rural areas (2.9%) but had low overall usage, suggesting they were unreliable as a source of political information. Radios were used exclusively in rural areas (2.9%), highlighting their importance due to accessibility and established listening habits. Engagement with Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp was higher in rural areas (34.6%), reflecting a strong social network and reliance on these platforms for news and community dialogue.

Television programs were more popular in urban areas (18.3%) than in rural areas (9.9%), likely due to better television services and a preference for this media type. Website engagement was minimal in both rural (0.9%) and urban (1.41%)

areas, suggesting it was not a significant channel for political engagement. YouTube was used for accessing political content fairly evenly in urban (53.5%) and rural (41.5%) areas, showing its broad reach and appeal.

The survey on a national level revealed that media consumption patterns among Lok Sabha election voters differed between rural and urban areas, with digital media, particularly social media and YouTube, serving as the leading information sources. The declining relevance of pamphlets and magazines in both segments indicated the fading role of traditional print media as a primary information source in the digital era. Television programs were more prevalent in urban areas, possibly due to better viewing habits or broadcasting infrastructure. The dominance of social media and YouTube underscored the significant impact of digital media on information dissemination, with their direct, personalized communication explaining their increased use in rural areas where traditional media infrastructure was limited.

Table 2.2: **Primary source of election information among media channels in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election.**

Variable	Pamphlet	Magazine	Radio	TV programme	Website	Whatsapp/ Facebook/ Instagram	YouTube	Total
Rural	8	4	2	8	1	39	43	105
Urban	1	1	0	15	3	13	37	70
Total	**9**	**5**	**2**	**23**	**4**	**52**	**80**	**175**

Source: Field Survey

The aim of the research survey is to identify the principal media sources that Mizoram Legislative Assembly voters in both rural and urban settings used to gather information about the upcoming Legislative Assembly elections.

Table 2.2 showed that in rural areas, 41.9% of respondents reported YouTube as their primary source of election-related content, indicating its widespread use even in less urbanized settings. Traditional media such as pamphlets,

magazines, and radios still had some presence, reflecting a mix of communication methods. Television programs and websites were less favored, possibly due to limited access to cable and internet services.

In urban areas, YouTube was again the top platform (52.9%), with WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram following closely (18.6%), demonstrating a strong preference for social media over traditional media. Television was more popular in urban areas, likely due to better access to broadband and technology. Urban respondents did not mention radio, suggesting a shift toward visual and digital media sources.

Overall, the research on state-level elections indicated that magazines and pamphlets had minimal impact, suggesting that print media was declining in relevance for political campaigns. Radio was barely represented in the rural sample and almost absent in the urban sample, showing it was not an effective medium for either demographic. Television was notably more popular in urban areas, likely due to easier access to TV and a preference for visual media. Websites were slightly more favored in urban areas, possibly due to higher internet penetration or a preference for more traditional online content. YouTube emerged as the top information source in both rural and urban areas, with WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram also heavily used in urban areas. There was a clear distinction between preferred media outlets in urban (more diverse and digital) and rural (more traditional) settings, suggesting different strategies for media engagement.

Table 2.3: **Primary source of election information among media channels in Local Council and Village Council election.**

Variable	Pamphlet	Magazine	Radio	TV programme	Website	Whatsapp/ Facebook/ Instagram	YouTube	Total
Rural	26	1	1	6	0	58	7	99
Urban	9	2	1	12	1	16	29	70
Total	**35**	**3**	**2**	**18**	**1**	**74**	**36**	**169**

Source: Field Survey

In local elections, pamphlets were more commonly used in rural areas (26.3%) than in urban areas (12.9%), possibly due to limited internet access or a preference for traditional communication methods, as shown in Table 2.3. Magazines were rarely used as an election information source in both rural (1%) and urban (2.9%) areas, likely due to their infrequent publication. Radio was unpopular in both rural (1%) and urban (1.4%) areas, possibly overshadowed by more immediate, visually engaging media.

Television programs were more favored in urban areas (17.1%) compared to rural settings (6.1%), likely due to better access to television and a preference for visual media. Few rural respondents used websites, reflecting poor internet service or low digital skills in these areas. Social media was the dominant information source in rural areas, likely because of its accessibility on mobile devices and ability to quickly disseminate news. In contrast, YouTube was more popular in urban areas, likely due to better internet facilities and a preference for video content.

The survey results on local elections revealed significant differences in the primary sources of election information between rural and urban voters. Rural voters heavily depended on social media, while urban voters used a mix of digital and traditional media. The broader range of media used by urban voters suggested a more diverse approach to information gathering. The dominance of social media among rural voters indicated limited access to varied and reliable sources like websites and television, potentially restricting exposure to diverse viewpoints. However, the extensive use of media, including significant reliance on YouTube, suggested better digital infrastructure and skills among urban voters, potentially enhancing political awareness and encouraging more critical voting behavior.

Table 2.4: **Political activities exerting the greatest influence voting decision in Lok Sabha election.**

Variable	Election campaign	Party meetings / rallies	Door to door canvasing	Joint Platform Campaign	Media	Total
Rural	33	6	10	17	36	102
Urban	14	1	6	12	37	70
Total	**47**	**7**	**16**	**29**	**73**	**172**

Source: Field Survey

As shown in Table 2.4, a significant portion of rural voters (32.35%) actively participated in election campaigns, indicating strong grassroots engagement. In contrast, urban areas had lower campaign involvement, with only 20% participating actively, possibly reflecting a more dispersed or less community-oriented population. Rural areas also had higher attendance at party meetings and rallies (5.88%) compared to urban settings (1.43%), suggesting stronger community cohesion and localized political engagement. The lower participation in cities might indicate reduced enthusiasm or less reliance on traditional political mobilization methods.

Both rural (9.80%) and urban (8.57%) populations showed similar levels of door-to-door canvassing, indicating this campaign method was fairly consistent across settings. Participation in joint platform campaigns was nearly equal, with rural areas at 16.67% and urban areas at 17.14%, suggesting these campaigns appealed similarly to both groups.

Urban areas relied significantly on media, with 52.86% of the population engaged, likely due to the broad availability of media sources and a lifestyle more oriented towards digital media consumption. Although a smaller percentage of rural voters (35.29%) engaged with media compared to urban areas, it remained an important factor in both contexts.

The study on national elections revealed distinct patterns of political involvement between rural and urban areas, reflecting deeper socio-economic and

cultural differences. The strong influence of media in both settings highlighted its role as a primary source of political information and influence in contemporary society. Rural areas showed higher participation in most activities except for media use, suggesting a more community-focused approach. Differences in voting behavior might be explained by stricter social structures in rural areas, making in-person campaigns more effective. Urban areas, with better access to various media forms, might see the impact of direct campaigning diluted. Additionally, the urban lifestyle could make voters less accessible and responsive to labor-intensive campaign methods like rallies and canvassing.

Table 2.5: **Political activities exerting the greatest influence on voting decision in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election.**

Time	Election campaign	Party meetings / rallies	Door to door canvasing	Joint Platform Campaign	Media	Total
Rural	37 (21.26%)	3	16 (9.19(	22 (12.64)	25 (14.36)	103
Urban	14 (8.04%)	2	6 (3.44)	12 (6.89)	37 (21.26	71
Total	**51**	**5**	**22**	**34**	**62**	**174**

Source: Field Survey

Focusing on rural and urban responses, the survey examined the political activities that influenced voters' decisions in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election. Table 2.5 showed that media had the greatest overall impact on voting patterns in urban areas, likely due to higher literacy rates and broader access to various media channels. Traditional election campaigns followed, indicating they still held significant importance. Party meetings and rallies had the smallest impact, while joint platform campaigns and door-to-door canvassing had a moderate effect.

Election campaigns had more influence in rural areas (37 respondents) than in urban areas (14 respondents), possibly reflecting greater engagement with political leaders in rural settings. Joint platform campaigns were preferred in rural areas, likely due to the communal nature of these communities. Door-to-door

canvassing was more effective in rural settings, suggesting that a personal approach was more appreciated or effective in less populated areas.

In state-level elections, direct engagement methods such as election campaigns, door-to-door canvassing, and joint platform campaigns were more significant in rural areas, indicating a preference for personalized, community-centered campaigning. This likely resulted from the close-knit nature of rural communities. In contrast, urban voters, with better access to traditional and digital media, focused more on media for voter engagement. The reduced participation in direct campaigning in urban areas reflected lifestyle characteristics such as greater time constraints and less cohesive communities compared to rural environments.

Table 2.6:   Political activities exerting the greatest influence on voting decision in Local Council and Village Council elections.

Variable	Election campaign	Party meetings / rallies	Door to door canvasing	Joint Platform Campaign	Media	Total
Rural	34	8	32	19	8	101
Urban	14	2	9	13	33	71
Total	**48**	**10**	**41**	**32**	**41**	**172**

Source: Field Survey

The primary research question of this study, as shown in Table 2.6, examined how political activities distinctly influenced voting behaviors in Local Council and Village Council elections across different demographics, particularly in rural and urban settings.

The table indicated that election campaigns had a greater impact in rural areas (33.66%) compared to urban areas (19.72%), likely due to stronger community engagement and fewer media outlets in rural settings. Party gatherings and rallies had limited influence in both areas but were slightly more effective in rural regions (7.92%) than in urban ones (2.82%), possibly because rural communities valued personal interactions more.

Door-to-door canvassing was more common in rural areas (31.68%) than in urban areas (12.68%), suggesting that personal engagement was more effective in rural communities, where digital media was less prevalent. Joint platform campaigns were also slightly more effective in rural areas (18.81%) than in urban areas (18.31%), likely due to the mix of direct and mediated communication.

The data on local elections showed that media influence was more pronounced in urban areas (46.48%) than in rural areas (7.92%). This difference was likely due to higher literacy levels and greater access to diverse media in urban settings, making urban voters more susceptible to media influence. The data also showed that political involvement varied between rural and urban areas. In rural areas, election campaigns, door-to-door canvassing, and traditional community engagement methods like party meetings had more influence. In contrast, urban voters were more influenced by media, likely due to their greater access to print and digital media.

3. Election and candidate preferences

The research on 'Election and Candidate Preferences' is essential for analyzing voter behavior because it highlights what influences voters' decisions. This field investigates how different characteristics of candidates, including their policies, personality, party affiliation, and overall performance, affect electoral behaviour.

Table 3.1: Relative rank of Lok Sabha election with other two levels of elections in importance.

Variable	First	Second	Third	Total
Rural	3	14	87	104
Urban	14	20	34	68
Total	**17**	**34**	**121**	**172**

Source: Field Survey

The survey in Table 3.1 showed that only 3 out of 104 rural respondents considered the Lok Sabha election their top concern, while a larger proportion of urban respondents (14 out of 68) saw it as their primary concern. This suggests that

urban respondents felt a stronger personal connection or impact from the Lok Sabha election results compared to rural respondents. Fourteen rural respondents ranked the Lok Sabha election as their secondary priority, slightly less than the 20 urban respondents who did the same. This data indicates a higher level of interest in the elections among urban populations.

Most rural respondents (87 out of 104) viewed the Lok Sabha election as the least important for their wellbeing, whereas fewer urban respondents (34 out of 68) felt the same. This suggests that rural areas have a broader range of concerns that lessen the perceived importance of national politics.

Urban areas showed a higher percentage of respondents who rated the Lok Sabha election as their top priority, implying a potentially higher voter turnout in urban areas for national elections. Urban respondents prioritized the Lok Sabha election more distinctly (20.59% marked it as 'First') compared to rural respondents (2.88% marked it as 'First'). This difference might indicate that urban voters feel more directly affected by national policies or are more aware of the political landscape. Factors such as better access to information, more direct experiences with government policies, or a stronger sense of personal agency in urban areas may have influenced this situation.

Table 3.2: **Relative rank of Mizoram Legislative Assembly election with other two levels of elections in importance.**

Level	First	Second	Third	Total
Rural	57	45	4	106
Urban	49	19	1	69
Total	**106**	**64**	**5**	**175**

Source: Field Survey

The survey in Table 3.2 revealed that citizens of Mizoram, both urban and rural, assessed the significance of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly differently across election levels. The table categorized responses into three levels of importance (First, Second, and Third), highlighting the perceived significance of the assembly compared to other election levels.

A higher percentage of urban respondents (71.0%) considered the Mizoram Legislative Assembly of First Order importance, compared to rural respondents (53.8%), indicating that urban residents were more likely to prioritize the state assembly during elections. In contrast, the perception of importance was more varied in rural areas, with 42.5% of rural respondents viewing the assembly as significant, nearly double the percentage of urban respondents (27.5%). Additionally, more rural respondents ranked it as of Third Order importance, reflecting a broader consideration of state-level issues alongside other concerns at local or national governance levels.

Fewer urban respondents (71.0%) considered the Legislative Assembly their top priority, suggesting a higher political awareness or belief in the legislature's impact on their well-being. The strong urban emphasis on the assembly as the foremost priority could result from a greater reliance on state-level governance measures, such as public services and infrastructure, that directly affect urban living conditions. Few urban respondents ranked the assembly election as a minor priority (Second or Third), indicating a general agreement on its importance.

Table 3.3: **Relative rank of Local Council or Village Council election with other two levels of elections in importance.**

Level	First	Second	Third	Total
Rural	53	44	8	105
Urban	10	28	30	68
Total	**63**	**72**	**38**	**173**

Source: Field Survey

Table 3.3 presented surveys conducted to assess the perceived importance of Local Council or Village Council elections among residents in rural and urban areas. Respondents ranked the significance of these elections for their welfare at three different levels. The study aimed to analyze the data to identify trends, differences, and similarities in voting patterns across these demographics.

A majority of rural respondents (50.5%) and a smaller portion of urban respondents (14.7%) considered local elections as their top priority, indicating a greater reliance on local governance for welfare among rural populations. Conversely, a much lower percentage of urban residents viewed these elections as most important. Nearly equal proportions of rural (41.9%) and urban respondents (41.2%) ranked Local Council elections as the second most important, showing a similar level of importance assigned by both groups.

A significant difference emerged, with 44.1% of urban respondents and 7.6% of rural respondents viewing these elections as least important. This disparity suggests that urban residents might rely more on state or national governance or perceive local governance as less effective.

Overall, the study revealed notable differences in the perceived importance of local elections for the welfare of rural and urban areas. Urban residents were less likely to prioritize local council elections compared to their rural counterparts, possibly due to more direct engagement with local governance in rural settings. Alternatively, the lower priority given by urban residents could indicate a disconnection or dissatisfaction with local governance or a focus on broader state or national issues.

Table 3.4: **Most important factor in making voting decision in the Lok Sabha election.**

Variable	Party	Candidate	Leader (PM)	Party's manifesto	Religious community	Local Candidate	Kinship	Ethnic loyalty	Can't say	Total
Rural	9	34	9	23	2	1	2	10	11	101
Urban	3	27	4	12	3	0	0	8	13	70
Total	**12**	**61**	**13**	**35**	**5**	**1**	**2**	**18**	**24**	**171**

Source: Field Survey

At the national level, the candidate was the primary factor for both rural (33.66%) and urban (38.57%) voters, indicating a strong preference for the qualities

of individual candidates over party affiliations or ideologies, as shown in Table 3.4. The Party's Manifesto also had significant influence, particularly in rural areas (22.77% compared to 17.14% in urban areas), suggesting that rural voters were slightly more swayed by party policies and pledges.

There were notable differences in ethnic loyalty and uncertainty about primary voting considerations between rural and urban areas. Rural voters demonstrated a higher degree of ethnic loyalty (9.90%) than urban voters (8%). Additionally, more urban respondents (18.57%) were uncertain about their primary voting considerations, compared to 9.9% in rural areas. Religious affiliations, local candidates, and family ties had minimal impact on voting behavior, especially regarding local candidates and familial connections.

The survey indicated that while both groups favored individual candidate characteristics in their decision-making, rural voters placed slightly more emphasis on party manifestos and ethnic loyalty in national elections. This may reflect specific local needs and communal ties. In contrast, urban voters showed greater indecision, possibly due to increased skepticism or the overwhelming number of choices and political promises from various parties.

Table 3.5: **Most important factor in making voting decision in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election?**

Variable	Party	Candidate	Leader	Party's manifesto	Religious community	Local Candidate	Kinship	Ethnic loyalty	Can't say	Total
Rural	5	37	16	30	2	0	1	5	8	104
Urban	3	30	7	13	4	1	0	2	10	70
Total	**8**	**67**	**23**	**43**	**6**	**1**	**1**	**7**	**18**	**174**

Source: Field Survey

Table 3.5 showed that rural voters had a strong preference for the candidate (36%) over other factors, with the political party manifesto being a close second (28.8%) when making voting decisions. This suggests that rural voting was

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influenced by ideological reasons, possibly due to community discussions and traditional values shaping decisions in state-level elections.

For urban voters, the candidate had the greatest influence (42.9%), even more than in rural areas, while the party manifesto attracted 18.6% of urban support, indicating a stronger preference for individual candidates among urban voters. Rural voters were significantly influenced by the leader (15.4%), whereas urban voters were influenced at a lower rate (10%). Rural voters showed low responsiveness to religious (1.9%) and ethnic (4.8%) factors, while urban voters were somewhat influenced by religious factors (5.7%) and less so by ethnic elements (2.9%). Urban areas exhibited slightly higher religious influences, potentially due to more active local religious groups, despite being more cosmopolitan. The impact of local candidates and family ties on voter demographics was minimal. Rural voters showed an indecisiveness rate of 7.7%, while 14.3% of urban voters were undecided, possibly reflecting greater political engagement or awareness in rural areas or suggesting urban voters' disconnection or dissatisfaction with available political options.

Overall, the analysis highlighted significant differences in voting behaviors between rural and urban areas in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election. Rural voters were more influenced by individual candidates and party platforms, indicating a preference for familiar faces and clear policies. In contrast, urban voters were influenced by a broader range of factors, placing more emphasis on communal and religious ties and showing higher levels of indecisiveness, which may suggest a voting pattern more influenced by personal traits, unlike rural areas where loyalty to the party was almost equally important.

Table 3.6: Most important factor in making voting decision in the Local Council / Village Council election?

Variable	Party	Candidate	Leader	Party's manifesto	Religious community	Local Candidate	Kinship	Ethnic loyalty	Total
Rural	3	50	9	16	1	14	5	3	101
Urban	3	32	5	8	3	1	5	13	70
Total	**6**	**82**	**14**	**24**	**4**	**15**	**10**	**16**	**171**

Source: Field Survey

Table 3.6 indicated that the candidate was the primary factor for nearly half of all respondents (47.95%). This was more pronounced in rural areas, with a rate of 50%, compared to 46% in urban areas. This suggests that the appeal of the candidate was a major influence on voters in both settings, though it was slightly stronger in rural areas, possibly due to personal connections or familiarity with candidates. Urban voters, with access to more diverse information sources, may have been influenced by factors beyond personal acquaintance.

The party manifesto accounted for 14.04% of all responses, with rural voters showing greater interest (15.8%) than urban voters (11.43%). This indicates that rural voters were more concerned with party policies and their impact on local issues. Party affiliation had a minimal effect on both groups, with 2.97% of rural and 4.29% of urban respondents citing it as an influence. Ethnic loyalty was significantly higher among urban voters (18.57%) than rural voters (2.97%), possibly due to the diverse populations and strong ethnic group identities in urban areas.

Local candidates had a strong influence in rural areas (13.86%) but were nearly negligible in urban areas (1.43%), indicating a preference for local representatives in rural communities, where direct connections and community knowledge are important. In contrast, urban voters prioritized broader issues or candidate attributes rather than local ties. Religious affiliation was a small factor overall (2.34%) but was more prevalent in urban areas (4.29%) than in rural areas (0.99%), suggesting a mostly secular approach to council elections in both settings.

Overall, both rural and urban voters showed a clear preference for individual candidates, with this preference being particularly strong in rural areas. This highlights the importance of personal knowledge and trust in candidates for rural voters. Urban voters showed less interest in party manifestos compared to rural voters, possibly reflecting differences in political engagement or the relevance of local issues covered in these manifestos.

Table 3.7: Most important candidate's characteristic in the Lok Sabha election.

Variable	Youth candidate	Candidate's education	Candidate's party	Experience in politics	Native of your area	Personality	Total
Rural	8	15	2	13	1	64	103
Urban	8	9	0	12	0	41	70
Total	**16**	**24**	**2**	**25**	**1**	**105**	**173**

Source: Field Survey

Table 3.7 showed that personality traits were highly valued, with 64 rural and 41 urban individuals favoring them. This preference for traits such as charisma, integrity, and reliability was significantly stronger than for other factors in the Lok Sabha election.

Both urban and rural areas had the same number of respondents (8) who favored youth, indicating a consistent preference for younger candidates regardless of location. Rural respondents (15) valued education more than urban respondents (9), suggesting that rural voters associated education with better governance. Few respondents considered political affiliation important (2 from rural, none from urban), indicating a trend towards prioritizing personal traits over party ties.

Experience was moderately important, with similar numbers of rural (13) and urban (12) respondents valuing it, showing its importance across different contexts. Being a native had minimal importance, with only one rural respondent and no urban respondents considering it crucial, indicating a negligible impact on electoral choices.

Overall, this survey provided insights into the electoral behaviors of rural and urban communities during the Lok Sabha elections, highlighting both shared and distinct priorities. Personality traits consistently influenced voter decisions, while education and political experience were also significant factors for both rural and urban voters.

Table 3.8: **Most important candidate's characteristic in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections.**

Variable	Youth candidate	Female candidate	Candidate's education	Candidate's party	Experience in politics	Native of your area	Personality	Total
Rural	5	0	14	3	9	2	70	103
Urban	6	2	8	0	11	0	43	70
Total	**11**	**2**	**22**	**3**	**20**	**2**	**113**	**173**

Source: Field Survey

Personality, as conveyed by Table 3.8, is the most significant factor in state level elections for both urban (24.86%) and rural (40.46%) voters, though markedly more so in rural areas. This suggests that personal traits, charisma, or character might play a crucial role in the electability of candidates, particularly in rural regions.

Both rural (2.89%) and urban (3.47%) voters showed a mild preference for younger candidates, with urban voters displaying a slightly stronger preference. This suggested openness to new ideas in both groups. Urban areas showed some acceptance of female candidates, while rural areas showed less. Rural voters (8.09%) placed more emphasis on education than urban voters (4.62%), indicating that rural electorates valued candidates' educational background or expertise more. Party affiliation was of minor importance to rural voters (1.73%) and none to urban voters, suggesting that personal traits were more influential in these areas. Urban voters (6.36%) valued experience slightly more than rural voters (5.20%), indicating a possible preference for a proven track record of effective administration in urban populations.

Rural voters (1.16%) preferred native-born candidates, suggesting a bias towards local identity and community ties, which was less relevant in urban areas (0%). Female candidates were only represented in urban areas, indicating a greater openness to gender diversity in urban areas compared to rural areas.

The data from the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election showed that rural voters emphasized a candidate's education, experience, and personality more and preferred local candidates but did not prioritize gender diversity. In contrast, urban voters highly valued candidates' personalities and political experience and showed some openness to diversity, including a mild preference for female candidates, while being less concerned with local connections or educational backgrounds.

Table 3.9: **Most important candidate's characteristic in the Local Council and Village Council elections.**

Variable	Youth candidate	Female candidate	Candidate's education	Experience in politics	Native of your area	Personality	Total
Rural	7	2	5	8	10	70	102
Urban	8	0	7	7	5	43	70
Total	**15**	**2**	**12**	**15**	**15**	**113**	**172**

Source: Field Survey

Table 3.9 examined voting trends in rural and urban areas, focusing on the traits voters emphasized during Local Council and Village Council elections. The data highlighted the differing priorities of rural and urban voters regarding specific candidate characteristics.

Personality was the primary factor for urban voters, unlike in rural areas, suggesting that urban voters might be more influenced by a politician's personal appeal or unique traits. Urban areas also showed a slightly higher preference for younger candidates, possibly indicating a more progressive attitude or a larger young population. There was minimal enthusiasm for female candidates in both areas, but it

was slightly more noticeable in urban settings, suggesting cultural or social barriers to women's advancement in leadership roles.

Urban voters focused more on education, while rural voters placed less emphasis on this, indicating different values placed on educational achievements between the two groups. Urban areas also valued political experience more than rural areas, likely due to greater expectations of political effectiveness. Being a native candidate was more important to rural voters, reflecting stronger community ties or a preference for local representation.

The table showed that urban voters preferred candidates with engaging personalities in local elections, suggesting that urban campaigns should emphasize candidates' personal charm and charisma. Rural voters valued candidates from their own area, highlighting the need for campaign strategies that focus on local issues and community involvement.

4. Political Engagement and Participation

Political involvement and participation are key components in examining voting patterns because they demonstrate the extent of democratic engagement and the well-being of the political system in a society. This involvement includes different forms of political engagement by citizens, such as voting, participating in campaigns, attending political gatherings, or engaging in discussions about politics.

Table 4.1:   Levels of interest in politics and public affairs.

Variable	Very much	Not much	Somewhat	Not interested	Total
Rural	30	29	30	16	105
Urban	14	28	18	9	69
Total	**44**	**57**	**48**	**25**	**174**

Source: Field Survey

Table 4.1 showed that rural respondents had a higher interest in politics, with 28.57% indicating strong interest, compared to 20.29% of urban respondents. This suggests that rural residents were more engaged with political outcomes. While both

rural (28.57%) and urban (26.09%) populations showed similar levels of political interest, it was slightly higher in rural areas.

Urban respondents had a significantly higher rate of disinterest in politics (40.58%) than rural respondents (27.62%), possibly due to a broader range of interests or a feeling of reduced political influence in urban settings. A small segment in both rural (15.24%) and urban (13.04%) areas expressed no interest in politics, indicating a consistent level of political apathy across both groups.

Overall, the data suggests that rural residents exhibited higher levels of political engagement, likely due to the direct impact of government policies on their communities, such as agricultural aid, land regulations, and local governance. Urban residents showed a greater tendency towards minimal participation, possibly due to a wider array of issues and distractions, less perceived influence in larger districts, and information overload from diverse media sources reducing their interest in politics.

Table 4.2:   Most important reason for voting a party in the Lok Sabha election.

Variable	My community supported the party	My family is a traditional supporter of the party	Good leadership	Good overall programme	Prosperity of religious beliefs	Total
Rural	5	11	19	44	23	102
Urban	1	9	24	26	11	71
Total	**6**	**20**	**43**	**70**	**34**	**173**

Source: Field Survey

Table 4.2 outlined the main reasons for supporting a particular political party in the Lok Sabha election, dividing respondents into rural and urban groups to analyze socio-political influences on voting patterns. Key factors included community support, family influence, leadership skills, program quality, and religious welfare.

Community support was more prevalent in rural areas (4.9%) than in urban areas (1.4%), suggesting stronger community ties or communal influence on voting

behavior. Family influence was significant in both urban (12.7%) and rural (10.8%) areas, with a slightly greater impact in urban settings, indicating lasting family loyalties to political parties. Urban voters (33.8%) placed more importance on leadership quality compared to rural voters (18.6%), likely due to better access to media and resources for evaluating leadership. Rural voters (43.1%) prioritized policy and program details, as these directly affected their economic conditions, while a substantial proportion of urban respondents (36.6%) also valued these factors. Religious influence was more significant in rural areas (22.5%) than in urban areas (15.5%), possibly due to higher levels of religiosity or the central role of religion in rural societies.

Overall, voting trends during the Lok Sabha elections showed distinct patterns influenced by socio-economic conditions, access to information, and cultural values. Rural voters mainly valued a party's comprehensive program, reflecting a practical focus on policies that impact their daily lives. Urban voters emphasized good leadership, indicating a broader evaluation of party qualities. While rural areas showed stronger influences from community, family traditions, and religious beliefs, suggesting a collective decision-making style, urban voters prioritized the personal qualities of party leaders and specific policies, reflecting a more individualistic voting approach.

Table 4.3:   Most important reason for voting a party in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election.

Variable	My community supported the party	My family is a traditional supporter of the party	Good leadership	Good overall programme	Prosperity of religious beliefs	Total
Rural	1	15	23	57	9	105
Urban	0	6	34	24	7	71
Total	**1**	**21**	**57**	**81**	**16**	**176**

Source: Field Survey

Rural voters in the state-level election, as depicted in Table 4.3 comprised 54.29% of the population and were more receptive to extensive political programs

than urban voters, who made up 33.80%. This suggests that broader policies had a greater influence on rural voters, possibly due to their direct impact on agriculture and local economies. Community influence was negligible in urban areas (0%) but slightly present in rural areas (1%), indicating more individualistic voting behavior in urban settings or less communal cohesion in political alignments.

Rural areas showed a stronger adherence to family voting traditions, at 14.29%, compared to 8.45% in urban areas, possibly due to stronger family ties or longstanding party loyalty. Urban voters placed greater importance on leadership, with 47.89% considering it significant, versus 21.90% of rural voters, reflecting a more pragmatic approach to politics in urban areas where leadership competence is highly valued. Religious beliefs had a modest and similar influence on both rural (8.57%) and urban (9.86%) voters, suggesting a consistent impact of religion on voting patterns across demographics.

Overall, there were notable differences in voting preferences between rural and urban areas. Urban voters were more influenced by party leadership qualities, indicating value-driven voting behavior, while rural voters were more connected to party policies and family traditions, suggesting a community-oriented and generationally transmitted political orientation.

Table 4.4:   Most important reason for voting a party in Local Council and Village Council election.

Variable	My community supported the party	My family is a traditional supporter of the party	Good leadership	Good overall programme	Prosperity of religious beliefs	Total
Rural	3	14	24	50	11	102
Urban	1	8	31	26	5	71
Total	**4**	**22**	**55**	**76**	**16**	**173**

Source: Field Survey

Voting choices in rural areas were significantly influenced by community (2.94%) and family (13.73%), while urban voters were less affected by these factors,

with community influence at 1.41% and family influence at 11.27%. This suggests a more individualistic attitude among urban voters or a less cohesive population compared to rural areas, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 also indicated that urban areas, representing 43.66% of the population, had a stronger preference for 'Good leadership' than rural areas, which made up 23.53%. This implies that urban voters prioritized candidates' personal qualities over party affiliations or community considerations, focusing more on individual leadership skills than on party-wide strategies. In contrast, rural voters (49.02%) prioritized 'Good overall programme,' suggesting a preference for party policies that benefit the broader community rather than specific leadership qualities. Rural voters were also more likely (10.78%) than urban voters (7.04%) to consider religious views in their voting decisions, indicating a stronger influence of religion in rural areas.

The most notable difference was in the preference for a 'Good overall programme,' with rural voters favoring this option nearly twice as much as urban voters. This demonstrates that policy and its impact on community welfare were more influential in shaping voting behavior in rural areas. While leadership qualities were important across all groups, they had a slightly stronger effect in urban areas, where voters appeared more influenced by the personal charisma of specific leaders. Conversely, rural voters emphasized broad party policies and programs, reflecting a concern for how these policies would affect their communities.

Table 4.5: **Whether a party was supported for being a recipient of their welfare programme or in expectation to be a beneficiary.**

Variable	I voted the party as a recipient of their welfare programme	I voted the party to be a beneficiary of their welfare programme	I was a recipient of a welfare programme but did not vote for the party.	I voted for the party without any intention of being a beneficiary.	Total
Rural	7	6	1	91	105
Urban	0	1	0	70	71
Total	**7**	**7**	**1**	**161**	**176**

Source: Field Survey

Table 4.5 shows that out of 105 rural voters, a small number (7 individuals or 6.67%) supported the party because of the benefits they received from its welfare policies, indicating some satisfaction or loyalty to these services. Similarly, 6 rural voters (5.71%) voted in anticipation of future benefits, reflecting a positive outlook on the party's forthcoming welfare initiatives. Only one rural voter acknowledged receiving aid but chose not to support the party, suggesting dissatisfaction with the program or stronger alternative political beliefs. A significant majority of rural voters (86.67% or 91 out of 105) supported a party not directly linked to social programs, implying that factors such as party ideology, leadership, or other policies influenced their votes.

In urban areas, the analysis shows that only one voter (1.41%) voted in hope of benefits, suggesting a possible lack of awareness or disbelief in the party's welfare commitments. The vast majority of urban voters (98.59% or 70 out of 71) supported the party regardless of welfare considerations, indicating that urban voter behavior was shaped by factors other than welfare programs.

Overall, the data suggests that while welfare programs did influence some voting patterns, they were not a major factor for most voters. Urban voters, in particular, seemed largely indifferent to welfare schemes, likely due to other political or economic influences. Rural voters showed a slightly higher tendency to vote based on their experiences with welfare programs, but this remained a minor influence compared to other factors affecting their electoral choices.

Table 4.6: **Most significant political participation apart from voting in the Lok Sabha election.**

Variable	Listening/ reading political news	Discussing elections with others	Membership in a party	Attending election meetings and rallies	An active party worker	Participated in door to door canvasing	Can't say	Total
Rural	33	21	4	4	6	1	34	103
Urban	33	8	4	2	1	0	21	69
Total	**66**	**29**	**8**	**6**	**7**	**1**	**55**	**172**

Source: Field Survey

The survey examined respondents' major political activities beyond voting in the Lok Sabha election, as detailed in Table 4.6, which highlights political participation in both urban and rural areas.

Table 4.6 showed that both urban and rural areas had high engagement in consuming political news, with urban areas displaying a significantly higher percentage (47.83%) than rural areas (32.04%). This difference may be due to better media access and more frequent news dissemination in urban areas. Rural areas, however, were more involved in discussing elections (20.39%) compared to urban areas (11.59%), suggesting a more communal approach in rural settings.

Political party membership was low in both areas (3.8% in rural and 5.8% in urban), indicating a general lack of interest or dissatisfaction with formal political involvement. Attendance at election meetings and rallies was also low, with urban areas showing even lower participation (2.90% in urban vs. 3.88% in rural), possibly due to busy urban lifestyles or different priorities. Active participation as party workers and in canvassing was higher in rural areas, indicating a greater level of commitment likely influenced by personal connections and the close-knit nature of rural communities, where individual actions are more noticeable.

A significant number of respondents in both rural (33.01%) and urban (30.43%) areas chose 'Can't say,' indicating a lack of opinion, disinterest, or disengagement from the political process, with slightly higher rates in rural areas. This may reflect skepticism or disillusionment with political outcomes.

The data revealed notable differences in political engagement between rural and urban populations. Urban residents were more focused on consuming political news but less involved in discussions and active participation, while rural residents were more engaged in discussions and active roles, possibly due to tighter community structures and the more visible impact of individual actions. The high rates of 'Can't say' responses in both demographics suggest a widespread ambivalence or disconnection from the political process, which could be concerning for democratic engagement and representation.

Table 4.7: **Most significant political participation apart from voting in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election.**

Variable	Listening / reading political news	Discussing elections with others	Membership in a party	Attending election meetings and rallies	An active party worker	Participated in door to door canvasing	Can't say	Total
Rural	44	21	7	8	7	1	18	106
Urban	34	6	4	2	3	0	20	69
Total	**78**	**27**	**11**	**10**	**10**	**1**	**38**	**175**

Source: Field Survey

The study examined voter participation patterns in rural and urban areas of Mizoram during the Legislative Assembly elections, focusing on various forms of political engagement beyond voting.

According to Table 4.7, the primary form of engagement in both rural (41.5%) and urban (49.28%) areas was consuming political news by listening and reading, with urban respondents showing a higher interest. Conversely, rural areas had a higher rate of political discussions (19.8%) compared to urban areas (8.7%), suggesting more communal political engagement in rural settings. Political party membership was low in both rural (6.6%) and urban (5.8%) areas, indicating a general disinterest or distrust in formal political involvement.

Rural areas showed slightly higher active participation in party activities (6.6%) than urban areas (5.8%). Participation in door-to-door canvassing was very low in both rural (0.9%) and urban (0%) settings, indicating it was an unpopular method of engagement. Rural voters (7.5%) attended more election meetings and rallies than urban voters (2.9%), possibly due to easier access to events or a stronger tradition of participation. A larger proportion of urban respondents (29%) were undecided about their involvement compared to rural respondents (17%), suggesting greater uncertainty or indifference towards the political process in urban areas.

The analysis revealed distinct trends in political engagement between rural and urban residents of Mizoram. Rural voters were more involved in discussions, attending political events, and participating in party activities, reflecting a community-oriented approach to politics. Urban voters, while less engaged in direct interactions, showed higher engagement in consuming political news. These differences in participation could be attributed to cultural variations, the availability of political events, and differing perceptions of political efficacy in the two areas.

Table 4.8: **Most significant political participation apart from voting in Local Council and Village Council election?**

Variable	Listening/reading political news	Discussing elections with others	Membership in a party	Attending election meetings and rallies	An active party worker	Participated in door to door canvasing	Can't say	Total
Rural	23	39	9	4	6	4	18	103
Urban	31	8	2	1	2	1	24	69
Total	**54**	**47**	**11**	**5**	**8**	**5**	**42**	**172**

Source: Field Survey

Studying voting habits and various forms of political engagement in rural and urban settings provides insights into how individuals participate in the election process beyond just voting. Table 4.8 details political participation in local elections in Mizoram.

Urban respondents (44.93%) were more informed about political events through listening and reading news than rural respondents (22.33%), likely due to better access to media in urban areas. Rural respondents (37.86%) engaged more in election discussions compared to urban respondents (11.59%), reflecting a political culture rooted in community values. A higher proportion of rural respondents (8.74%) were affiliated with a political party compared to urban respondents (2.90%), possibly due to stronger regional political ties in rural areas. Participation in election meetings and rallies was low in both settings, with rural areas at 3.88% and urban areas at 1.45%, suggesting disinterest or barriers like time constraints.

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Rural respondents (5.83%) were more likely to work as party members than urban respondents (2.90%), indicating a more active approach to politics in rural areas. Door-to-door campaigning had low involvement overall, but was slightly higher in rural areas (3.88%) compared to urban areas (1.45%). A significant number of respondents were unable to recall any political activities, with 17.48% in rural areas and 34.78% in urban areas, suggesting disengagement or lack of interest in political affairs, especially among urban residents.

Overall, rural individuals were more involved in discussions, party activities, and slightly more likely to attend rallies and participate in canvassing. In contrast, urban residents were more focused on consuming political news but less engaged in discussions and active political efforts.

Table 4.9: Most important election issue in Lok Sabha election

Variable	Good governance	Development	Issue of unemployment	Welfare schemes	Liquor policy	Ethnic issues	Regional aspirations	Others	Total
Rural	41	23	5	27	3	4	0	1	104
Urban	30	19	1	7	8	0	2	1	68
Total	**71**	**42**	**6**	**34**	**11**	**4**	**2**	**2**	**172**

Source: Field Survey

The investigation aimed to identify the principal electoral issue that electors considered most crucial at the national level election.

Table 4.9 showed that good governance was a major concern for both rural (39.4%) and urban (44.1%) respondents, with slightly more emphasis in urban areas. This suggests that urban voters had higher expectations for transparency and efficiency in government operations. Development was also important for both rural (22.1%) and urban (27.9%) respondents, indicating a general desire for better infrastructure and economic opportunities, with urban areas showing slightly more concern, possibly due to more noticeable deficiencies in densely populated areas.

Unemployment was a relatively minor issue for both groups, with only 4.8% of rural respondents and 1.5% of urban respondents considering it a key concern, especially among urban voters. This could be due to lower unemployment rates in urban areas or more diverse economic opportunities compared to rural areas. Welfare programs were much more significant in rural areas (26.0%) than in urban areas (10.3%), likely reflecting their direct impact on rural livelihoods.

The proportion of respondents who considered alcohol-related social problems significant was higher in urban areas (11.8%) compared to rural areas (2.9%), indicating more concern about these issues in densely populated settings. Ethnic identity concerns were noted exclusively in rural areas (3.8%), suggesting its importance in more homogeneously populated or tribal regions. Regional ambitions held some significance in urban areas (2.9%), but were less relevant in rural areas, where the election was viewed in broader terms. A small percentage of voters chose 'others' as their priority, with minimal influence in both rural (0.96%) and urban (1.47%) areas, indicating concerns not explicitly addressed in the survey.

This analysis highlighted the different priorities and electoral behaviors of rural and urban communities in Lok Sabha elections. Urban areas may have prioritized development due to exposure to international standards and greater infrastructural needs, while rural communities emphasized welfare schemes due to their reliance on agriculture and government support. In rural settings, traditional concerns such as ethnic issues were more pronounced due to stronger communal bonds.

Table 4.10: Most important election issue in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election.

Variable	Good governance	Development	Issue of unemployment	Welfare schemes	Liquor policy	Ethnic issues	Regional aspirations	Others	Total
Rural	47	25	7	24	1	0	0	2	106
Urban	33	15	2	6	9	2	2	0	69
Total	**80**	**40**	**9**	**30**	**10**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**175**

Source: Field Survey

The subject of Good Governance concerned both demographic groups, with 44.34% of rural respondents and 47.83% of urban respondents highlighting it in the state-level election. It was particularly significant in rural areas, as shown in Table 4.10. Concerns about development were more pronounced in rural areas (23.58%) compared to urban areas (21.74%), suggesting a greater need or perceived lack of facilities in rural regions. Unemployment was a minor concern in both areas, with rates of 6.60% in rural areas and 2.90% in urban areas, implying that Mizoram had a relatively stable employment situation or that other issues were more pressing.

Rural areas showed a significant focus on welfare systems (22.64%) compared to urban areas (8.70%), possibly indicating a greater dependence on government support. Urban areas, representing 13.04% of respondents, displayed a clearer focus on Liquor Policy than rural areas, which represented only 0.94%. This difference was likely related to the higher population density and alcohol-related issues in urban areas. Ethnic Issues and Regional Aspirations were minor concerns for both rural and urban respondents, suggesting these were not immediate priorities or were overshadowed by other governance and development issues.

The survey highlighted significant regional differences in key concerns among Mizoram's voters. Good Governance was a concern for all demographic groups but was more prominent in rural areas. Development concerns were notable in both rural and urban settings, with a stronger emphasis in rural districts. Urban areas exhibited a distinct focus on Liquor Policy, which was not a major priority for rural voters.

Table 4.11: **Most important election issue in Local Council and Village Council election.**

Variable	Majority for the party of choice	Development	Kinship ties	Welfare schemes	Liquor policy	Local aspirations	Others	Total
Rural	9	41	3	37	4	5	4	103
Urban	15	29	1	10	9	2	2	68
Total	**24**	**70**	**4**	**47**	**13**	**7**	**6**	**171**

Source: Field Survey

This study scrutinizes voting trends in both rural and urban settings concerning crucial issues during Local Council and Village Council elections.

Table 4.11 indicated that, compared to rural voters, a significantly higher percentage of urban voters (22.1%) valued majority support for their preferred party. Urban voters showed stronger loyalty or trust in specific political parties, likely due to greater exposure to party campaigns and political discussions. Both rural (39.8%) and urban voters (42.6%) considered development a crucial issue, though it was more important in urban feedback, suggesting a broad desire for improved infrastructure and services, with urban voters likely perceiving more immediate benefits from development initiatives.

The influence of family connections on most voters was minimal, suggesting that personal relationships had little impact on voting decisions in both rural (2.9%) and urban areas (1.5%). The emphasis on welfare programs was significantly stronger among rural voters (35.9%) than urban voters (14.7%), possibly due to their greater dependence on government support for agriculture, healthcare, and social services. Concern over alcohol policies was more pronounced among urban voters (13.2%) than rural voters (3.9%), likely due to urban-specific issues such as the relationship between alcohol use and public safety or crime.

Local goals were slightly more important in rural areas, with 4.9% of rural respondents and 2.9% of urban respondents highlighting this, likely focusing on issues unique to the cultural and economic conditions of local communities. However, voters in both settings attributed low importance to miscellaneous issues not covered under main categories, with 3.9% of rural respondents and 2.9% of urban respondents indicating this view.Survey results revealed distinct differences in primary concerns between rural and urban voters in the context of Local Council and Village Council elections. Development remained a key issue for all, but rural voters prioritized welfare schemes due to their immediate need for basic facilities and social services, which are typically scarcer in rural areas. Conversely, urban voters focused more on political party loyalty and issues related to alcohol, which may impact social stability and personal lifestyle.

Comparative analysis of voting behaviour in rural and urban areas at various election levels

The comparison of voting behavior in rural and urban areas is essential for understanding political dynamics. Comparative studies at various election levels - local, state, and national, revealed trends that were important for predicting electoral outcomes, creating strategies, and influencing government policy. A study of voting behavior in rural and urban areas at different election levels looked at how different priorities, access to resources, and socio-political circumstances influenced voting patterns. It also explored how these differences affected democratic representation and governance.

At the center of the analysis of voting behavior was the urban-rural divide, a well-known concept in political science. This divide reflected different socio-economic conditions, cultural values, and political goals. Urban areas, often characterized by higher levels of income, education, and diversity, tended to show voting patterns that supported progressive attitudes and liberal policies. In contrast, rural areas, which often faced challenges like lower income levels and limited access to services, tended to have conservative tendencies, focusing on traditional values and local issues. Differences in voting behavior between urban and rural voters could significantly impact national elections. Urban areas often favored candidates who focused on national and international issues like climate change and healthcare reform, whereas rural areas tended to support candidates who emphasized national security, traditional values, and economic policies that benefited domestic industries.

These differences in voting behavior have important consequences. They influenced policymaking, governance, and the overall democratic process. For example, political parties developed platforms aimed at either urban or rural voters, which could lead to policy polarization. This division also affected parliamentary representation, potentially skewing policy decisions in favor of one group over another. Understanding these disparities is critical for addressing the interests and preferences of various demographic groups, resulting in a more inclusive and representative political landscape. As a result, regular and extensive analysis is

essential for improving democratic processes and ensuring that all opinions were heard and taken into account in a country's government. Hence, this chapter highlights the important aspects and implications of voting behaviour at various levels of elections: national (Lok Sabha), state (Mizoram Legislative Assembly), Local level (Local Council, and Village Council) in urban and rural areas, and emphasises the trends and perceptions between urban and rural areas in political participation and representation.

A comparative analysis of voting behaviour in rural and urban areas of Mizoram at various election levels is made as follows.

Voter turnout in elections: The comparative analysis of voter turnout across three different levels of elections - local (Local Council/Village Council elections), state (Mizoram Legislative Assembly election), and national (Lok Sabha election), revealed varying degrees of voter engagement. The local elections had the highest voter turnout at 96.6%. This high participation rate was likely due to local elections involving issues directly affecting voters' daily lives. The turnout for the state legislative assembly election was slightly lower at 92.5%, but still remarkably high, reflecting the importance of state-level issues such as policies on liquor, development, and governance. Although lower than the local and state elections, the turnout for the national elections was still substantial at 83.8%. This suggested that while national elections might seem more distant in terms of immediate impact on voters' daily lives, there remained a significant level of political awareness and participation among the electorate in Mizoram.

The high voter turnout rates at all levels indicated a strong sense of community and civic responsibility among the electorate. Local issues appeared to have the greatest influence on voter turnout, showing that when voters felt directly impacted by the outcomes, they were more likely to participate. The high participation rates across different election levels highlighted a politically active and engaged population, with a strong commitment to influencing governance at local, state, and national levels.

Opinion influencing voting choices: An examination of urban and rural areas to determine whose opinion mattered most in influencing voting preferences showed a consistent pattern of individual decision-making across all election levels. A significant 72.3% in Lok Sabha Elections, 70.3% in Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections, and 69.4% in Local Level Elections indicated a strong preference for personal autonomy in voting, regardless of the election scale. Family influence was significant, particularly in local elections at 22.9%, compared to 18.5% in Lok Sabha Elections and 19.2% in Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections.

The influence of social and professional networks was minimal across all election levels, with colleagues, friends, and neighbors collectively influencing less than 5% of voting decisions. Additionally, religious influence consistently showed little impact in all types of elections, suggesting a strong secular and independent decision-making process among voters.

Continuity and change: The investigation of continuity and change in voter preferences was determined through a survey question asking if respondents would vote again for the same party as in the previous election. At the national level, there was relatively strong loyalty to political parties (62%), but a significant minority (38%) expressed a willingness to change their vote, reflecting potential dissatisfaction or a desire for change. At the state level, loyalty was higher (77%) compared to the national level, with a smaller percentage of voters (23%) open to changing their party allegiance. State elections often focus on local issues such as education, health, and infrastructure, which may explain the higher satisfaction with the current party if voters felt their needs were being met effectively. Loyalty at the local level was similar to the national level, with 63.2% of respondents stating they would vote for the same party, while 36.8% were considering other options.

Voter loyalty was highest at the state level, suggesting that when governance and policy outcomes were directly observable and impactful to voters' daily lives, loyalty increased. Openness to change was notable at all levels, particularly at the national and local levels, indicating that a substantial portion of the electorate was responsive to political shifts, campaign effectiveness, and party performance.

Media channel for electoral information: The media channels used as the primary sources across all election levels showed a clear shift towards digital media, with YouTube and social media platforms being the preferred sources for election information. The data suggested a significant change in how electoral campaigns were conducted, moving away from traditional media such as TV, radio, and print, towards more dynamic and accessible digital formats. In the Lok Sabha election, YouTube emerged as the dominant media platform (46.5%), followed by social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram (29.1%). Similarly, in the Assembly election, YouTube remained the most preferred media source (45.7%), with social media platforms accounting for 29.7%. However, in local elections, social media platforms held a significant position (43.8%), followed by YouTube (21.3%) and pamphlets (20.7%), indicating a more traditional approach in local contexts.

The continued relevance of traditional methods like pamphlets in local elections highlighted the need for localized strategies that took into account demographic factors such as access to technology, age, and rural versus urban settings. This suggested that successful campaigns were those that were adaptable, using a mix of traditional and modern methods to ensure comprehensive voter outreach.

Impact of political activities: Election voting behavior was influenced by many factors, including political activities, which played a significant role in shaping voters' choices. The study on which political activities had the most impact on voter decisions showed that media engagement (42.4%) and election campaigns (27.3%) had the greatest influence on voters in the Lok Sabha Elections. This indicated a strong reliance on digital and traditional campaign media for political information and engagement. Party meetings or rallies (4.1%) and door-to-door canvassing (9.3%) were less impactful, suggesting a shift away from these traditional methods towards more direct communication strategies through media and personal campaigns.

At the state level, media engagement (35.6%) was also the dominant influence, followed by election campaigns (29.3%) and joint platform campaigns (19.5%), highlighting the significant role of media in shaping political opinions and decisions. Door-to-door canvassing (12.6%) had a moderate influence, while party meetings or rallies (2.9%) were the least effective.

In local elections, election campaigns (27.9%) and media (23.8%) were primary influences, with door-to-door canvassing (23.8%) equally significant, emphasizing the importance of personal contact in local elections. Joint platform campaigns (18.6%) had a moderate influence, and party meetings or rallies (5.8%) had minimal impact. While media and broad campaign strategies dominated in Lok Sabha and MLA elections, local elections still relied heavily on personal engagement through door-to-door canvassing, reflecting the localized nature of issues and the importance of direct interaction in influencing voter decisions.

Perception of importance: A comparative analysis of the three levels of elections in Mizoram - Lok Sabha, Mizoram Legislative Assembly (MLA), and Local Council/Village Council, revealed different perceptions of electoral importance among respondents, likely reflecting varying degrees of perceived impact. The MLA elections were considered the most important by a significant majority (60.6%), indicating a strong belief that state-level governance and legislative decisions had a direct and profound impact on personal well-being.

In contrast, the Lok Sabha elections, representing the national level, were seen as the least important by a majority of respondents (70.3%). This suggested that national policies, while important, were perceived to have a less immediate impact on people's daily lives compared to local or state issues. Only 9.9% of respondents viewed these elections as the most crucial, indicating relatively lower engagement or perceived relevance of national governance. Meanwhile, local elections were seen as moderately important, with the highest percentage of respondents (41.6%) ranking them second in importance. This reflected a recognition of the significant role of local governance, although it was not seen as the most impactful compared to state governance.

Attributes of candidate: The inquiry into the most important characteristics of a candidate across various levels of elections found that voters prioritized personality traits such as charisma, integrity, and reliability over all other factors at the Lok Sabha (60.7%) election. Experience and education also held considerable importance, indicating a preference for candidates who were perceived as capable and well-informed. Interestingly, party affiliation and regional origin of the candidate were the least considered, highlighting a trend towards individual merit over traditional loyalties.

In the state-level elections of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, personality (65.3%) again dominated voter preferences, even more so than in the national elections. Education (12.7%) and political experience (11.6%) followed in importance, indicating that voters valued intellectual and practical capabilities in their representatives. Like the national elections, there was minimal emphasis on party alignment and regional or gender identity.

Even at the local level, the preference for personality (65.7%) in candidates was similarly strong, reinforcing the trend seen in both national and state elections. The equal importance given to youth, experience, and local origin at this level reflected a nuanced electorate that valued fresh ideas and established relationships equally. Education was less prioritized, and gender remained the least considered factor, suggesting ongoing challenges related to gender perceptions in politics. Hence, across all three levels of elections, personality stood out as the most critical attribute influencing voter choice, indicating a significant shift towards personalization in politics.

Parameter of importance: The study that explored the most important factors voters considered while deciding voting preferences found that individual candidate qualities (35.5%) and party manifesto (20.9%) were the dominant factors in the Lok Sabha election. This indicated that national elections were significantly influenced by the merits of individual candidates and the specific policies proposed by their parties. At the state level, the pattern was somewhat similar but with noticeable differences. Again, the candidate's attributes (38.3%) led as the most

significant factor, followed by the party's manifesto (25.1%). The higher emphasis on the manifesto compared to the Lok Sabha suggested a greater concern for state-specific policies. The local elections showed an even stronger focus on individual candidates (47.7%), indicating that at the grassroots level, personal familiarity and reputation were paramount. This highlighted an evolving electoral landscape where personal merit was increasingly central to electoral success.

Level of participation: A comparative evaluation of the most significant political participation of the voters across all three election levels established a clear preference for passive forms of political participation (38.4% in Lok Sabha, 44.6% in MLA, and 27.3% in local elections), primarily through listening to or reading political news. This preference indicated that voters felt more comfortable or found it more feasible to engage with politics in a less direct, less demanding manner, which could be accessed through various media.

Discussions about the elections with others accounted for 16.9% at the Lok Sabha election, showing some level of active involvement but less intense compared to media consumption, with a similar rate of 15.4% observed at the state level. However, at the local level, engagement through discussing elections rose to 27.3%. The relatively higher engagement in discussions at the local level indicated that when political issues were perceived as more directly impacting their lives, individuals were more likely to engage in conversations with peers, thereby increasing communal discourse and potentially influencing voting behavior at this level.

Across all the elections, there was a consistently low percentage for active involvement, such as canvassing or attending rallies, which suggested that these activities were perceived as requiring more effort, time, or commitment than most individuals were willing or able to give.

Choice of political party in election: An examination of the most important reasons for voters to vote for a particular party in the elections specified that the most crucial determinant was the party's comprehensive policy program, which received 40.2% of the vote in the Lok Sabha election, 45.8% in the state level, and 43.7% in the local level election. This suggested a strong alignment with the national voting

trends regarding the emphasis on policy and leadership. The second most influential factor across the elections was leadership quality, accounting for 24.7% in the Lok Sabha, 32.2% at the state level, and 31.6% in the local level election. This data clearly showed the importance of capable and charismatic leaders at all levels of elections.

Religious beliefs and traditional affiliations (family and community support) played lesser roles, suggesting a shift towards more pragmatic and policy-focused voting behavior at the national level.

Election issue(s): At the Lok Sabha elections, the three important issues that voters prioritized were effective administrative practices or good governance (41.3%), economic advancement (24.4%), and welfare schemes (19.8%). The same priorities were observed at the state level elections, indicating a preference for overall stability and progressive policies over immediate concerns like unemployment. However, at the local level elections (Local Council and Village Council), the three issues that voters prioritized were development (40.9%), welfare schemes (27.5%), and party majority (14.0%). This showed a strong inclination towards visible improvements in their immediate environment and social security.

Local aspirations and ethnic issues received minimal emphasis, suggesting that these concerns were overshadowed by more universal issues such as governance and development. However, their presence indicated specific local and community-based interests that could influence targeted voter segments.

Conclusion.

The comparative analysis of voting behavior in rural and urban areas across different election levels in Mizoram provided insight into electoral participation and decision-making. The study showed that local, state, and national elections each played unique roles in engaging voters and addressing their concerns, reflecting different socio-political contexts.

Local elections had the highest voter turnout, indicating that when voters saw direct impacts on their daily lives, they were more likely to participate. This

engagement was driven by local issues and the immediate effects of officials' decisions. State elections, while slightly less engaging, still showed high voter involvement, highlighting the importance of state governance in addressing broader issues like education, health, and regional development. Voter loyalty to parties at this level suggested satisfaction with governance and a desire for continuity. At the national level, voter turnout was lower than in local and state elections but still significant, indicating engagement with national issues despite the less immediate impact of national policies on daily lives. Digital media emerged as the primary source of election information across all levels, showing a shift in how voters engaged with elections.

The differences in voting behavior between rural and urban areas highlighted the diverse ways in which geographic, economic, and cultural contexts influenced political participation and preferences. Overall, the study mapped the landscape of electoral engagement in Mizoram and provided insights into the evolving nature of political participation in Mizoram, emphasizing the importance of addressing local concerns, the impact of state governance on voter satisfaction, and the broad ideological engagements at the national level.

CHAPTER - VI

IMPLICATIONS OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR
ON ELECTORAL OUTCOME

Mizoram, situated in north east India, presents a fascinating case for studying electoral politics, due to its unique cultural, ethnic, and social diversity. Studying the impact of voting behaviour on electoral results in Mizoram at different levels: national, state, and local, offers valuable insights into the complex workings of democracy in regions with diverse ethnicities and complex politics. An in-depth understanding of voting behaviour and its impact on electoral outcome not only contributes to better governance, but also enhances the democratic landscape of the area. Through a comprehensive examination of how local preferences influence and are influenced by state and national policies, political parties have to develop a governance model that is both inclusive and effective, accurately representing the diverse needs and aspirations of the people of Mizoram.

The political arena in Mizoram after statehood is predominantly a contest between the Mizo National Front (MNF) party and the Indian National Congress (INC) party. Voter decisions are greatly influenced by various factors. Moreover, the alignment of local parties with major national parties can influence the electoral outcomes, reflecting a strategic dimension to voting behavior. Mizoram typically exhibit higher voter turnout indicating a politically active electorate. This high level of engagement is reflective of the vibrant democratic ethos of the state but also points to the significant mobilization efforts by political parties and civil society groups. The voter turnout not only reflects the strength of democratic process in Mizoram but also brings out the impact of voting behavior on electoral outcomes. This chapter explores the impact of voting behaviour on electoral outcomes in Mizoram, and its significance across national, state, and local.

Understanding the implications of voting behaviour in Mizoram is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it helps in the effective formulation and implementation of policies that are more responsive to the needs of local population. Secondly, it provides a framework for political accountability where electoral outcomes directly

reflect the government's performance at various levels. Thirdly, it enhances democratic participation by informing voters and stakeholders of the critical issues at play, thus promoting a more informed and participatory electoral process. Hence, Studying voting behaviour across national, state and local level enables comprehensive analysis of how various factors influence voter decisions and, consequently, electoral outcomes.

Implications of Voting Behaviour on Electoral Outcome
at National Level Election

The Lok Sabha elections in Mizoram hold significance in India's democratic processes, reflecting distinct regional political dynamics and the wider national electoral scene. The state, being one of the least populous states in India contributes only one seat to the Lok Sabha or the lower house of India's Parliament at the national level. Nevertheless, significance of this single seat goes beyond its numerical value. Analyzing voting behaviour in Mizoram for Lok Sabha elections provides some insights into the regional preferences and priorities that influenced national politics. The state has a population that is predominantly Christian and tribal communal structures, which contribute to its distinct political environment from much of India. These components greatly affect voting patterns and election results in addition to shaping the region's cultural identity. While local issues including welfare schemes, alcohol sales, administration, transport and communication, and everyday necessities have significant effects on voting behavior in the state, national politics and the functioning of central government also have significant impact as it exerts direct effects on state level administration and daily lives. Political parties, in turn, use these insights to shape their national-level strategies to incorporate regional aspirations, which can affect their overall performance and policy prioritization at the national stage. Analyzing voting behaviour in Lok Sabha elections can reveal how regional preferences are integrated into the national political agenda and how these preferences influence the national political landscape.

In the first place, turnout of 83.8% in the Lok Sabha elections, 2019, among the respondents indicates a high level of political participation in Mizoram, which imply a strong trust in the democratic process or the presence of highly motivating

factors during the election, such as crucial issues or charismatic candidates. The Lok sabha election was significant as it was held a year after the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, 2018, and due to the emergence of Zoram People Movement (ZMP) as a third alternative apart from the INC and the MNF. The MNF which was considered the party to return a representative to the Lok Sabha by virtue of being the party in power in the state was challenged by the ZPM which had formed a pre-poll alliance with the Indian National Congress (INC). Hence, the MNF was challenged with two parties aligned with the objective of defeating the MNF leading to higher voter engagement in the election. This high voter turnout increases the likelihood of the elected candidate to be more representative of the population thereby enhancing the legitimacy of their role. In addition, the pre-poll alliance of the ZPM and INC was indicative of the diminishing hold of the INC upon the electorate as the party supported the candidate of ZPM and has not fielded candidate from their party.

The act of voting and choices of the electorate are shaped by various influences. In other words, an elector tends to crystalline preferences on the basis of opinion and suggestions of various factors such as family, work place, friendship and religious traditions and programme of political party. However, in the Lok sabha election under study, the overwhelming majority of respondents accounting for 72.3%, reported to have made voting decision on their own and do not rely on external influences. This finding which indicates a strong sense of individual autonomy among the electorate has important implications for the electoral outcomes in Mizoram. It suggests that candidates and political parties had to appeal directly to individual voters rather than relying on traditional community or familial networks to influence voting decisions. Hence, political parties strategically nominated candidates who were perceived as prominent and appealing, and who may resonate more with voters valuing personal decision making in the electoral process. For instance, the ZPM was a newly formed political party that was gaining the appeal of voters and could even capture eight Assembly seats in the Mizoram Assembly election, 2018, and with the strong support base of the INC, it was very likely that the candidate of ZPM would win the election. In addition, the ZPM had fielded a popular and influential young candidate who possesses strong leadership and oratory

skill despite lacking political experiences. With the backing of the INC and the electoral success of the ZPM in MLA election, he is bestowed with a favourable chance of winning the contest. Nevertheless, the MNF candidate won the election due to the perception among the majority of voters that the MNF was the party most capable of sending a representative to the Lok Sabha, despite his lack of political experience and advanced age. In addition, he has also made significant contributions to the state both in his personal capacity and during his tenure as a government official. The election results demonstrate the influence of individual autonomy on voting decisions, as evidenced by the victory of the MNF candidate.

A significant majority of 62% of respondents expressed their intention to vote for the same party in the next Lok Sabha elections, suggesting a high level of party loyalty and satisfaction with the current party's performance among the electorate. This finding implies a stable political environment where voters believe that their priorities and desires were being adequately met by the party or elected representative, or that the performance of the representative was satisfactory. Such political consistency can improve predictability and stability, enabling effective long-term planning and policy implementation. However, the opposition parties are confronted with both challenges and opportunities as a result of the 38% of the electorate who have indicated willingness to switch their vote. This section represents proportion of the electorate that exhibit openness towards alternative policies or leadership. Therefore, the opposition parties can influence them by strategically targeting this group by providing compelling alternatives and implementing effective campaigning strategies.

Hence, political parties have carefully analyse the various factors that influenced voter loyalty and adapt accordingly to maintain support and appeal to potential new members through policies and promises touching the daily life of the population. Important factors that had been considered include economic performance, social policies, and effectiveness of local governance. The political parties in power often emphasise their accomplishments, commitment to their policies, and ability to maintain stability. On the other hand, opposition parties offer

appealing alternatives and voice criticisms of the current state of affairs in order to take advantage of public discontent.

Based on the survey data, it is evident that the YouTube significantly impacted the consumption of electoral information and voter behavior as compared to other sources used for articulating information concerning election. The platform offers convenient access to a wide range of content, such as campaign videos, debates, and political commentary that may not be easily accessible through traditional media outlets. This level of accessibility is especially advantageous for voters residing in remote regions. Hence, the YouTube emerged as a convenient and effective platform for observing national politics and evaluating political parties. It was observed that political parties and candidates are giving more importance to creating digital content for the YouTube rather than relying on traditional campaign methods. This shift has the potential to impact campaign budgets and strategies, with an increased emphasis on generating viral content to effectively engage and mobilise voters. The YouTube has the potential to promote inclusivity by offering a platform for underrepresented voices and perspectives. The high appeal to younger demographics indicates a potential for increased political engagement and voter turnout among young individuals.

After examining various political activities through the survey data, it is evident that the factor that had the most significant influence on voting decisions in the Mizoram Lok Sabha election was the interaction through media, accounting for 42.4% of the valid replies. Significant number of voters employed media channels to actively participate in the voting process, disseminating political information and articulating their viewpoints with the intention of influencing others. The extensive role of media in informing voting decisions during the Lok Sabha elections in Mizoram highlights the pivotal impact of media in shaping electoral outcomes. In order to promote a fair and balanced political discourse in the lead-up to elections, it is crucial for all relevant parties, such as political organisations, media outlets, regulatory agencies, and the voting public, to accept a comprehensive strategy. Hence, the engagement with media plays a vital role as a primary source of information, exerting its impact on people's views, priorities, and discussions related

to politics. It was observed in the election that political parties and candidates prioritised media engagement over traditional methods like door-to-door canvassing or party rallies. These traditional methods have a lower level of influence, with door-to-door canvassing at 9.3% and party rallies at 4.1%.

According to the findings regarding the perception of significance of Lok Sabha election, a relatively small percentage (9.9%) of participants in Mizoram view the elections as the primary factor influencing their personal well-being when compared with other elections, such as state and at local level. A slightly higher, though still relatively small, proportion of participants (19.8%) view Lok Sabha elections as second most important. A substantial number of participants (70.3%) perceive Lok Sabha elections to have lesser significance (Third) in terms of their personal well-being. The data reveals a significant difference between how the electorate perceives the impact of Lok Sabha election on their personal well-being and the broader implications of national governance. Decreased voter participation has been observed due to the perception that Lok Sabha elections have had limited impact on individual welfare. One possible reason for the lack of interest or apathy could be the belief that decisions made at the Lok Sabha level have limited influence on their everyday lives or immediate community concerns, which are usually dealt with more directly by state or local governments. Perception of being insignificant can result in decreased engagement in the electoral process, including activities such as debates, attending rallies, and staying informed about election news. If the general public perceives Lok Sabha elections as having little significance, it had eventually lead to a decrease in affiliations with political parties based on national ideologies or leaders, lesser participation in the electoral process as well as lesser voter turnout as compared with other elections at the state and local level.

Based on the survey data, it is evident that the most significant factor influencing the electorate's decision in Lok Sabha elections in Mizoram is the factor of 'candidate', as indicated by 35.5% of the valid responses. It can be inferred from the study that electoral results are greatly impacted by individual candidates, highlighting their significance in comparison to party affiliation, leadership, communal interests, ethnicity or ideological platforms. Voters are influenced by the

personal characteristics, integrity, and reputation of candidates. The emphasis on the candidate as a factor for deciding voting choice suggests that those who have had strong local presence, a track record of successful representation, and a personal connection with voters are likely to achieve favourable outcomes in elections.

This implication revealed by how political parties adjust their strategies to focus on selecting candidates who have significant local influence or a strong personal appeal. 7.6% of the respondents recognised the importance of national leader, but the majority of electorate showed a stronger preference for individual candidate characteristics, indicating that local issues and personal leadership are of greater significance. This might have encourage candidates to focus more on issues specific to their constituencies rather than on broader national policies.

The survey data outlining the most important characteristic of candidate specify that a significant majority of voters in Mizoram's Lok Sabha election considered the 'personality' of candidate to be the most important characteristic. Approximately 60.7% of the respondents expressed this preference. The electoral outcome is significantly impacted, with broader implications for political campaigns and candidate selection in the region. The electoral preference for personality traits in Mizoram's Lok Sabha elections suggests a significant inclination towards personality politics, in contrast to other candidate characteristics. This phenomenon necessitates a reevaluation of political strategies, selection of candidates, and voter knowledge to achieve a harmonious balance between the appeal of personality and the essential requirements of effective political leadership and governance. Political parties prioritise candidates who possess strong personal appeal and charismatic qualities and those individuals who can establish emotional and personal connections with the electorate, potentially disregarding conventional qualifications such as political experience or educational background.

'Good overall programme' in Mizoram Lok Sabha elections (40.2% of valid responses) is identified as the main motivation for voting a particular party according to the survey. Hence, it is inferred that policies as put forward forwarded through manifestoes were gaining significance among voters, surpassing factors such as

community support, traditional familial affiliation and support for prosperity of religious community. A crucial implication of the voter behavior regarding the reason to vote a party is the increase in voter knowledge about electoral process and individuals evaluating party policies rather than blindly adhering to traditional loyalties. Therefore, political parties are focussed on creating well-rounded and appealing policy to effectively address the concerns of voters. On the other hand, the impact of party programmes on a significant portion of the electorate could result in decreased predictability in electoral loyalty, as voters are inclined to shift their support towards parties that offered favourable policies. That can lead to greater competition among political parties and potentially bring about shifts in political power and alliances within the state.

In the Lok Sabha election, the most common means of political participation in the Lok Sabha in Mizoram is 'reading/listening to political news' (38.4%). This research provides vital insights into the region's election trends. The prevalence of political news consumption as the main form of engagement implies that the voter was informed or actively pursues electoral information. This demonstrates that individuals establish decisions by relying on news and information rather than direct party mobilisation or interpersonal influence. Thus, media has a huge impact on electoral outcomes since a big percentage of the voter relies heavily on related news for political information. It influences voter views and decisions by providing information on candidates, topics, and party policies. Nevertheless, the impact of media coverage can be advantageous or detrimental, depending upon the degree of fairness and impartiality exhibited. The low percentages for direct political actions, such as attending meetings and rallies (3.5%), becoming an active party worker (4.1%), and campaigning door-to-door (0.6%), suggest that political engagement was more passive and less physically involved.

The electorate's prioritization of good governance (41.3%) in the Mizoram Lok Sabha election indicates a significant shift in electoral strategy and policy focus. It implies that candidates and political parties had to address fundamental governance issues to capture the support of the voting population. This shift in focus resulted in a campaign that differs in tone and content from previous elections. It also indicates

that candidates and political parties should align their campaigns and manifestos with principles of openness, accountability, and efficient administration. The emphasis on good governance also led political parties to prioritize policies that would combat corruption, improve public service delivery, and enhance legal systems.

Implications of Voting Behaviour on State Level Election Outcome.

At the state level, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections are crucial in shaping the state's governance and policy-making. They are a direct reflection of local political, economic, and social dynamics. At this level, voting behaviour often reflects more localized concerns compared to the national level, including state policies on education, health, and local economic development and ethnic group policies. Ethnic dynamics, community affiliations, and local leaders' charisma significantly impact voter preferences. Political parties and candidates focusing on these localized issues can significantly sway voter preferences. Analyzing voter behaviour in assembly elections helps to identify the effectiveness of state policies, the impact of state leadership, and the alignment of state-level governance with the electorate's expectations. It also provides a ground for understanding the interaction between state and national politics, especially how state-level electoral outcomes can influence or constrain national policy decisions concerning Mizoram.

In the first place, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election of 2018 saw a noteworthy voter turnout of 92.5% among respondents. The significant voter turnout has multiple implications for both the electoral outcome and political analysis. The significance and issues surrounding the election has motivated a larger portion of the population to participate in voting. For instance, the eight State legislative Assembly elections was marked by the expiry of second term of the INC government, projection of the newly formed ZPM party as a viable alternative to the duopoly dominance of the INC and MNF, as well as the effective campaign strategy adopted by the MNF. In this scenario, voters turn out at the polls either to replace the existing government or put the new party to the seat of power. Additionally, an increased voter turnout strengthens the legitimacy of the electoral process and the succeeding administration. High voter turnout in elections empowers elected officials by

providing them with increased authority and a stronger mandate, so strengthening their ability to govern and make critical policy choices.

The Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections in 2023 also saw an impressive voter turnout of 98.3% among respondents. The significant voter turnout in the region carries significant consequences for both electoral results and political participation. The high voter turnout reflects a noteworthy degree of political involvement and enthusiasm among the electorate. While it is crucial for enhancing the credibility of electoral process and the elected government, it also indicates a diverse array of choices made by the electorate, facilitating stronger democratic system. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon, including the effectiveness of voter education, the significance of the issues at hand, and the mobilisation efforts made by political parties and civil society organisations.

As observed from the previous Assembly election, the entry of new ZPM party in the electoral fray attracted many voters, coupled with an attempt of INC to elevate their waning influence and to increase their vote base. On the other hand, the MNF government undertook a robust campaign activities to consolidate itsposition for the second consecutive term. In this political landscape, voters had exercise their franchise to elect a government of their choice. High voter participation also enhances the likelihood of the electoral result accurately reflecting genuine desires of the community. This helps to reduce the impact of marginalised factions that would possess an unjust advantage in elections characterised by low voter participation. Moreover, stability in governance is also attained by implementing policies that effectively reflected the requirements and choices of the voting population.

The survey result indicated that a significant majority of respondents (70.3%) state that they had independently determine their voting preferences in the state legislative assembly election, 2018. The increasing trend of individual decision-making has far-reaching consequences for electoral outcomes, political strategies, voter participation methods, and the democratic environment in Mizoram. A sizable proportion of voters expressing independence in making voting decision demonstrate a strong feeling of personal autonomy and political consciousness. Encouraging the

voters to actively seek unbiased information about candidates and party agendas can increase their understanding and liberate them from familial or societal influences.

According to the data, it appears that traditional social networks, including family, friends, and religious leaders, have a somewhat limited effect on voters' decision-making, with a combined influence of around 26.1%. The waning influence could lead to a decrease in communal voting practices and potentially impede the effectiveness of campaigning efforts that helps to address collective community interests. On the other hand, forecasting electoral results also becomes more difficult when a significant portion of voters make individual choices. When individuals have different preferences, it can lead to unexpected results, especially when new or independent candidates provide appealing options apart from established party affiliations. Further, it may lead to political parties prioritising policy and governance matters that were relevant to voters' everyday lives, rather than relying on emotional or identity appeals, in order to influence individual decision-making.

The survey illustrates that a significant majority (77%) of respondents expressed their intention to vote for the same party in the upcoming Mizoram Legislative Assembly election as they did previously. This data has various implications for electoral outcomes and political dynamics in Mizoram. The high percentage (77%) of respondents who voted for the same party suggests strong voter loyalty and satisfaction with the current party's performance. This level of continuity can imply a stable political environment where the incumbent party is viewed favorably, potentially due to effective governance, fulfillment of electoral promises, or strong leadership. With a large majority of the electorate expressing intent to vote consistently, the predictability of electoral outcome also increases. This could mean that unless significant events occur to shift public opinion, the incumbent party may have a substantial advantage in the forthcoming election.

The findings can influence the focus of electoral campaigns. For instance, the incumbent party might focus more on reinforcing their successes and continuity, while the opposition could concentrate on mobilizing the 23% who are dissatisfied, as well as targeting undecided voters. Hence, the strong indication of voter loyalty to

the incumbent party in Mizoram suggests a significant advantage for them in the upcoming elections, but also highlights the need for dynamic and responsive political strategies from all parties involved to effectively engage with and address the electorate's evolving preferences and concerns.

The data derived from the survey indicates that a substantial proportion of participants in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election held the belief that media involvement was the primary determinant of their vote preferences and political activity. This discovery carries important implications for comprehending voter conduct in the area. The statement implies that voters significantly use internet platforms as their primary electoral activities by creating content, reading, listening as well as disseminating information. Political parties that possessed a robust media strategy have had a competitive edge in influencing voter views and choices. Consequently, parties choose to dedicate additional resources towards media campaigns, resulting in the use of targeted commercials, strategic media appearances, and enhanced public relations and social media management. The dependence on media as a primary activity implies a trend of political disinterest, as people opt to passively accept information rather than actively pursue it. This suggest a certain degree of confidence in media organisations or an inclination towards convenience. The research further indicates a change in political communication techniques, with conventional approaches proving less impactful in comparison to internet and broadcast media. This shift influences the manner in which political statements are crafted, giving priority to succinct and widely spread information rather than in-depth policy discussions. Nevertheless, the growing frequency of media consumption also heightens the vulnerability to misinformation and media bias, which can sway voter decisions and undermine the integrity of the political process.

As the main source of electoral information, it is observed that a significant number of respondents relied on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election. The robust use of digital media have important implications in the electoral process and outcomes, since it exert a notable in the region. A considerable 29.7% of respondents utilise these platforms, while YouTube is utilised by 45.7%. The use of

YouTube and social media platforms for election information during the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election represents a significant shift in electoral campaigns and voter participation from traditional forms of media, such as printed materials, magazines, and television shows, to interactive and readily available digital platforms. These platforms enable immediate feedback and interaction with voters because of their interactive nature. The prevalence of YouTube indicates that influencers and content creators possess the ability to exert substantial influence over public opinion and disseminate political content. YouTube and Facebook promote user engagement by offering a range of multimedia features and interactive content. Forming alliances with well-known local YouTubers would be an effective approach for campaign planning. This phenomenon has the potential to increase voter engagement and participation in the electoral process. On the other hand, social media platforms have the potential to quickly and widely spread misinformation which poses a significant challenge to electoral integrity, requiring the adoption of strong measures to monitor and address the spread of misinformation. Nevertheless, this phenomenon also gives rise to apprehensions regarding individuals in the electorate who may face challenges in accessing the internet or digital devices, potentially leading to disparities in information access.

It is evident from the survey that Mizoram placed a strong emphasis on state-level elections (MLA elections) and their impact on their well-being when compared with other elections at national and local levels. A substantial number of participants (60.6%) view MLA elections as highly significant, highlighting their strong preference for local governance and its direct impact on their lives. An important implication is the phenomenon of greater voter turnout, as people are likely to engage in activities that they perceived as directly affecting their well-being. Therefore, when comparing voter turnout among various level of elections in Mizoram, the State Legislative Assembly election typically exhibits the highest number of voter turnout. Campaigns that emphasised local issues and commitments have the potential to effectively engage voters, leading to an election that is more centred on specific concerns rather than being solely influenced by broader national narratives or party allegiance.

Individuals who recognise the importance of MLA elections for their well-being may demonstrate increased engagement not only by voting, but also by participating in other aspects of the electoral process, such as attending rallies, engaging in discussions, or even aspiring to hold public office. The increased level of engagement can lead to a more knowledgeable electorate and potentially a more effective legislative body. The focus on state-level elections suggests a population that was actively involved in and supportive of the governance and policy choices that directly affect them. Recognising and resolving the unique requirements and challenges at the state level is of utmost importance for political actors.

The majority of respondents (38.3%) consider 'Candidate' the most important factor in deciding their vote in the Legislative Assembly elections. This perception provides significant insights into the electoral dynamics of region. It illustrates the prominence of the candidate as a deciding factor suggesting a candidate-centric approach to politics. Voters appear to place a high value on the personal qualities, capabilities, and reputation of individual candidates rather than their party affiliation or other factors. This could lead to electoral strategies focussed on selecting and promoting candidates with strong personal appeal and good public image.

The data also highlights that party ideology or manifesto (25.1%) and party affiliation (4.6%) are less influential than the individual characteristics of candidates. This could lead to a dilution of ideological politics in favor of personality-driven approaches. Candidates therefore had to focus more on their personal connection with voters and less on party-line issues. However, focus on candidates can lead to greater electoral volatility, as voter loyalty may shift easily between elections based on the candidates. Unlike party loyalty, which tends to be more stable, candidate-based preferences can change quickly if new candidates emerge who matches voter expectations better or if existing candidates fall out of favour.

This emphasis on the candidate as the primary factor in voter decision-making highlights the personalized nature of political engagement in Mizoram and suggests a political setting that was deeply influenced by the qualities and perceived effectiveness of individual political figures.

The Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections have seen a shift in voter behavior, with individual characteristics becoming more important than traditional factors like party affiliation or policy positions. The study revealed that 65.3% of respondents considered candidate 'personality' as the most important attribute in the election, indicating a growing tendency for candidates' personal attributes, such as charisma, integrity, approachability, and communication skills, to exert a substantial impact on voting decisions. Campaigns often employ strategies such as personal storytelling, public appearances, and direct interactions with the electorate to cultivate a relatable image that aligned with voters' values and expectations. However, notable implications is observed in electoral outcomes.

The impact of personality on political discourse could reduce the degree of analysis of important policy issues. When making informed voting decisions, it is essential to examine not just individual traits but also discusses about governance, policy efficacy, and legislative competence. Emphasising personal characteristics can increase voter engagement and participation, especially among populations who have a strong affinity for politicians who effectively transmit and possess appealing personality. Hence, political parties nominated candidates who can influence the electorate with their charm and personal traits in the election. In a number of cases, candidates were new recruit of the party and not a member of the party cadre. Focusing on human characteristics rather than policy or party allegiance can also limit or aid the expansion of political arena.

The importance laid on 'Good Overall Programme' as a determining factor for voters in Mizoram's MLA elections suggests that the electorate in this region prioritises governance and values comprehensive, practical, and inclusive policy frameworks over traditional and identity-based voting cues. The statement suggests that political success was determined by policy effectiveness and governance capabilities in an electoral environment. The finding that a majority of participants (45.8%) consider the 'Good Overall Programme' as the primary factor influencing their vote in favour of a political party in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly election has important implications for understanding voter preferences and electoral dynamics in Mizoram.

The data indicates a shift towards policy-based voting rather than identity politics. While community support and traditional affiliations, accounting for 0.6% and 12.4% respectively, have an impact on voting behaviour, a significant portion of the electorate wass more swayed by the comprehensive policy proposals presented by political parties. This suggests developing electoral strategy that prioritised governance and policy frameworks. Voters prioritising 'Good Overall Programme' leads political parties to emphasise the quality and feasibility of their policy proposals. This may foster a more competitive environment among political parties, encouraging them to create and present comprehensive programmes that effectively tackled the important concerns and needs of the voters. This trend promotes accountability as political parties are motivated to fulfil their campaign promises in order to maintain continuing voter support.

This preference promotes a more informed voting population. As political parties develop detailed programmes, voters are expected to seek additional information and analyse the specifics of these plans more critically. This may result in heightened public discourse, deliberation, and greater civic participation, thereby fostering a more knowledgeable electorate. Following an election, the focus on policy initiatives can shape the approach to governance. Elected representatives and political parties are motivated to effectively implement their proposed policies in order to meet the expectations of voters. Enhanced transparency and outcome-driven governance can be achieved by imposing penalties in future elections for failing to fulfil campaign promises.

The study on media consumption and political participation in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election reveals that the majority of voters engaged in the electoral process by consuming political news through listening and reading. This indicates that voters are informed and possessed knowledge about the political landscape and current issues. This level of involvement implies that voters were likely to make well-informed voting decisions. However, this could result in an increase in uncertainty in electoral outcomes, as voters are influenced more by current concerns and candidate strategies rather than longstanding party loyalties or long term administration.

The media's impact on public opinion and voting behavior is also significant, with the spread of false information and biased journalism potentially manipulating voters' perceptions and choices. In addition, the passive participation also imply the decrease in active involvement of the general public with political parties in Mizoram, since, a smaller number of participants discloses affiliation as party members, active party workers, or participation in door-to-door canvassing.

The Mizoram Legislative Assembly election has highlighted the importance of 'Good Governance' as a primary concern for 45.7% of respondents. This has significant implications for electoral results and campaign tactics. Hence, political parties and candidates prioritize policies and historical accomplishments related to good governance, such as transparency, accountability, and efficient administration in the election. They emphasize instances where good governance has resulted in positive outcomes, such as improved public services and reduced corruption or general welfare and development.

It is noted that voters who prioritize good governance are likely to have higher expectations of elected officials and will thoroughly assess candidates' qualifications and previous and performances and standing in the society. The focus on governance could also mobilize a significant portion of the electorate, potentially increasing voter turnout. If the current government is perceived as having effectively implemented good governance, it could gain a substantial advantage. However, if governance is perceived as inadequate and not performing as expected, voters are more open to considering alternative candidates or political parties. And, this is a significant phenomenon in electoral politics in Mizoram and elsewhere. For instance, the ruling INC was ousted out of power in the Eight State Legislative Assembly elections by the MNF in which mismanagement of state affairs occupy a major election issues among others. Therefore, integrating good governance with other issues like development, welfare schemes, and unemployment are crucial for gaining support of the electorate.

Implications of Voting Behaviour on Local Level Election Outcome.

Local elections in Mizoram are a crucial aspect of governance, as they directly address the immediate and everyday concerns of the people. These elections, which include Local Council and Village Council elections, have a significant impact on voter turnout and electoral preferences. Some examples of these could be local infrastructure, community projects, and local leadership accountability. The outcome of these elections has a significant impact on local governance and community projects, as they determine leadership at the grassroots level. At this level, voting behaviour is typically influenced by factors such as administrative efficiency and the personal appeal of candidates. Examining these behaviours can offer valuable insights into the political involvement at the grassroots level and the efficacy of local governance. Additionally, it aids in comprehending the influence of local matters and leadership on wider electoral patterns within the state.

The 96.6% voter turnout in Mizoram's Local Council/Village Council elections demonstrates robust democratic involvement and effective local government. The high level of civic involvement found in this context implies that the community was deeply committed to influencing local government and decision-making procedures. Increasing voter turnout is critical to preserving the legitimacy of elected leaders and the electoral system. It enables council members to efficiently convey their representation of the public's desires. The council's authority is enhanced, allowing it to make significant decisions that had a direct influence on local affairs. When a vast majority of eligible voters vote, elected authorities are more likely to prioritise the community's well-being.

The survey findings regarding voting decisions in Mizoram's Local Council and Village Council elections reveal a significant degree of independent decision-making among voters. This suggests a sophisticated electorate that valued personal judgement over traditional influences. The observed trend carries important consequences for political campaigns, governance, and the democratic process. A significant proportion of participants (69.4%) exercise their own voting choices, showcasing confidence in their ability to assess candidates and make independent

decisions without relying heavily on family, social, or other networks. Several factors have contributed to this independence, such as the rise in education levels, easier access to information, knowledge of one's community affairs and a change in cultural attitudes towards individualism in political decision-making. Family members continue to hold a significant influence (22.9%) in shaping voting decisions, although they are not the primary decision-makers for most voters. Traditional influencers, on the other hand, have a diminished role in this regard. The influence of religious leaders and colleagues on voting behaviour is minimal, suggesting a shift away from traditional social hierarchies. The rise in individual decision making could result in electoral outcomes that are less predictable and more diverse across different regions and elections. The existence of variability in the political landscape fosters a dynamic environment, providing new candidates and parties with enhanced prospects to gain traction and exert influence.

Based on the survey findings, a significant majority of respondents in Mizoram, specifically 63.2%, express their intention to support the same political party in the forthcoming Local Council (LC) or Village Council (VC) elections. This implies a strong level of voter loyalty and satisfaction with the current party's performance. It also indicates that the party has fulfilled the expectations of these voters and enjoys a robust and lasting support base. When the current party in power is reelected, it often results in a consistent approach to policymaking and implementation which bring stability and continuity in governance.

It is expected that if the current party in power is reelected, there will be a consistent and ongoing approach to creating and executing policies with the potential to provide advantages for projects that spanned a long period of time and promote stability in governance. Another noteworthy implication is the minimal chances of unexpected leadership changes and policy disruptions, which is usually perceived to contribute to a more consistent and reliable setting.

Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram have significantly influenced the transmission of information for Mizoram's Local Council (LC) and Village Council (VC) elections, introducing new elements into the electoral

landscape. These platforms have the potential to enhance interaction and facilitate interaction and communication among the electorate. The widespread use of social media platforms as primary sources of information has significant implications for electoral processes. There has been a rise in the risk of voters being influenced by deceptive and manipulated content. This highlights the importance of implementing stricter monitoring and regulatory measures to foster transparency and ethical campaigning on these platforms. Increased participation on social media platforms is likely to be more prevalent among younger individuals who are technologically inclined. Hence, youth voter forms a sizeable number in the election.

With the increasing popularity of social media, another significant implication is the decrease in the significance of traditional forms of media like pamphlets, radio and magazines, during elections. In order to stay current and expand their audience, traditional mediums may need to update their approach by incorporating digital elements or partnering with social media platforms.

The survey on factors influencing voting choices highlights the importance of election campaigns during Local and Village Council elections in Mizoram. The data shows that election campaign activities had the highest impact on voters, followed by engagement with media and door-to-door canvassing. Joint platform campaigns also play a substantial role, while party meetings and rallies have the lowest impact. Various forms of election campaign is neither attended nor participated by a significant number of the electorate nor do they engage themselves in the electoral activities. Hence, in the event of bulk of the electorate remaining passive, the overall activities of election campaigning, covering interaction with the candidates, friends, neighbours, familial tradition and distribution of pamphlets occupy a pivotal place in influencing voting decision of the electorate. The success of election campaigns in local level elections can be attributed to their direct engagement and comprehensive approach. Hence, in local level elections, apart from the parties activities the campaigning done by family members, friends and the candidate exerts much influence in the voting decision of the voters.

The data collected is crucial for informing future campaign strategies for Local and Village Council elections in Mizoram., since it demonstrate that political parties should prioritize direct engagement, strategic media utilization, and consistent evaluation of various campaign tactics. By doing so, they can optimize electoral advantages and foster a more knowledgeable and engaged voter population.

The analysis of survey findings reveals that there was a diverse range of perceptions regarding the importance of Local Council/Village Council elections in Mizoram when compared with state and national level elections. While a significant portion of the electorate (36.4%) considers these elections to be of great significance, there is also a substantial segment (41.6%) that perceived them to be of lesser importance. This suggests that there was a recognition of the importance of local governance, but it may not be prioritized as highly as state or national level elections.

It is interesting to note that a considerable percentage (22%) of voters view these elections as having lesser importance than other elections. This indicates that they prioritized other levels of governance that they believed have a more immediate or noticeable impact on their lives. This finding highlights the need for political parties and candidates to understand the specific concerns and priorities of these voters in order to effectively engage with them.

The perception of these elections as having a moderate to high level of significance by 41.6% of individuals suggests a corresponding level of voter engagement. While not considered the most crucial, these elections are still seen as important by voters. Hence, the voter turnout in local level elections occupy a middle position next to State legislative Assembly elections in importance. The relatively low importance placed on these elections by most people may also have implications for the allocation of funding and resources. While they are recognized as important, they may not receive as much attention and resources as elections that are considered to be of higher priority.

The local council and village council elections in Mizoram have a strong focus on individual candidates, with voters prioritizing the qualities and capabilities of the candidate over party affiliation or manifesto. This has led to changes in

electoral campaigns, with political parties and candidates emphasizing personal reputation, integrity, and local performance. The emphasis on individual candidates promotes a sense of direct accountability, as elected officials are seen as responsible for their actions and the advancement of the local community. This can also lead to a more thorough examination of candidates' behavior and higher expectations for local administration, which is made possible as the candidates are from the same neigbourhood or locality. However, this focus on candidates can also lead to a divided political environment within local councils. If the importance of the candidate outweighs other considerations, it result in reduced support for specific political parties in different areas. This could make the formation of coalitions and governance more complex, as candidates may receive support based on personal loyalty rather than party affiliations.

Furthermore, the emphasis on individual candidates gives power to those who understand the significance of their personal brand. Individuals would choose to change their political affiliations or run as independent candidates if they believe it will yield more influence than aligning with a specific party. This could lead to increased political mobility among elected officials, as they may shift their allegiances to secure more advantageous positions for election and reelection.

Analysis of the electoral results of the Local Council and Village Council elections in Mizoram highlights the importance of candidates' personalities in the voting decision. A majority of respondents (65.7%) emphasized the significance of candidate's personality, indicating a shift towards personalized politics. This finding has complex implications for candidates, electoral tactics, and the wider political landscape. To improve their personal branding strategies, candidates are focussed on highlighting their charisma, integrity, and leadership qualities. Utilizing personalized methods such as door-to-door visits and active engagement with the community helped voters gain a better understanding of the candidate's personal qualities. Strong communication skills are also crucial for success in political campaigns, as candidates who effectively communicate their vision and establish an emotional connection with voters would have an advantage.

Candidates who can establish a personal connection with the community have the potential to enhance voter engagement and increase turnout. This personal connection leads to a stronger sense of connection between voters and candidates, potentially influencing voters to change their support between elections based on the candidates' personalities, leading to less predictable election results and potentially affect the stability of political loyalties. While personalized politics can promote voter participation and reduce ideological disputes, there are challenges to address in order to ensure effective governance. Candidates and parties can find a balance between appealing personality and the essential qualities of competence and clear policies for effective local governance.

This research highlights a notable transition towards a policy-driven, accountable, and substantive democratic participation at the local level. The impact of a 'Good Overall Programme' on voters' decision-making process can have far-reaching consequences, affecting political strategy, the quality of governance, and the overall functioning of democracy in the region. It is important for parties to recognize and adapt to this shift in voter preferences to effectively engage with the electorate and address their concerns.

The electoral results of Local Council and Village Council elections in Mizoram illustrates that voters prioritize a party's "Good Overall Programme" when making their voting decision. This finding suggests a preference for policy-focused voting behavior, with voters carefully considering the policies and programs put forth by parties rather than relying on long-standing loyalties or community influences. The shift towards prioritizing specific issues and programmatic factors indicates a change in voter preferences. Leadership quality also plays a significant role in this shift, while traditional support trends of community and family contributes to a lesser extent. Therefore, parties need to focus on developing and disseminating well-design programs to address local concerns, as this trend may encourage them to invest in more thorough and achievable manifestos as a crucial tool for campaigning. It is also to be noted that in local level elections political parties usually rely on the party policies formulated during State Legislative

Assembly elections in general and specific programmes are formulated to strengthen its appeal for the electorate.

The data from the survey regarding the main mode of political engagement in Mizoram's Local Council and Village Council elections highlight this consumption of political news via listening and reading. Approximately 31.4% of participants opt for this passive method of engagement. Therefore, it can be inferred that most people in the area engaged in the political process by consuming media rather than actively participating. The manner in which political news is conveyed has a significant impact on the perspectives of voters regarding candidates and issues, ultimately shaping voter turnout and preferences. The relatively low percentages for active forms of participation, such as attending meetings and rallies, being an active party worker, and door-to-door canvassing, indicate a limited level of direct voter mobilisation efforts. It is inferred that electoral results are swayed by overarching messaging and media campaigns rather than direct contact campaigns.

Nevertheless, the substantial dependence on media for political information also presents potential hazards. It is important to acknowledge the possibility of misinformation or biased content influencing voter decisions. It is also important to mention that a considerable number of respondents (24.4%) chose "Can't say" as their response when asked about their form of political participation. There appears to be a lack of enthusiasm or engagement with the political process. Ultimately, media outlets possess the capacity to significantly impact electoral results in Mizoram's Local Council and Village Council elections as a result of the inclination towards passive modes of political engagement. Effective utilisation of media channels can provide campaigns with a notable advantage.

The significance of development is a crucial concern in Local Council and Village Council elections in Mizoram. It is clear from the survey that a significant portion of participants, 40.9% to be exact, viewed development as the primary concern. This indicates that voters in the region placed a high importance on enhancing their overall well-being. The focus on development can have various implications for the political landscape. First, it has the potential to increase voter

participation. When individuals perceive that their vote has had the potential to enact substantial enhancements in their personal circumstances, they are more inclined to engage in the electoral process. As a result, the credibility of the elections is strengthened. Additionally, it is necessary for local political parties to modify their platforms in order to better reflect the priorities of the voters. Given the emphasis on development, it is necessary for parties to prioritise agendas that werere focused on development rather than traditional or populist measures. This may lead to a shift towards policy-driven politics, where political parties prioritise investing in expert policy formulations.

Importance of development as a voter priority suggests an expanding electorate that is primarily focused on substantial issues. The potential consequences of this development are significant, affecting political strategies, electoral participation, and the governance model in Mizoram. This could potentially result in a governance approach that is more focused on sustainable development.

Evaluation of the Implications of Voting Behaviour on Electoral Outcome

The voter turnout in Mizoram during the Lok Sabha election in 2019 stood at 83.8%, indicating a significant level of political engagement among the electorate. This level of turnout holds great importance within the broader national landscape, as it reflects a strong faith in the democratic system. It is possible that the existence of significant concerns or influential figures may have influenced voter engagement. The significant voter turnout in this election has bolstered the elected representative's legitimacy and enhanced their capacity to govern with efficacy.

The voter turnout in the 2018 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections reached an impressive 92.5%. The high level of participation demonstrates the significant involvement of the electorate in local issues and the democratic process. The significant voter turnout indicates that individuals were influenced by significant and controversial matters pertaining to local administration, ethnic factors, and Mizoram's specific economic policies.

Elections for the Local Council and Village Council in Mizoram consistently witness remarkably high voter participation, with the most recent election recording a turnout of 96.6%. The high level of democratic engagement at the grassroots level is a testament to the community's dedication to shaping local governance. The significant voter participation in these elections is of utmost importance as it directly impacts the decision-making processes at the local level. The voter turnouts in Mizoram's elections are consistently high, but the implications differ depending on the level of the elections. High voter turnouts in Lok Sabha and state elections serve to validate the democratic process and bolster the legitimacy and authority of elected representatives. This, in turn, empowers them to make consequential decisions at the national or state level. However, local council elections, which have even higher turnouts, demonstrate a strong local involvement that directly improves community-specific governance and responsiveness.

This analysis indicates that increased voter turnout had a positive effect on democratic legitimacy at all levels. However, its direct influence on governance and policy-making is particularly significant at the specific level of the election. Elections at the national and state levels have a significant impact on shaping policy directions and governance frameworks.

The research emphasises the growing trend of individual autonomy in voting decisions in Mizoram. The Lok Sabha and Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections witnessed a significant number of voters asserting their autonomy in decision-making, suggesting a departure from conventional community or familial influences. As a result, campaign strategies have shifted, with candidates placing greater emphasis on engaging directly with voters and conducting issue-oriented campaigns.

At the local level, there is also a consistent trend of voters maintaining a high level of autonomy in their voting decisions. A considerable portion of voters express confidence in their capacity to make independent choices. This signifies a cultural change towards individualism in political decision-making and a decreased impact of traditional social networks.

This analysis indicates that the increasing independence of individuals in their voting choices had important consequences for the electoral situation in Mizoram. The importance of electoral campaigns adapting by prioritising policies and practical impacts, rather than relying on emotional or communal appeals, is emphasised. This shift could potentially result in a higher level of variability in election outcomes, as it create more opportunities for new or independent candidates to challenge and disrupt the established norms of traditional party politics. In addition, the current inclination towards individual decision-making contributes to the improvement of democratic engagement and governance as it encourages a well-informed and actively engaged electorate. This statement calls for political parties to improve their strategies and prioritise governance issues that have had a direct impact on the lives of voters. In general, the increase in individual autonomy in Mizoram's electoral behaviour may result in a more unpredictable and dynamic democratic process. The statement highlights the significance of engaging directly with voters and engaging in meaningful policy discussions to influence election results.

Based on the survey findings, it is evident that there existed a noteworthy degree of party loyalty among voters in India. A significant majority of respondents, 62% to be precise, have expressed their intention to vote for the same party in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. These findings suggest that a significant segment of the voting population was content with the present party's achievements and is inclined to maintain their support. Nonetheless, it implies that a significant portion, 38%, was receptive to altering their voting decision. This provides an opening for opposition parties to influence these voters and secure their backing.

At the state level, a significant majority of respondents, 77%, express their intention to vote for the same party in the upcoming MLA elections, indicating a strong inclination to maintain voting patterns. These findings indicate that voter satisfaction and loyalty tended to be stronger at the state level in comparison to the national level. This trend may result in increased stability and continuity in state governance, as the current ruling party is expected to maintain its hold on power.

Opposition parties face a significant challenge, but it is not impossible to overcome. A notable portion of the electorate, comprising 23% of voters, remains open to change and can be influenced accordingly. In order to effectively reach these voters, opposition parties should prioritise addressing localised issues that directly impacted the daily lives of state voters. Addressing the concerns of these voters and persuading them to switch their support will necessitate the use of focused and effective strategies.

At the local level, there is a moderate level of loyalty towards the current political party, which falls between the loyalty observed in Lok Sabha elections and state elections. Approximately 63.2% of respondents displayed this loyalty. It can be inferred that satisfaction with governance varied across different tiers. The consistent voter preference at the local level suggests that the incumbent party was successfully addressing local needs, leading to stable local governance and policy implementation. In general, there is a clear pattern of significant voter loyalty in all three levels of elections, with the most pronounced support seen in state elections indicating a prevailing sentiment of strong support for the current ruling parties.

The YouTube played a significant role in shaping voter behaviour and electoral outcomes during the Lok Sabha elections in India. This was especially important in remote regions such as Mizoram, where voters had limited exposure to conventional media. YouTube played a significant role in shaping the political views and voting decisions of these voters by providing them with a diverse range of electoral content. Furthermore, social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube played a crucial role in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, serving as primary sources of information for voters. These platforms played a vital role in enabling focused advertising, instantaneous interactions, and prompt feedback, all of which were essential in influencing and addressing voter sentiment.

The significance of digital platforms in the dissemination and consumption of electoral information is immense. Online platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram provide voters with unparalleled access to political content,

including campaign videos, live debates, and political commentary. This is especially advantageous in areas where traditional media may have limited effectiveness, like Mizoram. The outcome is a voter base that is better informed, resulting in more thoughtful and well-informed voting choices.

Political parties and candidates have had to make significant adjustments to their campaign strategies due to the rise of digital platforms. There has been a significant transition from conventional approaches such as door-to-door campaigning and print media to the creation of digital content with the intention of achieving viral status. The shift signifies the increasing impact and scope of digital platforms in shaping voter perspectives and involvement.

In addition, digital platforms have the capacity to enhance political involvement and voter turnout among young individuals. YouTube is highly favoured by younger demographics due to its native and appealing medium. This can potentially address the issue of apathy and disengagement among younger voters, resulting in a more politically active youth population and potentially impacting the long-term voter demographics.

Ultimately, the incorporation of digital platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram into electoral procedures presents a range of advantages and obstacles. There are several benefits to be considered. Firstly, voter engagement is increased, leading to more informed voting decisions. Additionally, there is a noticeable shift towards dynamic and responsive campaigning methods. However, there are increased risks linked to misinformation, the necessity for strict regulatory oversight, and the difficulty of guaranteeing equal access to information for all voter demographics. Finding a middle ground between harnessing the advantages of digital media in elections and minimising its possible negative consequences is

The Lok Sabha elections in Mizoram demonstrate a notable dependence on media as a primary channel for political information and influence. A significant portion of the participants, 42.4% to be precise, recognised the influence of media on

their voting choices. This finding emphasizes the media's crucial role as a channel for sharing information and shaping political opinions. In state-level elections, around 35.6% of voters stated that media engagement played a crucial role in influencing their electoral choices.

Nevertheless, a distinct dynamic is observed at the local and village council levels. The activities related to election campaigns were identified as the most influential, with 27.9% of respondents citing them. This suggests a grassroots approach to campaigning, where direct engagement, such as door-to-door canvassing and joint platform campaigns, play important roles. Both media and door-to-door canvassing were chosen by 23.8% of respondents, indicating the significance of direct involvement in local elections.

When examining these three electoral levels, it becomes clear that there was a variation in the level of influence. Media plays a dominant role in national elections, while a combination of media and direct engagement is observed in state elections. On the other hand, direct campaign strategies take precedence in local elections. The observed scaling effect showcases how campaign strategies can be adjusted to fit the size and characteristics of the electoral competition.

According to the survey results, there is a notable lack of interest and significance attributed to Lok Sabha elections. Merely 9.9% of respondents view them as the most important. This resulted in decreased voter turnout and a diminished sense of allegiance towards national political parties or ideologies. However, MLA elections are widely regarded as highly significant, with a majority of respondents (60.6%) considering them to be of utmost importance. This demonstrates a belief in the significant influence of state governance on the welfare of individuals.

Local level elections reveal a wide array of voter perspectives. A significant proportion of participants (36.4%) consider these elections to be of great significance, while a larger percentage (41.6%) regard them as moderately important. A minority (22%) view them as having limited importance. It appears that although

the significance of local governance was acknowledged by many, it is not given higher priority compared to state or national matters.

The levels of engagement in MLA elections are significantly higher than those in Lok Sabha and local elections, suggesting the possibility of a greater voter turnout. The Lok Sabha elections could potentially experience a significant decline in voter turnout as a result of the perceived lack of relevance. Hence, it is crucial for campaigns at various levels to customise their strategies according to the perceived significance of each election.

During Lok Sabha elections, it is necessary for national parties to adapt their strategies to cater to local concerns. On the other hand, MLA candidates should prioritise state-specific issues and concentrate their efforts accordingly. Local elections necessitate well-rounded campaigns that effectively addressed the specific needs of the community while also considering wider issues. In the Lok Sabha elections, national parties may find it beneficial to tailor their approach to local issues. However, in MLA and local elections, it is more effective to prioritise immediate and tangible benefits in order to engage voters and achieve favourable outcomes.

The analysis indicates a significant inclination towards individual candidates in Indian elections, specifically in the Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections in Mizoram. According to the Lok Sabha elections, 35.5% of respondents prioritise the factor of 'candidate' over party affiliations or ideological stances as well as communal considerations. In the Mizoram State Assembly elections, 38.3% of respondents expressed a strong preference for individual candidates.

Voters prioritise the integrity, personal reputation, and ability of candidates to address local needs. Political parties may perceive this as a motivation to increase investment in personal branding strategies and emphasise candidates' individual accomplishments and relationships with their constituents. The emphasis on individual candidates is even more prominent at the local council and village council levels. This indicates a political culture that placed a high importance on personal

merit and leadership abilities. The prioritisation of candidates over party affiliations or ideological frameworks can result in increased electoral volatility, as loyalty to individuals may change depending on their perceived effectiveness and integrity.

The prominence of individual candidates, rather than party ideology, national leadership, or communal considerations, indicates a broader trend towards personal politics. This shift may result in fragmented political landscapes, particularly at the local level, where individual popularity can greatly influence electoral alliances and party strength. Political parties have responded to this trend by implementing rigorous candidate selection processes that prioritise personal integrity, effectiveness, and local presence, in order to appeal to voters. Candidates must actively address local issues rather than solely relying on national party platforms.

The analysis show that there was a strong preference for individual candidates in Indian elections, suggesting a shift towards personal politics. This trend poses a challenge to traditional party-centric campaigning, necessitating political parties to adapt and prioritise personalised, candidate-focused strategies. The adaptability of political parties and the responsiveness of individual candidates are expected to play crucial roles in determining outcomes.

The exploration of voting behaviour in Mizoram indicates that candidate personality was given more importance than other factors like political experience, party affiliation, or policy stance. A significant impact on electoral outcomes was observed in the Lok Sabha elections, with 60.7% of voters placing emphasis on the candidate's personality. This trend necessitates a strategic change in which political parties prioritise candidates with significant personal appeal and charisma, potentially at the cost of other essential qualities.

The Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections demonstrate a clear trend towards personality politics, with 65.3% of voters considering 'Candidate Personality' to be the most important factor. The shift towards personalised politics at the state level underscores the importance that voters attached to personal connections and attributes, rather than relying solely on traditional political

indicators. In Local Council and Village Council elections, 65.7% of respondents emphasised the significance of personality at the grassroots level. The personal connection between candidates and the community is crucial in this context. The level of elections at which voters and candidates have the most direct interaction is crucial for considering the influence of personality.

The dominance of candidate personality over other electoral factors indicates a shift towards personalised politics in Mizoram. Enhancing voter engagement and breaking down traditional barriers presents challenges in balancing appealing personalities with the necessary competencies for effective governance.

A significant inclination towards policy-oriented voting in all three levels of elections is observed in various levels of elections in Mioram. In the Lok Sabha elections, 40.2% of voters preferred a "Good overall party programme," indicating a trend towards voting based on policy considerations. This shift in voter behaviour can incentivize political parties to improve the quality and coherence of their policies.

In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly (MLA) elections, 45.8% of voters considered a "Good Overall Programme" as their primary decision factor. This highlights the importance of policy in electoral success and suggests that voters evaluated parties based on their capacity to develop and execute effective governance strategies. Similarly, in the Local and Village Council elections, 43.7% of voters prioritized a "Good Overall Programme." This indicates a strong preference for policies that effectively addressed local concerns. This trend promotes the prioritization of creating and communicating specific, practical plans that are customized to meet the needs of local political entities.

As voters increasingly prioritize policy, political parties are motivated to innovate and enhance the quality of their offerings. This leads to a more competitive and dynamic political landscape. Electoral success becomes more dependent on policy effectiveness, shifting governance towards a greater focus on achieving desired outcomes. This shift in campaign strategies resulted in political campaigns

becoming more information-focused and policy-oriented. Parties may move away from relying on identity and emotional appeals in favor of a more rational and programmatic approach. Ultimately, this evolution can lead to improved governance, aligning political actions more closely with the needs and aspirations of the electorate.

Analysis of political participation in the Lok Sabha election and Mizoram Legislative Assembly (MLA) elections reveals a passive nature of engagement among the electorate. The primary form of political involvement is through the consumption of political news, accounting for 38.4% in the Lok Sabha election and 44.6% in the MLA elections. This indicates a heavy reliance on media for information rather than direct party mobilisation or interpersonal persuasion. The low percentages of active participation in politics are evident, with 3.5% attending meetings and rallies, 4.1% being active party workers, and 0.6% participating in door-to-door canvassing in the Lok Sabha election. Similarly, in the MLA elections, the percentages for active participation are even lower, with 2.9% attending meetings and rallies, 4.7% being active party workers, and 2.9% participating in door-to-door canvassing.

These figures highlight the trend of low physical engagement in politics and emphasize the significant impact of media on shaping electoral results and influencing voter perceptions and decisions. The extensive engagement with media sources may increase political awareness and lead to a transition towards issue-based voting.

However, the data also reveals that a substantial proportion of the electorate, specifically 15.4%, formed their opinions in isolation, indicating a potential challenge for political parties to effectively engage these voters. Additionally, the high percentages of voters expressing "Can't say" or demonstrating disinterest in active political engagement further complicate the task of political parties in mobilizing these individuals.

The consistent trend of relying on media for political information is also observed in Local Council (LC) and Village Council (VC) elections, with 31.4% of participants primarily engaging through media consumption. The lower percentages for active participation in these elections suggest a prioritization of broad messaging through media campaigns rather than grassroots initiatives. The analysis highlights the extensive use of media for political information in Mizoram's elections at all levels, indicating a well-informed electorate but also potential isolation in their consumption of political content.

The analysis of voter behaviour in Mizoram reveals different priorities at various levels of elections. In the Lok Sabha elections, voters in Mizoram are demanding improvements in transparency, accountability, and efficiency of government actions, with a strong emphasis on good governance. This is reflected in the electoral outcomes, with a significant proportion of respondents (45.7%) expressing a preference for good governance in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections as well.

The focus on integrity and effectiveness in administration is consistent across state-level and national elections, indicating a broader expectation among voters. The electoral strategies in these elections are expected to prioritize local governance issues and reforms in local administration, similar to the Lok Sabha campaigns. This also lead to higher voter turnout, as politically motivated voters are likely to be engaged and vote based on candidates' governance qualifications.

In contrast, the Local Council and Village Council elections show a shift in focus, with 40.9% of respondents prioritizing development as their main concern. This highlights the importance of immediate, tangible improvements in infrastructure and local services to voters, which outweigh broader governance reforms. The adoption of this agenda may result in increased voter turnout, as voters perceive a clear connection between their votes and the improvement of their everyday lives.

The analysis demonstrates that voter concerns vary at different levels of elections in Mizoram. State and national elections are largely focused on good

governance, reflecting a desire for systemic reform at a macro-level. On the other hand, local elections prioritize development, indicating a need for tangible progress at a micro-level. These distinct electoral dynamics have significant implications for the political landscape after an election, as elected officials are held accountable to the prioritized issues of the electorate.

Conclusion

An examination of voting patterns in Mizoram at the national, state, and local levels showed that voter independence, media influence, and candidate appeal were key factors in election outcomes. The study highlighted how local preferences and national policies shape Mizoram's electoral dynamics, reflecting the region's unique social and cultural environment.

The Lok Sabha elections significantly impacted both regional politics in Mizoram and the broader national debate, demonstrating the influence of Mizoram's voters on national policies despite the state's small size. The Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections showed that voter behavior focused on local issues, which affected governance and policy-making. High voter turnout indicated strong engagement, with potential impacts on both state and national politics.

Local elections, including the Local Council and Village Council, represented direct voter engagement with local governance, influencing community development and administration effectiveness. Media played a powerful role in shaping political views in Mizoram, with digital platforms like YouTube and Facebook expanding the reach of political information and campaign strategies.

Political campaigns in Mizoram have evolved to combine traditional methods with new digital strategies, reflecting a trend of adaptable political engagement. Political parties and candidates need to focus on transparency, accountability, and effective policies to meet the public's growing expectations.

Overall, this study highlighted the complex relationship between voter behavior and election outcomes in Mizoram, offering insights into the democratic processes that influence governance. The findings emphasize the need for ongoing research to understand electoral politics in culturally diverse regions like Mizoram, ensuring that governance remains inclusive and representative of all communities.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This Chapter serves as the conclusion of an in-depth comparative study of voting behaviour and electoral dynamics at the national, state, and local levels in Mizoram. The main focus is to synthesize the findings and implications derived from previous chapters, emphasizing the complex relationship between various factors influencing voter behaviour and electoral outcomes. The chapter summarizes the comparative analysis of voting patterns across different electoral levels, highlighting significant differences and similarities. These comparisons throw light on how electoral behaviour varies according to the type and level of elections.

The chapter summarizes the main results of the study, focusing on the original research goals and hypotheses. It established different voting patterns at various election levels, identifies the factors that influence these patterns, and examines the differences in voting between urban and rural areas. Additionally, it discusses the broader implications of these findings on the political scene in Mizoram.

The thesis deals with a comparative study of voting behaviour in Mizoram at the national, state and local level elections as well as a comparative analysis of urban and rural voting behaviour in these elections. The study is focussed on the elections to Members of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election, Village Councils Elections, in non-sixth schedule and sixth schedule areas, as well as Local Council Elections, under Aizawl Municipal Corporation. The research also deals with the implications of voting behaviour on electoral outcomes in these elections. Apart from the comparative studies undertaken, the thesis presents analysis of voting behaviour at each level of elections in Mizoram. Hence, the study deals with the rate of voter turnout in elections and how voting decisions are made by the population. The sources of electoral information as well as the electoral activities that influenced an individual to shape voting decision is analysed in this thesis. The study also covers the perception and attitudes of voters during election and their level of participation in the electoral process.

The first chapter entitled 'Introduction,' introduces the study and outlines the objective of the study, it covers statement of the problem, research questions, methodology and chapterisation. It provides an in-depth explanation of democracy, emphasizing its participatory nature. The Chapter traces the origins of democracy from ancient Greece, and further explains modern democracy characterized by popular participation, free and fair elections.

The chapter also provides historical overview of electoral processes in India, detailing the evolution of elections from the British colonial period to the post-independence era. As a study area, specific focus is given to the state of Mizoram, describing its geographical, demographic, and political context. It explores the political history of Mizoram, including the establishment of political parties, the impact of insurgency, and the role of elections in shaping the state's governance. The evolution of political consciousness and the emergence of political parties in Mizoram are discussed in detail.

Chapter two entitled 'Voting Behaviour: A Theoretical Framework.' provides a theoretical framework for investigating voting behaviour within the context of political science and democratic theory. It highlights the importance of voting as a fundamental action in democracies that enabled direct participation in the political process. It emphasizes that voting behaviour was influenced by numerous factors, including social, economic, psychological, and political elements. Elections are depicted as central to democratic societies, serving functions such as political recruitment, mobilization, communication, and legitimization. They reflect the collective will of the people, establishing a direct connection between citizens and their government. The chapter emphasizes that robust electoral laws and independent election authority were essential to maintain the integrity of the electoral process.

The chapter also discusses the concept of voting behaviour and different theories that were used to analyze and predict voting patterns, such as sociological, psychological, and rational choice theories. Voting is presented as the most important method of political participation in a democracy. It allows citizens to choose their representatives and express their political opinions. Voting behaviour, therefore, is a

critical area of study as it reflects the attitudes, preferences, and motivations of the electorate. The chapter notes that understanding voting behaviour involved examining how voters make their decisions and the factors influencing these decisions. It provides a detailed account of India's electoral framework, governed by the Constitution and the Election Commission. It covers the legal provisions, the preparation and revision of electoral rolls, and the structure and functions of the Election Commission.

The third chapter entitled, 'Voting Behaviour at Various Election in Mizoram', provides an in-depth analysis of the region's electoral scenario, highlighting the interplay between national and regional electoral politics. It traces the evolution of Mizoram's political consciousness from the British colonial era through significant milestones, including the formation of the District Council in 1952 and the attainment of statehood in 1987.

The electoral journey of Mizoram began with the adoption of democratic norms during British colonial administration. However, the first District Council elections in 1952 marked the beginning of political engagement for the Mizo people, who had previously been excluded from formal legislative processes. The chapter summaries the transition from District Council elections to Union Territory status in 1972, followed by statehood in 1987, underlining the increasing political awareness and participation of the Mizo population through national, state and local level elections. The chapter also examines the role of major state parties such as the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Indian National Congress (INC), along with minor regional and national organizations. It provides a detailed account of their performance across different election levels, offering insights into party competitiveness, voter alignment, and electoral outcomes.

A comparative analysis of voting behaviour across different levels of elections is discussed in the fourth Chapter entitled 'Comparision of Voting Behaviour at Various Levels of Elections.' The chapter examines national (Lok Sabha), state (Mizoram Legislative Assembly), and local (Local Council and Village

Council) elections, highlighting the distinct patterns and factors that influence voter behaviour at each level.

The Lok Sabha elections are pivotal in shaping India's leadership and legislative agenda, focusing on significant national issues such as economic policies, defense, and foreign relations. While, the State Legislative Assembly elections are crucial for addressing regional issues and have a direct impact on the daily lives of citizens, Local elections focus on immediate and practical issues such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, directly impacting local governance. The chapter presents an in-dept analysis of voter behaviour during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in Mizoram, the 2018 and 2023 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections as well as the 2020 Local Council/Village Council elections under non-sixth schedule, along with Village Councils elections in LADC (2020), CADC (2020) and MADC (2020) under the sixth schedule areas in Mizoram. It discusses the perception, attitudes and choices of the voters in these elections.

Chapter Five entitled 'Voting Behaviour in urban and rural areas', studies voting behaviour between urban and rural areas. Understanding voting behaviour is crucial as it reveals the underlying factors influencing electoral choices, such as economic conditions, cultural influences, and political mobilization strategies. This research seeks to analyse and contrast voting behaviours in these two distinct contexts, therefore offering understanding into regional voting trends.

Urban and rural areas differ significantly in demographics, including age, education level, and occupation. These differences impact voting preferences and behaviours. Urban voters might prioritize public transportation and housing policies, whereas rural voters might focus on agricultural policies and land use. Political engagement levels also vary, influenced by factors such as access to information and community cohesion. Understanding these dynamics is essential for enhancing voter participation and developing inclusive political processes.

In urban areas, higher population densities and diverse economic activities create a complex social structure with varied ideological leanings and political affiliations. Urban voters tend to be more informed and have higher voter turnout due

to better infrastructure and access to information. In contrast, rural areas have homogeneous economic activities mainly focused on farming, which results in more consistent voting patterns based on local needs and community ties. The chapter provides a detailed demographic data on the survey respondents, categorizing them by their urban or rural residence. Key variables examined include marital status, age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, and income. The chapter explores various aspects of voting behaviour, including voting patterns, decision-making influences, sources of information, candidate preferences, and political engagement.

Chapter six which is entitled 'Voting Behaviour: Implication on Electoral Outcome' highlights the complex relationship between voting behaviour and electoral outcomes in Mizoram, emphasizing individual autonomy, media influence, and candidate-centric voting. These factors shape the political landscape at national, state, and local levels, guiding party strategies to align with voter priorities and preferences. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for political parties to effectively engage with voters and achieve electoral success.

The Chapter elaborates on the implication of electoral outcome in several ways. It shows that most voters in Mizoram made their own decisions when voting, which means they are becoming more independent from traditional influences. This independence forces political parties to appeal directly to the voters, making the appeal of individual candidates and their leadership qualities very important.

Even though many voters plan to vote for the same party in the next election, showing strong party loyalty and a stable political environment, there are still opportunities for opposition parties to attract voters who are open to change. The chapter also discusses how interactions with the media have a significant impact on voting decisions. This highlights the importance of strategic media engagement for political parties to gain support.

The study also reveals that many voters saw Lok Sabha elections as less significant than state and local elections, which affected voter turnout and engagement. This perception impacts the strategies of political parties, who need to focus on both national and local issues to mobilize voters effectively. It also

illustrates that voters prioritized the qualities of individual candidates over party affiliation or ideology, with 35.5% of voters considering the candidate the most important factor in their decision. This trend emphasizes the importance of personal reputation, integrity, and local presence in achieving electoral success.

Voting behaviour is the study of how people vote during elections, focusing on how they cast their ballots and make their decisions. It involves understanding the factors that influenced voting, such as political attitudes, party preferences, sources of political information, and the process by which voters make their political decisions. Voters are the most important players in democracy. However, it is difficult to read the minds of voters and to predict electoral outcomes since factors such as traditions, localism, economic motivation, religious beliefs, nationalities, races, and sex can influence their voting behaviour. Therefore, the study of voting behaviour take account of the electorate's attitude towards voting, voting participation, voting choices, and participation in other electoral activities. It includes individual actions that reflected a voter's inclinations, preferences, agreements, views, ideologies, concerns, and alternatives pertaining to the wide range of topics and problems contested during elections. Simply put, voting behaviour refers to the way in which an individual make decision about a candidate or a political party to support in an election. In other words, the study of voting behaviour would include the study of motivations and reasons behind individual voting choices in elections.

Voting behaviour is a crucial aspect of democratic polity, as it provides insights into political involvement, patterns, motivating factors, and sociological components involved in election process. Elections are complex events whose results are shaped by various factors, including socio-economic conditions, psychological factors, and the overall electoral environment. Sociologists have sought to establish a correlation between various socio-economic factors, such as gender, age, race, religion, ethnicity, class, occupation, education, and voting behaviour, while political scientists have focused on the effect of numerous political elements on electorates' voting decisions.

Models of voting behaviour play a crucial role in studying electoral and political behaviour, helping identify important factors that influenced voting decisions, such as economic performance, social identity, party allegiance, candidate appeal, and changes in political attitudes and behaviours over time. Three main schools of research have been employed to explain voting behaviour: the School of Columbia (Sociological Model), the School of Michigan (Psychosocial Model), and the School of Rochester (Rational Choice Model).

The Sociological Model examines how various social variables affect voting and connects an individual's voting preferences to their affiliation with a particular group. It emphasizes the importance of certain social characteristics of the electorates like class, race, ethnicity, religion, and language and establishes a link between them and the person's voting behaviour.

The School of Michigan's Psychosocial Model suggests that voting decisions were influenced by an individual's affiliation with a political party. This model suggests that voters view casting a ballot as a demonstration of their support for a certain political viewpoint, and that voters favour candidates who support a specific political party.

The School of Rochester's Rational-Choice or Economic Model suggests that voters made decisions based on cost-benefit calculations, with the primary goal of maximizing their gains from each political party. This model creates a parallel between voters and consumers, as well as between businesses and political parties.

In addition, the Dominant Ideology Model, on the other hand, emphasizes the influence of government, political parties, and interest groups on voting decisions. It implies that powerful groups and organisations employed mass media to promote issues that related with their interests, in order to influence the electoral process in their favour.

This research work has adopted the Rational Choice or Economic Model as the framework upon which voting behaviour of Mizoram is studied.

In India, the adoption of democratic process and particularly the elections for the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies, have significantly impacted the field of election studies. These studies examine several facets of political behaviour in a democratic society, and the outcomes of these elections can indicate the future strength or weakness of the political system. However, scholarly interest in the field did not gain ground until the middle of the 1960s, and election studies did not flourish as much as they did after 1967. The study of voting behaviour began in the 1960s with the publication of 'Indian Voting Behaviour' (1965), which identified various variables of electoral influence in the election year.

Elections in India

India has a long history of elections with references to practices of elections and existence of republican forms of government in ancient texts. However, modern elections based on universal adult franchise began after India gained independence from British rule. The first general elections to the Lok Sabha, which is the lower house of the Indian Parliament, held between 25th October, 1951, and 21st February, 1952, marked a significant step towards democracy, with millions of voters participating in the electoral process. The frameworks for conducting free and fair elections in India have been provided by the Indian Constitution, which are further reinforced by laws passed by the Indian Parliament. The Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the Representation of the People Act, 1951 are the two primary legislations pertaining to electoral processes in India.

Further, successful conduct of the elections can be credited to the establishment of Election Commission of India (ECI) on January 25, 1950. The ECI is an independent constitutional authority responsible for managing the electoral process with the task to ensure free and fair elections at all levels of government. Hence, it operates independently from the executive, parliament, and political parties, with the objective to maintain the integrity of the electoral system and upholding democratic principles. It derives its authority from Article 324 of the Indian Constitution, which grants it the power to oversee and manage elections for the Parliament, state legislatures, and the positions of President and Vice-President.

Elections in India, cover the entire process, from notification made under Section 14 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, to the results announced under Section 66 of the Act. If existing laws are inadequate or do not address the issue at hand, the Supreme Court of India has determined that the Election Commission possessed residual powers as per the Constitution to take appropriate action.

The electoral system in India is divided into three levels: national, state, and local. At the national level, elections are held to elect Members of Parliament (MPs) to the Lok Sabha (Lower House) and Rajya Sabha (Upper House). The Lok Sabha consists of 543 constituencies, with each constituency electing one representative. The Rajya Sabha is a permanent house with members elected indirectly by state legislatures and other bodies.

State-level elections are held to elect members of the State Legislative Assembly and State Legislative Council. The State Legislative Assembly elections follow a first-past-the-post system, where members are directly elected by the people. The State Legislative Council elections use a system of proportional representation, with members elected indirectly by members of the Legislative Assembly, local authorities, graduates, and teachers.

At the local level, elections are held for local self-governing bodies such as the Panchayati Raj system in rural areas and the village council system in certain states. These elections aim to ensure grassroots democracy and active citizen participation in governance.

Elections in Mizoram

The electoral history in Mizoram dates back to the adoption of democratic norms during British colonial administration, followed by key milestones like the first District Council elections in 1952. Elections in Mizoram are characterized by the interaction of numerous political parties, including the Mizo Union (MU), United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO), Indian National Congress (INC), Mizo National Front (MNF), and Mizoram People's Conference (MNF). These political

parties have had a notable impact on the state's political progress and have achieved different levels of success in elections.

At the national level, elections are conducted for Members of Parliament (Lok Sabha) or House of the People. The Lok Sabha constituency of Mizoram covers the entire state, with the seat reserved for Scheduled Tribes. The first elections to the House of the People (Lok Sabha) in the Union Territory of Mizoram were held in 1972, but polling was not conducted due to the uncontested election of Sângliana, as the first Member of Parliament from Mizoram. Two elections were held in 1977 and 1980, with R.Rothuama winning both elections as an independent candidate. In 1984, Lalduhoma of the Indian National Congress was declared elected as a Member of Parliament. After Mizoram attained statehood, elections for the Members of Parliament to the Ninth Lok Sabha were held in 1989. Since then, the State (Mizoram) has returned representatives to the Lok Sabha in successive elections.

The 16th Lok Sabha election was held on April 11, 2019, C. Lalrosanga of the MNF won the election, dislodging the INC, which had held the reins of government for two consecutive terms. The parliamentary constituency allotted to Mizoram remains the same, with a total of 7,92,464 electors. Earlier in 2018, the MNF formed a new government in the state, following the INC's administration for two consecutive terms. Thus, the MNF was seen as a party to send representative to the Lok Sabha, but an Independent candidate supported by Zoram People's Movement garnered significant public support. Yet, C. Lalrosanga won by a margin of 8,140 votes.

At the state level, elections are conducted for Member of Legislative Assembly or the Vidhan Sabha. The Mizoram Legislative Assembly was founded in 1972, following the elevation of the Mizo Hills District to the status of a Union Territory. The first elections were held in May 1972, with the Mizo Union party winning 21 seats. However, the party lost public support, with the Mizo Labour Party and the INC gaining significant support from the people. The second election in 1978 saw the Peoples Conference Party win 23 out of 30 seats. However, a crisis within the Peoples Conference led to the dissolution of the MPC government. The third

Union Territory Legislative Assembly election in 1979 saw the MPC win 18 out of 30 seats, while the Indian National Congress won 20 out of 30 seats. The INC's initiative led to the signing of Memorandum of Settlement in 1986, granting Mizoram statehood in 1987. An interim government was formed with five ministers from the MNF and four from the INC.

The First Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election was held on February 19, 1987. The Mizo National Front (MNF) won the First Mizoram State Assembly election with 24 seats, securing 36.62% of the votes. The party was dissolved due to splits within the party. The Second State Legislative Assembly Elections in 1989 saw the Congress Party win 23 seats, while the MNF lost 14. The election also saw the emergence of identity politics with the Hmar People's Convention and Chakma Jaty Prasad entering electoral politics.

Mizoram's political power oscillates between the Indian National Congress and the Mizo National Front, with the electorate alternately giving mandates to these parties since the First State Legislative Assembly election. Although there were instances of electoral alliances, the INC played a key role in ensuring peace and normalcy in the state after years of insurgency movements. The State Legislative Assembly elections have been fought mainly on local issues such as ethnicity, good governance, prohibition of liquor, housing schemes for the poor, healthcare schemes, unemployment, development, and assistance to farmers.

The Eight Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election, 2018, was held on November 28, 2018, for the 40 Assembly Constituencies in eight districts. The MNF captured 27 seats with a vote share of 37.69%, to form the government. The INC won 4 seats, while the BJP won 1 seat. The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) emerged as a major opposition party by winning 8 seats even though the party-men contested the election as independent candidate.

Several issues influenced the electorate during the campaign and electioneering process in 2018. The ruling INC government's performances were tainted by poor road conditions, which affected movement, trade, and commercial activities. Opposition parties like the MNF and ZPM took advantage of these issues

to sway voters in their favor. The anti-incumbency role also played a divisive role for the ruling INC, with opposition parties like the MNF taking advantage of dissatisfaction with the INC rule and projecting themselves as the party that would deliver good for society and the state. The family oriented economic development programme called the Socio-Economic Development Policy (SEDP) formulated by the MNF posed a major challenge to the welfare programme of the INC since the financial assistance available to eligible beneficiaries was higher.

In this scenario, the newly formed Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) emerged as a viable alternative to the two previous ruling parties. Many individuals and non-party men looked forward to this new political party as a crucial agent of change and development in the state. The support it garnered from the people is reflected by the party winning eight seats even though its candidates contested as independent candidates.

At the local level, elections are conducted for the Village Councils as well as Local Councils in areas under Municipal administration. The establishment of Village Council owes its origin to the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 which empowers the District Council to form Village Councils within its jurisdiction. The first elections to the Village Councils were held from April 23, 1954, to July 7, 1954. The Mizo Union won the inaugural village council elections under the District Council and capturing most of the interior villages.

The up-gradation of Mizo District Council to Union Territory by the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 ushered a number of political developments in the region. While abolishing the Mizo District Council and Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, three other autonomous District Councils, named after three minority tribes, were constituted on April 2, 1972, resulting in the village councils under the erstwhile Pawi-Lakher Regional Council becoming the village councils of Pawi, Lakher, and Chakma Autonomous District Councils. These autonomous district councils enjoy the privileges provided by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India within their jurisdiction. Apart from elections to members of District Councils, elections to Village Councils were conducted since 1955.

The new government of Union Territory also organized and constituted different departments to manage the Union Territory and therefore, the Local Administrative Department (LAD) was created to manage the working of village councils. Consequently, the first elections to village council were conducted by the LAD on May 5 and 7, 1975, with 163 councils and 738 elected members. Standard tenure of the Village Council was three years. However, with the passing of the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Amendment Act in 2014, the tenure have been changed from three years to five years. The extended tenure of village council term was implemented in the thirteenth elections to the village councils held on April 30, 2015, and reservation of seats for women were made for the first time.

The schedule of the Fourteenth Village Council Elections was published on August 5, 2020, to constitute 558 village councils within Non-Sixth Scheduled Districts. There were 6,925 candidates contesting for 2,454 village council seats, with 1,823 General Seats and 631 Reserved Seats for women. The election was conducted amid the Covid-19 pandemic, and the State Election Commission issued Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to prevent and contain the pandemic.

With the assistance of Mizoram Peoples' Forum and The Central Young Mizo Association, preventive measures were prioritized, including queue-less voting, social distancing, wearing face masks, and sanitizing voters' hands before entering the polling station. However, eight village councils were deferred due to the pandemic, and the actual elections were conducted for 538 village councils.

After receiving election petitions, the State Election Commission announced a re-poll to constitute North Vanlaiphai Village Council and Darlawn Venghlun Village Councils. Out of the seven seats in the village council, the MNF won 4 seats, ZPM bagged 2 seats, and the INC captured 1 seat. A re-poll for the Reserved Seat at Darlawn Venghlun village council was conducted on February 5, 2021, with Lalhmingmawii of ZPM winning the election.

The MNF won the most seats in the 2020 village council elections, winning 1376 seats, resulting in 327 village councils. The majority of the electorate favored the political party in power in the state. The BJP and ZPM also increased their

influence at the grassroot level, winning 38 village councils and several General and Reserved Seats, respectively. The 2020 village council elections were held simultaneously with the local council elections under the Aizawl Municipal Corporation.

In post-independent India, urban local government received less attention than rural local government. Therefore, the Constitution's 74th Amendment Act, 1992, provided for a constitutional status for urban local government institutions. However, the subject of local government was placed under the state list, allowing states to enact local government according to their needs and situation. In post-independent India, Aizawl became an urban settlement but followed the village council system in its administration.

Aizawl was selected as one of the urban centers in India to avail the benefits of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). Hence, the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007, was enacted, and the office of the Municipal Council started functioning from July 1, 2007. The First Aizawl Municipal Council Election was held on November 3, 2010, and the First Local Council Election was held on February 23, 2012. Within the 19 Wards of the Aizawl Municipalities, there were 522 seats to be filled in 82 Local Councils. The main contenders in the election were the INC and the MNF. The INC captured 269 seats, resulting in 42 Local Councils, while the MNF secured 219 seats, resulting in 30 Local Councils. ZNP and MPC secured 14 and 18 seats, respectively. Whereas, two seats were won by Independent candidates.

The Third Local Council Election was scheduled to be held simultaneously with Village Council elections on August 27, 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The total electors for the 83 Local Councils was 2,18,600, with male voters comprising 1,01,540 and female voters comprising 1,17,060. The INC won 71 Local Councils, accounting for 86% of the total, while the INC won only 6%. ZPM party, formed in 2018, quickly gained ground and established itself as a viable political party in Mizoram. Despite winning only two Local Councils, it captured 40 seats, amounting to 7.3 seat percentage in just two years of its existence.

In the Sixth Schedule areas, elections to Village Council in CADC, 2020, were planned for 88 Village Councils, but voting took place in 82 because the MNF party won uncontested in six councils. There were 31,112 voters, with a turnout of 86.51%. The Mizo National Front (MNF) was the leading party, winning 65 Village Councils and 374 out of 516 seats. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 16 councils and 113 seats, showing a significant presence. The Indian National Congress (INC) did poorly, winning no councils and only 2 seats. Independent candidates won 3 councils and 27 seats. In 4 councils, no party or candidates gained a majority.

The Village Council elections for MADC were held on April 18, 2023, with 43,120 voters, including 20,794 men and 22,326 women, and a voter turnout of 77.53%. The BJP won the most, with 41 Village Councils and 232 seats. The MNF came second with 25 councils and 160 seats, while the INC won 8 councils and 78 seats. The ZPM and Independent candidates had smaller successes, with ZPM winning 2 councils and 13 seats, and Independents winning 1 council and 9 seats. In 22 councils, no party had a clear majority. A total of 99 Village Councils and 492 seats were contested in the election.

The Village Council elections for the Lai Autonomous District Council were held on May 8, 2019, with 50,709 voters, including 24,883 men and 25,709 women, and a voter turnout of 75%. The Mizo National Front (MNF) won decisively, securing 63 out of 95 Village Councils and 301 out of 465 seats. The Indian National Congress (INC) was the main competitor, winning 14 councils and 119 seats. Independent candidates won 4 councils and 45 seats, while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) did not win any councils or seats. There were 13 councils with tied results and 1 council where no party had a majority. Overall, the MNF emerged as the leading party, with the INC as the main opposition.

The electoral history of Mizoram illustrate that elections at various levels were held at periodic intervals in a free and fair manner. However, it is noteworthy that unprecedented events transpired before the 2018 Mizoram Assembly election, such as the alleged inclusion of illegal Bru refugees as voters by Dr. Arun T., the District Commissioner of Kolasib District. Protests were organized and the issue was

resolved peacefully. The deployment of central security forces in the western borders of the state, and the ECI's approval of Bru refugees to cast their votes in their camps in Tripura were other major issues. Moreover, the Principal Secretary of state, Lalnunmawia Chuaungo, was accused of interfering in the electoral process by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), S.B. Sashank. This led to the removal of Lalnunmawia Chuaungo from his post and the appointment of Ashish Kundra as the new C.E.O. These incidents, did not, however, disrupt the conduct of free and fair election in the Mizoram Assembly Election.

Responses to objective and hypothesis of the study

The objective of the study is fundamental in shaping the research process, guiding the researcher, and ensuring that the study was purposeful, coherent, and meaningful. Following are the responses to research objectives set out:

1. *To study the voting behaviour of electorate in elections at various levels in Mizoram*: This objective was achieved by conducting field survey and discussed in Chapter three and four.

2. *To analyse the factors that influenced voting behaviour at various levels of elections*: Analysis of factors that influenced voting behaviour is derived by conducting field survey and discussed in Chapter four.

3. *To compare the variation of voting behaviour in these elections in the urban and rural areas of the state* : The variations in voting behaviour as well as comparative study between urban and rural areas across the three levels of elections is taken up and discussed in Chapter five.

4. *To analyse the implications of voting behaviour on the electoral outcome*: The implication of voting behaviour on electoral outcome is deliberated at length in Chapter six.

The study's hypotheses were developed with the research objectives in mind. The hypotheses are tested based on study findings, as follows:

1. *Voting behaviour of the electorate is different at various levels of elections in Mizoram*: The field work undertaken to study the pattern and trends of voting behaviour highlights that the electorate in Mizoram exhibited variations of voting behaviour at various levels of election in the state. For, instance, the voter turnout at the Lok Sabha was lowest when compared with state and local level elections indicating greater political awareness with governance that had more direct impact on their daily lives. While making voting decisions during elections, majority of voters responded making their voting decisions independently across the three levels of elections. However, familial and community influence became greater as election level decreases and is most pronounced at the local level.

2. *Various factors have influenced voting behaviour in various levels of elections*: Even though similarities are observed in the trends of voting behaviour across the three levels of elections in Mizoram, particular influences are observed in each election. Analysis of the perception of importance among three levels of election shows that State Legislative Assembly was considered most important and hence it resulted in higher voter turnout when compared with the other elections. The survey result has also shown that the primary concern of the voter at the national level were good governance and economic development. However, voting decision at the local level is influenced by development and welfare schemes indicating the fact the immediate and tangible outcome and support system are the most important factor that influenced voting decision.

3. *Voting behaviour differs in urban and rural areas of the state*: Urban areas, characterised by higher population density and broader economic activities, better infrastructure and access to information tends to demonstrate higher voter turnout and more diversed ideological leanings and attitudes. In contrast, rural areas often exhibit more homogeneous economic activities which correlate with uniform voting pattern. The study found that urban regions in Mizoram had more party loyalty than rural areas in three tiers of elections: Lok Sabha, Mizoram Legislative Assembly, and local elections. In the Lok Sabha elections, 69% of urban respondents intend to vote for the same party, while 43% of rural voters are considering changing their allegiance. In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, urban respondents are

significantly more committed to their existing political party, whilst rural respondents have a little higher rejection rate. In local level elections, urban respondents show more party allegiance, whereas rural respondents indicate greater political dissatisfaction.

The survey also reveals that rural voters in Mizoram showed higher participation in election campaigns and door-to-door canvassing compared to urban voters. In the Lok Sabha elections, rural voters show higher attendance at party meetings and rallies, while urban voters rely more on media for political information. In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, traditional campaigning remains important, with rural voters showing more influence from joint platform campaigns and door-to-door canvassing. Urban voters, on the other hand, are more influenced by media due to higher literacy rates and better access to various media channels. In the Local/Village Council elections, rural voters have a greater influence on election campaigns, with door-to-door canvassing more frequent in rural areas. These findings reflect socio-economic and cultural differences between rural and urban areas, influencing their political behaviours and engagement methods.

4. *Variation in voting behaviour had affected the electoral implications*: Voting behaviour is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, and variations in voting behaviour have significant electoral implications, affecting outcomes in various ways. For instance, YouTube played a significant role in shaping voter behaviour and electoral outcomes in Lok Sabha elections, particularly in remote regions like Mizoram. These areas had limited exposure to traditional media, making YouTube a crucial source of diverse electoral content that influenced political views and voting decisions. Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube also played a vital role in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, serving as primary sources of information for voters and enabling focused advertising, instant interactions, and prompt feedback.

Digital platforms have immense significance in disseminating and consuming electoral information. They provide voters with unparalleled access to political content, including campaign videos, live debates, and political commentary. This is

especially advantageous in areas where traditional media is less effective, resulting in a better-informed voter base and more thoughtful voting choices. Political parties and candidates had to adjust their campaign strategies due to the rise of digital platforms, shifting from traditional approaches to creating viral digital content. This signifies the increasing impact and scope of digital platforms in shaping voter perspectives and involvement.

Further, digital platforms have the potential to enhance political involvement and voter turnout among young individuals, as platforms like YouTube are highly favored by younger demographics. This can address the issue of apathy and disengagement among younger voters, leading to a more politically active youth population and potentially impacting long-term voter demographics.

However, the incorporation of digital platforms in electoral procedures also presents challenges, such as the risks of misinformation, the need for regulatory oversight, and ensuring equal access to information for all voter demographics. Striking a balance between harnessing the advantages of digital media in elections and minimizing its negative consequences is crucial.

Major findings

Understanding voting patterns at all levels of elections is crucial for understanding India's democratic system. National elections determine leadership and legislative goals, often dominated by large national problems like economic policies and defense. State level elections provide a middle ground, focusing on regional issues and the impact of state policies on daily life. Local elections represent grassroots objectives and the efficacy of local governance, often focusing on local issues like water supply, sanitation, road maintenance, and economic growth. Voter behaviour at this level is often influenced by urgent needs and state officials' performance. Mizoram represents a unique demographic and cultural entity within India with predominant tribal communities. Analysing its voting pattern provide insights into how regional and ethnic interests are represented and addressed as well as the factors and trends that influenced electoral outcomes. The following

discussion highlights the major findings derived from comparative analysis across national, state and local level elections, which are grouped into four categories.

1. *Voting behaviour and decision making.*

      1.1   The research survey findings show that voter turnout in Mizoram was increasing at more localized levels of governance. While national elections have a high turnout, state and local elections have even higher levels of participation. This suggests that voters were more involved in local governance due to the direct impact of local decisions and effective mobilization efforts.

      1.2   The survey also reveals that voters tended to make independent choices in deciding whom to support across all levels of elections. At the national level, the majority of voters rely on their own judgment, with minimal influence from family or community leaders. A similar trend is also observed at the state level election. However, as the scale of the election decreases, and especially at local level elections, personal connections and familial ties play a more significant role in shaping voter decisions.

      1.3   In terms of voter loyalty or rendering continued support to particular political party, there is a variation across different levels of elections. While a majority of voters express allegiance to their chosen political party at the national and local levels, a higher voter loyalty is demonstrated by the voters in state elections. It is observed that significant numbers of voters were open and willing to change parties at the national and local level elections, which may depended on various factors such as leadership and policies of political parties. This highlights the relationship between voter satisfaction and political stability across different tiers of governance.

2. *Influence and sources of political information*

      2.1   The study result on which media forms the primary source of political information shows that digital media was playing an increasingly significant role in providing election information. YouTube and social media platforms are the primary sources of information for voters at all levels of elections. However, Youtube is the

predominant source at the national level, while Youtube and social media are key channels for electoral information at state level, and local level election saw the dominance of interactive social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Instagram and Facebook. Hence, a shift towards interactive online platforms for political information becomes more pronounced as one moves from national to local elections.

2.2   The influential factors for making voting decision also vary across different levels of elections. Media engagement or shaping voting decision based on information through media, as well as traditional campaigning are most impactful at the national level, while media engagement is the dominant influence again at the state level, especially in regions with high literacy and digital access. Traditional campaigning methods remain highly effective at the local level, however media engagement and direct canvassing also play substantial roles.

3. *Election and candidate preferences*

3.1   Voter priorities differ across different levels of elections. While national elections are perceived as less significant to overall well-being, state elections are deemed most crucial by respondents. Local council elections are considered second in importance, reflecting a belief in the direct influence of local governance on individual and community life.

3.2   Across national, state, and local levels of elections, voters prioritize the 'candidate' over party policies, party, community, faith or leadership, when making voting decisions. This trend is most pronounced at the local level, where 47.7% prioritize candidate qualities compared to only 14.5% focusing on party manifestos. This shows that the factor of 'candidate' was becoming more important in lower level of election, which would imply that voters expect politicians to be more accountable and connect with them on a more personal level.

3.3   The impact of candidate attributes on elections remains consistent across national, state, and local levels. Personality is the most valued trait, with 60.7% of voters at the national level, 65.7% at the state level, and 65.7% at the local

level prioritizing it. This indicates that voters placed great importance rather than party affiliation and experience in politics or young candidate when choosing representatives who would effectively represent their interests.

4. *Political engagement and participation*

4.1   Voters across all levels prioritize practical policy considerations and leadership qualities over community or familial loyalty. With regard to the most important reason to vote for a particular party, 'Good overall programme' is ranked highest in importance at all levels, followed by leadership quality. This suggests a universal preference for substantive policy frameworks and capable leadership across different levels of governance.

4.2   Consuming political news or listening or reading political news and information is the most prominent form of political participation at all levels of election. However, as participants become more involved in political activities, there is a stronger emphasis on discussions and other forms of active engagement. Hence, at the state and local levels there is a trend of active participation through political discussion, attending rallies and taking part in campaigning. It is also observed that active involvement in electoral politics was the most pronounced at the local level.

4.3   Voter behaviour across national, state, and local election levels reflects evolving societal, economic, and cultural conditions. Good governance, economic development, and social welfare programs are primary concerns at the national level. At the state and local levels, there is a similar emphasis on good governance, but with a greater focus on regional development and welfare schemes. This suggests that voters prioritized transparent and efficient administration alongside local progress and public benefits.

Urban and rural voting behaviour

Urban and rural areas often differ in terms of demography, perception, attitudes and levels of political participation. Hence, understanding their similarities and distinction is essential not only for analysing voter behaviour across regions but also for the development of more responsive and inclusive political processes. A

summary of the comparative analysis of voting behaviour across the three levels of elections derived is highlighted as follows.

1) The comparative analysis of voter turnout in rural and urban areas across three elections reveals both similarities and differences in electoral engagement. While high turnout is a common feature, urban areas tend to have higher participation rates in general elections, is due to better infrastructure and mobilization efforts. Conversely, rural areas show slightly higher turnout in local elections, possibly due to stronger community ties and the direct impact of local governance on their lives. These findings highlight the need for parties to tailor voter engagement strategies to the specific requirements of both rural and urban communities.

2) The study findings show that both groups have had a strong sense of civic duty, but urban residents have a slightly higher commitment to voting as a right and duty. Rural voters are more likely to support specific candidates, indicating a stronger personal connection or loyalty. This could be due to closer interactions or targeted campaigning. On the other hand, urban voters are more likely to vote based on political party preference. The influence of electoral bodies and family/community ties is minimal for both groups. The main incentive for voting is a sense of civic responsibility, which is more pronounced in urban areas. However, rural voters are more likely to vote based on personal candidate preference. These findings suggest that civic education was effective in encouraging voter turnout and that personalized campaigning might be more impactful in rural areas.

3) The analysis of voting behaviours between urban and rural areas reveals distinct patterns in the timing of making electoral decisions. Urban voters are more likely to decide on their vote before the campaign begins, likely due to better access to information or stronger political ties. In contrast, rural voters tend to make their decision after candidates are announced, indicating the significant influence of candidate identification. During the election campaign, rural voters are more affected than urban voters, suggesting effective campaign strategies in rural areas. Both rural and urban voters have a small percentage deciding on the polling day. The proportion

of undecided or non-disclosing voters is similar in both groups. Overall, rural voters tend to decide during the campaign phases, while urban voters are more likely to make their decision early, reflecting differences in information access and political engagement.

4) The most significant factor in voter behaviour in both urban and rural areas is individual preference. This means that a majority of voters in both settings would make their own decisions when it comes to voting. However, there are some differences between urban and rural areas in terms of the influence of other factors. In rural areas, family influence is more significant compared to urban areas. This suggests that family ties and opinions played a larger role in shaping voting decisions in rural communities. Around 25% of rural respondents reported that their family had an impact on their voting choices, while only 18.5% of urban respondents said the same. This indicates that family dynamics and traditions have a stronger hold on voting behaviour in rural areas.

5) The study reveals that urban areas in Mizoram showed higher party loyalty compared to rural areas in three levels of elections: Lok Sabha, Mizoram Legislative Assembly, and local level elections. In the Lok Sabha elections, 69% of urban respondents plan to vote for the same party, while 43% of rural voters consider changing their affiliation. In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, urban respondents show a slightly higher commitment to their current political party, while rural respondents have a slightly higher rejection rate. In local level elections, urban respondents show higher party loyalty, while rural respondents show stronger political discontent. The study suggests that urban areas had better access to information, services, and effective governance.

6) The study reveals a significant difference in media consumption patterns between rural and urban voters during elections. Rural voters rely more on traditional media like pamphlets and radio, while urban voters prefer television programs. Magazines have minimal impact, and radio remains important in rural areas. Television programs are more popular in urban areas, likely due to better access to television services. Website engagement is minimal, and social media platforms like

Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are heavily used in rural areas. YouTube is the primary source of election-related content in both rural and urban settings. In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, YouTube remains the top platform for both rural and urban voters, with social media platforms closely following in urban areas. Traditional media is less significant in rural areas, and television is more popular in urban areas. Social media dominates as the chief information source in rural areas, while urban voters mix digital and traditional media, with YouTube being notably popular due to better internet facilities. This suggests targeted strategies for political campaigns, with urban areas favouring diverse digital content and rural areas relying more on accessible traditional media.

7) The study reveals that rural voters in Mizoram showed higher participation in election campaigns and door-to-door canvassing compared to urban voters. In the Lok Sabha elections, rural voters show higher attendance at party meetings and rallies, while urban voters rely more on media for political information. In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, traditional campaigning remains important, with rural voters showing more influence from joint platform campaigns and door-to-door canvassing. Urban voters, on the other hand, are more influenced by media due to higher literacy rates and better access to various media channels. In the Local/Village Council elections, rural voters have a greater influence on election campaigns, with the door-to-door canvassing more frequent in rural areas. Media influence is significantly higher in urban areas, indicating the reliance on personal and community interactions in rural settings versus media-driven influences in urban areas. These findings reflect socio-economic and cultural differences between rural and urban areas, influencing their political behaviours and engagement methods.

8) The study reveals that urban and rural residents had different priorities for national, state, and local elections. Urban respondents prioritize national elections more, with 20.59% considering Lok Sabha elections their primary concern, compared to only 2.88% for rural respondents. However, a larger fraction view these elections as secondary, with 87 out of 104 rural respondents deeming them least crucial for their wellbeing. This suggests that urban voters are more engaged with national elections, potentially leading to higher voter turnout in urban areas.

Urban residents also prioritize state elections, with 71.0% classifying the state assembly as of First Order importance, exceeding 53.8% of rural respondents. This suggests that urban residents placed greater emphasis on state governance, while rural respondents would weigh state-level issues against local or national concerns.

Local council elections are more important for rural respondents, with 50.5% ranking them as their highest priority, compared to 14.7% of urban respondents. This indicates that rural populations depended significantly on local governance for their welfare. However, a pronounced disparity emerges when considering the least important elections, with 44.1% of urban respondents viewing local elections as least important, indicating a stronger reliance on state or national governance in urban areas or a perception of inefficacy at the local level.

9) The study reveal that both urban and rural voters prioritized individual candidates at the national level, with rural voters slightly more so. Rural voters are more influenced by party manifestos and ethnic loyalty, while urban voters are unsure about their voting preferences. In urban regions, candidates have a greater influence, while ethnic allegiance is higher in urban areas. The religious community has a smaller overall influence in metropolitan areas.

10) In Lok Sabha elections, rural voters prioritize personality traits, while urban voters value youth. Rural voters place more emphasis on education, while political affiliation is less important. In MLA elections, rural voters prioritize personality more than urban voters, with urban areas showing a slight preference for younger and female candidates. In local elections, urban voters prioritize personality, youth, education, and experience, while rural voters focus on local representation by preferring native candidates.

11) The data shows that rural areas have a higher level of political engagement, with 28.57% of respondents showing strong interest, compared to 20.29% in urban areas. Urban respondents show a higher disinterest in politics, with 40.58% reporting a higher disinterest. A small segment of respondents express no interest in politics, suggesting a basic level of political apathy. Rural areas are more engaged due to governmental policies, while urban areas tend to show minimal

participation due to a broader spectrum of issues or increased access to diverse media.

12) The study reveals distinct voting patterns in three levels of elections: Lok Sabha, MLA, and Local Council/Village Council. Rural voters prioritize community support, family traditions, and comprehensive party programs, focusing on practical benefits for their daily lives. They also value leadership qualities and religious factors. Urban voters have minimal influence from the community and slightly higher family influence, but also value leadership qualities. In MLA elections, rural voters show greater openness to extensive party programs and adhere more to family voting traditions. Leadership is less emphasized, and religious factors have a modest influence. In the Local Council/Village Council elections, rural voters prioritize party programs and religious views, while urban voters show lesser community influence and moderate family influence. Overall, rural voters prioritize community ties, family traditions, and comprehensive party programs, highlighting the varying socio-political dynamics between rural and urban areas.

13) The study reveals that a small percentage of rural voters, or 6.67%, supported a party based on benefits they received from the party's welfare policies. However, a majority of rural voters, or 86.67%, voted for a party not directly linked to social programs, suggesting other factors like party ideology, leadership, or unrelated policies influenced their votes. In urban areas, only 1.41% of the total voted in hope of benefits, indicating potential unawareness or disbelief in the party's welfare commitments. A vast majority of urban voters (98.59%) supported the party irrespective of their current or expected welfare situation, suggesting that urban voter behaviour might be shaped by factors beyond welfare programs. The data suggests that welfare programs did not predominantly affect the majority of voters in the areas studied.

14) In the Lok Sabha Election and Legislative Assembly elections in Mizoram, urban areas showed higher engagement in political news, while rural areas showed higher engagement in discussing elections. However, membership in political parties and attendance at election meetings and rallies were low in both

areas. Rural voters showed higher active participation as party workers, influenced by personal connections and smaller community scales. In the local level elections, urban respondents were more informed about political events through media, but rural areas showed higher engagement in discussing elections and higher affiliation with political parties. Participation in election meetings and rallies was modest in both areas, but slightly higher in rural areas.

15) The study shows that both urban and rural voters prioritized good governance at the national level, with urban voters emphasizing transparency and efficient government operations. Development is a key concern in urban areas, with 27.9% expressing a need for improved infrastructure and economic opportunities. Unemployment is a minor issue, with urban voters focusing more on welfare schemes and alcohol-related social problems. Ethnic identity is a concern exclusively for rural areas. In state elections, good governance is a top concern, with urban voters slightly prioritizing development. In local council and village council elections, urban voters prioritize development, welfare programs, and alcohol policies.

Evaluation of Rational Choice Model and Voter Behaviour in Mizoram

The comparative analysis of voting behaviour across national, state, and local elections in Mizoram provides significant insights into which models of voting behaviour - Sociological, Psychosocial, Rational Choice or Dominant Ideology Model was most pronounced at various levels of elections.

Sociological Model : The Sociological model emphasizes the influence of group affiliations, such as class, religion, ethnicity, and family, on voting behaviour. The data showed that family influence was stronger at the local level (22.9%) compared to the national level (18.5%). This suggests that at lower level of elections, voters were more likely to be influenced by their immediate social environment, which aligns with the Sociological model. The importance of personal connections at the local level, such as family, indicates that voting decisions were closely tied to social groups and community in these lower level elections.

Psychosocial Model : The Psychosocial Model, which focuses on personal identity, party identification, and loyalty, appears to be more prominent at the state level. The data shows that 77% of voters in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections demonstrate strong loyalty to their chosen political party, indicating a deep-seated psychological attachment to the party. This model is also somewhat present at the national and local levels, though less strongly, with 62% and 63.2% voter loyalty, respectively.

Rational Choice Model : The Rational Choice model suggests that voters make decisions based on a logical evaluation of policies, candidates, and the benefits of their choices. This model was most clearly reflected in the consistent preference for practical policy considerations and leadership qualities across all levels of elections. For instance, the prioritization of a party's 'Good overall programme' and leadership quality, as seen at both the state and local levels, indicates that voters were making calculated decisions based on perceived benefits. Additionally, the focus on candidate attributes, particularly personality and leadership qualities, further supports the Rational Choice model, as voters evaluate these traits to determine who was best suited to represent their interests.

Dominant Ideology Model : The Dominant Ideology Model, which asserts that voters are influenced by media and cultural narratives, is most pronounced at the national and state levels. The analysis highlights that digital media, especially YouTube and social media platforms, plays a significant role in shaping voter opinions. For instance, 46.5% of voters at the national level rely on YouTube for election information, and this influence is also strong at the state level. This suggests that the Dominant Ideology Model is influential, particularly where media has a strong presence.

While all models of voting behaviour were evident in the voting behaviour across national, state, and local elections, the Rational Choice model was the most pronounced Model. Voters consistently prioritized policy and leadership qualities, which aligns with rational decision making. However, the influence of the Sociological model becomes more prominent at the local level, where family and

community ties play a greater role in shaping decisions. The Psychosocial model is also crucial, particularly in the context of media influence, which is strong across all levels but increasingly significant at the local level.

The Rational Choice Model of voting behaviour suggests that voters make decisions based on a cost benefit analysis, where they weigh the potential benefits of their choices against the costs involved. In the context of Mizoram's voter turnout, we can see that voters in Mizoram acted in accordance with the Rational Choice Model for several reasons:

High Turnout Reflecting Perceived Benefits: The high voter turnout across all levels indicates that voters saw significant benefits in participating in these elections. According to the Rational Choice Model, this high turnout can be attributed to the perception that the benefits of voting, such as influencing governance, securing favourable policies, and addressing local issues, outweigh the costs, such as the time and effort required to vote. This aligns with the Rational Choice Model, where voters participate when they believe the benefits outweigh the costs.

Independent Decision Making: The data showed that large majority of voters made voting choices on their own. This independence in decision making highlights that voters were carefully considering their options and making choices they believed would maximize their benefits, which is a key aspect of the Rational Choice Model.

Influence of Media and Information Sources: Across all levels of elections, voters in Mizoram relied heavily on digital media for information, especially social media platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook. This reliance on easily accessible and up to date information showed that voters are increasingly relying on easily accessible and immediate sources of information to make informed choices.

In the Rational Choice Model, having good information is crucial because it allows voters to weigh their options effectively. The use of social media means voters could quickly compare candidates and policies, reducing the "cost" of gathering information and increasing the likelihood of making a choice that maximizes their benefits.

Policy Over Party: Voters showed a preference for candidates who offered good policies and strong leadership qualities, rather than just voting based on party loyalty. For example, in both state and local elections, voters prioritized candidates with effective programs and leadership skills. This behaviour is rational because voters are choosing candidates who they believe will implement policies that will benefit them the most, rather than just following party lines. They are making a calculated choice, trying to ensure that their vote results in the best possible outcomes for themselves and their communities.

Loyalty When Satisfied: Voter loyalty was highest at the state level, with 77% of voters planning to vote for the same party again. This shows that when voters are satisfied with the benefits they received from a party's previous performance, they are likely to remain loyal. In Rational Choice terms, if voters feel that their needs are being met, they are likely to continue supporting the same party, perceiving the benefit from a continuing government as outweighing any potential gains from switching parties.

Emphasis on Candidate Qualities: At the local level, voters were most concerned with the personal qualities of candidates, like integrity and leadership. This emphasis on individual traits suggests that voters believe these qualities are crucial for effectively addressing local issues. In the Rational Choice Model, this behaviour indicates that voters are carefully selecting candidates who they think will personally deliver the best outcomes for their community, showing a very calculated and personal approach to voting.

Focus on Governance and Policy: Across all levels, voters in Mizoram prioritize good governance, development, and welfare schemes. The Rational Choice Model would explain this as voters identifying these areas as the most beneficial for their well-being and thus voting for candidates or parties that they believe will effectively deliver on these priorities.

In fine, the Rational Choice Model is evident in Mizoram's voting behaviour through the high turnout driven by perceived benefits, the use of digital media to make informed choices, the prioritization of effective policies over party loyalty, and

the emphasis on candidates' personal qualities. Voters in Mizoram made decisions based on careful assessment of the costs and benefits with an aim to maximise their personal and community benefits, which is the essence of the Rational Choice Model.

Conclusion

This chapter consolidates the findings of a detailed study on voting behaviour in Mizoram across various election levels. The analysis highlights the distinct patterns of urban and rural voting, emphasizing how demographic factors, media influence, and political engagement shape electoral outcomes. The study reveals a growing reliance on digital platforms for electoral information, indicating a shift towards more informed and media-driven voter behaviour.

The research outlines the importance of individual candidate qualities and the significant role of media interactions in influencing voter decisions. It also points out the varying voter priorities at national, state, and local levels, with a notable emphasis on candidate-centric voting in local elections. Ultimately, this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving voter behaviour in Mizoram, offering valuable insights for developing targeted voter engagement strategies to enhance democratic participation and ensure responsive governance.

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QUESTIONNAIRE
ON
'A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN MIZORAM'

My name is Zoramthanga, and I am currently pursuing the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in the Department of Political Science, Mizoram University. This questionnaire is a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy entitled '*A Comparative Study of Voting Behaviour in Mizoram*'. The data collected through these questions will be used to understand the voting behaviour of Mizoram in the Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) election (2019), Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election (2018), Local Council / Village Council Elections (2020). This survey is an independent study and is not linked to any political party or government agency and the information obtained will be used for academic purpose only, therefore, an honest response is kindly solicited. The identity of the respondent shall be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for your cooperation.

In this questionnaire, unless otherwise stated, the term 'Election(s)' would mean 'General Elections to Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) election (2019), Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election (2018) Local Council / Village Council Elections (2020).

PROFILE OF RESPONDENT

1. Name of the respondent : _____
2. Marital status :
   1) Married
   2) Unmarried
   3) Divroced
   4) Widowed

3. Age :
      1)   23 yrs - 40 yrs
      2)   41 yrs - 50 yrs
      3)   51 yrs and above

4. Gender :
      1)   Male
      2)   Female
      3)   Others _____

5. Educational qualification(s) :
      1)   HSSLC and equivalent or below
      2)   Under graduate and equivalent
      3)   Post graduate and equivalent or above

6. Occupation of the respondent : (Specify_____)
      1)   Student
      2)   Self employed
      3)   Unemployed
      4)   Retired
      5)   Employed

7. Total annual income of the respondent :
      1)   Up to Rs. 3,00,000
      2)   Rs. 3,00,001 to Rs. 12,00,000
      3)   Rs. 12,00,001 to Rs. 18,00,000
      4)   Rs. 18,00,001 and above

8. Address of the respondent   : _____

9. Phone number : _____

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Q01.   Do you have an interest in politics and public affairs?
1. Very much
2. Somewhat
3. Not much
4. Not interested

Q02.   Did you vote in the elections mentioned below?   YES / NO
1. Mizoram Legislative Assembly (MLA) Election, 2018   :   1   2
2. Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) Election, 2019   :   1   2
3. Local Council / Village Council (LC/VC) Election, 2020 :   1   2

Q03.   Among the three levels of elections, indicate the order (First, Second, Third) in   which you consider important for your well being ?

	First	Second	Third
1. Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) Election	1	2	3
2. Mizoram Legislative Assembly (MLA) Election	1	2	3
3. Local Council / Village Council (LC/VC) Election	1	2	3

Q04.   What was the main reason for you to vote in the elections?
1. It is my right and responsibility
2. To elect the candidate of my choice
3. To elect the party of my choice
4. Just following others casting their votes
5. At the request of the electoral agencies
6. At the request of family/community members
7. Other reasons: _____

Q05.   When did you decide whom to vote in the elections?
1. On polling day
2. During the election campaign
3. After the declaration of candidates
4. Before the start of election campaign
5. Can't say

Q06.   In deciding whom to vote, whose opinion matters the most to you?

MP (LS)	MLA	LC/VC
1. Husband / Wife	1. Husband / Wife	1. Husband / Wife
2. Family members	2. Family members	2. Family members
3. Religious leaders	3. Religious leaders	3. Religious leaders

4. Friends/Neighbours	4. Friends/Neighbours	4. Friends/Neighbours
5. Colleague	5. Colleague	5. Colleague
6. I decide on my own	6. I decide on my own	6. I decide on my own

Q07.   While making a decision in voting, what factor did you consider most important?

MP (LS)	MLA	LC/VC
1. Party	1. Party	1. Party
2. Candidate	2. Candidate	2. Candidate
3. Leader (PM)	3. Leader (CM)	3. Leader
4. Party's manifesto	4. Party's manifesto	4. Party's manifesto
5. Religious community	5. Religious community	5. Religious community
6. Local Candidate	6. Local Candidate	6. Kinship
7. Kinship	7. Kinship	7. Ethnic loyalty
8. Ethnic loyalty	8. Ethnic loyalty	8. Others
9. Can't say	9. Can't say	9. Can't say

Q08.   What was the most important characteristic of a candidate to you in the elections?

MP (LS)	MLA	LC/VC
1. Youth candidate	1. Youth candidate	1. Youth candidate
2. Female candidate	2. Female candidate	2. Female candidate
3. Candidate's education	3. Candidate's education	3. Candidate's education
4. Candidate's party	4. Candidate's party	4. Candidate's party
5. Experience in politics	5. Experience in politics	5. Experience in politics
6. Native of your area	6. Native of your area	6. Others
7. Personality	7. Personality	7. Personality

Q09.   What was the most important reason for voting in favour of the party you chose?

MP (LS)	MLA	LC/VC

1. My community supported the party	1. My community supported the party	1. My community supported the party
2. My family is a traditonal Supporter of the party	2. My family is a traditonal supporter of the party	2. My family is a traditonal supporter of the party
3. Good leadership	3. Good leadership	3. Good leadership
4. Good overall programme	4. Good overall programme	4. Good overall programme
5. Prosperity of religious beliefs	5. Prosperity of religious beliefs	5. Prosperity of religious beliefs

Q10.   Did you vote for a party for being a recipient of their welfare programme or in   expectation to be a beneficiary?

1. I voted the party as a recipient of their welfare programme
2. I voted the party to be a beneficiary of their welfare programme
3. I was a recipient of a welfare proramme but did not vote for the party.
4. I voted for the party without any intention of being a beneficiary.

Q11.   Will you vote for the same political party in the next elections? (Indicate Yes/No)

	YES	/	NO
1. MP (LS)	1		2
2. MLA	1		2
3. LC/VC	1		2

Q12.   Which political activities had the greatest influence on your voting decision?

MP (LS)	MLA	LC/VC
1. Election campaign	1. Election campaign	1. Election campaign
2. Party meetings / rallies	2. Party meetings / rallies	2. Party meetings / rallies
3. Door to door canvasing	3. Door to door canvasing	3. Door to door canvasing
4. Joint Platform Campaign	4. Joint Platform Campaign	4. Joint Platform campaign
5. Media	5. Media	5. Media

Q13. What media channel would you consider your primary source of election information?

MP (LS)	MLA	LC/VC
1. Pamphlet	1. Pamphlet	1. Pamphlet
2. Magazine	2. Magazine	2. Magazine
3. Radio	3. Radio	3. Radio
4. TV programme	4. TV programme	4. TV programme
5. Website	5. Website	5. Website
6. Whatsapp/Facebook/ Instagram	6. Whatsapp/Facebook/ Instagram	6. Whatsapp/Facebook/ Instagram
7. YouTube	7. YouTube	7. YouTube

Q14. Apart from voting in the elections, what was your most significant political participation?

MP (LS)	MLA	LC/VC
1. Listening/reading political news	1. Listening/reading political news	1. Listening/reading political news
2. Discussing elections with others	2. Discussing elections with others	2. Discussing elections with others
3. Membership in a party	3. Membership in a party	3. Membership in a party
4. Attending election meetings and rallies	4. Attending election meetings and rallies	4. Attending election meetings and rallies
5. An active party worker	5. An active party worker	5. An active party worker
6. Participated in door to door canvasing	6. Participated in door to door canvasing	6. Participated in door to door canvasing
7. Can't say	7. Can't say	7. Can't say

Q15. What was your most important election issue?

MP (LS)	MLA	LC/VC
1. Good governance	1. Good governance	1. Majority for the party of choice
2. Development	2. Development	2. Development
3. Issue of unemployment	3. Issue of unemployment	3. Kinship ties

4. Welfare schemes	4. Welfare schemes	4. Welfare schemes
5. Liquor policy	5. Liquor policy	5. Liquor policy
6. Ethnic issues	6. Ethnic issues	6. Personality of candidate
7. Regional aspirations	7. Regional aspirations	7. Local aspirations
8. Others _____	8. Others_____	8. Others _____

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GENDER	:	MALE
MARITAL STATUS	:	MARRIED
Ph.D. REGISTRATION No.	:	MZU/Ph.D./ 1075 of 31.10.2017
DEPARTMENT	:	DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
TITLE OF THESIS	:	A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN MIZORAM

PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE

NAME OF THE CANDIDATE   :   **ZORAMTHANGA**

DEGREE   :   DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT   :   POLITICAL SCIENCE

TITLE OF THE THESIS   :   A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN MIZORAM

DATE OF ADMISSION   :   30.03.2017

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL :

      1. BOS   :   20.10.2017

      2. SCHOOL BOARD   :   31.10.2017

MZU REGISTRATION NUMBER   :   1506841

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ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN MIZORAM

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN MIZORAM

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IN MIZORAM

ABSTRACT

Democracy is a system of self-governance where power lies with the people, aiming to ensure the well-being of all citizens. It involves the participation of citizens in decision-making, either directly or through elected representatives, often through periodic free elections. The essence of democracy is that laws, policies, and leadership are decided by the people, reflecting public opinion and a resolution that power should be distributed among the people rather than held by a single entity. Historically, the concept of democracy originated from the Greek word 'demokratia,' describing the political systems of Athens and other Greek city-states in the 5th century BCE. Democracy in Athens emerged through political reforms and emphasized equality before the law and citizen participation.

Democratic principles can also be traced back to prehistoric tribal societies where decisions were made by consensus or majority even without designated chiefs, indicating early forms of collective decision-making. However, with the advent of agriculture and trade, communities grew, and power became centralized, leading to hierarchical and authoritarian forms of governance like monarchy and oligarchy. The modern concept of democracy was reinvented in Greece and Rome around 500 BCE. Athens developed a direct democracy, while the Roman Republic had a mixed government with elements of democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy. Over time, direct democracy evolved into representative democracy, where citizens elect officials to represent their interests.

Democracy today is characterized by popular participation, competition for public office, and checks on power. The principles of democracy include legal equality, rule of law, and freedom, ensuring equal treatment and opportunities for all citizens. It involves citizens voting, engaging in public decision-making, and participating in free and fair elections. Hence, elections are crucial component of

democracy, allowing citizens to choose their representatives by voting and holding them accountable.

Voting is a fundamental political activity in democracy, allowing citizens to choose representatives and make decisions on proposals. It serves as a means for the public to express political opinions. Influenced by socio-economic and psychological factors, the behavior of voters during election plays crucial role in democracy.

Voting behavior refers to how individuals make decisions about a candidate of political party to support in elections to public offices. It reflects political attitudes, preferences as well as decision making process. It is shaped by sociological and political factors, such as social origins, political issues, and candidate personalities. Hence, voting behavior studies how people vote and the various reasons and motivations behind their voting choices. Models of voting behavior help explain these influences, providing insights into political participation and electoral outcomes.

Various models explain voting behavior, including the Sociological Model (School of Columbia), the Psychosocial Model (School of Michigan), the Rational-Choice Model (School of Rochester), and the Dominant Ideology Model. Each model highlights different factors influencing voting decisions, from social affiliations and psychological predispositions to rational self-interest and dominant ideologies. These models help understand the complex nature of electoral behavior and its impact on democratic systems.

The Rational Choice Model has been used to study the voting behaviour in Mizoram by analysing how individuals make decisions about voting based on a logical evaluation of costs and benefits. It suggests that voters in Mizoram considered various factors, such as personal gain, the likelihood of their vote making a difference, and the impact of the election outcome, before deciding whether or not to vote and whom to vote for. Hence, this Model provides useful framework for understanding voting behaviour in Mizoram, by focusing on how voters weigh costs and benefits. It offers insights into why people in different parts of the state support certain parties or candidates. Whether at the national, state, or local level, the

Rational Choice Model helps to explain the rational decisions that voters make, rooted in their specific needs and interests.

Voting Behaviour in India

The development of electoral politics in India, particularly through Lok Sabha and state legislative assembly elections, has significantly shaped the study of voting behavior in the country. Examining these electoral processes and voting patterns reveals various aspects of political behavior and helped predict the strengths and weaknesses of the political system.

Although scholarly interest in Indian electoral studies grew slowly, it gained momentum after the 1967 General Elections, following the dominance of the Indian National Congress until Jawaharlal Nehru's death in 1964. Research quality and quantity improved post-1967, with significant contributions from scholars like Myron Weiner, Rajni Kothari, Tarun Sheth, V.M. Sirsikar, and Baldev Nayar, who highlighted factors such as ethnic loyalties, caste, religion, and party affiliations influencing voting behavior.

Voters in India make electoral choices influenced by various factors, including party identification, groupism, personal whims, advice from friends, candidate preferences, and socio-economic status. Determinants of voting behavior include religion, community, social status, language, age, sex, education, money power, local issues, factionalism, and the political, social, and cultural events of the election year.

Electoral Process in India

India's first General Elections to the Lok Sabha, held from 1951 to 1952, marked a significant milestone in the country's democratic journey. Despite the challenges of a large, illiterate population, the election was conducted on a 'one-voter-one-vote-one-value' basis, with 45% voter turnout. The Constitution of India established the Election Commission in 1950 to manage elections, ensuring free and fair processes and peaceful transitions of power. Hence, elections are periodically

held to choose representatives for the Parliament, state legislatures, and other positions, as mandated by the Constitution.

Constitutional Legal Framework

Articles 324-329 of the Indian Constitution, outlines the provisions for elections. The Election Commission, under Article 324, manages elections for Parliament, state legislatures, and other bodies. The Representation of the People Acts of 1950 and 1951 govern electoral roll creation, election conduct, and dispute resolution. In addition, the Supreme Court of India has affirmed the Election Commission's residual powers to address election-related issues not covered by existing laws.

Elections in India

Elections in India have a long history, dating back to ancient times. Ancient Indian societies, as described in Buddhist texts and Greek accounts, practiced forms of democracy and republican governance. In modern times, elections based on universal adult franchise started after India gained independence. The first General Election in 1952 was a major democratic exercise, involving 176 million voters, most of whom were illiterate. The elections were based on universal adult franchise, ensuring every adult had the right to vote regardless of religion, caste, or gender, as enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Elections in India are conducted at three levels: national (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), state (Legislative Assemblies and Councils), and local (Panchayati Raj/Village Councils and municipalities). Specific seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) to ensure representation of historically disadvantaged groups.

Profile of Mizoram

Mizoram, the 23rd state of India, is located in the north eastern region of the country. It lies between 21°58' and 24°35' North Latitude and 92°15' and 93°29' East Longitude, covering an area of 21,081 square kilometers. Mizoram shares an

international boundary with Myanmar to the east and south (404 km) and Bangladesh to the west (318 km). It is bordered by Tripura to the northwest, Assam to the north, and Manipur to the northeast.

Mizoram has a population density of 52 persons per square kilometer and, according to the 2011 census, has a population of 1,091,014, making it the second least populous state in India. The population is predominantly tribal, with 94.46% classified as Scheduled Tribe (S.T.). The main ethnic group, the Mizo, comprises various clans and sub-clans such as Lusei, Pawi, Mara, Sailo, and others. Besides the Mizo, the state is home to the Chakma community in the south and the Bru community in the west. Non-tribal groups such as Nepali, Assamese, and Bengali also reside in Mizoram. Christianity is the predominant religion, practiced by 87.2% of the population, followed by Buddhism (8.5%) mainly among the Chakma, and Hinduism (3.3%). Mizoram has a high literacy rate of 91.33%, ranking third in India.

The region was traditionally governed by tribal chiefs until the British annexation in the late 19th century, leading to significant changes and development in governance and social structure. The British annexation marked the beginning of modern political history in Mizoram, introducing new administrative systems while maintaining some traditional practices. Political consciousness in Mizoram grew under British rule, with the first political party, Mizo Union, formed in 1946. The party played a significant role in advocating for the rights and unification of the Mizo people. Other political movements and parties emerged over time.

Statement of the problem

In post-independence India, the Mizo District Council was established in 1952, followed by the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council in 1953, as outlined in the Indian Constitution under Articles 244(2) and 275(1). These Councils were set up in the Lushai Hills, known then as the Mizo Hills District Council. Elections based on universal adult suffrage began in 1952 to elect members to the Mizo District Council. By 1972, the Mizo District was upgraded to a Union Territory named Mizoram, leading to the first elections for the Mizoram Assembly. In the same year, election was conducted for the Lok Sabha or House of the People. Following a

Memorandum of Understanding between the Mizo National Front and the Indian government, Mizoram was elevated to full statehood in 1987, and the first elections for the Mizoram Legislative Assembly were held in the same year. Since, then subsequent elections to Mizoram Legislative Assembly were held.

After chieftainship was abolished in 1954, the Mizo District Council established village councils, with the first elections held in the same year. Likewise, elections to Village Councils were held in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council in 1955. This progression highlights the introduction of elections based on universal suffrage at various levels since 1952.

After attaining Union Territory status and thereafter statehood, elections covering the state were held at various levels, including Members of Parliament, Members of the State Legislative Assembly, Village Councils, and Local Councils after the creation of the Aizawl Municipal Council, which later became a Corporation. Voter turnout varied across these elections, necessitating a study of voting behavior at different election levels to understand public perceptions, attitudes, and choices.

In the first three Legislative Assembly elections post-Union Territory status in 1972, the Mizo Union Party and the Mizo People's Conference Party dominated the political scene. Likewise, post-statehood elections revealed a shift to two dominant parties, the Mizo National front and the Indian National Congress, with the majority alternating between them despite the existence of multiple parties. This calls for an investigation into the voting behavior of the electorate to comprehend the rational choices made during elections and the reasons behind the preference for one party over another.

Mizoram is comprised of 11 districts with distinct urban and rural areas. Urban areas offer better opportunities and facilities, leading to a higher standard of living compared to rural areas. Consequently, local needs, demands, attitudes, and perceptions vary within and between districts. Studying these variations in voting behavior and their impact on electoral processes and political transitions is essential.

Research gap

There are a number of research works and studies done on voting behavior in India with a focus on particular state election, a period of time, constituencies or a constituency and group participation in elections in India. Even though these studies provided a deep insight and understanding of voting behavior in India, the available literatures and studies does not cover the analysis and study of voting behavior in Mizoram in various elections. Hence, there has been no research work done under the topic. Therefore, the comparative study and investigation of voting behavior of Mizoram at various levels of elections would provide not only new knowledge and information regarding Mizoram but also in the study of voting behavior in India.

Objectives

1. To study the voting behavior of electorate in elections at various levels in Mizoram.
2. To analyse the factors that influenced voting behavior at various levels of elections.
3. To compare the variation of voting behavior in these elections in the urban and rural areas of the state.
4. To analyse the implications of voting behavior on the electoral outcome.

Hypotheses

1. Voting behavior of the electorate is different at various levels of elections in Mizoram.

2. Various factors have influenced voting behavior in various levels of elections.

3. Voting behaviour differs in urban and rural areas of the state.

4. Variation in voting behavior had affected the electoral implications.

Methodology

The study is designed to determine the voting behaviour at various levels of elections in Mizoram by employing the qualitative and quantitative approaches. All data for the study has been collected from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been derived from the answers given by the respondents in the questionnaire as well as government's publication of reports. The questionnaire is a structured questionnaire and has been constructed to targets audience of young, middle aged and old age group as well as women to cover broader section of the society. The targeted population in this study refers to 11 districts in Mizoram. Purposive Sampling method has been employed to select the geographical location of the polling station and to determine the respondents. Hence, four districts, namely Aizawl, Lunglei, Serchhip and Siaha were selected to represent the urban electorate, while, Kolasib, Champhai, Lunglei Mamit, Hnahthial, Khawzawl and Lawngtlai districts were selected to represent the rural electorate.

And, after deriving one polling station within the urban area, and likewise, within the rural areas, an average of 16 respondents were selected from the electoral roll. The size of sample is 176, which would represent 40 Legislative Assembly Constituencies in 11 districts.

The field work and survey done through the questionnaire highlighted the general political awareness of the people as well as their involvement in the electioneering process, the awareness in issues highlighted by political parties and the reasons for which they choose and vote a candidate. It was administered to voters above or those who have reach the age of 18 or those have qualified for voting in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections of 2018. The respondents consisted of 33.33% each in the age groups of 23-40 years, 41-50 years and 51 and above, in both the rural and urban areas. In terms of demography, the rural respondents consisted of 59% while the urban consisted of 41% of the total respondents.

The secondary source are derived from the findings stated in published documents and literatures related to the research problem such as, articles,

newspapers, journals, time sequence record of state report on elections published by the Election Commission. Besides, the Census of India and e-resources has also been consulted. It also covers studies from related concepts and theories. The data that described and explain events has been organized, tabulated and depicted. Analysis of data involving in the reduction of accumulated data to a manageable size, developing summaries, looking for patterns of similarities and differences using SPSS 20 version has also been taken up accordingly.

Scope of the study

This study deals with the voting behaviour of Mizoram at the national, state and local level elections. Hence, it is focussed on House of the People (Lok Sabha) elections, Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections, as well as village councils, including the areas covered under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, and also the Local Council elections under Aizawl Municipal Council. And, for the purpose of study, the most recent elections at various levels held between 2018 and 2023 have been selected. Further, even though, various types of elections were conducted, it is imperative to study these elections to understand voting behaviour since they were the main elections that covered the entire study area. And, in analysing these elections, emphasis has not been made in their chronological order but rather on the levels of elections in terms of context and dimensions.

National elections usually attract more attention, while state elections mix national and local concerns. Local elections, though often having lower turnout, are important for community governance. Therefore, the study investigated the differences in how people vote in national, state, and local elections, focusing on what influenced voters at each level. It also examines how voting behaviour differs between urban and rural areas. Urban areas, with higher population and media coverage, often have different voting patterns compared to rural areas, which may have less access to information and different concerns. The study looked into these differences to understand their impact on the overall voting process. The investigation also considers how these voting behaviors influenced the outcomes of

elections, including how differences in voter turnout and preferences affect who wins in the elections.

Chapterisation

Chapter I   :   Introduction

The first chapter explains the meaning and importance of democracy, elections, and voting behavior. It includes literature review, statement of the problem, research gap, scope of study, objectives, hypothesis, and methodology. It also gives a brief introduction to the study area and the different levels of elections held in the state.

Chapter II   :   Voting Behaviour: A Theoretical Framework

In the second chapter, the focus is on analyzing the theoretical framework of voting behavior and the electoral process in India. It explores the development of the study of voting behavior and uses models and theories to understand voting patterns. The chapter also examines the Indian electoral process through the Constitution, the role of the Election Commission, and other methods used to ensure free and fair elections.

Chapter III   :   Voting Behaviour at Various Elections in Mizoram

The third chapter briefly describes the formation of political parties, analyzes elections at different levels, and discusses the issues faced during elections. It provides a detailed study of elections and examines the similarities and differences in voting behavior at the national, state, and local levels.

Chapter IV   :   Comparison of Voting Behaviour at Various Levels of

Elections

The chapter explains how people vote in different types of elections within the state. It uses survey data to explore what motivates and influences voters, how they participate in elections, and how social, economic, and political factors shape

their voting behavior. The chapter also compares voting behaviors across different types of elections.

Chapter V   :   Voting Behaviour in Urban and Rural Areas

This chapter analyzes how people vote and compares voting behaviors in urban versus rural areas across different types of elections, based on survey data. It explores at how location, family income, education, community, religion, and jobs affect voting. The chapter also examines party loyalty, political involvement, and election issues for urbab and rural voters.

Chapter VI   :   Voting Behaviour: Implications on Electoral Outcome

The chapter discuss how people's voting pattern change at different types of elections. It examine how voting patterns and behaviors differ between urban and rural voters across three levels of elections. The chapter explains how these voting behaviors affect the election results, which determine who gets elected to public office or power.

Chapter VII :   Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the entire study. It lists the main conclusions and findings from each chapter, explaining the reasons behind them. It also discusses key concepts related to electoral process, details about the study area, and summarizes the voting behaviour and patterns across various elections in Mizoram.

Elections in Mizoram

After India gained independence, the Lushai Hills District was formed under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution on January 26, 1952. This District later became a Union Territory 'Mizoram' in 1972 through the North Eastern Areas (Re-Organisation) Act of 1971. With the signing of peace agreement in 1986 and full statehood in 1987, Mizoram Legislative Assembly now has 40 members. As stated earlier, this study is focussed on the elections to Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) 2019, Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election, 2018, and Village Council Elections,

2020 (Non-Sixth Schedule areas), Village Councils elections of Chakma Autonomous District Council (2020), Lai Autonomous District Council (2020), Mara Autonomous District Council, (2023) under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, as well as Local Council Elections, 2020, under Aizawl Municipal Council.

National Level Election

The Lok Sabha constituency in Mizoram is reserved for Scheduled Tribe and covers the entire state. The 16th Lok Sabha term concluded on June 3, 2019, and the election took place on April 11, 2019, where MNF candidate C. Lalrosanga emerged victorious. A total of six candidates participated in the election: five men and one woman. Three candidates were from political parties (BJP, MNF, and PRISM), while the other three were independents. The MNF had previously formed the state government in 2018, ending the INC's two consecutive terms, and also won the Lok Sabha seat.

State Level Elections

The tenure of the Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly ended on December 13, 2018. Elections for the Eighth Assembly were announced on October 6, 2018, and held on November 28, 2018; the results were counted on December 11, 2018. In the 40 Assembly constituencies, there were 209 candidates, including 146 from political parties and 63 independents. The Mizo National Front (MNF) won 27 seats to form the government. The INC secured 30.56% of the votes but only won 4 seats. The BJP won 1 seat, marking its entry into the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, and the new party Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) won eight seats.

Local Level Elections – Village Council

The schedule of election for the Fourteenth Village Council Elections to constitute 558 village councils within nine Non-Sixth Scheduled Districts viz., Aizawl, Lunglei, Serchhip, Champhai, Mamit, Kolasib, Saitual, Khawzawl and Hnahthial was published by the SEC on August 5, 2020. In the election held on August 27, 2020, there were 6,925 candidates contesting for 2,454 village council's seats altogether in which 1,823 were General Seats and 631 were Reserved Seats for

women. MNF won the most number of seats by winning 1,376 seats which translated to 327 village councils. In most village council elections, it is observed that the majority of electorate usually voted in favour of the political in power in the state. The village council elections of 2020 were held simultaneously with the local council election under the Aizawl Municipal Corporation.

The most recent Village Council elections under the Sixth Schedule in Mizoram were held in the Chakma (CADC), Mara (MADC), and Lai (LADC) Autonomous District Councils. In the 2020 elections for CADC, the Mizo National Front (MNF) emerged as the dominant party, winning 65 out of 88 Village Councils. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also made a notable impact, securing 16 Village Councils, while the Indian National Congress (INC) failed to win any. In the 2023 elections for MADC, the BJP performed strongly, winning 41 out of 99 Village Councils, followed by the MNF, which won 25. The INC managed to win 8 Village Councils in this election. Finally, in the 2020 LADC elections, the MNF again dominated, winning 63 out of 95 Village Councils, with the INC securing 14. Across these elections, the MNF demonstrated consistent strength, particularly in CADC and LADC, while the BJP gained significant ground in MADC.

Local Level Elections – Local Council

In post independent India, Aizawl became an urban settlement but followed village council system in its administration; however, there is a need to set up a structure of urban governance in adherence to the 74th Amendment Act, 1992. In addition, Aizawl was selected as one of the urban centre in India to avail the benefits of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), launched under the Ministry of Urban Development in India. And, to avail the grants under JNNURM, the government of Mizoram, the Department of Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation and the Union Ministry of Urban development signed an agreement on June 12, 2007, in which the state government was binded by the agreement to establish urban local bodies under the 74th Amendment Act. Thereafter, the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007, was enacted by the government of Mizoram and came into effect on April 20, 2007. The office of the Municipal

Council started functioning from July 1, 2007, and the First Aizawl Municipal Council Election was held on November 3, 2010. As per the Mizoram Municipalities Act, the Municipality formed Local Councils in every locality within its jurisdiction to administer the local areas. Consequently, the First Local Council Election was held on February 23, 2012. And, within the 19 Wards of the Aizawl Municipalities, there are 82 Local Councils.

The tenure of the Second Local Council expired on September 7, 2020, and hence the Third Local Council Election was scheduled to be held simultaneously with Village Council elections on August 27, 2020. The main contenders in the election were the INC and MNF. Since the election was held while the MNF was in power, the voters showed strong support for the MNF, reflecting their wish for a good relationship between their local area and the state government. The MNF won 71 Local Councils which accounts for a high 86 percent of the total Local Councils while the INC which won the second highest number of 5 Local Councils would be only 6 percent.

Responses to objective and hypothesis of the study

The objective of the study is fundamental in shaping the research process, guiding the researcher, and ensuring that the study was purposeful, coherent, and meaningful. Following are the responses to research objectives set out:

1. *To study the voting behaviour of electorate in elections at various levels in Mizoram*: This objective was achieved by conducting field survey and discussed in Chapter three and four.

2. *To analyse the factors that influenced voting behaviour at various levels of elections*: Analysis of factors that influenced voting behaviour is derived by conducting field survey and discussed in Chapter four.

3. *To compare the variation of voting behaviour in these elections in the urban and rural areas of the state* : The variations in voting behaviour as well as comparative study between urban and rural areas across the three levels of elections is taken up and discussed in Chapter five.

4. *To analyse the implications of voting behaviour on the electoral outcome*: The implication of voting behaviour on electoral outcome is deliberated at length in Chapter six.

The study's hypotheses were developed with the research objectives in mind. The hypotheses are tested based on study findings, as follows:

1. *Voting behaviour of the electorate is different at various levels of elections in Mizoram*: The field work undertaken to study the pattern and trends of voting behaviour highlights that the electorate in Mizoram exhibited variations of voting behaviour at various levels of election in the state. For, instance, the voter turnout at the Lok Sabha was lowest when compared with state and local level elections indicating greater political awareness with governance that had more direct impact on their daily lives.

2. *Various factors have influenced voting behaviour in various levels of elections*: Even though similarities are observed in the trends of voting behaviour across the three levels of elections in Mizoram, particular influences are observed in each election. The survey result has also shown that the primary concern of the voter at the national level were good governance and economic development. However, voting decision at the local level was influenced by development and welfare schemes indicating the fact the immediate and tangible outcome and support system are the most important factor that influenced voting decision.

3. *Voting behaviour differs in urban and rural areas of the state*: The survey also reveals that rural voters in Mizoram showed higher participation in election campaigns and door-to-door canvassing compared to urban voters. In the Lok Sabha elections, rural voters show higher attendance at party meetings and rallies, while urban voters rely more on media for political information. In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, traditional campaigning remains important, with rural voters showing more influence from joint platform campaigns and door-to-door canvassing. Urban voters, on the other hand, are more influenced by media due to higher literacy rates and better access to various media channels. In the Local/Village Council elections, rural voters have a greater influence on election

campaigns, with door-to-door canvassing more frequent in rural areas. These findings reflect socio-economic and cultural differences between rural and urban areas, influencing their political behaviours and engagement methods.

4. *Variation in voting behaviour had affected the electoral implications*: Voting behaviour is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, and variations in voting behaviour have significant electoral implications, affecting outcomes in various ways. Variations in voting behavior, influenced by digital platforms like YouTube and social media, significantly affected election outcomes. In regions like Mizoram, where traditional media was less accessible, digital content became a key source of information, shaping political opinions and voting decisions. This shift has led to more informed voters, changes in campaign strategies, and increased political engagement, especially among younger people. However, it also brings challenges like misinformation and the need for fair access to information.

Major findings

Understanding voting patterns at all levels of elections is crucial for understanding India's democratic system. National elections determine leadership and legislative goals, often dominated by large national issues like economic policies and defense. State level elections provide a middle ground, focusing on regional issues and the impact of state policies on daily life. Local elections represent grassroots objectives and the efficacy of local governance, often focusing on local issues like water supply, sanitation, road maintenance, and land use. Voter behaviour at this level is often influenced by urgent needs and state officials' performance. Mizoram represents a unique demographic and cultural entity within India with predominant tribal communities. Analysing its voting pattern provide insights into how regional and ethnic interests are represented and addressed as well as the factors and trends that influenced electoral outcomes. The following discussion highlights the major findings have been derived from comparative analysis across national, state and local level elections, which are grouped into four categories.

1. *Voting behaviour and decision making.*

1.1   The research survey findings revealed that voter turnout in Mizoram was higher at more local levels of government. This means that people were more active in local elections because local decisions affected them directly and there were good efforts to get people involved.

1.2   The survey also discovered that voters usually made their own choices about whom to support in all types of elections. At the national level, most voters relied on their own opinions, with little influence from family or community leaders. This trend was also seen in state-level elections. However, in smaller, local elections, personal relationships and family connections had a bigger influence on how people voted.

1.3   Regarding loyalty to a political party, there were differences depending on the level of the election. Most voters stuck with their chosen party at the national and local levels, but even more showed loyalty during state elections. Still, many voters were willing to change their party choice at the national and local levels.

2. *Influence and sources of political information*

2.1   The study found that digital media played an increasingly important role in providing election information. YouTube and social media platforms were the main sources of information for voters at all levels of elections. However, YouTube was the most common source at the national level, while both YouTube and social media were key channels for election information at the state level. At the local level, interactive social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook were the most dominant.

2.2   The factors influencing voting decisions also varied across different levels of elections. Media engagement and traditional campaigning had the most impact on voting decisions at the national level, while media engagement was again the main influence at the state level.

3. *Election and candidate preferences*

3.1   Voter priorities differed across different levels of elections. While national elections were seen as less important to overall well-being among the three levels, respondents considered state elections to be the most crucial.

3.2   In national, state, and local elections, voters prioritized the candidate over party policies, party, community, faith, or leadership when making their voting decisions. This trend was most evident at the local level, where 47.7% of voters focused on the qualities of the candidate, compared to only 14.5% who focused on party manifestos.

3.3   The impact of candidate attributes on elections remained consistent across national, state, and local levels. Personality was the most valued trait, with 60.7% of voters at the national level, 65.7% at the state level, and 65.7% at the local level prioritizing it.

4. *Political engagement and participation*

4.1   Voters at all levels prioritized practical policy considerations and leadership qualities over community or familial loyalty. When choosing a party to vote for, "Good overall program" was considered the most important reason at all levels, followed by leadership quality.

4.2   Consuming political news, whether by listening or reading, was the most common form of political participation at all election levels. At the state and local levels, there was a trend of more active participation, such as engaging in political discussions, attending rallies, and taking part in campaigns. Active involvement in electoral politics was most noticeable at the local level.

4.3   Voter behavior across national, state, and local elections reflected changing societal, economic, and cultural conditions. At the national level, voters were primarily concerned with good governance, economic development, and social welfare programs. At the state and local levels, there was a similar focus on good

governance, but with a greater emphasis on regional development and welfare schemes.

Urban and rural voting behaviour

Comparing voting behavior in rural and urban areas was essential for understanding a country's political dynamics. Looking at these behaviors across different election levels - local, state, and national, revealed trends that were important for predicting election outcomes, creating strategies, and shaping government policy. A study of voting behavior in rural and urban areas at various election levels examined how different priorities, access to resources, and socio-political circumstances influenced voting patterns in Mizoram.

Voter Turnout in Elections: The research found that in all types of elections, both rural and urban areas in Mizoram and India had high voter turnout, showing that people were very engaged in politics. Urban areas generally had a bit higher turnout in Lok Sabha elections, likely because they had better access to polling stations, more effective campaigns, and higher levels of education. However, rural areas also showed strong voter participation, especially in local elections, where the turnout was even higher than in urban areas.

Reason for voting in election: The study examined why people in rural and urban areas voted. It discovered that most people in both rural (69.5%) and urban (81.4%) areas saw voting as both a right and a duty. Rural voters were more likely to vote for a specific candidate (20%) compared to urban voters (7.1%), who were slightly more influenced by political parties. The study also showed that rural voters had stronger personal connections to the candidates, while urban voters focused more on party politics.

Time period of making voting decision: Rural voters were more influenced by the election campaign and tend to make their decisions during this period, while urban voters were more likely to decide earlier, likely due to better access to information and stronger political connections. This indicates that campaigns played a more crucial role in shaping the decisions of rural voters compared to urban voters.

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Most important opinion shaping voting choice: In all elections, both rural and urban voters preferred to make their own choices, though this was more common in urban areas. In rural areas, family influence was still important because of traditional social structures. The data showed a trend toward individual decision-making and moving away from communal and traditional influences in modern elections.

Level of loyalty to vote in next election: Urban areas showed higher loyalty to political parties in all three levels of elections compared to rural areas. Urban voters had better governance, more access to information, and a variety of political campaigns, which led to stronger and more stable political loyalty. On the other hand, rural areas showed more political instability and openness to change, often influenced by local issues and dissatisfaction with current party policies.

Media channel used for election information: There was a clear difference in how urban and rural areas used media in all three levels of elections. Rural voters mainly used traditional media and social networks, while urban voters preferred digital media, especially YouTube and television.

Most influential political activity: The comparison across the three levels of elections showed that rural voters were more involved in direct and community-focused political activities, while urban voters relied more on influences from the media.

Relative rank of elections: Urban respondents gave more importance to national and state-level elections, while rural respondents focused more on local elections.

Most important factor in making voting decision: Both rural and urban voters considered the candidates to be important in national, state, and local elections. However, rural voters were more influenced by party manifestos and ethnic loyalty than urban voters. Rural voters also valued local candidates more, reflecting their emphasis on personal connections and community ties. In contrast, urban voters were more indecisive and slightly more influenced by religious and ethnic factors.

Most important candidate's characteristic: Personality traits were consistently influential across all levels of elections, with rural areas placing a higher emphasis on education and local ties, while urban areas value political experience and showed more openness to vote for women.

Level of interest in politics and public affairs: Rural residents showed a higher interest in politics compared to urban residents, with 28.57% of rural people being very interested versus 20.29% of urban people. This is likely because political decisions have a direct impact on rural communities, such as those related to agriculture and land use. Urban residents, on the other hand, have a higher rate of disinterest in politics, with 40.58% showing little interest compared to 27.62% in rural areas. This is due to the varied interests and activities available in urban areas that compete for attention, and a feeling that their individual votes matter less in larger electoral setting.

Most important reason for voting a party: Rural voters prioritized party programs and policies that directly affect their economic and social welfare, reflecting a practical and community-oriented approach to voting. In contrast, urban voters were more influenced by leadership qualities and individual traits, indicating a more individualistic and leadership-focused voting behaviour.

Impact of welfare scheme(s) on voting choice: Welfare programs play a minor role in shaping the electoral decisions of both rural and urban voters. While rural voters showed a marginally higher inclination to vote based on welfare benefits, other factors such as party ideology and leadership had a more significant impact on their voting behaviour. In urban areas, welfare considerations were even less influential, with voters focusing more on other political or economic factors when deciding which party to support.

Most significant political participation: Urban residents were more engaged in consuming political news but participate less in discussions and active political roles. In contrast, rural residents engaged more deeply in discussions, party activities, and attend political events, reflecting a community-focused approach to politics.

Most important election issue: Across all three levels of elections, good governance and development are consistently crucial issues for both rural and urban voters, with urban voters showing higher concern due to their greater expectations and immediate need for infrastructure improvements. Rural voters placed a higher emphasis on welfare programs, reflecting their reliance on government support.

Implications of Voting Behaviour on Electoral Outcome

In the 2019 Lok Sabha election in Mizoram, 83.8% of voters cast their votes, indicating strong engagement and trust in the democratic process. This level of participation strengthens the legitimacy and authority of the elected representatives. Similarly, the 2018 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections saw even higher voter turnout at 92.5%, reflecting the electorate's deep involvement in local matters, particularly those related to administration, ethnic factors, and local economic policies. Local Council and Village Council elections in Mizoram also experienced high voter engagement, with a turnout of 96.6%, showing the community's dedication to influencing local governance.

The high voter turnouts in Mizoram's elections affirm the democratic process and enhance the legitimacy of elected officials. This robust participation empowers officials to make crucial decisions at both national and state levels, ensuring effective and responsive governance at the local level.

The study also notes a growing trend of voters in Mizoram making independent decisions, moving away from traditional community or familial influences. This shift leads candidates to focus more on direct voter engagement and issue-oriented campaigns, encouraging a more informed and active electorate. Such independence in voter behaviour suggests a dynamic and unpredictable democratic process, pushing political parties to prioritize direct voter engagement than relevant governance issues.

Digital platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram have significantly influenced voter behaviour. These platforms provide easy access to political content, aiding informed decision-making and increasing political

engagement, particularly among the youth. However, the rise of digital media also brings challenges like misinformation, necessitating strict regulation to balance its benefits.

Media plays a crucial role in influencing voter decisions, with 42.4% of Lok Sabha voters and 35.6% of state election voters acknowledging its impact. At the local level, direct election campaigns are more influential, highlighting the importance of personal contact in grassroots politics.

Interest in different elections varies, with higher engagement in state elections compared to national elections. Voters perceive state governance as having a more immediate impact on their lives. Campaign strategies should address these differing levels of importance to maximize voter turnout and engagement.

The factor of candidate plays significant role in elections, with many voters in Mizoram prioritizing candidate over party affiliation. This trend towards personalized politics requires parties to focus on the personal appeal and integrity of their candidates. This shift challenges traditional party-centric campaigning and highlights the importance of individual merit and leadership.

The dominance of candidate personality over other factors in Mizoram underscores a move towards personalized politics, posing challenges in balancing appealing personalities with effective governance. Additionally, there is a notable trend towards policy-oriented voting, encouraging parties to focus on practical plans addressing local concerns. This shift results in more competitive political landscapes and potentially improved governance through information-focused and policy-oriented campaigns.

Overall, voter behaviour in Mizoram varies depending on the level of the election. In national and state elections, voters focused on transparency and good governance. In local elections, voters prioritized immediate improvements in infrastructure and services. These different priorities influenced the political environment, ensuring that elected officials were held accountable for the specific issues important to their voters.

Evaluation of Rational Choice Model and Voter Behaviour in Mizoram

While all models of voting behaviour were evident in the voting behaviour across national, state, and local elections, the Rational Choice model was the most pronounced Model. Voters consistently prioritized policy and leadership qualities, which aligns with rational decision making. The Rational Choice Model of voting behaviour suggests that voters make decisions based on a cost benefit analysis, where they weigh the potential benefits of their choices against the costs involved. In the context of Mizoram's voter turnout, we can see that voters in Mizoram acted in accordance with the Rational Choice Model for several reasons:

High Turnout Reflecting Perceived Benefits: The high voter turnout across all levels indicates that voters saw significant benefits in participating in these elections. According to the Rational Choice Model, this high turnout can be attributed to the perception that the benefits of voting, such as influencing governance, securing favourable policies, and addressing local issues, outweigh the costs, such as the time and effort required to vote. This aligns with the Rational Choice Model, where voters participate when they believe the benefits outweigh the costs.

Independent Decision Making: The data showed that large majority of voters made voting choices on their own. This independence in decision making highlights that voters were carefully considering their options and making choices they believed would maximize their benefits, which is a key aspect of the Rational Choice Model.

Influence of Media and Information Sources: Across all levels of elections, voters in Mizoram relied heavily on digital media for information, especially social media platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook. This reliance on easily accessible and up to date information showed that voters are increasingly relying on easily accessible and immediate sources of information to make informed choices. In the Rational Choice Model, having good information is crucial because it allows voters to weigh their options effectively. The use of social media means voters could quickly compare candidates and policies, reducing the "cost" of gathering

information and increasing the likelihood of making a choice that maximizes their benefits.

Policy Over Party: Voters showed a preference for candidates who offered good policies and strong leadership qualities, rather than just voting based on party loyalty. For example, in both state and local elections, voters prioritized candidates with effective programs and leadership skills. This behaviour is rational because voters were choosing candidates who they believe will implement policies that will benefit them the most, rather than just following party lines. They were making a calculated choice, trying to ensure that their vote results in the best possible outcomes for themselves and their communities.

Loyalty When Satisfied: Voter loyalty was highest at the state level, with 77% of voters planning to vote for the same party again. This shows that when voters are satisfied with the benefits they received from a party's previous performance, they are likely to remain loyal. In Rational Choice terms, if voters feel that their needs are being met, they are likely to continue supporting the same party, perceiving the benefit from a continuing government as outweighing any potential gains from switching parties.

Emphasis on Candidate Qualities: Across various levels, voters were most concerned with the personal qualities of candidates, like integrity and leadership. This emphasis on individual traits suggests that voters believe these qualities are crucial for effectively addressing local issues. In the Rational Choice Model, this behaviour indicates that voters are carefully selecting candidates who they think will personally deliver the best outcomes for their community, showing a very calculated and personal approach to voting.

Focus on Governance and Policy: Across all levels, voters in Mizoram prioritize good governance, development, and welfare schemes. The Rational Choice Model would explain this as voters identifying these areas as the most beneficial for their well-being and thus voting for candidates or parties that they believe will effectively deliver on these priorities.

In fine, the Rational Choice Model is evident in Mizoram's voting behaviour through the high turnout driven by perceived benefits, the use of digital media to make informed choices, the prioritization of effective policies over party loyalty, and the emphasis on candidates' personal qualities. Voters in Mizoram made decisions based on careful assessment of the costs and benefits with an aim to maximise their personal and community benefits, which is the essence of the Rational Choice Model.

Conclusion

This study on voting behavior in Mizoram provides an in-depth analysis of how electoral choices are influenced by various socio-economic and political factors at different levels of elections - national, state, and local. The findings indicate that voter engagement and turnout were highest at the local level, reflecting the direct impact of local governance on the daily lives of citizens. In contrast, national elections, though crucial, showed slightly lower engagement, likely due to the perceived distance of national policies from everyday concerns.

The research highlights the significant role of digital media in shaping voter decisions across all election levels. Platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook have become primary sources of political information, especially among younger voters. This shift towards digital engagement underscores the need for political campaigns to adapt their strategies to effectively reach and influence voters through these channels. It also points to the increasing independence of voters from traditional community or familial influences, as they make more informed and individualistic choices.

A critical insight from the study was the emphasis voters place on candidate qualities over party affiliation. This trend towards personalized politics suggests that voters are more interested in the integrity, leadership, and capability of individual candidates rather than their party lines. This behaviour aligns with the Rational Choice Model, which posits that voters make decisions based on a calculated evaluation of the costs and benefits associated with each option, aiming to maximize personal and community benefits. Hence, it is observed that findings from this study

provided a comprehensive understanding of the voting behaviour in Mizoram, emphasizing the prominence of the Rational Choice Model in explaining voter decisions.

Overall, the study contributes valuable knowledge to the understanding of voting behaviour in Mizoram and, by extension, India. It demonstrates that voting patterns are not static but evolve with changing socio-economic contexts and advancements in media technology. These findings have important implications for future electoral strategies, governance policies, and the broader democratic process in diverse and dynamic societies like Mizoram.

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