

VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN: A STUDY OF NAGALAND

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REQUIREMENT OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

By

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work presented in this thesis titled “**Voting Behaviour of Women: A Study of Nagaland**” submitted to Nagaland University, Lumami is an authentic record of the research work carried out by **Mr. Shitio Shitiri**, under my supervision in the Department of Political Science, and that the work has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma from any other university.

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DECLARATION

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.E	Advance Estimates
AAGSP	All Assam Gorkha Student Union
AASU	All Assam Students Union
AC	Assembly Constituencies
ADC	Additional Deputy Commissioner
AFSEZ	Agro & Food Processing Special Economic Zone
AGP	Asom Gana Parishad
AITC	All India Trinamool Congress
AIUDF	All India United Democratic Front
AJM	Asom Jana Morcha
ASMJTYP	Assam Jatiya Parishad
BGanP	Bharatiya Gana Parishad
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BOPF	Bodoland People Front
CAPS	Citizen Action Party–Sikkim
CHC	Community Health Centres
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India Marxist
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
EAC	Extra Assistant Commissioner
EPF	Economic Participation and Opportunity
EPIP	Export Promotion Industrial Park
G.R	Growth Rate
GSDP	Gross State Domestic Products

HSPDP	Hill State People's Democratic Party
IIDC	Integrated Infrastructure Development Centres
IPO	Indian Institute of Public Opinion
ILP	Inner Line Permit
INC	Indian National Congress
IND	Independent
IPFT	Indigenous People's Front of Tripura
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
JDU	Janata Dal United
JP	Janata Party
KPA	Kuki People's Alliance
LJP	Lok Jan Shakti Party
LJP-RV	Lok Janshakti -Ram Vilas
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MNF	Mizo National Front
NCP	Nationalist Congress Party
NDDP	Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party
NEEPCO	North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited
NES	National Election Study
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHDP	National Handloom Development Programme
NHHDC	Nagaland handloom and handicrafts development corporation
NHIDCL	National Highway and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd
NHPC	National Hydroelectric Power Corporation
NIDC	Nagaland Industrial development corporation

NKVIB	Nagaland Khadi and Village industrial board
NLA	Nagaland Legislative Assembly
NNO	Nagaland Nationalist Organisation
NPF	Nagaland Peoples Front
NPP	National People's Party
NSRLM	Nagaland State Rural Livelihood Mission
NTPC	National Thermal Power Corporation
P	Provisional
PHC	Primary Health Centres
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
PS	polling stations
RAP	Rural Artisan programme
RJD	Rashtriya Janata Dal
RPI	Republican Party Of India
RPI (A)	Republican Party Of India (a)
RPPRINAT	Rashtriya Parivartan Party of India (Athawale)
RS	Random Start
RUC	Rashtriya Ulama Council
SDO (C)	Sub-Divisional Officer
SES	Social Economic Status
SEZ	Special Export Zone
SHC	Subsidiary Health Centres
SHGs	Self-Help Groups
SI	Sampling Interval
SKM	Sikkim Krantikari Morcha

SRPP	Sikkim Republican Party
SUCI	Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist)
TDP	Telugu Desam Party
TMP	Tipra Motha Party
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDP	United Democratic Party
UFN	United Front of Nagaland
UN	United Nation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VC	Village Council
VDB	Village Development Boards
VIP	Voters Party International
VOTPP	Voice Of The People Party
WEF	World Economic Forum
ZPM	Zoram People's Movement

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

The study of voting behaviour helps us understand the political opinions, interests, and priorities of individual voters during an election.¹ It enables researchers to pinpoint the precise moment when a voter decides how and for whom to cast his vote. The voter's mindset, the various influences to which he is exposed, his personal perception of political phenomena, his opinion of the government, his preferred political parties and candidates, and most importantly, the voter's personal assessment of the importance of the vote and voting activity all have an impact on the voter's decision. How and when voters choose to cast their ballot depends on their political views and their associations with political parties or candidates.²

Voting behaviour is a pattern of behaviour in which an individual interacts with the political system on a regular basis, either actively or passively, in order to achieve a desired political outcome that is best suited to the individual's personal value pattern, which is formed based on personal capabilities, circumstances, and social-cultural environment.³ Research on voting behaviour has improved our knowledge on a variety of subject, such as how voters perceive political parties, the scope and character of citizenship at various levels of government,

¹ Kashyup, S. C. (Ed.). (1971). *Elections and electoral reforms in India* p. 23. New Delhi: Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies.

²Babu, K. H. (2012). *Voting behaviour: A study of selected assembly constituencies in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Acharya Nagarjuna University].

³Negi, M. M. S. (2005). *Theoretic aspects of electoral behaviour*. *Indian Journal of Political Science*, 95–104

socioeconomic traits of individuals, media exposure, influences from ethnic and religious groups, the social environment and the effects of social organisation.⁴

Voting behaviour entails more than just looking at voting records, compiling voting data, and calculating election shifts. It means examining individual psychological processes such as perception, emotion, motivation, and group structures and functions, and their links to political action, as well as institutional trends such as the communication process, and their influence on elections.⁵ A study of voting behaviour is thus, required to comprehend the dynamics of electoral politics as well as the future trajectory of political evolution in a society.⁶ Voting provides one of the richest sources of information about the interaction between individuals, society and politics. By investigating voting behaviour, one can learn important lessons about the nature of the political system and gain insight into the process of social and political change.⁷

In the 1950s and 1960s, the idea to scientifically analyse and understand politics through comprehensive observation and examination of political behaviour sparked scholarly interest in voting behaviour research. The scientific study of voting behaviour, known as “Psephology” commands a central position in political analysis.⁸ This is because voting provides one of the richest sources of information about the interaction between individuals, society and politics.⁹

⁴Kini, N. G. S. (1974). *The City voter in India: A study of 1967 general elections in Nagpur*. In *Abhinav Publications eBooks* (pp. 9–10). <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA29327469>

⁵Eldersveld, S. J. (1951). Theory and method in voting behavior research. *Journal of Politics*, 13(1), 70–87.

⁶Barbhuiya, K. (2018). *Voting Behaviour and Electoral Politics: A Study of the 16th Lok Sabha Election 2014 and 14th Assembly Election 2016, Barak Valley*. [Doctoral Dissertation. Assam University]

⁷Goswami, S. (2001). Changing electoral trends. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1584–1586.

⁸Heywood, A. (2015). *Essentials of UK politics* (3rd ed) (p. 137). Macmillan International Higher Education.

⁹Baruah, G. (2012). *Voting behaviour analysis of Lakhimpur parliamentary constituency Assam 1985 to 2009*. Retrieved from <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/114361> (Doctoral Dissertation, Guwahati University).

The evolution of women's roles in politics has been a significant area of study, reflecting a shift from traditional gender roles to more inclusive political participation. Historically, women were confined to the private sphere, with politics being a male-dominated public activity. However, this began to change in the early nineteenth century as women engaged in political and social reform campaigns, challenging inequalities and influencing mainstream political movements.¹⁰ The Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 marked a pivotal moment, as women began to demand their right to vote, symbolizing a challenge to male political privilege.¹¹ By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women began to enter formal political arenas, albeit still underrepresented and often subjected to essentialist constructions of femininity.¹² Over the last five decades, the "second wave" of feminism and increased female participation in politics have led to a substantial body of literature examining women's political roles across various political systems, including capitalist, state-socialist, and Third World countries.¹³ This shift has been supported by international efforts, such as the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, which has encouraged women's political participation globally.¹⁴ Feminist theoretical frameworks have been instrumental in analyzing gender dynamics in politics, addressing issues such as women's political participation, representation, and their roles in the family and state.¹⁵ The integration of gender as a concept in political

¹⁰ Hannam, J. (2008). Women and politics. In *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945* (pp. 193-218). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203930151-15/women-politics-june-hannam>

¹¹ Boylan, A. M. (1990). Women and Politics in the Era before Seneca Falls. *Journal of the Early Republic*, 10(3), 363. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3123393>

¹² Wahl-Jorgensen, K., & Ye, W. (2015). Gender and politics. *The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication*, 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118541555.wbiepc144>

¹³ Randall, V. (1982). *Women's political behaviour* (pp. 50–94). Palgrave, London. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-18836-9_3

¹⁴ Shaw, D. J. (2007). Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995. In *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks* (pp. 340–346). https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230589780_34

¹⁵ Tickner, J. A. (2011). Gender in world politics. In J. Baylis, S. Smith, & P. Owens (Eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (5th ed., pp. 262 - 277). Oxford University Press.

science has further enriched the field, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the sociological and historical aspects of gender roles.¹⁶

Literature on behavioural studies covering the period up to 1972 shows that the male participation in politics exceeded that of women in most of the western countries.¹⁷ Further women were considered inferior being, less interest or knowledgeable about politics. These differential political orientations of women have affected the kind of influence they exert upon the political system.¹⁸ In Indian context, it may be stated that women's low participation in politics is a product of their exclusion from the social process at large. One of the main arguments is that men intentionally want to keep women out of politics in order to maintain their privileged status and domination.¹⁹

In the case of Nagaland, the political terrain is dominated by men in terms of both participation and representation. Women have been left out of mainstream politics in the state despite the high number of female voters. The percentage of women in the entire population of the state is 48.21 per cent (2011 Census), and in sheer terms women constitute almost half of the electorate in Nagaland (49 per cent).²⁰ Out of the fourteen (14) Assembly Elections, the women electorate surpassed the male voter turnout in eight (8) elections. In 2023 NLA elections, which registered a total polling percentage of 86.04 per cent, the polling percentage of

¹⁶ Mossuz-Lavau, J. (2009). *Gender and Politics* (pp. 51–67). Palgrave Macmillan, New York. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230101890_5

¹⁷ Shankar, A. (2015). *Voting behaviour and political culture of women: A study of Warangal parliamentary constituency in 2004 and 2009 general elections*. (Doctorate Dissertation, Osmania University Hyderabad).

¹⁸ Jamir, N. (2012). *Participation of naga women in electoral politics a case study of Kohima town Nagaland* (Doctoral dissertation, NEHU).

¹⁹ Shankar, A. (2015). *Voting behaviour and political culture of women: A study of Warangal parliamentary constituency in 2004 and 2009 general elections*. (Doctorate Dissertation, Osmania University Hyderabad).

²⁰ *Report on the Tenth General Election to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly* (2013). India: Government of Nagaland.

male voters was 84.92 per cent, while it was 87.15 per cent for females.²¹ This indicate that women voters vote more compared to male voters.

Despite over 50 years of statehood, Nagaland have only 2 women MLA. Hence, discourse on the exclusion of women in the electoral process in Nagaland context is one of the most challenging arguments in the electoral studies. This pattern is evident in Nagaland, where men dominate the political arena, while women's participation, especially their representation, is hardly visible. This has kept women away from key decision-making areas, leaving them with very little power and inferior status.²²

The study of voting behaviour invariably focuses on the determinants of why people vote as they do and how they arrive at the decisions they make.²³ Scholars studying voting behaviour are compelled to examine the context in which voters choose candidates and parties, how they vote or have voted for, what factors influence their voting decisions, their satisfaction with government performance, and popularity ratings of leaders and the ruling party.²⁴ The socio-economic, cultural, institutional and political variables hinder women's access to political participation.²⁵ However, the most common explanatory variables consistently used in the studies is the SES-factor such as age, gender, occupational status, income, educational levels, marital status and place of residence. Socio-economic status of the voters is the most important

²¹ Election Commission of India. (1964-2023). Statistical Report- Nagaland Legislative Assembly Election 1964-2023. Retrieved from <https://www.eci.gov.in/general-election-to-state-legislative-assembly>

²² Amer, M. (2013). Political status of women in Nagaland. *Journal of Business Management & Social Science Research*, 2(4), 91–95.

²³ Marshall, G. (1994). *The concise Oxford dictionary of Sociology* p. 558. Oxford University Press.

²⁴ Goldman, S. (1966). Voting behaviour on the United States courts of appeals, 1961–1964. *American Political Science Review*, 60(2), 374–383. doi:10.2307/1953364; UK Essays. (2015). *Meaning of voting behaviour*. Retrieved from <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/politics/meaning-of-voting-behaviour-politics-essay.php>.

²⁵ Reynolds, A. (1999). Women in the legislatures and executives of the world: Knocking at the highest glass ceiling. *World Politics*, 51(4), 547–572. doi:10.1017/S0043887100009254

key to understanding politics in a democratic state.²⁶ This approach holds that those with high socio-economic status are more likely to participate in politics. The common explanation of this tendency is that political participation generally requires political resources and that those with higher socio-economic status can more readily afford such investment.²⁷

The socio-economic status (SES), material wealth and educational attainment of individuals is said to shape the level of resources (time, money and civic skills) available to facilitate participation in political activities, such as voting.²⁸ Researchers have typically bundled together a number of variables relevant to personal resources which are said to influence people's decision to vote at the individual level.²⁹ Generally, participation tends to be higher among better educated, members of higher occupational and income groups, middle aged, dominant ethnic and religious groups, people with political family background, settled residents, urban dwellers and members of voluntary associations.³⁰ Individuals with higher socioeconomic status who are educated, employed, or have a decent income tend to appreciate voting, feel confident about making a difference in politics, and are more interested and engaged in political activities.³¹ Conversely, citizens with lower socioeconomic status are less confident, less informed, and less connected to politics, which results in their reduced

²⁶Verba, S., & Nie, N. (1972). *Participation in American: Political democracy and social equality*. New York: Harper and Row.

²⁷Pettersen, P. A., & Rose, L. E. (1996). Participation in local politics in Norway: Some do, some don't; some will, some won't. *Political Behavior*, 18(1), 51–97. doi:[10.1007/BF01498660](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01498660)

²⁸ Brady, H. E., Verba, S., & Schlozman, K. L. (1995). Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation. *American Political Science Review*, 89(2), 271–294. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2082425>

²⁹ Tambe, E. B. (2017). Electoral participation in African democracies: The impact of individual and contextual factors. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 55(2), 119–140. doi:[10.1080/14662043.2017.1274868](https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2017.1274868)

³⁰McClosky, H. (1968). Political participation. In D. L. Sills (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social sciences*, Vol. 12. New York: Macmillan Company & Free Press, p. 252.

³¹ Bovens, M., & Wille, A. (2017). *Diploma Democracy: The Rise of Political Meritocracy: The education gap in political participation* (pp.69-90). Oxford Academic. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198790631.003.0005>

participation in voting and political activities.³² Therefore, women's lower levels of socio-economic resources may make it more difficult for them to engage in time-intensive, expensive, or highly skilled forms of activity, such as campaigning for a candidate.³³

Besides the SES factor, the culture of the society also influences women's participation in the public sphere.³⁴ It is postulated that cultural factors determine public opinion and attitudes toward women leaders.³⁵ Such factors include a host of aspects, such as social capital, political socialisation, cultural norms, economic conditions, gender stereotypes, and gender roles that tend to become barriers to women's political participation.³⁶ Despite legal frameworks and policy measures to increase the number of women in politics, socio-cultural restrictions based on patriarchy still hinder their political representation. Such cultural practices not only affect their rights to vote but also to be represented in political offices and access of the public space.³⁷ Therefore, in a traditional Naga society, socio cultural factors are important in explaining women's voting behaviour.

Politics has been perceived as a male dominated arena and this perception often discourages women from participating. Women might feel that politics is not their thing when they realise that most positions in parliaments and party leadership are occupied by men. The

³² Veena, R. S. (2024). Unveiling the Gap: Exploring gender inequality in Economic empowerment across India. *Journal of Humanities and Education Development*, 6(2), 65–70. <https://doi.org/10.22161/jhed.6.2.9>

³³ Paxton, P., Kunovich, S., & Hughes, M. M. (2007). Gender in politics. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33(1), 263–284. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131651>

³⁴ Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2000). The developmental theory of the gender gap: Women's and men's voting behaviour in global perspective. *International Political Science Review*, 21(4), 441–463. doi:[10.1177/0192512100214007](https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512100214007)

³⁵ Roza, V. (2010). *Gatekeepers to power: Party-level influences on women's political participation in Latin America (p-4)*. (Doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University).

³⁶ Soltani, Z., Heydarabadi, A., Pahlavan, M., & Hashemnejad Abrasi, F. (2024). *Women's Political Participation in Mazandaran Province and the Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting It*. 3(3), 236–248. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.jspsich.3.3.14>

³⁷ Charan, U., & Chikara, A. (2025). Access of Women to Public Spaces: Socio-Cultural Impact on Their Identity and Dignity. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, IX(V), 4503–4508. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2025.905000346>

absence of visible women in these positions lowers their confidence and interest. Moreover, politics is perceived by society as an unfriendly, competitive, and masculine world, so a woman can feel unwanted or unprepared to venture into it. This strengthens over time the notion that politics and decision-making are the prerogatives of men and thus it becomes more difficult for woman to come forward. This leads to less women involvement and the cycle of low representation continues thus reinforcing the belief that politics is a male dominated sphere.³⁸

The present study will examine voting behavior of women from different dimensions. Voting is no doubt an important mode of electoral participation. However, besides voting there are many modes of electoral activities. Therefore, going beyond voting, the present study will also examine women's participation in other electoral activities, such as political discussion, campaigning, attending political rallies and meetings or engaging in various political and non-political organizations. This will be assessed against the background of psychological, socio-economic and socio-cultural variables of women electoral engagement.

1.2 Review of literature

The review of literature on women's voting behaviour comprises a diverse array of scholarly publications from the fields of political science, gender studies, sociology, and other relevant disciplines. It encompasses investigations into the historical progression of women's suffrage, the influence of gender identity and societal roles on voting behaviour. Furthermore, the review of literature also highlights how women's electoral choices are influenced by factors such as women's issues, socio-economic status, societal environment, political parties, political representation, and feminist movements. This review aims to offer a thorough comprehension of the intricate elements that influence women's voting patterns and political participation.

³⁸ Verba, S., Burns, N., & Schlozman, K. L. (1997). Knowing and Caring About Politics: Gender and Political Engagement. *The Journal of Politics*, 59(4), 1051–1072. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2998592>

The study of voting behaviour has been a much-researched and frequently debated source of academic inquiry. Over the years, many scholars have examined voting behavior utilizing variety of data and theoretical approaches, and have unearthed a range of outcomes and viewpoints. This section provides a summary of review of literature on voting behaviour under the following sub-themes:-

1.2.1 Concept of Voting Behaviour

Due to the behavioural movement the traditional approach of studying politics underwent change. Instead of studying state and other political institutions, behaviouralist emphasized upon the efficacy and relevance of studying observed political behavior underlying particular institutional and legal arrangements.³⁹ Behavioural studies concerned not only with overt acts but also subjective behaviour such as attitudes, beliefs, opinion, motivation, perception, values and norms, personality and group practices of human beings.⁴⁰ Bernard Berelson coined the term “behavioural sciences” and made major contributions in the fields of communications research, voting studies, and population. He left behind an enduring legacy by believing in the value of behavioural empiricism as well as the moral and ethical implications of behavioural research.⁴¹

Voting behaviour is a form of electoral behaviour to explain how and why decisions were made either by an individual or public decision-makers.⁴² According to Samuel S. Eldersveld, the term "voting behaviour" encompasses more than just the analysis of voting patterns,

³⁹ Patni, S. (1994). *Women political elite: Search for identity* p. 2. Jaipur, India: Printwell.

⁴⁰ Newton, K., & Van Deth, J. W. (2005). Political attitudes and behaviour. In *Cambridge University Press eBooks* (pp. 135–158). <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511806810.012>

⁴¹ Sills, D. L. (1981). Bernard Berelson: Behavioral scientist. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 17(3), 305–311. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696\(198107\)17:3<305::AID-JHBS2300170302>3.0.CO;2-I](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696(198107)17:3<305::AID-JHBS2300170302>3.0.CO;2-I)

⁴² Goldman, S. (1966). Voting behaviour on the United States courts of appeals, 1961–1964. *American Political Science Review*, 60(2), 374–383. doi:[10.2307/1953364](https://doi.org/10.2307/1953364)

statistical data and calculations of electoral shifts and swings. It also means examining individual psychological processes such as perception, emotion, motivation, and group structures and functions, and their links to political action, as well as institutional trends such as the communication process, and their influence on elections.⁴³ Stephen L. Wasby asserts “The study voting of behaviour involves an analysis of individual psychological make-up and their relation to political action as well as institutional patterns, such as the communication process and their impact on elections” (Wasby, 1972).

The scientific study of voting behaviour, known as ‘Psephology’ commands a central position in political analysis.⁴⁴ This is because voting provides one of the richest sources of information about the interaction between individuals, society and politics.⁴⁵ Psephology is the study of elections using voting precinct data, public opinion polls to gauge voter sentiment, financial data about the campaign, and other election-related statistical data. Voting behaviour, thus, may be assessed quantitatively with some precision using various scientific scaling choices, although not as accurately as in the physical and biological sciences.⁴⁶

Voting behaviour is a social phenomenon, and understanding it requires an examination of the interactions between the social, political, economic, religious, cultural, and environmental factors.⁴⁷ The study of voting behaviour encompasses the examination of voters' voting intentions, their preferred or past choices, the reasons of their voting decisions, their level of satisfaction with government performance, and the popularity ratings of leaders and the ruling

⁴³ Eldersveld, S. J. (1951). Theory and Method in Voting Behavior Research. *The Journal of Politics*, 13(1), 70–87. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2126123>

⁴⁴ Heywood, A. (2015). *Essentials of UK politics*. London: Macmillan International Higher Education.

⁴⁵ Baruah, G (2012). *Voting behaviour analysis of Lakhimpur parliamentary constituency Assam 1985 to 2009*. Retrieved from <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/114361> (Doctoral Dissertation, Guwahati University).

⁴⁶ Kumar, S., & Rai, P. (2013). *Measuring voting behaviour in India (1st ed.)*. India: SAGE Publications.

⁴⁷ Snyder, R. C., Eulau, H., Eldersveld, S. J., & Janowitz, M. (1957). Political behavior: A reader in theory and research. *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 1(1), 101. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2109018>

party.⁴⁸ Voting behaviour, in the words of Plano and Riggs, is a study concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in public elections and to find out reasons why they vote as they do.⁴⁹ Thus, voting behaviour may be defined as the behaviour that explicitly reflects voter's choices, preferences, alternatives, ideologies, concerns, agreements, and programmes in respect of various issues, questions about the society and nations (Sirsikar, 1973).

The study of voting behaviour has shown that voter's choices are influenced by multiple factors, such as the performance of the government in power, the state of the economy, voters' orientations on specific issues, partisanship or party affiliation, the candidate's personality, or the identity or ethnic background of the candidate.⁵⁰ Likewise, the mindset of voters, the influences they encounter, their personal understanding of political events, their views on the government, political parties, and candidates, and above all, their personal evaluation of the importance of voting, all play a role in shaping their decision.⁵¹ Hence, the examination of voting behaviour is crucial for assessing and understanding the perspectives of individuals who are engaged in the political process as voters.

1.2.2 Models of Voting Behaviour Study

In academia, the factors that impact voter choice have prompted a lot of discussion and research. Many scholars have researched voting behaviour over the years, using a range of theoretical methodologies and data, and have come up with variety of findings. The book 'Quantitative Methods of Politics' by Stuart Rice (1928) was possibly the first attempt to

⁴⁸ Kumar, S., & Rai, P. (2013). *Measuring voting behaviour in India (1st ed.)*. India: SAGE Publications.

⁴⁹ Hazarika, B. (2015). Voting behaviour in India and its determinants. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 20(10), 22–25.

⁵⁰ Prysby, C. L., & Scavo, C. (1993). *Voting Behavior: the 1992 Election*. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association

⁵¹ Varma, S. P., & Narain, I. (1973). *Voting behaviour in a changing society: A case study of the fourth general election in Rajasthan*. National Publishing House.

analyse factors influencing political attitudes and voting behaviour using quantitative research.⁵² George Gallup, who founded the American Institute of Public Opinion in Princeton, New Jersey, USA in 1935, is credited for pioneering election survey to study voting behaviour. Gallup opinion polls on the US presidential election not only predicted the winners and losers but also gave a robust and informative account of American voting behaviour.⁵³ Since then, a number of research studies have been conducted on various facets of voting behaviour. Voting behaviour has emerged as one of the most developed field of research in social sciences, and as a result, it has become a fully-fledged area of study within political science.⁵⁴

The study on voting behaviour in the west have been influenced by several theoretical frameworks, particularly three schools of thoughts- the Columbia (Sociological approach), Michigan (psychological approach), and Rochester schools (Rational choice or economic approach) (Antunes, 2010).⁵⁵ All of these theories describe different forms of voting behaviour, but they are not mutually exclusive; rather they are complementary and interrelated in many instances. These theories explain voter's political attitudes, perspectives, choices, thoughts, agreements, ideologies, and degree of political behavior by providing insight into their mental processes.⁵⁶

The contribution of political scientists, psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists has been very important towards examining the voting behaviours. The academic study of voting behaviour in scientific contexts is primarily based on three theoretical frameworks: the

⁵² Rice, S. A. (1938). Quantitative methods in politics. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 33(201), 126–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01621459.1938.10503380>

⁵³ Gallup, G., & Robinson, C. (1938). American Institute of Public opinion—Surveys, 1935-38. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 2(3), 373–398. doi:[10.1086/265204](https://doi.org/10.1086/265204)

⁵⁴ Babu, K. H. (2012). *Voting behaviour-A study of selected assembly constituencies in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh* (Doctoral Thesis, Acharya Nagarjuna University).

⁵⁵ Antunes, R. (2010). Theoretical models of voting behaviour. *Exedra*, 4(1), 145-70.

⁵⁶ Baruah, G (2012). *Voting behaviour analysis of Lakhimpur parliamentary constituency Assam 1985 to 2009*. Retrieved from <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/114361> (Doctoral Dissertation, Guwahati University).

Sociological Model (also referred to as the School of Columbia), the Psychosocial Model (also known as the School of Michigan), and the Rational choice Model (also known as the School of Rochester or model of economic voting).

Sociological Model of Voting Behaviour

In the 1940s, a group of Columbia University social scientists led by Paul Lazarsfeld pioneered the use of survey research for the scientific study of voting behaviour (Bartels, 2008: 2). The sociological model of voting behaviour are defined in three essential works: *The People's Choice* (work of Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1968), *Voting* (work of Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1986) and *Personal Influence* (work of Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1966).⁵⁷ In the sociological paradigm, individual voting behaviour is connected to their social group environment. Voting is examined within the social context, and the variables such as social class, ethnicity, occupation, sex, age, race, language, religion, and rural-urban divides, were explored in order to establish a link between the SES components and voter behaviour. It is argued that the voting behaviour of individuals is shaped by their socioeconomic status.⁵⁸

The Columbia researchers discovered that the influence of political parties and the media on voter choice was negligible. However, voters' decision-making process was greatly impacted by their social affiliations.⁵⁹ The sociological paradigm posits that societal values and norms exert a substantial impact on individuals' behaviour and thinking. Individual opinions and political choices are predominantly influenced by social groupings, socio-economic status,

⁵⁷ Antunes, R. (2010). Theoretical models of voting behaviour. *Exedra*, 4(1), 145-70.

⁵⁸ Kumar, S., & Rai, P. (2013). *Measuring voting behaviour in India (1st ed.)*. India: SAGE Publications.

⁵⁹ Miller, W. L. (2002). *Political participation and voting behaviour*. *Encyclopedia of government and politics*, 428–442.

class, race, and religion, rather than being solely determined by political parties and politicians.⁶⁰

The sociological theoretical model of voting behaviour was reinforced by the pioneering efforts of Seymour M. Lipset in his book "Political Man" (1960) and by Seymour M. Lipset & Stein Rokkan (1967) in their book "Party Systems and Voter Alignment: Cross-National Perspectives".⁶¹ The Lipset and Rokkan hypothesis suggests that the origin of political parties and electoral struggle can be ascribed to a complex sequence of historical events instigated by the national and industrial revolutions. The four cleavages that have been identified are: the division between the centre and peripheral regions (involving regional and separatist parties), the conflict between the state and the church (involving secular and religious voters), the class division (involving socialist and conservative parties on the left and right), and the division between the agricultural and industrial sectors (resulting in agrarian and peasant parties).⁶²

In this model, attitudinal or psychological elements that are influenced by how people interact with others on a daily basis are treated as dependent variables.⁶³ This model claimed that Candidates and political parties have little chance of swaying voters' attitudes in their favour.⁶⁴ The primary cause of some voters switching their votes from one party to another

⁶⁰ Aiba, J. (2003). Reviewing the theories of voting behaviour. *Memoirs of Nara University*, 31, 283–304.; Evans, G., & Northmore-Ball, K. (2017). Long-term factors: Class and religious cleavages. In *The Routledge handbook of elections, voting behaviour and public opinion* (pp. 123–135). Routledge.; Mahsud, N. H. K, & Amin, H. (2020). Theoretical approaches to the study of voting behaviour: A comparative analysis. *Sjesr*, 3(3), 65–73. [https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol3-iss3-2020\(65-73\)](https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol3-iss3-2020(65-73)); Visser, M. (1994). The psychology of voting action on the psychological origins of electoral research, 1939–1964. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 30(1), 43–52. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696\(199401\)30:1<43::AID-JHBS2300300105>3.0.CO;2-D](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696(199401)30:1<43::AID-JHBS2300300105>3.0.CO;2-D);

⁶¹ Antunes, R. (2010). Theoretical models of voting behaviour. *Exedra*, 4(1), 145–70.

⁶² Von Schoultz, Å. (2017). *Party systems and voter alignments. The Sage handbook of electoral behaviour*, 1, 30–55.

⁶³ Aiba, J. (2003). Reviewing the theories of voting behaviour. *Memoirs of Nara University*, 31, 283–304.

⁶⁴ Visser, M. (1994). The psychology of voting action on the psychological origins of electoral research, 1939–1964. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 30(1), 43–52. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696\(199401\)30:1<43::AID-JHBS2300300105>3.0.CO;2-D](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696(199401)30:1<43::AID-JHBS2300300105>3.0.CO;2-D);

during the election campaign or between two elections is because of cross-pressures or opposing forces pulling the voter in opposite directions. Cross-pressures, according to the proponents of this paradigm, predominantly arise from voter's participation in social groups with a diversity of voting preferences.⁶⁵

However, there are limitations to the Sociological Model when it comes to explaining the changes in voting caused by economic variables unique to each election. The Social variables may explain the long-term uniformity of voting patterns, but they are unable to explain variations in voting patterns across elections, just as they are unable to explain why some social group's members tend to vote differently from those of other social groups. In an effort to overcome this constraint, the Psychosocial Model was developed employing the idea of partisanship. It seek to integrate the effect of sociological and historical long-term elements, as outlined in the Sociological Model, with the short and long-term social and political factors that influence each elections.⁶⁶

Psychosocial Model of Voting Behaviour

A team of researchers from the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan developed an alternative model known as the psychological approach for analysing voting behaviour in response to criticism of the Columbia model. The Michigan school offers a model to explain voting behaviour that incorporates social and psychological framework. The psychosocial model of voting behaviour was developed based on the American presidential elections studies of 1948, 1952, and 1956 carried out by researchers like Campbell, Kahn, Gurin, Miller, Converse, and Stokes (Bartels, 2008: 6). The publications 'The People Elect a

⁶⁵ Visser, M. (1998). *Five theories of voting action: Strategy and structure of psychological explanation*, 7–17. University of Twente.

⁶⁶ Knoke, D. (1974). A Causal Synthesis of Sociological and Psychological Models of American Voting Behavior. *Social Forces*, 53(1), 92–101. <https://doi.org/10.1093/SF/53.1.92>

President,' 'The Voter Decides,' and 'The American Voter' provide an overview of the research's findings.⁶⁷

In Contrary to Sociological Theory, the Psychosocial Model asserts that a person's voting behaviour is determined by their own thoughts, not merely by their socioeconomic status. An individual's psychological evaluation of the electoral factors in their local area, such as political parties, issues and candidates, has a greater influence on their voting behaviour than their socioeconomic status.⁶⁸ The proponents of this approach listed party identification, issues concerns, personal attachment to candidates, loyalty to group standards, sense of efficacy, and sense of social obligation to vote as six psychological factors that may influence voters' decisions.⁶⁹ Party identification, candidate partisanship, and issue orientation are three of the six components that the theory's proponent claims have the most influence on voters' decision making process.⁷⁰ The term party identification in this context refers to a person's emotional attachments to a political party. Voters' assessments of a candidate's credentials and demeanour are referred to as their candidate orientation, while their opinions on the issues discussed during an election campaign are referred to as their issue orientation.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Visser, M. (1994). The psychology of voting action on the psychological origins of electoral research, 1939–1964. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 30(1), 43–52. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696\(199401\)30:1<43::AID-JHBS2300300105>3.0.CO;2-D](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696(199401)30:1<43::AID-JHBS2300300105>3.0.CO;2-D); Mahsud, N. H. K, & Amin, H. (2020). Theoretical approaches to the study of voting behaviour: A comparative analysis. *Sjesr*, 3(3), 65–73. [https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol3-iss3-2020\(65-73\)](https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol3-iss3-2020(65-73))

⁶⁸ Verburg, A. H. (1979). *The role of socio-economic status in determining voting behavior in Richmond, Virginia* (Master Thesis, **University of Richmond**). Retrieved from <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2147&context=masters-theses>

⁶⁹ Mahsud, N. H. K, & Amin, H. (2020). Theoretical approaches to the study of voting behaviour: A comparative analysis. *Sjesr*, 3(3), 65–73. [https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol3-iss3-2020\(65-73\)](https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol3-iss3-2020(65-73))

⁷⁰ Aiba, J. (2003). Reviewing the theories of voting behaviour. *Memoirs of Nara University*, 31, 283–304.

⁷¹ Akhter, Z., & Sheikh, Y. A. (2014). Determinants of voting behaviour in India: Theoretical perspective. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 4(8), 104–108.; Hutchings, V. L., & Jefferson, H. J. (2017). The sociological and social-psychological approaches. In *The Routledge handbook of elections, voting behavior and public opinion* (pp. 21–29). Routledge.

The long-term value of political commitment is emphasised by the party identification paradigm. The opinion and attitudes of family, friends, and coworkers have an impact on how a person develops their partisanship.⁷² Similar to a link with one's socio-economic class, religion or race, party identification is an emotional attachment to any political party.⁷³ The Michigan Model placed a lot of emphasis on the intermediary variables such as perception, opinion, attitude, and identity. This approach, nevertheless, has drawn criticism for placing more emphasis on the relationship between partisanship, candidates, and issues and less emphasis on social elements and communication systems.⁷⁴ However, the psychological models that have influenced electoral psychology and provided a foundation for evaluating national elections are still being used today.

Rational Choice Model of Voting Behaviour

The Rational Choice Model primarily examines the correlation between individual's attitudes and their voting behaviour. The underlying tenet of the Rational Choice Model is that voters ought to possess awareness of their own political interests, assess the available options, and subsequently select the candidate or party that is most likely to fulfil those interests.⁷⁵ The Rational Choice Model seeks to offer an economic rationale for voting behaviour by doing a thorough study of costs and benefits.⁷⁶ The economic explanation of voting behaviour is found in the work of Anthony Downs (1957) 'An Economic Theory of Democracy', Duncan Black

⁷² Miller, W. L. (2002). *Political participation and voting behaviour. Encyclopedia of government and politics*, 428–442.

⁷³ Hutchings, V. L., & Jefferson, H. J. (2017). The sociological and social-psychological approaches. In *The Routledge handbook of elections, voting behavior and public opinion* (pp. 21–29). Routledge.

⁷⁴ Greene, S. (2002). The Social-Psychological Measurement of Partisanship. *Political Behavior*, 24(3), 171–197. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021859907145>

⁷⁵ Miller, W. L. (2002). *Political participation and voting behaviour. Encyclopedia of government and politics*, 428–442.

⁷⁶ Opp, K. (2001). Why do people vote? The Cognitive-Illusion Proposition and its test. *Kyklos*, 54(2–3), 355–378. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6435.00158>

(1948) ‘Median Voter Theorem’, and Kenneth Arrow (1951) ‘Social Choice and Individual Values’.⁷⁷ Under this paradigm, voters evaluate the issues presented and policies supported by different political parties and politicians prior to casting their votes. Therefore, when deciding whether to vote for a political party or candidate, voters take into account their personal interests, as well as the interests of their family, social class, or group.⁷⁸

The Rational Choice Theory states that political parties act as strategic actors and they compete to maximise their electoral support by providing policies that are most likely to attract the highest number of voters whilst voters attempt to maximise the value of their votes by voting a party or candidate that most benefits them.⁷⁹ The rational choice model explains political behaviour by assuming that individuals act logically to achieve the best possible outcomes based on three key premises. First, the likes and dislikes of people are clear and organised, which means that people know what they want and can rank their choices according to the level of importance. Second, they weigh the costs and benefits of each available option before deciding. Third, they always try to maximise their utility or get the greatest advantage from their choice.⁸⁰ When applied to elections, this implies that voters pick a party or candidate that will bring them the greatest good, be it in terms of policies, leadership, or personal gain,

⁷⁷ Mitchell, W. C. (1988). Virginia, Rochester, and Bloomington: Twenty-five years of public choice and political science. *Public Choice*, 56(2), 101–119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00115751>

⁷⁸ Dowding, K. (2017). Rational choice theory and voting. In *The Routledge handbook of elections, voting Behavior and public opinion* (pp. 30–40). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315712390.ch3>.

⁷⁹ Feddersen, T. J., Sened, I., & Wright, S. G. (1990). Rational Voting and Candidate Entry under Plurality Rule. *American Journal of Political Science*, 34(4), 1005–1016. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111469>; Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers

⁸⁰ Mueller, D. C. (2011). The importance of self-interest and public interest in politics. *Critical Review*, 23(3), 321–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08913811.2011.635870>

and political parties tend to reduce or maximise their promises, policies, and campaign messages to attract the largest number of voters and to win the election.⁸¹

1.2.3 Determinants of Voting Behaviour

Voting behaviour is a complicated and multifaceted subject. No single element can be used to predict the voting behaviour of the electorate, hence several factors must be considered in order to analyse the outcomes. Election survey research studies carried out by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion (IIPO) from 1957 to 1980s revealed that socioeconomic status, caste, religion, leadership, education, political issues, and occupational background were factors influencing the voting behaviour of Indian voters.⁸² An empirical study of the determinant of electoral behaviour in India displays the astounding fact that the behaviour of man is influenced by various irrational factors like caste, religion, language, money, charisma, education, party loyalty, populist slogans, ideological commitment, current and local issues, election campaigns, personal contacts, and regionalism.⁸³ The study of voting behaviour can be broadly categorised into long term and short term factors. Long-term influences include social class, gender, race, culture, religion, age, education, and political alignment. Short-term influence includes the performance of the governing party, major issues, electoral campaign, the image of party leaders, the influence of the mass media and major political events.⁸⁴

Socio-economic variables: Though many factors contribute to differing levels of participation among citizens, one of the most commonly used model is the measurement of socio-economic

⁸¹ Schlesinger, J. A. (1975). The Primary Goals of Political Parties: A Clarification of Positive Theory. *American Political Science Review*, 69(3), 840–849. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1958393>

⁸² Kumar, S., & Rai, P. (2013). *Measuring voting behaviour in India (1st ed.)*. India: SAGE Publications.; Narain, I. (1978). *Election studies in India: An evaluation*. Bombay: Allied Publishers.

⁸³ Akhter, Z., & Sheikh, Y. A. (2014). Determinants of voting behaviour in India: Theoretical perspective. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 4(8), 104–108.; Hazarika, B. (2015). Voting behaviour in India and its determinants. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 20(10), 22–25.

⁸⁴ Heywood, A. (2015). *Essentials of UK politics*. London: Macmillan International Higher Education.

and demographic factors such as age, gender, occupational status, income, educational levels, marital status and place of residence. Differences between men and women on these traits are commonly held to account for any gender gap in political participation. The common explanation of this argument is that political participation generally requires political resources and that those with higher socio-economic status can more readily afford such investment.⁸⁵ Women have significant disadvantages in accessing the resources necessary for engaging in active political participation. Research has revealed that men have a higher propensity to vote compared to women, individuals with higher levels of education are more inclined to vote than those with lower levels of education, urban inhabitants are more likely to vote than rural people, and middle-aged individuals are more active in voting compared to both young and elderly individuals.⁸⁶ Hence, the limited socio-economic resources of women may hinder their involvement in electoral activities that require significant time, financial investment, or advanced skills, such as actively supporting a political candidate's campaign.⁸⁷ This indicates that numerous research on electoral behaviour in various political systems have shown a significant relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and voting behaviour. Gunnar Sjoblom asserts that socioeconomic factors are generally the main motivators of voting behaviour.⁸⁸ The political involvement of women is influenced by socioeconomic factors such as age, education, occupation, income, religion, race, family background, and residence.⁸⁹ Generally, people with higher education and socioeconomic position have easier access to

⁸⁵ Pettersen, P. A., & Rose, L. E. (1996). Participation in local politics in Norway: Some do, some don't; some will, some won't. *Political Behavior*, 18(1), 51–97. doi:[10.1007/BF01498660](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01498660)

⁸⁶ Lipset, S. M. (1963). *Political man: The Social basis of Politics*. Doubleday Publishing and Company.

⁸⁷ Idrees, M. G. (2025). Constraints to women's participation in the electoral activities in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. In *UJ Press eBooks* (pp. 293–308). <https://doi.org/10.36615/9780906785638-13>

⁸⁸ Singh, M. (2016). *Socio-Economic Determinates of the voters of Punjab*. *International Journal of Management and Social Science*, 4(6), 271–280.

⁸⁹ Pande, N. (2017). *Representation of women politicians in Indian newspapers: A Content Analysis Study of the Times of India and Dainik Jagran*. In *Papers of fourth international conference on advances in women's studies*, 2017 (p. 59).

politics than those with lower status. Moreover, dominant ethnic and religious groups, political families, settled residents and urban dwellers tend to fare better on the political front.⁹⁰

Women's participation in electoral activities is influenced by their social status. Studies have shown that women in better social and economic positions are more actively involved in political activities compared to those in lower positions.⁹¹ Women often do not vote independently, with a considerable proportion lacking formal education and relying on male family members (such as husbands and sons) to exercise their right to vote. They have a lack of interest or concern towards politics and have a limited awareness or understanding of political issues.⁹² Women have been discouraged from participating in politics due to societal and familial barriers. Women find it difficult to participate in all facets of politics because they typically have little control over their financial resources and their families are sometimes reluctant to lend a hand or offer assistance.⁹³ In addition to these socio-economic challenges, women politicians, activists and policy makers encounter character-assassination, threats and violence. These preconceptions, stereotypical thinking and the overall social environment restrict equality in participation.⁹⁴

Socio-cultural factor: Women have always been viewed as inferior political actors in Indian political culture.⁹⁵ Patriarchal values and practices continue to exercise significant influence over both the public and private domains, exploiting and exerting control over women, and

⁹⁰ Lane, R. E. (1959). Political life: Why people get involved in politics. *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 46(2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/1891593>.

⁹¹ Kumar, S., & Mishra, J. (2021). *Participation in politics: Voting behaviour and engagement in political activities*. In *Women voters in Indian elections* (pp. 17–33). Routledge.

⁹² Shankar, A. (2015). *Voting behaviour and political culture of women: A study of Warangal parliamentary constituency in 2004 and 2009 general elections* (Doctorate Dissertation, Osmania University Hyderabad).

⁹³ Singh, C. P., & Jha, B. N. (1992). *Women's situation in India. Indian Women-Challenges and Changes*. Common Wealth Publishers.

⁹⁴ Khanna, M. (2009). Political participation of women in India. *The Indian journal of political science*, 70 (1), 60.

⁹⁵ Kumar, S. (Ed.). (2021). *Women voters in Indian elections: Changing trends and emerging patterns*. Taylor & Francis.

hence rendering them vulnerable and subordinate.⁹⁶ Women still face a number of obstacles that restrict their capacity to engage in politics because of deeply rooted misogynistic cultural norms and social behaviours. Indian social and political environment is strongly dominated by patriarchal norms that impacts the attitudes and behaviour of women. A large number of women do not vote independently despite having complete freedom to exercise their voting choice, rather they seek the advice of male family members. Women who are married and older are less likely to be able to decide whether or not to participate in electoral activities as candidates, party employees or voters due to internalized patriarchal norms.⁹⁷ Despite the legal equality between genders, politics remains predominantly male-dominated. This dominance is seen in voting patterns as well as in more overt forms of participation, such as attending political assemblies, participating in political campaigns and rallies, and motivating other voters.⁹⁸ Women continue to face disadvantages in politics due to hurdles related to family ties, societal norms, gender stereotypes that persist, discriminatory cultural practices and institutional restrictions.⁹⁹

In Indian society, particularly in rural areas, family and kinship connections are the primary means of socialization. While they provide important societal benefits in terms of survival, identity, and belonging, they can also limit the freedom and progress of women and individuals in participating in the political domain due to traditional norms.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Soman, U. (2009). *Patriarchy: Theoretical postulates and empirical findings*. *Sociological Bulletin*, 58(2), 253–272. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038022920090206>

⁹⁷ Rana, M. (2021). *Internalized patriarchy: Sociocultural and economic barriers to participation of women in politics*. In *Women voters in Indian elections* (pp. 84–108). Routledge.

⁹⁸ Andersen, K. (1975). *Working women and political participation, 1952–1972*. *American Journal of Political Science*, 19(3), 439–453. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2110538>

⁹⁹ Attri, V. (2021). *Individual and motivational factors affecting women's political participation*. In *Women voters in Indian elections* (pp. 34–58). Routledge.

¹⁰⁰ Babu, K. H. (2012). *Voting behaviour: A study of selected assembly constituencies in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Acharya Nagarjuna University].

Gender: Research has shown that gender influences political behaviour and opinion significantly where women tend to support Democrats, liberals and welfare, equality as well as environmental policies more than men and are more conservative on issues involving morality.¹⁰¹ Several election studies put forth four theoretical justifications for the disparity in gender.¹⁰² As to the Vulnerability Theory, women's socio-economic inferiority renders them more susceptible to economic threats compared to men. Women typically favoured candidates who promoted social programs protecting women and children due to their vulnerability. Scholars like Farah and Klein further developed this concept by considering individual vulnerability when analyzing the main issue of the 1988 Presidential Elections. Additionally, according to the mobilization theory, the women's movement prioritised candidates' distinct positions on matters that directly impact women. As a result, women were more likely to vote for candidates advocating for the ratification of the equal rights amendment, reproductive rights, and other women's rights. Moreover, according to the Nurturance Theory, women's roles as mothers increased their concern about reductions to social services and heightened their fear of future conflicts. Women would vote for politicians they believed would support and protect social welfare and reduce conflicts. The gender gap, as explained by the Autonomy Theory, mostly stems from established societal norms that have historically associated women's interests with the perpetuation of a male-dominated power structure. According to the gender gap theory, women who refrain from expressing their political ideas are more inclined to vote in accordance with the advice of men.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Lizotte, M. (2022). Handbook on Politics and Public Opinion. In *Public opinion and gender* (pp. 193–207). Edward Elgar Publishing eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800379619.00025>

¹⁰² Susan, C. (1988). *Women's autonomy and the gender gap: 1980 and 1982*. In C. M. Mueller (Ed.), *The politics of the gender gap: The social construction of political influence* (pp. 237–241). SAGE.

¹⁰³ Rusciano, F. L. (1992). *Rethinking the gender gap: The case of West German elections, 1949–1987*. *Comparative Politics*, 24(3), 335–357. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422136>

Political attitudes and behaviour between men and women generally exhibit predictable disparities.¹⁰⁴ In emerging nations like India, voters are also prone to discrimination favouring men over women. There is a significant number of individuals who maintain the belief that women should not participate in politics or seek positions of power. Evidently, female candidates have significantly underperformed in the elections compared to their male counterparts.¹⁰⁵

Psychological Variable: Voting behaviour is influenced by psychological conditions such as interest in politics, trust in the political system, level of awareness, and whether they believe that their vote is making a difference or not.¹⁰⁶ Among these, political interests play the most important role in influencing how someone chooses to vote.¹⁰⁷ Women in India are often apathetic towards politics and less inclined to engage in politics, talk about politics, attend public meetings, or influence discussions.¹⁰⁸ Women are indoctrinated in the belief that politics is a male domain. Men, it is argued, should be more involved in politics, while women should be more concerned with domestic issues. Educated women though interested never venture into the political arena due to the stigma associated with politics. Women are still viewed as symbols outside the framework of the power structure, having little influence.¹⁰⁹ Prejudice against

¹⁰⁴ Hatemi, P. K., McDermott, R., Bailey, J. M., & Martin, N. G. (2012). *The different effects of gender and sex on vote choice*. *Political Research Quarterly*, 65(1), 76–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912910391475>

¹⁰⁵ Shankar, A. (2015). *Voting behaviour and political culture of women: A study of Warangal parliamentary constituency in 2004 and 2009 general elections* (Doctorate Dissertation, Osmania University Hyderabad).

¹⁰⁶ Anand, P. K., & Reddy, S. (2024). Psychosocial factors influencing voting behavior. *Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 6(10), 153–157. [https://doi.org/10.53469/jssh.2024.6\(10\).28](https://doi.org/10.53469/jssh.2024.6(10).28)

¹⁰⁷ Blais, A., & Labbé St-Vincent, S. (2011). Personality traits, political attitudes and the propensity to vote. *European Journal of Political Research*, 50(3), 395–417. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1475-6765.2010.01935.X>

¹⁰⁸ Goel, M. L. (1975). *Political participation in a developing nation, India*. Asia publishing house.

¹⁰⁹ Khelghat-Doost, H., & Sibly, S. (2020). The Impact of Patriarchy on Women's Political Participation. *The International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(3), 396–409. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/V10-I3/7058>

women exists in many facets of life, including social, economic, and most significantly political discrimination.¹¹⁰

Women generally lack the political network, expertise, free time or support from their families to commit themselves to electoral politics. Additionally, their lack of financial resources, low self-esteem and lack of political education and experience prohibit them from engaging in public life.¹¹¹ Regardless of the individual barriers, it is certain that the pervasiveness of deep-rooted gender stereotypes influence the psychological or personal traits of women voters, hindering the development of their political interest and attitudes.¹¹²

Political efficacy encompasses the conviction that individuals possess the capacity to comprehend and exert influence over the process of policy formation, even as ordinary citizens.¹¹³ Individuals who possess a sense of political efficacy are significantly more inclined to actively participate in political affairs.¹¹⁴ Political efficacy can be classified into two categories: internal efficacy and external efficacy. Internal efficacy refers to an individual's personal perception of their understanding and ability to exert influence in the political domain. It encompasses one's beliefs about their own competence to comprehend and effectively engage in political matters. External efficacy refers to the perception of how effectively governmental

¹¹⁰ Sahay, S. (1998). *Women and Empowerment: Approaches and strategies* (pp. 3–9). Discovery Publishing House.

¹¹¹ Iwanaga, K. (Ed.). (2008). *Women's political participation and representation in Asia: Obstacles and challenges*, 2 (pp. 1–22). Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences Press.

¹¹² Atti, V. (2021). *Individual and motivational factors affecting women's political participation*. In *Women voters in Indian elections* (pp. 34–58). Routledge.

¹¹³ Margaret Conway. (1991) *Political Participation in the United States*, Washington: A Division of Congressional Quarterly Inc, p.33.

¹¹⁴ Wu, C. (2003). Psycho-Political Correlates of Political Efficacy The Case of the 1994 New Orleans Mayoral Election. *Journal of Black Studies*, 33(6), 729–760. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934703033006002>

agencies and organisations meet the expectations of citizens. External efficacy relates to ‘beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands’.¹¹⁵

Political trust influences voting behaviour. Individuals are likely to vote when they trust the government, when they think that the election is fair or when they think that their votes matter. Nonetheless, the voter turnout declines and the approval of protest or anti-establishment alternatives is increased when they do not trust the system or when they believe that there is corruption or ineffectiveness within the system. Concisely, increased trust will mean increased voting, and decreased trust lowers turnout.¹¹⁶ The given explanation posits that persons with higher levels of trust in government institutions are more inclined to engage in electoral activities. This is because they tend to hold a good perception of government institutions and anticipate greater personal benefits from participating in politics.¹¹⁷

Political awareness and voting behaviour are closely connected, because people who are more informed about political issues, parties, and candidates are generally more likely to vote.¹¹⁸ When people understand how government decisions affect their lives, how important elections are, and how political processes work, they will be more confident and willing to get involved in politics. Conversely, low political awareness has the tendency to cause confusion,

¹¹⁵ Sullivan, J., & Riedel, E. (2001). Efficacy: political. In *Elsevier eBooks* (pp. 4353–4356). <https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-08-043076-7/01137-2>

¹¹⁶ Grönlund, K., & Setälä, M. (2007). Political Trust, Satisfaction and Voter Turnout. *Comparative European Politics*, 5(4), 400–422. <https://doi.org/10.1057/PALGRAVE.CEP.6110113>

¹¹⁷ Ouattara, E., & Steenvoorden, E. (2023). The Elusive Effect of Political Trust on Participation: Participatory Resource or (Dis) incentive? *Political Studies*, 72(4), 1269–1287. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217231194820>

¹¹⁸ Zaller, J. (1990). Political awareness, elite opinion leadership, and the mass survey response. *Social Cognition*, 8(1), 125–153. <https://doi.org/10.1521/SOCO.1990.8.1.125>

lack of interest or the perception that voting does not matter, which leads to reduced voter turnout.¹¹⁹ In simple terms, the more aware people are about politics, the more they tend to vote.

Political interest and voting behaviour are strongly linked, because people who are more interested in politics pay closer attention to issues, parties, and elections, which motivates them to vote.¹²⁰ Increased political interest leads to curiosity, interest, and a feeling of being part of the wider society and hence more likely to vote. Conversely, when political interest is low, there is usually lack of interest and engagement, which translates to low voter turnout.¹²¹ In simple words, the more interested people are in politics, the more likely they are to vote.

Party Identification: Personal and emotional attachment to political parties contributes significantly to voting behaviour since there is always tendency to vote in support of their own party regardless of party actions and policies.¹²² The identification to the party refers to the emotional attachment an individual develops towards a political party and in the majority of cases this attachment is created during an early age by the family or the society one inhabits. This attachment usually grows stronger over time, regardless of specific policies or issues.¹²³ After the Pulwama attack in India, emotional politics became very effective, as people's anger and grief turned into strong support for the BJP government, while rational debate and

¹¹⁹ Nordin, M. (2014). Do Voters Vote in Line with their Policy Preferences?—The Role of Information. *CESifo Economic Studies*, 60(4), 681–721. <https://doi.org/10.1093/CESIFO/IFU012>

¹²⁰ Zaller, J. (1990). Political awareness, elite opinion leadership, and the mass survey response. *Social Cognition*, 8(1), 125–153. <https://doi.org/10.1521/SOCO.1990.8.1.125>

¹²¹ Block, R. (2010). *Some like it hot: Towards a political climate explanation of racial differences in political interest* (pp. 147–156). Palgrave Macmillan, New York. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230114340_10

¹²² Dalton, R. J. (2016). Party identification and its implications. *Oxford research encyclopedia of politics*. Retrieved 12 September, 2025, from <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-72>.

¹²³ Sniderman, P. M., & Stiglitz, E. H. (2012). The reputational premium: A theory of party identification and policy reasoning (pp.12-33). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691154145.003.0002>

discussion were pushed aside.¹²⁴ Political parties such as BJP exploited this emotional attachment to ensure voters remain loyal to them even when their agenda contravenes ideals such as secularism.¹²⁵ The BJP won the 2019 election because its followers were populist and had strong religious and populist ideas, which is comparable to what happens with extreme right populism throughout the world.¹²⁶ Voting behaviour is thus influenced by one's emotional and personal attachments to political parties.¹²⁷

Personality and Candidate Orientation: The orientation of a candidate or charismatic personality of party leaders can indeed be a decisive element in influencing voter's choices, particularly when traditional cues such as party allegiance, group association, and group identification are lacking or non-existent. David G. Lawrence highlights that candidate orientation, meaning how people see a candidate's personal qualities for the presidency, is important in understanding voting behaviour, especially when party loyalty or issue-based factors do not explain voter choices.¹²⁸ In Western Europe, charismatic leaders of populist radical right parties strongly influence voter support, where people's opinions of the leader often matter more than traditional party ideologies in shaping voting behaviour.¹²⁹ In the U.S. charismatic leaders such as Kennedy, Reagan, and Obama who have played a significant role in

¹²⁴ Mahajan, G. (2023). Cementing emotions: The new reasoning of majoritarian politics. In *Passionate politics* (pp. 208-216). Manchester University Press eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526157751.00032>

¹²⁵ Mathur, V. (2023). 'Modi'-fied Beliefs: Assessing cognitive dissonance in populist voting behaviour in India. *South Asia Journal of South Asian Studies*, 46(5), 1028–1048. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2023.2218688>

¹²⁶ Han, J. (2024). The Great Transition Towards Populism in Indian Politics: Populist Attitudes and Populist Radical Right (PRR) Voting in the 2019 Indian General Election. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 12(2), 183-203. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23210230241289448>

¹²⁷ Thomassen, J., & Rosema, M. (2009). *Party identification revisited. Political parties and partisanship: Social identity and individual attitudes*, 42–59.

¹²⁸ Lawrence, D. G. (1978). Candidate Orientation, Vote Choice, & the Quality of the American Electorate. *Polity*, 11(2), 229–246. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3234444>

¹²⁹ Michel, E., Garzia, D., Ferreira da Silva, F., & De Angelis, A. (2020). Leader Effects and Voting for the Populist Radical Right in Western Europe. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 26(3), 273–295. <https://doi.org/10.1111/SPSR.12404>

winning presidential elections by using their charisma to connect with voters and sway election results.¹³⁰ In India, charismatic leadership and candidate orientation are found to be important factors influencing the voting behaviour of the voters, as evident from the Modi Wave. Narendra Modi's popularity has been the spark for the BJP's strong victories in 2014 and 2019, strengthening the potential of right-wing politics and demonstrating how much of his persona dictates voter decisions.¹³¹ Leaders like Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Vajpayee, and Modi clearly show how a leader's charisma strongly influences the voting behaviour of people.¹³²

Issue Orientation: Voters tend to make their electoral decisions based on certain issues that affect them directly, either at the national level (unemployment, inflation, corruption and security) or the local level (roads, water supply, electricity and schools). People are likely to support candidates or parties they believe can address these current and local problems effectively.¹³³ Pocketbook voting or making electoral choice based on one's own personal economic situation played huge role in deciding the result of 18th Parliamentary Elections in India in 2024. Voters tend to vote for ruling party candidates when they feel that the ruling party government has been successful in running the economy, including providing employment opportunities and controlling inflation.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Su, Z. (2024). Charismatic leadership, and its detrimental role in American presidential elections. *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media*, 36(1), 97–103. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/36/20240431>

¹³¹ Rai, P. (2023). Political legitimization and charismatic routinization of Modi 'Wave' in India. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 60(2), 771–785 <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096231179655>

¹³² Akhter, Z., & Sheikh, Y. A. (2014). Determinants of voting behaviour in India: Theoretical perspective. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 4(8), 104–108.

¹³³ Alam, M. S. (2024). Pocketbook Voting in India's 18th Parliamentary Elections (2024). *Studies in Indian Politics*, 12(2), 251-264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23210230241289454>

¹³⁴ Khemani, S. (2001). Decentralization and Accountability: Are Voters More Vigilant in Local than in National Elections? In *World Bank, Washington, DC eBooks* (2557). <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-2557>

Sub-Nationalism: Sub-nationalism is a significant determinant in voting behaviour because of ethnic diversity, communalism and regionalism in India. Sub-nationalism also cause people to elect regional parties that advance local or ethnic interests at the expense of nation building.¹³⁵ In some cases, secessionist parties even demand to have election boycotts or coerce voters not to vote in favour of some parties. Sometimes, secessionist groups like the Akali Dal factions, Naga Nationalist Organisation, Gorkha League, Jharkhand Party, AASU, and AAGSP in Assam used local slogans that stirred people's regional or ethnic feelings and influenced them to vote along those lines.¹³⁶

Election Campaigns: In India, the election campaigns are complicated procedures in which different political parties employ different methods to influence the voters to win the vote of the undecided voters or 'floating' voters. These campaigns are characterized by a blend of traditional and modern techniques, including mass meetings, personal contacts, poster war, film star speeches and the use of media such as TV, radio, and newspapers.¹³⁷ In India, the most important period for election campaign is the "poll-eve" stage, when the identity, leadership or development promises become the centre of attraction for the undecided voters.¹³⁸

Religion: Religion has prominent influence on the voting behaviour in India as the voters mostly vote for the party and candidate that they think will safeguard their religious identity and interests. Political parties also use religious emotions in electoral campaigns to gain votes

¹³⁵ Gochhayat, A. (2014). Regionalism and sub-regionalism: A theoretical framework with special reference to India. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 8(1), 10–26. <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJPSIR2013.0611s>

¹³⁶ Hazarika, B. (2015). Voting behaviour in India and its determinants. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 20(10), 22-25.

¹³⁷ Wyatt, A. (2021). Political parties, rallies, and propaganda in India. In *Edward Elgar Publishing eBooks* (pp. 347–358). <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789906424.00031>

¹³⁸ Vasudevan, S. (2019). Diminishing the effectiveness of vote buying: Experimental evidence from a persuasive radio campaign in India (pp.1-67). *Unpublished Manuscript, Columbia University*. https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/research-paper/Diminishing-the-Effect-of-Vote-Buying_Jan2019.pdf

making religion a great instrument to determine voting behaviour.¹³⁹ The presence of various communal parties such as the Muslim league, the Akali Dal, the Hindu Maha Sabha, Shiv Senas etc. has further added to the politicisation of religion. In India, religious pluralism has widely influenced the political system as parties strategize their campaigns based on religion and often nominate candidates from the majority religion to garner maximum votes. This has contributed significantly to the electoral successes of BJP in particular, such as in their growing number of seats in the Lok Sabha from the end of the 20th century.¹⁴⁰

Language: The use of language is an effective criterion for political parties to reach out to diverse constituencies across India, and it is crucial to electoral campaigns in the country. At the national and regional levels, parties in India use language to articulate their stance in the political arena, think strategically, vote in numbers, work out policies and convert the various registered constituent elements of the constituencies into dominant vote banks.¹⁴¹ The fact that states were reorganised on linguistic basis in India in 1956 is evidence of the significance of language in Indian politics. It led to the rise of regional parties such as DMK in Tamil Nadu, Akali Dal in Punjab or TDP in Andhra Pradesh who gained their power from language and regionalism.¹⁴² People's deep emotional attachment to their languages makes them easily influenced by language-related issues, and these linguistic interests often play a strong role in shaping their voting behaviour.

¹³⁹ Kumar, S. (2009). Religious Practices among Indian Hindus: Does that Influence Their Political Choices? *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 10(3), 313–332. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1468109909990090>

¹⁴⁰ Sahu, S. K. (2002). *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective: Religion and Politics in India* (pp. 241–266). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511814402.012s>

¹⁴¹ Patteti, R. S., & Rajani, D. (2024). Speech and strategy: unpacking political power in india through the language of power. *ShodhKosh Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 5(5). <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.3001>

¹⁴² Hardgrave, R. L. (1983). The Northeast, the Punjab, and the regionalization of Indian politics. *Asian Survey*, 23(11), 1171–1181. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2644366>

Money Factor: Money plays an important role in determining the voting behaviour in India. During elections, political parties and candidates spend large amounts of money campaigning, mobilising supporters and sometimes distributing cash, gifts or welfare benefits to electors.¹⁴³ In many economically weaker and rural areas, financial incentives can have a significant impact on voter decisions, particularly where poverty makes people more susceptible. Studies have shown money power not only influences electoral competition but also corrupts free and fair elections by creating unequal opportunities for candidates.¹⁴⁴ Thus, money has become a significant factor in shaping electoral behaviour in India.

Ideology: Ideology is the major determinant of voter behaviour. Electors tend to vote for parties whose ideological views of nationalism, secularism, socialism or liberalism are similar to their own values and beliefs. Some voters vote for parties that have a strong nationalist focus while others prefer parties that are concerned with issues such as social justice, welfare programmes, or secular values. This shows how different ideologies attract different groups of voters.¹⁴⁵ The steady rise in BJP is a testament to the power of ideology. For Hindus, voting for BJP has become a retraction of Hindu Nationalism (Hindutva) in a bid to secure their favour by reinforcing Hindu cultural identity at the expense of minorities.¹⁴⁶ Thus, ideology offers a guiding framework for the voters to identify with parties that they feel represent their interests and their identity.

¹⁴³ Kumar, A. (2024). The role of money in India's elections: How effective is the political finance regime? *Millennial Asia*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09763996241246054>

¹⁴⁴ Vaishnav, M. (2017). *When Crime Pays: Money and muscle in Indian politics*. https://openlibrary.org/books/OL27236016M/When_crime_pays

¹⁴⁵ Chhibber, P. K., & Verma, R. (2018). *Ideology and identity: The changing party systems of India*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190623876.001.0001>

¹⁴⁶ Pinatih, I. D. S. (2024). Identity politics and political parties in India. *Nation State Journal of International Studies*, 7(1), 71–85. <https://doi.org/10.24076/nsjis.v7i1.1587>

1.3 Women's Voting Behavior: A Historical Perspective

The study of voting behaviour of women in western democracies has a historical underpinning that dated back to the suffrage movements originating in the 19th century. Women voting right in New Zealand and United States is a landmark event in women suffrage activities across the world. In the year 1893, New Zealand became the first country to enfranchise women and this was possible because of a strong coalition between Maori women, coherent working-class women, and settler feminists opposing the institutions of Victorianism and championing universal citizenship.¹⁴⁷ Women suffrage was initially granted in the western state and territories of the United States such as Wyoming, Utah, Colorado and Idaho with Wyoming being the first territory or state to grant women suffrage way back in 1869.¹⁴⁸ However, the states in the east were less sensitive, and it was not before 1915 that New York voted on women suffrage.¹⁴⁹ Eventually, the 19th Amendment was finally ratified in 1920 and women could finally vote in the U.S. after so many years of activism and advocacy.¹⁵⁰

The achievements of the women's suffrage in New Zealand and the United States became influential examples that guided and motivated other countries to empower women with voting rights. This led to the enfranchisement of women through countries such as Denmark in 1915, France in 1944 and Belgium in 1948 which in many instances was done as part of a

¹⁴⁷ Curtin, J. (2018). New Zealand: A country of firsts in women's political rights. In *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks* (pp. 129–142). https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59074-9_9

¹⁴⁸ McCammon, H. J., & Campbell, K. E. (2001). Winning the vote in the West: The political successes of the women's suffrage movements, 1866-1919. *Gender & Society*, 15(1), 55-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124301015001004>

¹⁴⁹ Ulrich, L. T. (2020). Woman Suffrage West to East: The View from Puck , 1915. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society Held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge*, 164(1), 64–87. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pro.2020.a915021>

¹⁵⁰ Kenny, L. W. (2004). Votes for women. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 919–921). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-306-47828-4_208; Mead, R. (2004). *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914*. New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814761175.001.0001>

political transformation.¹⁵¹ The suffrage movements in these regions did not solely imply the right to vote, but also the effort to redefine the place of woman in the society and to revolutionise the established authorities.¹⁵² The women suffrage movement in Europe brought a major democratic change thus resulting in more social spending because women could finally use their voting rights.¹⁵³

The women suffrage in Europe significantly influenced the research of women's voting behavior by demonstrating the gendered character of citizenship, challenging the dominance of men in discourse and promoting the complete participation of women in the political life, an agenda that was not fully met even after the implementation of the right to vote.¹⁵⁴ The development of female suffrage helped researchers not only focus upon famous leaders and activists. They started taking notice of the ordinary women who significantly contributed to the movement and acknowledged that without being able to attend to everyday women it is impossible to gain voting rights. Researchers also began to examine the broad perspective of the suffrage movement with social and political considerations in mind like the responsibility and involvement of various communities, cultures and politics. Such broader approach allows one to comprehend how the women suffrage was achieved better, as it was not merely a collective initiative on the part of the leaders but the action of many people who were motivated

¹⁵¹ Goodwin, J. L. (1999). Bigger than a Ballot Box. *Journal of Women's History*, 11(1), 219–228. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2003.0095>

¹⁵² Lamont, V. (2020). Woman suffrage in the American West: Emma Ghent Curtis's the administratrix. *Legacy a Journal of American Women Writers*, 37(2), 309–310. <https://doi.org/10.1353/leg.2020.0032>

¹⁵³ Aidt, T. S., & Dallal, B. (2007). Female voting power: the contribution of women's suffrage to the growth of social spending in Western Europe (1869–1960). *Public Choice*, 134(3–4), 391–417. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-007-9234-1>

¹⁵⁴ Rubio-Marín, R. (2014). The achievement of female suffrage in Europe: on women's citizenship. *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, 12(1), 4–34. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ICON/MOT067>

by diverse social forces operating in play.¹⁵⁵ This shift of perspectives assisted scholars to realize the impact of women voting rights on elections and government decision making. For example, early studies showed that women didn't just copy how their husbands voted. Instead, they would opt to join parties that would take care of their benefits and suffrage, and in many cases would favour policies that would distribute resources more equally.¹⁵⁶ Suffrage movement has also helped in enlarging the understanding of feminism and public policy in general since it intersected with issues of classes, ethnicity and regional disparities, which affected the political process in Europe.¹⁵⁷

Maurice Duverger analysed voting trends of women in the middle of the 20th century during which he found that women showed lower voter turnout and tended to vote conservative as compared to men, a position which has been reiterated and further extended by later research. His work, commissioned by UNESCO, was one of the few large-scale studies of the era, in particular looking at the political role of women in France, Germany, Norway and Yugoslavia. This conservatism tendency among female voters proved truly influential enough to shape the political situation in Europe in the post-World War II period, as there was no chance of establishing Communist governments in such nations as France or Germany.¹⁵⁸

Nevertheless, the women behavior in politics has changed with time. In Western Europe, the decline in support among women towards leftist parties started in the 1970s, and this has carried on into the new millennium, though the pace and degree of the shift differs between

¹⁵⁵ Mayhall, L. E. N. (2000). Reclaiming the political: Women and the social history of suffrage in Great Britain, France, and the United States. *Journal of Women's History*, 12(1), 172–181. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2000.0023>

¹⁵⁶ Morgan-Collins, M. (2016). First Women at the Polls: Examination of women's early voting behaviour. *London School of Economics and Political Science* [Thesis]. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/46520075.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ Jenson, J., & Lovenduski, J. (1987). Women and European Politics: Contemporary Feminism and Public Policy. *Contemporary Sociology*, 16(5), 673. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2069777>

¹⁵⁸ Devaud, M. S. (1968). Political participation of Western European women. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 375(1), 61–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271626837500109>

nations.¹⁵⁹ Despite this shift, women are still not as active in politics as men, and they can be involved in it depending on the factors of party identification, political efficacy, as well as aspects of group identity like gender or religious consciousness.¹⁶⁰ Also, women representation in legislative capacities remains low, yet women make up a considerable percentage of the voting population.¹⁶¹ Duverger was right in his early observations of conservative voting tendencies of women in his time, but women have significantly changed in the way they act politically due to associated changes in society and the changing functionality of women in politics.¹⁶²

The well-known studies on the voting behavior such as “The American Voter” by Campbell and his associates laid the groundwork for understanding voting behaviour, but did not explicitly cover the problem of gender and socioeconomic status.¹⁶³ Nonetheless, there have been recent research findings that highlighted the importance of the SES factors. According to Miki Caul Kittilson, cross-nation gender differences in political behaviour remain, but the differences are assessed by resources, economy, socialization, and political context, which

¹⁵⁹ Giger, N. (2009). Towards a modern gender gap in Europe?: A comparative analysis of voting behavior in 12 countries. *Social Science Journal*, 46(3), 474–492. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SOSCIJ.2009.03.002> ; Abendschon, S., & Steinmetz, S. (2014). The gender gap in voting revisited: Women’s Party preferences in a European context. *Social Politics International Studies in Gender State & Society*, 21(2), 315–344. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxu009>

¹⁶⁰ Hughes, D. L., & Peek, C. W. (1986). Ladies against women: Explaining the political participation of traditional- and modern-role females. *Political Behavior*, 8(2), 158–174. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00987181> ; Jennings, M. K., & Farah, B. (2023). Gender, levels of political thinking and political action. In *Routledge eBooks* (pp. 156–159). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003371502-18>

¹⁶¹ Suarmini, N. W., Nuswantara, K., Zain, I., Bhawika, G. W., & Sani, N. A. (2021). Relationship between Women-Voters characteristics and participation in politics to their preferences. *Jurnal Analisa Sosiologi*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.20961/jas.v10i0.46205>

¹⁶² Kittilson, M. (2016). Gender and Political Behavior. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Retrieved 9 Aug. 2023, from <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-71>.

¹⁶³ Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E. (1961). The American voter. *American Journal of Psychology*, 74(4), 648. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1419686>

interacts with other identities to influence voting behaviour.¹⁶⁴ Socioeconomic status (SES) of women is an important predictor of their political preferences due to the fact that higher SES offers them more access to education and resources where they can be more politically active and lower SES limits accessibility and their political participation.¹⁶⁵ Women with low SES are particularly affected by lack of resources and fewer formal means of participation in politics and thus, they rely on informal social circles that can be manipulated to promote voting behavior in different directions, unlike women with higher SES.¹⁶⁶ Studies have revealed that the more a person is rich the more is the level of political participation be it in terms of cognitive participation, expressive participation, electoral participation or any other forms of political participation.¹⁶⁷

Political orientations are a key determinant in the U.S. in the voting behavior of women as compared to socioeconomic and situational factors dominant in Britain and Australia.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, the study by Welch and Hibbing indicates that women tend to respond more to sociotropic economic voting i.e., are more concerned with the economic welfare instead of their individual finance situations as compared to voting behaviour in men.¹⁶⁹ A study by Stewart and Scott on Black women shows that socioeconomic status (SES) is a significant determinant of

¹⁶⁴ Kittilson, M. C. (2018). Gender and electoral behavior. In *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks* (pp. 21–32). https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59074-9_2

¹⁶⁵ Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., Lundberg, K. B., & McKee, S. (2017). The politics of socioeconomic status: how socioeconomic status may influence political attitudes and engagement. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 18, 11–14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.06.018>

¹⁶⁶ Wemlinger, E., & Kropf, M. (2013). Not a Suburban Soccer Mom? Political Engagement Among Lower SES Women. *Poverty & Public Policy*, 5(1), 48–66. <https://doi.org/10.1002/POP4.15>

¹⁶⁷ Beeghley, L. (1986). Social class and political participation: A review and an explanation. *Sociological Forum*, 1(3), 496–513. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01123942>

¹⁶⁸ Studlar, D. T., McAllister, I., & Hayes, B. C. (1998). Explaining the Gender Gap in Voting: A Cross-National Analysis. *Social Science Quarterly*, 79(4), 779–798. <https://abdn.pure.elsevier.com/en/publications/explaining-the-gender-gap-in-voting-a-cross-national-analysis>

¹⁶⁹ Welch, S., & Hibbing, J. R. (1992). Financial Conditions, Gender, and Voting in American National Elections. *The Journal of Politics*, 54(1), 197–213. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2131650>

political ideology and preferences with women in more economically advantageous communities often developing different political attitudes and ideals than women in more impoverished communities, and therefore SES is a major factor in explaining the distinctions in the same race.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, in her analysis of the 2015 British General Election, Anna Sanders notes that women give more emphasis to their class-based economic policies over gender policies and these preferences vary depending on the different life stages, which implies that socioeconomic situation is a key determinant in the formation of voting behaviour.¹⁷¹

The above evidence combined clearly depicts that the SES of women is not only relevant in determining their access to political information and resources, it also influences their political interests and engagement, with women of higher SES more likely to be politically concerned with discussing other policy areas than their lower SES counterparts.¹⁷² In general, such studies confirm the importance of SES to influence the voting behavior of women and further research is necessary to fully understand how these variables interact to exert their influence on the political arena.

1.4 Women's Voting Behaviour in India: An Overview

The study of women's voting behavior in India has significantly changed over the decades and is marked with a few milestones. To begin with, the Indian independence movement and the consequent constitutional provision of equal political rights preconditioned

¹⁷⁰ Stewart, J. L., & Scott, J. S. (2024). Are we all alright? The influence of socioeconomic status on Black women's political beliefs and policy preferences by region. *The Journal of Race Ethnicity and Politics*, 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2024.8>

¹⁷¹ Sanders, A. (2022). The Impact of Gendered Policies on Women's Voting Behavior: Evidence from the 2015 British General Election. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 44(2), 168–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477x.2022.2068118>

¹⁷² Quintelier, E., & Hooghe, M. (2012). The impact of socio-economic status on political participation. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 273–289). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-30068-4_14

the entry of women into politics.¹⁷³ The first election was held in 1951-52 in an attempt to integrate women into the electoral process, although they were represented in few numbers.¹⁷⁴ The period 1917-1937 was remarkable since women in India were pushing strongly to have their say in political matters, which became the basis of the subsequent positive developments.¹⁷⁵ After independence, local governance reforms like the Panchayati Raj system in the 1990s saw a great rise in the number of women in local governance giving them a voice and a space to lead.¹⁷⁶ Despite such developments, representation of women in the higher offices has been uneven with the success stories recorded at the local government level but no changes at the national end.¹⁷⁷ Gender disparity in voting has long been a longstanding problem, but women electoral participation has risen dramatically in recent years due to various factors, such as greater level of literacy and media penetration.¹⁷⁸ The introduction of electoral reform like female reservation in the assembly have been of paramount importance in promoting their political participation.¹⁷⁹ Nevertheless, there are still some challenges such as stereotypes in society, institutional discrimination and disregarding feminist concerns in the agenda of society.¹⁸⁰ Despite these issues, it is now being realized that the voting power of women cannot

¹⁷³ Saxena, S., & Srivastava, A. (2024). Political participation of women in India. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.16339>

¹⁷⁴ Shani, O. (2021). Women and the Vote: Registration, Representation and Participation in the Run-Up to India's First Elections, 1951–52. *South Asia-Journal of South Asian Studies*, 44(2), 228–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2021.1882746>

¹⁷⁵ Basu, A. (2008). Women's Struggle for the Vote: 1917-1937. *Indian Historical Review*, 35(1), 128–143. <https://doi.org/10.1177/037698360803500106>

¹⁷⁶ Siingh, N. S. (2024). Female political participation in India. *Journal of Advances and Scholarly Researches in Allied Education*, 21(5), 255–262. <https://doi.org/10.29070/cqj4sx18>

¹⁷⁷ Spary, C. (2024). Women in Indian politics. In *Oxford University Press eBooks* (pp. 305–326). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198894261.013.20>

¹⁷⁸ Kumar, S. (2020). A paradigm shift in women's turnout and representation in Indian elections. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 181–208). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36012-2_9 ; Kumar, S., & Gupta, P. (2015). Changing Patterns of Women's Turnout in Indian Elections: *Studies in Indian Politics*, 3(1), 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2321023015575210>

¹⁷⁹ Saxena, S., & Srivastava, A. (2024). Political participation of women in India. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.16339>

¹⁸⁰ Deo, N. (2012). Running From Elections: Indian Feminism and Electoral Politics. *India Review*, 11(1), 46–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2012.649126>

be ignored, and their participation is what is going to make democracy much more inclusive to all.¹⁸¹

Women's involvement in electoral politics is influenced by their socioeconomic status as well as their level of independence and freedom.¹⁸² The socio-economic status is significant in explaining voter's political consciousness, exposure to political propaganda, political engagement, affiliation with castes, a sense of personal efficacy in politics, and exposure to modernisation.¹⁸³ Party identity or allegiance, socio-economic status, caste loyalty, leadership identity, exposure to political communication, and psychological attitudes toward society all have an impact on Indian voting behaviour.¹⁸⁴

India women are marginalized in politics because they are hindered by problems that are related to family pressures, social-cultural norms in the society, gender stereotyping, discriminatory culture and institutional barriers. This is mainly due to the fact that they are poorly represented in politics, as a result of being socially inferior in the male dominated society.¹⁸⁵ The conservative society in India is not inclined to listen to the feeling of women and impose strict norms that restrict the manifestation of women in social life. This is the reason male members discourage female members to pursue anything beyond the household activities. Hence women continue to be marginalized in social, economic and political lives.¹⁸⁶ Women in India regardless of religion, social status, level of education, mobility status, and location

¹⁸¹ Spary, C. (2024). Women in Indian politics. In *Oxford University Press eBooks* (pp. 305–326). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198894261.013.20>

¹⁸² Rai, P. (2017). Women's participation in electoral politics in India: Silent feminisation. *South Asia Research*, 37(1), 58–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728016675529>

¹⁸³ Kini, N. G. S. (1974). The city voter in India: a study of 1967 general elections in Nagpur. In *Abhinav Publications eBooks* (pp.1-91). <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA29327469>

¹⁸⁴ Hardgrave, R. L., Eldersveld, S. J., & Ahmed, B. (1979). Citizens and Politics: Mass political behavior in India. *The Western Political Quarterly*, 32(2), 245. <https://doi.org/10.2307/448203>

¹⁸⁵ Randall, V. (1982). Women's Political Behaviour. In *Women and Politics* (pp. 35–68). Palgrave, London. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-16880-4_3

¹⁸⁶ Shukla, D. M. (1987). Political Socialisation and Women Voters: A Case Study of Kodarma Constituency. Anmol Publications. *eBooks*. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA37215802>

mostly lack political power to make any political decisions .The patriarchal nature of society in India is deeply ingrained and majorly restricts the democratic rights of women.¹⁸⁷ In addition to socio-cultural environment and household responsibilities, women's lack of interest in politics, lack of awareness and the lack of access to education are also among the hindrances women face in order to become active participants in politics.¹⁸⁸

In India, women voters in rural and the urban areas differ significantly in their voting behaviour because of socio-economic and cultural differences. Traditional gender roles and socio-economic constraints usually discourage women who are probably active in rural communities from political participation. The culture and the patriarchal system limits the freedom of movement and choice which ultimately affects the involvement of women in politics.¹⁸⁹ The 73rd Indian Constitutional Amendment mandating the representation of women in local governance, has been very helpful in breaking these traditional norms by providing reservation to women and thus increasing the involvement of women in politics specifically those in rural area.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the disparities still exist because of the lower education levels and economic independence, which is critical to improving the political agency of women.¹⁹¹ On the other hand, urban women are comparatively more politically active since they

¹⁸⁷ Kumar, S. (Ed.). (2021). *Women voters in Indian elections: Changing trends and emerging patterns*. Taylor & Francis.

¹⁸⁸ Agarwal, B. (1997). Re-sounding the alert-gender, resources and community action. *World Development*, 25(9), 1373–1380. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(97\)00062-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(97)00062-4) ; Banerjee, S. (2003). Gender and nationalism: The masculinization of Hinduism and female political participation in India. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 26(2), 167–179. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395\(03\)00019-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(03)00019-0); Kumar, S., & Gupta, P. (2015). Changing patterns of women's turnout in Indian elections. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 3(1), 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2321023015575210>

¹⁸⁹ Vissandjée, B., Abdool, S., Apale, A., & Dupéré, S. (2006). Women's political participation in rural India. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 13(3), 425–450. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097152150601300305> ; Bhat, Z. A. (2014). Gender Bias and Socio-Economic Problems of women in India. *Abhinav National Monthly Refereed Journal of Research in Arts & Education*, 3(4), 8–13. <https://shorturl.at/N4nEE>

¹⁹⁰ Dasgupta, S. (2022). Female Political Representation and Gender Attitudes in Rural India. *Journal of Developing Areas*, 56(4), 137–149. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jda.2022.0069>

¹⁹¹ Siingh, N. S. (2024). Female political participation in India. *Journal of Advances and Scholarly Researches in Allied Education*, 21(5), 255–262. <https://doi.org/10.29070/cqj4sx18> ;

are better equipped with access to education and economic opportunities. Women's education is experienced as a form of empowerment that implies enhanced bargaining power in the household and community and, therefore, is associated with increased political participation.¹⁹² Also, urban women are more exposed to the mass media and more progressive gender norms, which further contribute to their engagement in political processes.¹⁹³ Notwithstanding these developments, socio-economic inequalities, including caste and class differences, still have impact on the political participation of women in both rural and urban areas.¹⁹⁴

Gender-based discrimination in Indian political parties is widespread, evident in the limited opportunities offered to women for holding top positions and the restricted allocation of election tickets to them. Political parties have done little to empower women in politics, and the way they are constituted inhibits women from rising through the ranks.¹⁹⁵ Although there are women in leadership positions in many political parties at both the national and state levels, the overall proportion of women's representation in political parties is still significantly inadequate.¹⁹⁶ The introduction of gender quotas was suggested as one of the methods to eliminate this disparity, and although that has boosted the involvement of women in leadership positions and shaped decisions in various policies, it has never been enough to inspire women to

¹⁹² Pokale, V. D. (2020). Socio-economic & educational empowerment of rural women in india. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 7(2), 52–56. <https://www.jetir.org/view?paper=JETIRDK06019>

¹⁹³ Datta, A. (2021). Gender, Urban Spaces and Gendered Resistances: Towards Inclusive and Fear Free Cities in India. In *Reflections on 21st Century Human Habitats in India* (pp. 327–343). Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-3100-9_13

¹⁹⁴ Bhat, Z. A. (2014). Gender Bias and Socio-Economic Problems of women in India. *Abhinav National Monthly Refereed Journal of Research in Arts & Education*, 3(4), 8–13. <https://shorturl.at/N4nEE>

¹⁹⁵ Kumar, S. (Ed.). (2021). *Women voters in Indian elections: Changing trends and emerging patterns*. Taylor & Francis.

¹⁹⁶ Rai, P. (2017). Women's participation in electoral politics in India: Silent feminisation. *South Asia Research*, 37(1), 58–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728016675529> ; Parry, S. A., & Bhat, A. A. (2019). Analyzing the role of women in Indian politics and its implications for gender equality. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, 1764–1773. <https://doi.org/10.53555/v23i5/400035>

choose competition beyond the reserved seats.¹⁹⁷ Women also face many challenges like household chores, lack of finances and the risk of being defamed, which make it even harder for them to take part in politics.¹⁹⁸ Although legislative interventions and socio-economic developments have enabled greater degree of political involvement among women, there is still a need to continue such efforts.

1.5. Overview of Women's Voting Behaviour in North-East India with Special reference to Nagaland

The northeast part of India comprises of eight states namely Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim. It is a common notion that women in the states of the North Eastern Region of the nation are better off as compared to women elsewhere in India.¹⁹⁹ In Northeast India, women are key to family decision-making and play an important role in their communities, which in many cases extends to social, cultural, and economic pursuits. They also participate in community organization, conflict resolution, and informal leadership which act as indicators to their ability to govern and lead.²⁰⁰ But such instances of participation does not occur in the formal political area where their level of participation and representation is minimal. Some of the challenges that women face are male dominated party, lack of political encouragement to seek office, lack of adequate finances and the negative attitude of the society that restricts and suppresses women access to politics. This means that their participation in formal politics, such as acquisition of party ticket, taking part in

¹⁹⁷ Turnbull, B. (2021). Quotas as Opportunities and Obstacles: Revisiting Gender Quotas in India. *Politics & Gender*, 17(2), 324–348. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X19000722>

¹⁹⁸ Rai, S. (1995). Class, caste and gender - women in parliament in India. *Ids Bulletin*, 26(3), 110–116. <https://core.ac.uk/reader/43540260>

¹⁹⁹ Das, I. (2013). Status of women: North Eastern region of India versus India. *International journal of scientific and research publications*, 3(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.29322/ijsrp.org/research-paper-1301.php?rp=P13578>

²⁰⁰ Bhattacharya, J. (2018). Conflict and Peace Building: A study of women organizations of Northeast India. *12th PARIS International Conference on Marketing, Education, Humanities & Social Sciences (MEHSS-18)*, 66–70. <https://doi.org/10.17758/eirai4.f0918411>

election, or even being elected to legislative position is minimal. The difference between poor political representation and informal representation indicates that there is a gap in the system since it does not allow equal gender representation in the political process.²⁰¹

In Assam, women are discouraged from participating in politics due to social and familial impediments. They are primarily influenced by patriarchal social norms, which contributes to their subjugation and marginalisation.²⁰² Women in Assam, therefore, face an uphill struggle to achieve equal participation and representation in electoral politics due to constraints such as illiteracy, lack of experience and resources, family responsibilities, socio-cultural norms, and other factors.²⁰³ The decline in women's representation in elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly indicates that women's representation should be prioritised by regional political parties.²⁰⁴

The state of Arunachal Pradesh has an on-record rise in the number of women candidates, yet the obstructions that still define the political, social, cultural, economic, and institutional levels prevent substantive representation. Ethnicised local politics, family dominance or clan dominance, low-party endorsement, customary male councils, economic aspects and overlapping marginalities or social exclusion are the major barriers.²⁰⁵ The issue of who can challenge and the performance of women in office is influenced by social norms, gender expectations and the local practices. Ethnicity intersects these cultural forces to generate

²⁰¹ Ahmed, H. (2020). Gender divide in the political representation in north east India. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(13), 208–211. <https://doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.13.35>

²⁰² Tabassum, R. (2018). *Political participation and voting behaviour: Women and politics in the Char areas of Assam* [Ph.d Dissertation, Guwahati University]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/245569>

²⁰³ Sinha, T. (2016). Women in Electoral Politics: A study of South Assam. *International Research Journal of Interdisciplinary & Multidisciplinary Studies (IRJIMS)*, II(X), 64–69. <https://oaji.net/articles/2016/1707-1480920460.pdf>

²⁰⁴ Deka, P., Chakravartty, P. K., & Borah, K. (2022). Political representation of women in legislative assembly elections of Assam. *World Journal Of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 14(2), 559–563. <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2022.14.2.0461>

²⁰⁵ Mishra, A. (2018). Multiple Marginalities: A study of participation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions in Arunachal Pradesh. *Social Change*, 48(4), 558–574. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049085718801444>

different results within communities.²⁰⁶ Research highlights the attitudes of constant patriarchy and strict gender roles that restrict the visibility of women leaders within the population and its acceptance in Arunachal Pradesh²⁰⁷

Meghalaya follows a matrilineal system, but women still do not have equal political power. In Khasi society, politics is largely dominated by men, and women are usually sidelined in making decisions in politics.²⁰⁸ As a result, politics is still considered a male domain, and women's political roles are still insignificant, creating a system where women have very little representation²⁰⁹ The Khasi's still regard conventional political institutions as men's domains and are hesitant to relinquish political power. Women's poor electoral representation is mostly attributed to lack of participation in politics and lack of political literacy.²¹⁰

Manipur, similar to many regions of India, has female citizens bound to patriarchal standards that restrict their agency concerning choices made at home and in the political arena.²¹¹ The socio-cultural values, community based organisation, party organisation, ethnic polarisation, candidate's influence and kinship all impact voters voting behaviour.²¹² Another

²⁰⁶ Yadav, A. K. (2017). Tribal Women Experiencing Panchayati Raj Institution in India with Special Reference to Arunachal Pradesh. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 22(01), 46–50. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2201024650>

²⁰⁷ Pegu, K., & Sharma, O. P. (2023). A Study to find the level of participation of elected women representative in Zila Parishad of Tawang District, Arunachal Pradesh. *RESEARCH REVIEW International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 8(3), 93–105. <https://doi.org/10.31305/rrijm.2023.v08.n03.012>

²⁰⁸ Soanes, R. (2022). Gender and Political Participation in the Traditional Political System of the Village: A Study on the Khasi tribe of Mawkynrew village in Meghalaya. *The Oriental Anthropologist a Bi-annual International Journal of the Science of Man*, 22(2), 213–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09725558x211063737>

²⁰⁹ Lyngdoh, M. P. R. (1995). *Women in Meghalaya and the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1992: Problems and Expectations*. In Workshop on Panchayati Raj organized by NERC-ICSSR.

²¹⁰ Khatso, K. (2004). *Khasi women and electoral politics: A study of the Greater Shillong Area*. [Doctoral Dissertation, NEHU].

²¹¹ Rojibala, N. (2021). Meetei women in the political sphere of Manipur. *Antyajaa Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 6(1–2), 99–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/24556327211068288> ; Sophia, A. (2021). Women's empowerment in Manipur. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 4(1), 25–39. <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1991.04.01.247>

²¹² Singh, R. P. (1981). *Electoral politics in Manipur*. Concept Publishing Company (pp. 116-159). https://ia801500.us.archive.org/29/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.119111/2015.119111.Electoral-Politics-In-Manipur_text.pdf

important factor of voting is ethnic identity, where there are high ethnic voting patterns in the hills of Manipur, which suggests high partisanship attachments due to conflicts in the past.²¹³ The socio-economic position of Manipuri women is marked by their prevalence in the local trade and increased entrepreneurship but at the same time still experiencing discrimination, and lacking access to good resources, including land possession to boost their social-economic status.²¹⁴ Manipuri women cast their vote as simple voters whose votes are influenced by non-political factors like the family.²¹⁵ As a result, it is claimed that women's participation in decision-making should be enhanced not simply via legislation, but through a variety of empowerment programmes.²¹⁶

The politics of Mizoram has a unique history of its own, described by a blend of socio-cultural surroundings such as the influence of colonialism and Christianity, which have had a bearing on gender roles as well as political participation.²¹⁷ Despite this, Mizoram has always been patriarchal in its social set up with men enjoying more power and influence in the society. They have therefore treated women as inferior to men and relegated them to only domestic affairs. They also have a low representation in political campaigns or candidature in assuming a position in the public office.²¹⁸ This problem is further worsened because tribal states such as Mizoram are exempted in some clauses of the constitution amendment that targets reserving

²¹³ Haokip, T. (2020). Voting behaviour in deeply divided societies: partisanship and ethnic voting in the hills of Manipur. *Asian Ethnicity*, 23(3), 427–441. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2020.1799750>

²¹⁴ Thingbaijam, L., & Das, K. K. (2015). Status of Women in Manipur: A Comparative look. *Economic Affairs*, 60(4), 761–768. <https://doi.org/10.5958/0976-4666.2015.00108.4>

²¹⁵ Ningshen, M. (2010). *Political Participation of Tangkhul naga women in Manipur 1972 -2005* [Ph.d Thesis, Manipur University]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/39533>

²¹⁶ Singh, O. K. (2009). PARTICIPATION OF MANIPURI WOMEN IN ELECTIONS A Critical Analysis. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 70(3), 897–906. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42742770>

²¹⁷ Chakraborty, A. S. (2008). Emergence of Women from ‘Private’ to ‘Public’: A Narrative of Power Politics from Mizoram. *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, 9(3), 27–45. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1317&context=jiws>

²¹⁸ Lalfakawmi, B. (2019). *Political participation of women in Mizoram* [Ph.d Thesis, Mizoram university]. <https://mzuir.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/973/1/B.Lalfakawmi%20Ph.D%20Thesis%20%28Pol.Sc%29.pdf>

seats to women in local-level self-governments, as traditional institutions usually dominate local governance, denying women political empowerment.²¹⁹ The voting trend in Mizoram is largely determined by socio-religious factors as religion and influential people have a big stake on the people. Some of the issues that influence the decisions of the electorate are the abilities and integrity of those running as candidates; affiliations that the voters might have with the resident locals and their ethnic origins. Furthermore, the family and clan affiliations as well as the opinion of the people shaped by numerous social, economic, and political factors is also dominant. Moreover, the way politicians and issues are covered and presented by media can have either more or less impact on the choice, made by citizens.²²⁰ The need to involve women in the decision making process is essential to the realization of gender equality and empowerment of democratic institutions since the diversified opinions expressed by the women would make the policies much responsive and sustainable growth.²²¹

In Sikkim, the party systems, the absence of decision-making power, and the poor supporting systems are some of the barriers women experience.²²² Limited education, assets, and resources to run campaigns make women less competent as candidates and able to

²¹⁹ Lalneihzovi. (2017). Political Empowerment of Women in Mizoram. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 60(3), 649-659. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019556120140322>

²²⁰ Chhuanawma, L. H (2016). Determinant of voting behaviour in Mizoram. *Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(1), 58–64. <https://senhri-journal.pucollege.edu.in/journals/1>; Zoramthanga. (2024). Voting behaviour and perception in Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i04.26036>

²²¹ Zothansanga, D. (2024). Local bodies and empowerment of women: A Study of women local council members in Aizawl, Mizoram. *South India Journal of Social Sciences*, 22(2), 187–197. <https://doi.org/10.62656/sijss.v22i2.422>

²²² Tamang, P. (2025). Political Reservation and Women's Empowerment: A case study of Panchayati Raj institutions in Sikkim. In *International Journal of Social Science Research (IJSSR)* (Vol. 2, Issue 6, pp. 243–245). https://www.ijssr.com/wp-content/uploads/journal/published_paper/volume-2/issue-6/IJSSR30709.pdf

effectively represent constituencies. Cultural practices also limit the presence of women in public life and the decision-making bodies.²²³

Women in Tripura have numerous related social, cultural, economic, political and institutional barriers that not only restrain their number but also their representation in decision-making bodies.²²⁴ Some of the key challenges include patriarchal norms, proxy leadership, economic dependence, party reservations, lack of capacity and accessibility to digital resources.²²⁵ In Tripura, women are not allowed to venture into politics due to the community regulations, dominance of men in certain tribes, and limitations to movement and participation in political affairs every day.²²⁶ Such social factors decrease the confidence of women, restrict their access to information, and deprive them of the possibility to independently work in elected offices.²²⁷

In Nagaland, women outnumber men in voting, but when it comes to representation in the political offices, females remain under-represented.²²⁸ Women legitimate position in the decision-making process of society is eroded due to lack of economic development and political

²²³ Bhasin, V. (2011). Status of women in transhumant societies. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 02. <https://doi.org/10.31901/24566764.2011/02.01.01>

²²⁴ De, A., & Das, K. (2019). Political Participation of Women in Tripura since Independence. *International Journal of Social Science*, 8(2), 69-78. DOI: [10.30954/2249-6637.02.2019.5](https://doi.org/10.30954/2249-6637.02.2019.5)

²²⁵ Biswas, R. (2025). Breaking barriers: understanding the challenges of women's participation in rural local self-governance in the Indian state of Tripura. *International Research Journal of Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies (IRJHIS)*, 6(2), 83-91.

²²⁶ De, A. (2020). Status of Tiprasa Women in Tripura. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational research*, 9(6 (3)), 151-162. [https://ijmer.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/volume9/volume9-issue6\(3\)-2020.pdf#page=159](https://ijmer.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/volume9/volume9-issue6(3)-2020.pdf#page=159)

²²⁷ Roy, K., & Teliamura, K. (2021). Does limited representation matter in the process of political empowerment of women? A study of women representation in Tripura tribal areas autonomous district council. *International journal of multidisciplinary educational research*, 11 (1), 41, 45. DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.11.10>

²²⁸ Ponggen, M. (2022). *Voter's turnout and participation of women during elections in Nagaland: An Analysis*. 1(2), 6-14. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijeel.1.2.2>

parties' unwillingness to motivate women.²²⁹ The patriarchal Naga socio-cultural environment is one of the main causes for women's low political participation and representation. The Naga electorate has a negative stance toward women politicians, and political parties are reluctant to field women as candidates.²³⁰ Women are encouraged to be allies and participants in politics, but not decision-makers.²³¹

1.6 Research Gap

Women in Nagaland have made positive progress participating in different fields and activities. However, politics is one area where their participation is conspicuously absent. In fact, Nagaland never had a female MLA until 2023, which also adds to the idea that the electoral politics of the state remain a male-dominated affair. Women's electoral presence remains limited to that of voters. Although women tend to vote more than the male voters in Nagaland, there is remarkably little research examining the specific determinants and patterns of women's voting behaviour. The review of literature does not adequately address why this gap persists or what factors prevent women voters from translating their electoral participation into political candidacy and representation. This represents a major unexplored area.

Moreover, researchers have not thoroughly examined how various factors interact to shape women's voting behaviour. For instance, the patriarchal systems recorded in the Naga society,²³² have not been well researched in relation to the participation in the electoral process. In a traditional Naga society, women's voting is always considered an extension of their male

²²⁹ Ningshen, M. (2010). *Political Participation of Tangkhul naga women in Manipur 1972 -2005* [Ph.d Thesis, Manipur University]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/39533>

²³⁰ Jamir, T. (2008). Gender dimensions of electoral politics in Nagaland. *Ishani*, 2, (1-A).

²³¹ Jamir, N. (2012). *Participation of naga women in electoral politics a case study of Kohima town Nagaland* (Doctoral dissertation, NEHU).

²³² Ghushapu, I., & Walling, A. W. (2023). Men as allies in promoting women's empowerment in Nagaland. *Antyajaa Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 8(1-2), 38-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/24556327251367850>

relatives. The attitude of the society towards the role of women is conservative, and patriarchy appears to prevail in every social, political and family institution.²³³

Research in India indicates that women's voting behaviour is based on the opinions and expectations of their family members and caste communities.²³⁴ Nonetheless, no such study has been conducted specifically to determine whether these same influences apply to the voters of the Naga women, creating a gap in the understanding of their voting behaviour. The question of whether Naga cultural and social systems create unique voting patterns has not been studied, addressed or clearly explained.

Most importantly, there is no detailed or qualitative research that captures Naga women's own views, participation and experiences in electoral processes. The literature on interview-based research examining the motivation, limitations and political ambitions of women remains limited and unexplored. These gaps suggest that a comprehensive study examining women's voting behaviour in Nagaland incorporating quantitative analysis of electoral patterns, qualitative interviews with women voters, leaders, NGO's and investigation of barriers to participation and representation would make a significant contribution to understanding voting behavior of women in Nagaland.

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- ²³³ Amer, M. (2009). Political awareness and its implications on participatory behaviour: A study of Naga women voters in Nagaland. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 16(3), 359–374. doi:[10.1177/097152150901600303](https://doi.org/10.1177/097152150901600303); Amer, M. (2013). Political status of women in Nagaland. *Journal of Business Management & Social Science Research*, 2(4), 91-95. https://www.academia.edu/6468837/Political_Status_of_Women_in_Nagaland; Ojha, R. (2014). Women in electoral politics in Nagaland, India. *International Research Journal of Social Science*, 3(11), 47–50. <https://www.isca.me/IJSS/Archive/v3/i11/9.ISCA-IRJSS-2014-182.pdf>
- ²³⁴ Joshi, C. V., & Joshi, V. K. (2025). Comparative study of factors influencing electoral behaviour of men & women voters in urban India: A micro level study of Nagpur city. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, 7(10), 2025499. <https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2025499>

There is also insufficient research on the role of party on the question of women political representation. These gaps represent opportunities for the present research to comprehensively examine and understand why Nagaland, despite women's active role in the social and economic arena has experienced such profound underrepresentation in electoral politics.

1.7 Statement of the Problem

To promote representative democracy around the world, it is important to improve gender equality in political engagement. The effective and efficient participation of women in politics is not only a matter of human rights and sustainable development but also equally encourages inclusiveness.²³⁵ In the context of Nagaland, women are still struggling for space in the political domain.²³⁶ Women have achieved parity with men in terms of voting, a single aspect of political participation, but participation in other electoral activities continue to be a male domain. Nagaland has always recorded a high turnout in the Assembly Elections held from 1969-2024.²³⁷ In many of these elections women have outnumbered the male voters. But such activism among women electorate is not seen in other types of political activities. Compared to men, women participate less in public political activities like meetings, rallies and campaigns. The problem does not end there. There is also a lack of women's representation in elected bodies in Nagaland, implying that women are under-represented as leaders and representatives compared to men. In 59 years, the state has elected only two female MLAs. Many aspects of life in Nagaland, even today, are governed by time-honored customs and practices. As such, there is a growing concern about women's participation as well as

²³⁵ OECD. (2018) *Women's political participation in Egypt barriers, opportunities and gender sensitivity of select political institutions*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/womens-political-participation-in-egypt.pdf>

²³⁶ Ningshen, M. (2010). *Political Participation of Tangkhul naga women in Manipur 1972 -2005* [Ph.d Thesis, Manipur University]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/39533>

²³⁷ Report on the General Elections to Nagaland Legislative Assembly 1964-2024, Government of Nagaland

underrepresentation in political and decision-making areas. Besides the socio-economic problems faced by women, political parties have not done much to help women politically. Women remain at the periphery of the power structure.²³⁸ Women representatives are important because they tend to advocate for policies that benefit and advance the interests of women.²³⁹

Therefore, one of the problem of the study will be to examine the voting participation of women. Voting is the main form of political participation in liberal democratic societies. However, in different democracies people's participation in politics has taken various forms, and this has gradually extended the scope of electoral politics beyond voting. The study, therefore, will also examine women's participation in other electoral activities. There are many factors which influence the nature and extent of electoral participation. Socio-economic factors constitute a crucial setting for participation in electoral activities. Electoral participation is invariably influenced and determined to a great extent by the socio-cultural environment of a given society. The study will examine how the SES variables influence women's voting behaviours. Another problem of the study is to examine the challenges to political representation of women. Political parties play an important role in the participation and representation of women because they nominate and pick candidates for elected positions. The patriarchal structures and strong cultural norms are considered impediments to political representation of women. Therefore, the study also examines whether political parties shape

²³⁸ Longkoi, K. T. (2023). Is Naga Society egalitarian and Democratic? The Gender Questions on Customary Law and its Practices in Nagaland. *History and Sociology of South Asia*, 18(1), 23–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/22308075231201907>

²³⁹ Cowell-Meyers, K., & Langbein, L. (2009). Linking women's descriptive and substantive representation in the United States. *Politics & Gender*, 5(4), 491–518. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1743923x09990328>

political outcomes, i.e., the number of women in elected positions and the cultural barriers to women's political representation.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The most striking significance of the present study lies in the paradox that exists in Nagaland. Despite women's high voter turnout compared to male voters, there is practically no female representation in legislative bodies. Nagaland became a full-fledged state in 1963, since then, nineteen women have contested in the assembly elections from different constituencies. However, none of them won as of 2022, which indicates numerous barriers to women's representation in the Assembly. The NLA election of 2023 is considered historic since it was the first time two women got elected as MLAs. Such a phenomenon creates a unique research opportunity to understand the nature and dimensions of the voting behaviour of women and why women's high voting turnout in most of the state assembly elections does not translate into political representation.

A critical research finding is that Nagaland has better average gender indicators, like education, literacy and employment, as compared to the national average.²⁴⁰ Yet women continue to be politically marginalised, despite this social advancement. Studying voting behaviour in this context reveals that even if women are educated and financially independent, it does not always mean they have political power. This difference is important for understanding gender issues in Indian democracy.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Buragohain, S. (2024). Politics of Resistance: Political reservation for women in Nagaland, India. *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies*, 10(2), 235–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23944811241302025>

²⁴¹ Rame, K. C., & Bhat, J. A. (2024). Political participation of Women: A Case Study of Nagaland in Northeast State of India. *Paripex Indian Journal of Research*, 58–64. <https://doi.org/10.36106/paripex/3606296>

There are studies which reveals that despite women's visible roles in society, they remain politically marginalized due to deeply embedded societal norms.²⁴² The case study of Nagaland is therefore important in the analysis of the intersections between cultural practices and democratic participation. Research also shows that women's voting behaviour is influenced in different ways compared to men's. Understanding Nagaland's distinct political patterns may help leaders create better ways to increase participation and promote true democracy and inclusive governance in the state.

It is hoped that the proposed study will prove valuable for understanding the different dimensions of women's voting behaviour as well as other electoral activities, thereby adding value to knowledge and awareness among citizens. The political leaders, planners, academicians and activists would also get valuable insights from the result of this study. The study thus, seeks to add further knowledge to the current literature and scholarly discourse on gender and party politics.

1.9 Objectives

The study was carried out with the following objectives:-

- (i) To study the nature and dimensions of women's voting behaviour
- (ii) To study how the SES factors determines women's voting behaviour.
- (iii) To examine the role of political party and culture in the context of political representation of women.

²⁴² Amer, M. (2013). Political Status of Women in Nagaland. *Journal Of Business Management & Social Sciences Research*, 2(4), 91-95.

1.10 Hypotheses

- (i) Higher the socio-economic status, higher will be the level of electoral participation among women
- (ii) Political party and Cultural will have an impact on women's political representation.

1.11 Research Methodology

The methodological aspect of the study is highlighted in this section.

Universe of the Study

As the work examines the voting behaviour of women in Nagaland, registered women voters in the age group of 18 and above will form the universe of the study.

Sampling Method

For the study, selection of the sample is done using the Multi-Stage Random Sampling Method such that all units have an equal probability of being chosen regardless of their population sizes. The sample used in conducting the study was chosen based on the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) method as employed by the Centre of Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi, in the National Election Study 2014 (NES 2014).

Sampling of Assembly Constituencies (ACs)

The state of Nagaland has 60 Assembly Constituencies. In this study, the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) method was used to select Assembly Constituencies (ACs) based on the number of voters in each constituency. First, the total number of voters in all constituencies was calculated. Then, the Sampling Interval (SI) was obtained by dividing the total number of voters by the number of constituencies to be selected. After that, a random number smaller than

the SI was chosen, called the Random Start (RS). The first constituency was selected based on where this random number falls in the cumulative voter list. The SI is then repeatedly added to the RS (i.e. RS, RS + SI, RS + 2SI, etc.) to pick the remaining constituencies. In this way, the 15 Assembly Constituencies were selected in a systematic and fair way, based on their population size. This was to make sure that the sample represented various constituencies in the state.

Sampling of Polling Stations (PSs)

From each sampled Assembly Constituency (AC), three polling stations (PS) were selected using the systematic random sampling method to make sure voters from different parts of the constituency were represented. First, all the polling stations in that constituency were listed in numerical order to make the selection clear and systematic. Since three polling stations had to be selected, the total number of polling stations in that constituency was divided by three to find the sampling constant. This sampling constant was used as a fixed interval or gap that was used to systematically select the three polling stations from each sampled Assembly Constituencies (ACs).

Sampling of Respondents

Since it was not possible to interview every woman voter, a representative sample was selected from each chosen polling station using the systematic random sampling method. Eligible respondents were identified using the latest electoral lists, and ten women were selected from each polling station based on the fixed sampling technique. The names of the respondents, along with their ages and addresses, were listed in detail to enable effective follow-up and record keeping. Once the list of sample respondents was prepared, a face-to-face interview was conducted with the sampled respondents in each district using a common questionnaire to

ensure uniformity in the data collection process. These interviews took place either at the respondent's home or at their workplace, depending on what was more convenient to the respondent. Face-to-face interviews were useful because they made communication easier, helped explain questions clearly, and led to more accurate responses from the participants. A total of 450 respondents were successfully interviewed from all the sampled polling stations.

Data Collection

For this study, both primary and secondary data were used to achieve the research objectives. A structured questionnaire with both open-ended and close-ended questions was used to collect primary data. The questionnaire covered important areas such as the respondent's socio-economic background, their political participation, opinions about politics, views on political parties, and their level of trust in public institutions. This helped the study not only analyse the statistical patterns of women's voting behaviour but also the social and cultural issues that determine women's choices in politics. Data derived through questionnaires was supplemented by data collected by interviewing key informants from diverse backgrounds, such as village leaders, political party representatives, municipal councillors, church leaders, women leaders and social activists. The in-depth interviews allow for a fuller understanding of the interviewee's perspective on the investigated topic with an opportunity to probe or ask follow-up questions. The secondary data was generated on the basis of extensive literature survey and sources such as books, journals, reports and newspapers pertaining to the problem of the present study.

Data Analysis

The quantitative survey data were processed using structured analytical procedures with the use of excel tools in calculating valuable descriptive statistic especially percentages, to

explain the demographic variables such as age, education, occupation, income and voting behaviour. In addition, the qualitative data were interpreted using the thematic interpretation or analysis (coding, generating themes, reviewing themes and interpreting and reporting) so as to identify the patterns, perceptions and experiences that were similar and common among the respondents. A combination of these methods allowed the research data interpretation to attain not only a quantitative (numeric) clarity and, but also a qualitative (contextual) depth.

1.12 CHAPTER PLAN

1. **Introduction to the research study:** This chapter puts forward the broad framework of the proposed thesis. The theoretical framework, review of literature, statement of the problem, significance of the study, objectives, hypotheses, research methodology and chapter plan has been highlighted.
2. **Overview of the study area and socio-economic profile of respondents:** This chapter provides an overview of Nagaland, women in Naga society, and the socio-economic profile of the respondents.
3. **Women voting behaviour in Nagaland: Nature, Dimension and Determinant:** This chapter explains how women take part in voting and other electoral activities, and it examines how their level of participation differs based on their socio-economic background.
4. **Challenges of women political representation:** This chapter discusses the challenges women faced in the context of political representation. These challenges are examined from two perspectives, ie, the social-cultural and institutional barriers.
5. **Finding & Conclusion:** This chapter presents a summary of the study's key findings and offers suggestion based on the results from the study.

1.13 Conclusion

This chapter has offered the necessary background for the thesis. It outlined the theoretical framework for analysis and reviewed literature on the subject to identify existing gaps in the field. The statement of the problem explains the major problems that the research will cover, and the significance of the study highlights its academic and practical relevance. The objectives and hypotheses provide a clear guideline for the investigation, and the research methodology explains how the data will be collected and analysed. Finally, the chapter plan offered a structured outline of the thesis. These components provide a clear roadmap of the thesis and establish a basis on which the subsequent chapters can be discussed and analysed.

CHAPTER TWO

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AREA AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

2.1 Introduction: An Overview

This chapter provides an overview of Nagaland and its geography, demographic profile, population, economy, political system and cultural attributes with a special focus on the status of women in the Naga society. Besides offering this contextual background, the chapter looks at the socio-economic profile of the respondents sampled in terms of their educational level, occupation, marital status and other relevant demographic indicators.

Nagaland, a northeast Indian state, was part of Assam and North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in 1947, but attained statehood in 1963 and became the 16th state of India. Statehood came into existence as the result of a political agreement between the Indian government and Naga people. In this respect Nagaland's case is unique and special constitutional protection was also provided under Article 371(A) of the Indian Constitution to safeguard the culture, traditions and way of life of the Nagas. Nagaland is a small hill states in India which is known for its myriad tribes with their rich culture and tradition. The State has a distinct character both in terms of its social composition as well as in its developmental history.¹ The state cover an area of 16,579 sq.km and lies between 25°06' and 27°04' north latitude, and between 93°20' and 95°15' east longitude. Nagaland borders Manipur to the south, Assam to the north and

¹ Department of Planning & Coordination. (2004). *Nagaland State Human Development Report*. Government of Nagaland. (p.31). Retrieved November 15, 2021, from https://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/state_human_develop_report_nagaland_full_report_2008.pdf

west, Arunachal Pradesh to the northeast and Myanmar to the east, where there is a shared international boundary.²

Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid ethnic group, consisting of 17 Administrative Districts, namely Chumoukedima, Dimapur, Kohima, Kiphire, Longleng, Mon, Mokokchung, Meluri, Noklak, Niuland, Phek, Peren, Shamator, Tuensang, Tseminyu, Wokha and Zunheboto. It is home to 17 major tribes as well as several sub-tribes. The major tribes are Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chhang, Kachari, Khamniung country wide, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Tikhir, Yimkhiung and Zeliang. Each tribe has its own distinctive features concerning culture, language, and the style of clothes. The state has a strong oral tradition through which folklore is passed on generation after generation. Music is an indispensable part of life and folk songs that glorify ancestors, narrating heroic deeds of warriors, and glorifying traditional heroes cannot be ignored. Nagas have folk poetic love ballads which tell tragic history of love stories and entwine the topics of love, loss and longing.³

The state is part of the Indo-Burma global biodiversity hotspot, one of the world's most biologically diverse but ecologically vulnerable region. The state is endowed with an impressive variety of biodiversity, encompassing a wide range of flora such as rare orchids, medicinal plants, and dense forest vegetation and fauna, including several endemic and endangered species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects. About 32 species of mammals, 65 species of birds and 42 fish species belonging to 10 families and 24 genera, and 9 species of reptiles have been documented. However, despite its ecological significance, the entire biodiversity of the state is not yet thoroughly explored and documented.⁴

² Directorate of Economics & Statistics. (2014). *Statistical Hand Book of Nagaland*. Government of Nagaland (p.9). Retrieved November 15, 2021, from https://statistics.nagaland.gov.in/storage/statistical_data/2014/901601130156.pdf

³ Lanunungsang, A., & Ovung, A. (2012). *Nagaland the land of festivals*. Heritage Publishing House, pp.2-3

⁴ Government of Nagaland. (2012). *Nagaland State Action Plan on Climate Change*. p.56. Retrieved November 15, 2021, from <https://moef.gov.in/uploads/2017/09/Nagaland.pdf>

2.2 Topography and Climate

Nagaland is almost entirely hilly, except along the foothills bordering Assam plains. The Naga Hills are located in the northern extension of the Arakan – Yoma ranges. The general elevation of the Naga Hills increases towards the east. The highest peak Saramati (3826.15 metres) belongs to the easternmost hill ranges of the state, bordering Myanmar where it merges with the Patkai ranges of the Arakan mountain system. The Barail hill range is situated in the southwest region of the state and stretches to the northeast into the Kohima region that is approximately 1465 meters high. This range is connected to other hills around Kohima, which run up to the Manipur border and then are bent northwards. The land between Mao and Kohima elevates into some mountain peaks, the most renowned of which is Japfu. This is the area with high elevation and great hills on the road. Naga Hills consist of Barail and Japfu ranges, which cut across Mokokchung and Tuensang, and constitute a major watershed of river systems of Brahmaputra and Chindwin. Geomorphologically, the terrain can be broadly grouped into four topographic units - alluvial plains (150 to 200 meters above m.s.l.), low to moderate linear hills (200 to 500 meters above m.s.l.), moderate hills (500 to 800 meters above m.s.l.) and high hills (800 meters and above). The main rivers that flow through the state are Dhansiri, Doyang, Dikhu, Tizu and Melak. The narrow valleys of the many streams and rivers, the varying climate and the rich forest cover in the state provide a profusion of habitats, supporting rich biodiversity with high degree of endemism.⁵

Nagaland has a monsoonal (wet-dry) climate. Annual rainfall averages between 70 and 100 inches (1,800 and 2,500 mm) and is concentrated in the months of the southwest monsoon (May to September). Average temperatures decrease with greater elevation; in the summer temperatures range from the low 70s F (about 21-23° C) to the low 100s F (about 38-40° C),

⁵ Government of Nagaland. (2012). *Nagaland State Action Plan on Climate Change*. (pp.10-11). Retrieved November 15, 2021, from <https://moef.gov.in/uploads/2017/09/Nagaland.pdf>

while in the winter they rarely drop below 40 F (4°C), though frost is common at higher elevations. Humidity levels are generally high throughout the state.⁶ Plain area experience warm and subtropical climate. The foothill areas with rolling to undulatory topography experience subtropical climate. Low to moderate ranges with varying degree of slopes have submontane climate.⁷ Monsoon is the longest lasting for five months from May to September with May, June, and July being the wettest months. Owing to varied topography and relief annual rainfall varies from 1000 mm to over 3000 mm at different places with an average of 2000 mm.⁸

2.3 Demography

The population of Nagaland is 19, 78,502 out of which 71.14 per cent of the population reside in rural areas and 28.86 per cent in urban areas as per 2011 Census. The male population consist of 10.24 lakh and female 9.53 lakh with a sex ratio of 931 females per 1000 males. The male literacy rate stands at 82.75 per cent, while the female literacy rate is around 76.11 per cent. The overall literacy rate in Nagaland is 79.55 per cent which is higher than the national average of 74.04 per cent. Dimapur is the most populated among the districts with 19.14 per cent followed by Kohima with 13.54 per cent population. The least populated district is Longleng with 2.55 per cent. The State has an average population density of 119 which is much lower than the national average of 382 per sq.km. The Nagaland population density stood at 120 per sq.km in 2001 whereas the national average was 324 per sq.km. However during 2001-2011, the State witnessed a negative growth rate of -0.58 percent which was a first in the history

⁶ Government of Nagaland. (n.d.). *Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority-Geography of Nagaland*. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from <https://nsdma.nagaland.gov.in/geography-of-nagaland>

⁷ Geological Survey of India. (2011). *Geology and mineral resources of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, Geological Survey of India, 2011 (30 Part-4 (Vol-1))* p.4. Retrieved November 20, 2021, from <https://shorturl.at/8M6C2>

⁸ Government of Nagaland. (2012). *Nagaland State Action Plan on Climate Change*. (pp.11-12). Retrieved November 15, 2021, from <https://moef.gov.in/uploads/2017/09/Nagaland.pdf>

of Census in Nagaland. The population of the State declined between 2001 (1,990,036) and 2011 (1,978,502) by 11534 persons. This abnormal pattern can be attributed to the inaccuracies in the successive Census. “The 2001 Census was related to the expected loss of political representation due to impending delimitation, whereas deflation of population in the Census of 2011 is related to the inflation in the preceding decade” (Ankush Agrawal and Vikas Kumar 2012). Nagaland contributes 0.16 percent to India’s total population and ranks 25th in the total population among Indian states.⁹

Table 2.1: Demographic Profile of Nagaland

Description	2011 Census
Total Population	19,78,502
Male	10,24,649
Female	9,53,853
Density of Population (Per sq. km)	119
Sex Ration (Female per 1000 Males)	931
Decadal growth rate of Population (2001-2011)	-0.58
Percentage of Urban Population	28.86
Percentage of Rural Population	71.14
Male Literacy rate	82.75
Female Literacy Rate	76.11
Literacy Rate of Nagaland	79.55

Source: Statistical handbook of Nagaland 2022

⁹ Department of Planning and Coordination. (2016). *Nagaland State Human Development Report* (pp. 10-14). Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://shorturl.at/zF61H>

2.4 Governance and Administrative Profile

Naga traditional life revolve around the village. The formation of Nagaland State in 1963 was a critical step in the evolution of Nagaland, which gave the people the opportunity for peace, stability, accelerated investment and economic development. Naga people have an intricate relationship to modern democracy, and even though their governance is akin to the rest of the states, there are some distinct aspects that make Nagaland governance different. Article 371 (A) of the Indian Constitution remains a cornerstone to policy making in the State, and has ensured protection and preservation of the unique traditions and customary laws of the State.¹⁰

Historically, Naga villages were independent and each village community had its set of rules and governance, which differ from tribe to tribe. These systems were further strengthened when the government enacted the Nagaland Village and Area Councils Act, 1978 that officially made it a legal local self-governing bodies. All the existing recognized villages should have a Village Council (VC) to manage administration and justice based on local customs. Members are chosen through customary procedures acceptable to the State Government and hereditary chiefs such as Anghs, Gaonburas are included as ex-officio voting members.¹¹

Nagaland institutionalised its local self-government systems that existed even before the Panchayati Raj Act in the form of the Nagaland Village and Area Councils Act, 1978. Currently, Village Councils and Village Development Boards or VDBs serve as decentralized authorities in 1,317 villages that cover 17 districts and 52 blocks. The Village Councils monitor

¹⁰ Department of Planning & Coordination. (2004). *Nagaland State Human Development Report*. Government of Nagaland. (pp.2-3). Retrieved November 15, 2021, from https://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/state_human_develop_report_nagaland_full_report_2008.pdf

¹¹ Jamir, A. (2011). Understanding local self-governance in Nagaland- an essence of the institutions and their activities. *Special Issue: "Local Governance in North East India," Community Update*, 55(4), 1–13. <https://www.thenagarepublic.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Understanding-Local-Self-Governance-in-Nagaland.pdf>

administrative and court cases whereas VDBs deal with financial and developmental affairs.¹² The first VDB was implemented as a pilot program in 1976 at Ketsapomi village, Phek District and was extended to the whole state in 1980 under the VDB Model Rules.¹³ The VDBs are involved in all phases of developmental activities as a part of their responsibilities. These include receipt of allocation of funds, selection of beneficiaries or schemes, monitoring of progress of works & expenditure and completion of schemes. The book keeping of accounts of all VDB is mandatory, open, and subject to any audit of its account, including by an independent committee appointed by the VC on a regular basis. The Village Development Board liaises with government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), other stakeholders and put in place measures to ensure effective execution of the development programmes. They also promote the inclusion of the local community members in decision-making activities to ensure transparency and accountability in funds dispensation.¹⁴ As per the Survey conducted by the Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Nagaland has a total of 1355 villages with only 1 (one) uninhabited village as on March 2021. The Government has officially recognised 1280, 111 hamlets while 75 villages remain unrecognised. Out of the 1355 inhabited villages, there are 1272 villages having Village Development Board (VDB) and 83 villages without VDB.¹⁵

The State of Nagaland is composed of sixteen (17) administrative district Headquarter, namely Dimapur, Kohima, Wokha, Mokokchung, Zunheboto, Tuensang, Phek, Peren, Mon, Meluri, Kiphire, Longleng, Noklak, Chumukedima, Niuland, Tseminyu, and Shamator.¹⁶ In addition, as indicated in Table 2.2, it has 24 ADCs (Additional Deputy Commissioner)

¹² Chakraborty, D. (2012). Local Self Governance as Democratic Participation: The Unique Case of the Nagas. *Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences Research*, 1(2), 1–14. <https://shorturl.at/fLUyC>

¹³ Shimray, A. (2014). Decentralization from Below: A Case Study of Nagaland, India. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 4(3), 1–6. <https://shorturl.at/Fzuj9s>

¹⁴ Government of Nagaland. (2012). *Nagaland State Action Plan on Climate Change*. (p.18). Retrieved November 15, 2021, from <https://moef.gov.in/uploads/2017/09/Nagaland.pdf>

¹⁵ Government of Nagaland (2021). *Survey on the number of villages in Nagaland*. Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Nagaland, Kohima p. 5.

¹⁶ Nagaland GK (2023). List of Districts in Nagaland- Area, Population, Density, Literacy (Census 2011). Retrieved from <https://nagalandgk.com/list-of-districts-in-nagaland-area-population-density-literacy-census-2011/>

Headquarters, 17 SDO (C) sub-divisions Headquarters, and 63 EAC (Extra Assistant Commissioner) circles in the state. The District Administration headed by Deputy Commissioners regularly hold security coordination meetings and reports to State Government through Commissioner, Nagaland. Besides ensuring law and order, it also receives revenue in form of ILP fees, house taxes, arms licenses, rentals and land revenue. As the most accessible point of contact with the people, it serves as a key organ of administration in delivering schemes effectively, providing services at the grass roots level and effective access to the government.¹⁷

Table 2.2: Administrative Profile of Districts in Nagaland

Sl.No	Districts	Population	Major Tribe/Primary Inhabitants	Year of Establishment	DCs Office	ADCs HQ	SDO (C) HQ	EAC HQ
1	Chümoukedima	125,400	Heterogeneous	2021	1	1	1	1
2	Dimapur District	170,000	Heterogeneous	1997	1	NIL	NIL	NIL
3	Kiphire District	74,004	Yimkhiung,	2004	1	2	NIL	5
4	Kohima District	267,988	Angami	1957	1	1	2	2
5	Longleng	50,484	Phom	2004	1	1	NIL	6
6	Mokokchung	194,622	Ao	1957	1	2	2	6
7	Mon District	250,260	Konyak	1973	1	4	5	5
8	Niuland District	11,876	Sumi	2021	1	NIL	1	2
9	Noklak District	59,300	Khamniungan	2017	1	NIL	1	2
10	Peren District	95,219	Zeliang, Kuki	2004	1	2	1	3
11	Phek District	163,418	Chakhesang	1973	1	2	1	7
12	Shamator	12,726	Yimkhiung,	2022	1	NIL	1	3
13	Tseminyu	63,629	Rengma	2021	1	NIL	NIL	1
14	Tuensang	137,296	Chang, Sangtam,	1957	1	1	1	4
15	Wokha District	166,343	Lotha	1973	1	3	1	8
16	Zunheboto	140,757	Sumi	1973	1	5	1	7
17	Meluri District	22618	Pochury	2024	1			3

Source: Nagaland State Portal- Office Directory of Districts, Sub-division and Circles,
Government of Nagaland

¹⁷ *Government of Nagaland*. (2021). Office of the Commissioner Nagaland Kohima- District Administration. Retrieved December 20, 2021, from <https://commissioner.nagaland.gov.in/district-administration/>

The State has implemented the innovative concept of Communitisation to foster collaboration between the Government and the public by delegating management tasks to the community. The aim of this strategy is to enhance the efficiency of governmental organisations and services. Therefore, with the establishment of Village Councils, Village Development Boards, and the implementation of Communitisation in vital sectors like education, health, rural tourism, power, and rural water supply, the Government is progressively assuming the role of a mediator and advocate. The concept of development emerges organically from the grassroots level in a manner that is fair and appropriate for the unique conditions of Nagaland.¹⁸

2.5 Economic Profile

The economy of Nagaland still thrives on agriculture as over 60 per cent of the population depend on it as a source of livelihood. It has a very diverse economy with very large services sector, huge agricultural labour force and lots of untapped natural resources. Nagaland economy is in progress and still agriculture is the primary source of livelihood yet currently the service sector is becoming the fore front of the economy. The future oriented indicators are the recent policy plans, infrastructure and energy projects and international outreach. Yet, the realisation of its potential especially through mineral exploitation, industrial and tourism development depends on overcoming long-standing structural and infrastructural bottlenecks.

The state has been on the road of economic recovery following the Covid pandemic of 2020-21. The yearly advance estimate of Gross State Domestic Products (GSDP) shows that the Nagaland growth economy is projected to increase by 7.73 per cent at a constant price and 10.81 per cent at a current price respectively.

¹⁸ *Nagaland State human development report (2004)*. Department of Planning and Coordination Government of Nagaland, New Concept Information Systems Pvt, Ltd. New Delhi, p. 3.

Table 2.3: Growth Rate (in percentage) of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)

Item	2022-2023 (P)	2023-2024 (A.E)
G.R at Constant Price GSDP	8.84	7.73
G.R at Current Price GSDP	11.98	10.81

Source: Nagaland Economy Survey, 2023-2024. G.R- Growth Rate, P-Provisional, A.E- Advance Estimates

In comparison to the previous fiscal year, the state's economy in real term saw a deceleration in growth rate. It came down to 7.73 per cent in 2023-24 as against 8.84 achieved in 2022-23 (Table 2.3). The growth retardation is due to deceleration of the secondary sector. The difference in the real growth rate and the nominal growth rate indicates that there is inflation in the economy. The inferred inflation of around 3 percentage based on the said difference however falls into the moderate-range target of inflation (between 2 per cent and 6 per cent) based on Reserve Bank of India (RBI). In absolute figure (Table 2.4), the quantum of the economy in real terms is estimated to have increased from Rs.19903 crore in 2022-23 (P) to Rs. 21442 crore in 2023-24 (AE). In tandem, the nominal quantum of the economy has gone up by Rs. 39567 crore in 2023-24 (AE) compared to 35705 crore in 2022-23(P).

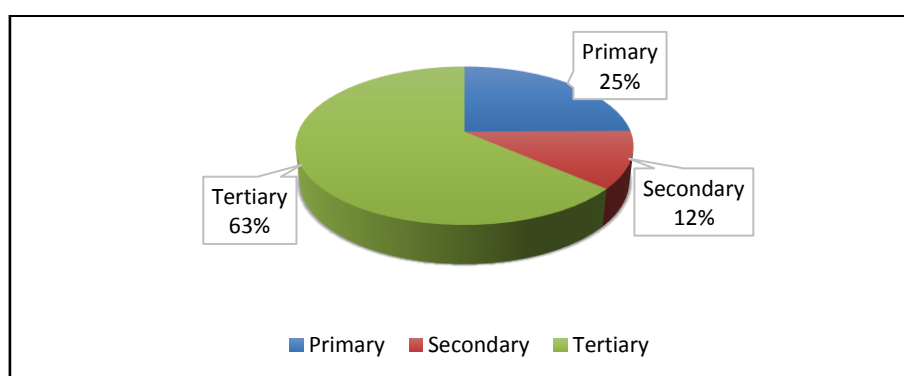
Table 2.4: Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) (in crore)

Item	2022-2023 (P)	2023-2024 (AE)
Real/Constant GSDP	19903	21442
Nominal/Current GSDP	35705	39567

Source: Nagaland Economy Survey, 2023-2024. G.R- Growth Rate, P-Provisional, A.E- Advance Estimates

To estimate the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and determine the sector contribution to GSDP, an economy is classified as: primary sector, secondary sector and tertiary sector. Primary sector comprises of economic activities based on natural resources such as agriculture, forestry, mining and quarrying, and so on. The secondary sector encompasses activities involving transformation of input-goods into output-goods such as manufacturing, construction, electricity generation, gas and water supply, and such like. Tertiary sector comprises of activities relating to services such as trades, transportation, education, healthcare, finance, real estate, public administration, and so on.

Figure 2.1: Sectoral Contribution of GSDP in 2023-24 (AE)



Source: Nagaland Economy Survey, 2023-2024

Figure 2.1 and Table 2.5, present the estimated percentage of sectoral contribution to GSDP in 2023-24. The tertiary sector is the principal contributor to the state's economy with 63.57 percent. The primary sector and the secondary sector contribute 24.81 percent and 11.61 percent respectively.

On sectoral growth rate, tertiary sector is estimated to achieve a good growth rate of 9.12 per cent in 2023-24 (AE). It is estimated that the secondary sector will grow by 7.34 per cent in the same fiscal year, whereas the primary sector will grow by 4.15 percent (Table 2.5). The differential sectoral growth rates therefore also suggests that the state's economy is primarily driven by tertiary sector. The tertiary sector is therefore

the driving force behind the economic growth of the state and the primary sector as well as the secondary sector are more or less stagnant. The fall in the percentage of primary sector is in tandem with the experience of both developing and developed economies. The shrinking share of the sector is natural as an economy grows. The stagnation of the secondary is the result of the continuing weak industrial base in the state owing to infrastructural shortage. The secondary sector is believed to increase in the near future with the continuous improvement of the infrastructure within the state.¹⁹

Table 2.5: Sectoral Contribution to GSDP and Growth Rate (in percentage)

Sector	Sectoral Contribution to GSDP		Growth Rate	
	2022-2023 (P)	2023-2024 (A.E)	2022-2023 (P)	2023-2024 (A.E)
Primary	20.81	24.81	4.57	4.15
Secondary	10.1	11.61	12.8	7.34
Tertiary	69.1	63.57	9.03	9.12

Source: Nagaland Economy Survey, 2023-2024. P-Provisional, A.E-Advance Estimates

The predominant agricultural produce includes rice, maize, pulses, millet, and oilseeds. Jhum is one of the primary methods of cultivation in Nagaland, alongside terrace cultivation. These two methods collectively account for about 86 per cent of the total cultivable land in the state.²⁰ Indigenous farming methods are closely interwoven with the cultural and religious aspects of the indigenous communities.²¹ The state's economy also benefits from its rich

¹⁹ Government of Nagaland. (2024). Nagaland Economic Survey 2023-24, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Nagaland: Kohima. pp. 21-22

²⁰ Khuvung, Z., & Mishra, P. (2023). Extent of adoption of recommended cultivation practices of rice (*Oryza sativa*) in the state of Nagaland. *The Pharma Innovation*, 12(5), 470–474. <https://doi.org/10.22271/tpi.2023.v12.i5f.19970>

²¹ Pongen, I. (2022). Festivals and Agrarian Socio-economic Formation the Case of the Chakhesang Naga of Nagaland. In *Routledge eBooks* (pp. 199–209). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003362807-12>

biodiversity, which supports agricultural activities and provides additional resources for the rural population.²²

Nagaland climatic conditions promote an ideal backdrop for the cultivation of horticultural and floricultural products, ultimately fostering the growth of a diverse array of fruits, vegetables, and floral species. The state is renowned for growing pineapples, oranges, and exotic flowers, all of which significantly contribute to the local economy. However, many impediments have hindered these sectors from completely actualizing their capabilities. One significant issue is the lack of adequate infrastructure, including cold storage facilities and efficient logistics, which hampers the preservation and transportation of perishable goods. For instance, the marketing channels for pineapple farming reveal inefficiencies, with high marketing costs reducing the producer's share in consumer rupees, highlighting the need for better logistics and market linkages to improve profitability and efficiency.²³

The state's rich cultural heritage is vividly reflected in its handicrafts and handlooms, which serve as both vital sources of livelihood and significant cultural symbols. The indigenous textiles of the Naga community, such as Naga shawls, bamboo crafts, and wood carvings characterised by their geometric and minimalistic designs, are highly valued and have a growing global demand. Each design within these textiles carries cultural importance, telling a story that reflects the wearer's social status and cultural identity.²⁴ Pottery, another significant craft, is deeply integrated into the everyday lives of the Nagas, with traditional methods and products still being highly valued for their aesthetic and religious significance. Pottery

²² Jamir, I., & Sharma, A. (2018). Factors Influencing the Capital Formation of Income and Employment on Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Nagaland. *International Journal of Current Microbiology and Applied Sciences*, 7(11), 2670–2678. <https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcmas.2018.711.305>

²³ Magh, Y., & Ramchandra, N. (2023). An Economic Analysis of Different Marketing Channels of Pineapple in Tseminyu District of Nagaland. *Asian Journal of Agricultural Extension Economics & Sociology*, 41(9), 334–341. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajaees/2023/v41i92050>

²⁴ Lyndem, N. N., & Bhandari, N. V. (2022). Cultural Appropriation with Reference to Textiles Handwoven in Nagaland, INDIA. *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR)*, 8 (11), 12–28. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra11686>

production in villages like Laruri and Rünguzu in Phek district and Wui in Tuensang district not only supports social sustainability but also maintains cultural heritage through practices like preparing jars for secondary burials, which are distinct from everyday cooking vessels.²⁵

Tourism is another expanding component of the economy of Nagaland. The Hornbill Festival, held at the Kisama Heritage Complex, is a prime example of how tourism can invigorate local economies and cultural pride. Initially a pastiche of various tribal festivals, the Hornbill Festival has evolved into a significant cultural event that fosters a sense of pride among the indigenous people of Nagaland and revitalises traditional celebration.²⁶ Birdwatching tourism, ‘Amur Falcon’, another growing sector, has shown specific advantages for local communities, such as generating additional income, promoting cultural exchange, and enhancing biodiversity.²⁷ Street vending, predominantly by women from diverse tribes, is another vital economic activity in Nagaland, offering a variety of products ranging from vegetables to handicrafts, thus supporting the livelihoods of many urban poor.²⁸ The ethnobotanical knowledge of medicinal plants utilised by local communities is another facet of Nagaland's cultural legacy that can be tapped for eco-tourism and educational purposes.²⁹ Thus, Nagaland has the capacity to become a prominent tourist centre, provided that development is managed sustainably and inclusively.

The government actively promotes and support local business ventures, which provide a substantial contribution to the state's economy. This support contributes to rural development,

²⁵ Vasa, D. (2022). Indigenous Pottery: Cultural Heritage of Nagaland. In *Routledge eBooks* (pp. 285–300). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003362807-22>

²⁶ Kreditsu, T. (2023). Cultural Recovery and Reformation: Tourism and the Hornbill Festival at Kisama. In *People, cultures and societies* (pp. 187–198). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-9292-6_15

²⁷ Wielenga, B., Folmer, A., & Hartman, S. (2024). From Consumption to Esteem. In *CABI eBooks* (pp. 83–90). <https://doi.org/10.1079/9781800621411.0007>

²⁸ Ao, S, T., & Riongchang (2023). A descriptive study on local street vendors: A case study in Dimapur district Nagaland. *The Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (TJMDR)*, 3 (1), 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.37022/tjmdr.v3i1.413>

²⁹ Luikham, S., & Bhattacharyya, J. (2024). On the traditional medicinal plants and plant-derived natural drugs used by indigenous people of Nagaland, India. *Natural Product Research*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14786419.2024.2315594>

job creation, and economic growth.³⁰ The introduction of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) has further bolstered the economy by generating employment opportunities and enhancing the socio-economic status of participants, particularly in districts like Peren, Kohima, and Dimapur.³¹ Additionally, the Nagaland State Rural Livelihood Mission (NSRLM) has significantly improved the livelihood and economic status of rural women, enhancing household incomes and asset creation.³² Despite the absence of large industries, these measures have provided a substantial boost to the state's economic profile. The cultivation of unique agricultural products like the Naga King chilli, which holds a Guinness World Record for its heat, also highlights the state's agricultural potential and the importance of geographical indications in protecting local produce.³³

The economy of Nagaland stands at a critical juncture, encountering a plethora of obstacles alongside noteworthy prospects. The state's largely unspoiled environment indeed presents a significant opportunity for promoting organic farming, which can cater to the growing demand for organic products both domestically and internationally, thereby providing better income for farmers. Addressing infrastructural inadequacies, endorsing sustainable agricultural practices, exploring the potential of tourism, and enhancing governance mechanisms can pave the way for a robust and inclusive economic development.

³⁰ Kumar, S., & Shobana. (2022). Role of Entrepreneurial Schemes in the Development of Entrepreneurship in Nagaland. *EPRA International Journal of Agriculture and Rural Economic Research*, 10(10), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra11365>

³¹ Mishra, A.K., & Langwangbe, T. (2014). Self- Help Groups, a model for Economic Growth in Nagaland. *International Journal of Recent Research in Commerce Economics and Management (IJRRCEM)*, 1(3), 89–95.

³² Konyak, O. C. S., Das, S., & Patra, N. K. (2023). Impact of Nagaland State Rural Livelihood Mission (NSRLM) on Livelihood Status of Women in Nagaland. *Agricultural Reviews*, 44(1), 92–99. <https://doi.org/10.18805/ag.R-2358>

³³ Ao, S. T., & Konwar, D. (2021). Topic: Naga King Cilli Cultivation in Nagaland; its Prospect and Challenges; A Descriptive Study. *Emperor Journal of Economics and Social Science Research*, 03(05), 92–101. <https://doi.org/10.35338/ejessr.2021.3511>

2.6 Infrastructural Profile

Infrastructure is an important factor in economic growth and development since it offers the foundations of economic activity through the provision of basic infrastructure like roads, transport networks, electricity, communications and other public services that enhance the quality of life of people. The economic growth in Nagaland is at a slow rate at the moment mainly because of lack of infrastructure. The rugged hills and scattered villages in the state complicate infrastructure building and thus leads to further slowing of development efforts. As a result, the lack of strong and reliable infrastructure continues to be one of the main reasons for Nagaland's slow economic growth and its struggle to realise its full development potential.

Table 2.6 indicate the essential infrastructural facilities available in Nagaland.

Table 2.6: Infrastructural Facilities

Sl.NO		Infrastructure	Units/Nos
1		Post Office	
	(i)	Head Posy Office	1
	(ii)	Sub-Post Office	44
	(iii)	Branch Post Office	355
2		Hospitals	
	(i)	District Hospital	11
	(ii)	Primary Health Centre	143
	(iii)	Community Health Centre	33
	(iv)	Sub-Centre	583
3		Power	
	(i)	No. of Villages Electrified (%)	75.22
4		Roads	
	(i)	National Highways	1507.88
	(ii)	National Highways (in Km.)	650
	(iii)	State Highways (in Km.)	1751.25
	(iv)	Village Roads (in Km.)	4420.5
5		Banks	
	(i)	Commercial Banks	155
	(ii)	Rural Bank	10
	(iii)	Cooperative Bank	21

Source: Nagaland Economic Survey 2023-24

As per the fiscal year 2023-24, Nagaland has a total of 400 post offices, including one Head office in Kohima, 44 sub-post offices, and 355 Gramin Dak Sevak or Branch post offices (Table 2.7). The Postal service covers 509 villages i.e. 39.6 per cent of the total number of villages in the state.

Table 2.7: Number of Post Office FY 2023-2024

SL.No	District	Head Post Office	Sub-Post Office	Gramin Dak Sevak/Branch Post Office	Total
1	Kohima	1	7	29	37
2	Dimapur	0	6	32	38
3	Peren	0	2	16	18
4	Phek	0	4	36	40
5	Mokokchung	0	8	49	57
6	Wokha	0	2	25	27
7	Zunheboto	0	2	34	36
8	Tuensang	0	2	28	30
9	Kiphire	0	1	20	21
10	Longleng	0	1	10	11
11	Mon	0	4	28	32
12	Noklak	0	1	13	14
13	Tseminyu	0	1	14	15
14	Chumoukedima	0	2	16	18
15	Niuland	0	0	2	2
16	Shamator	0	1	3	4
	Total	1	44	355	400

Source: Statistical Handbook, Nagaland 2023-2024

Health care is an essential part of human well-being, and it is a key determinant of happiness and quality of life. It involves the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and management of diseases in order to enhance physical and mental health.³⁴ The healthcare infrastructure such as the hospitals, Community Health Centres (CHC), Primary Health Centres (PHC), Subsidiary

³⁴ Crivelli, L., Della Bella, S., & Lucchini, M. (2016). Happiness and health. *Research Papers in Economics*, 372–399. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783471171.00023>

Health Centre (SHC), Dispensaries, Sub-Centre and medical staffs like doctors, nurses and pharmacists are highlighted in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8: Number of Hospital/C.H.C/P.H.C/S.H.C/Dispensary 2023 2024

Sl. No	Particulars	Total
1	2	3
1	District Hospital	12
2	Community Health Centre	25
3	Primary Health Centre	130
4	Subsidiary Health Centre	1
5	Dispensaries	2
6	T.B. Hospital	2
7	Mental Hospital	1
8	Sub-Centre	472
9	S.T.D. Clinic	11
10	D.T.C	11
11	Post Mortem Centre	12
12	Para Medical Training Institute	1
13	School of Nursing (GNM)	1
14	School of Nursing (ANM)	3
15	State Health Food Laboratory	1
16	Urban Public Health Centre	7
17	Health and Wellness Centre	43
18	Ayush Hospital	3

Source: Statistical Handbook, Nagaland 2023-2024

Despite its considerable potential, Nagaland currently relies heavily on external sources for its power supply. In fact, the state only produces 10 per cent of its power requirement.³⁵ Nagaland has an installed capacity of 26.74 MV, but the remaining power needs are met through allocations from Central Public Sector Undertakings such as NEEPCO, NHPC, and NTPC. With the commissioning of the Doyang Hydroelectric power plant, which has a capacity of 75 MW, the state now receives a 12 per cent share of the generated power. Additionally, Nagaland generates a portion of its power from various hydro power projects, including Likimro (24 MV), Lang (1 MV), Tehok (1 MW), Duilomroi-I (0.54 MV), and Duilomroi-II (0.20 MV). On May 3, 2022, the Tsutsung Small Hydro Power project, with a capacity of 1 MW, was successfully commissioned in Longsa Village, Mokokchung district. The power generated from this project will be integrated into the state grid.³⁶

Transportation network system is a key element of economic infrastructure. It plays a vital role in economic growth linking producers and consumers and providing economic and social opportunities that result in positive multiplier effect, such as accessibility to markets, employment and additional investments. Nagaland transport comprises of road, rail and air transport. The total road length of the State during 2023-24 including the National Highways 12985.76 Km. Out of which 1038.98 Km. comes under Urban Development Department, 10315.9 Km. under PWD (R&B), 964.56 Km comes under PWD (NH) and 666.32 km under NHIDCL (National Highway and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd).³⁷ The state has a limited railway infrastructure through which the first railway station was built in Dimapur

³⁵ Brahmachary, P. (2010). 8 infrastructure development in Nagaland an overview. *Rural Development in North East India*, 138–149.

³⁶ Government of Nagaland. (2021). Nagaland Economic Survey 2021-22, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Nagaland: Kohima p. 61.

³⁷ Government of Nagaland. (2023). Nagaland Economic Survey 2022-23, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Nagaland: Kohima p. 67.

with a broad gauge track of 12.85 km.³⁸ Nagaland inaugurated the second railway station in the state on November 26, 2022, called the Shokhuvi Railway Station. The actual distance between Dhansiri in Assam and Zubza in Kohima is 82.50 km and is linked via broad gauge railway line.³⁹ The only airport in Nagaland located at Dimapur serving as the major point of air connectivity in the state.

Table 2.9: State Transport Service in Nagaland during 2023-204

Sl.No	Particulars	Total
1	Length of Route Covered by NST (in km.)	22.86,879
2	Average Number of Passenger handled Daily	1950
3	Average quality luggage handled daily (qtls)	19.76
4	Number of Employees	1087
5	Number of Vehicles	181
6	Revenue earned (Rs.in Lakhs)	947
7	Cross Capital Investment (Rs.in Lakhs)	NIL

Source: Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2024

The state is home to a combined number of 26 banks and 246 branches or offices, encompassing nationalised institutions, commercial banks, and regional rural banks operating

³⁸ Brahmachary, P. (2010). 8 infrastructure development in Nagaland an overview. *Rural Development in North East India*, 138–149.

³⁹ The Morung Express (26 November 2022). Nagaland gets its 2nd railway station in 119 years. Retrieved from <https://morungexpress.com/nagaland-gets-its-2nd-railway-station-in-119-years>. (Accessed 14 December 2022)

within its jurisdiction. The prominent banks operating in Nagaland are the State Bank of India with 81 branches, Nagaland State Cooperative Banks with 14 offices, Bank of Baroda with 14 branches, Axis Bank Ltd with 17 branches, HDFC with 12, ICICI with 11 branches, and HDFC with 12 branches (Table 2.10).⁴⁰ There are 7844 registered Cooperative Societies operating in Nagaland.⁴¹

Table 2.10: Offices of Commercial Banks in Nagaland, As of June 2025

Bank	As of June 2025			
	Rural	Semi	Urban	Total
Nagaland Rural Bank	6	5	3	14
Axis Bank Limited		14	3	17
Bandhan Bank Limited	3	6	3	12
Federal Bank Ltd		2	1	3
HDFC Bank Ltd.		9	3	12
ICICI Bank Limited	3	6	2	11
IDBI Bank Limited	1	5	1	7
IDFC First Bank Limited		1	2	3
Indusind Bank Ltd		1	2	3
South Indian Bank Ltd			1	1
Yes Bank Ltd.	1	1	1	3
Bank Of Baroda	5	6	3	14
Bank Of India	1	1	1	3
Bank Of Maharashtra		1	1	2
Canara Bank	1	5	2	8
Central Bank Of India	3	4	1	8
Indian Bank	3	2	2	7
Indian Overseas Bank	1		1	2
Punjab And Sind Bank		1	2	3
Punjab National Bank		2	3	5
State Bank Of India	46	26	9	81
UCO Bank	2	4	2	8
Union Bank Of India		1	2	3
India Post Payments Bank Limited	1	7	1	9
ESAF Small Finance Bank Limited		1	1	2
Slice Small Finance Bank Limited	1	3	1	5
Total	78	114	54	246

Source: NER Databank,

⁴⁰ Government of Nagaland (2022). Nagaland Statistical Handbook, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Nagaland: Kohima pp. 118-128.

⁴¹ NER Databank. (n.d.). Investment Potential in Nagaland. Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <https://databank.nedfi.com/industry-nagaland/investment-potential-nagaland>

Nagaland does not have heavy industries. However, there is a significant impact of the small-scale industries on the economy of the state. Most of the small-scale industries in Nagaland include traditional crafts, handloom and handicrafts, agro-based processing, Medicinal & Aromatic Plants, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Meat processing, sericulture, and Floriculture, woodworking, Bamboo incense and toothpick, pottery, and blacksmithing in addition to a small manufacturing that utilize locally available resources.⁴² The Ministry of Textiles, Development Commissioner (Handlooms), has sanctioned the development of Eri Handloom Cluster at Mangkolemba under National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP) along with a cost of Rs.1.12 crore wherein 192 beneficiaries will be covered under the scope of interventions in the FY 2023-24. It has also sanctioned the concept development of Phusachodu Small Cluster Development Programme, Phek district in Nagaland under National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP) at a cost of Rs.1.93 crore where in 228 beneficiaries will be the target of the intervention as per guidelines of NHDP.⁴³

The state has 11 district industries centre, Nagaland Industrial development corporation (NIDC), Nagaland handloom and handicrafts development corporation (NHHDC), Nagaland Khadi and Village industrial board (NKVIB), Eight (8) Made in Nagaland emporium, five (5) weaving training centres, and seven (7) RAP training centre (Rural Artisan programme).⁴⁴

The Nagaland Industrial Development Corporation Limited (NIDC) is a government-owned entity established on March 26, 1970 by the Nagaland government. The main goal is to

⁴² *NER Databank*. (n.d.). Investment Potential in Nagaland. Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <https://databank.nedfi.com/industry-nagaland/investment-potential-nagaland>

⁴³ Government of Nagaland. (2023). Nagaland Economic Survey 2023-24, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Nagaland: Kohima pp. 68-69

⁴⁴ Government of Nagaland (2022). Nagaland Statistical Handbook, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Nagaland: Kohima pp. 84-85.

optimize, promote, and enhance industrial growth within the state. NIDC not only offers financial assistance in the form of loans and capital investment, but also plays a vital role in promoting infrastructure development and providing entrepreneurs with critical technical and commercial expertise. The Export Promotion Industrial Park (EPIP) was established by NIDC on a 100-acre plot of land allocated by the Department of Industries and Commerce at Ganeshnagar, Dimapur. The plan was approved by the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, and successfully executed in the fiscal year 2005-06. The EPIP (Export Promotion Industrial Park) has been converted into a Specific Product Special Export Zone (SEZ) in the Agro & Food Processing Sector, starting from July 9, 2009, with the aim of increasing its attractiveness to investors. The main goal of the Agro & Food Processing Special Economic Zone (AFSEZ) is to utilise the plentiful agro-horticulture resources in the state and tackle the issue of post-harvest loss. Consequently, this will bolster the horticulture and agriculture sectors in the State by establishing an accessible marketplace for their products. The Nagaland Industrial Development Corporation (NIDC) founded the Integrated Infrastructure Development Centres (IIDCs) in Kiruphema, located in Kohima District. The main goals of the IIDC is to allure investments, generate job prospects, and enhance the general economic development of Nagaland. NIDC has made substantial contributions to the advancement and expansion of the entrepreneurial community by offering crucial support services such as funding, coordinating training programmes, conducting surveys and research to identify industrial opportunities and viability, and participating in diverse promotional endeavours.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Government of Nagaland. Nagaland Industrial Development Corporation Ltd. (NIDC). Department of Commerce and Industries, Kohima. Retrieved March 30, 2023. <https://industry.nagaland.gov.in/nagaland-industrial-development-corporation-ltd-nidc-dimapur/>

2.7 Culture and Tradition

The Nagas have a strong sense of tribal identity, with society organised around various tribes. Each tribe has distinct customs, dialects, and traditions. The tribe serves as the fundamental unit of social organisation, exerting a pivotal influence in decision-making, dispute resolution, and the maintenance of social harmony. The transmission of oral history and folklore over generations is considered the most esteemed living heritage of the Nagas. Folktales, folksongs, stories, myths, taboos, proverbs, and prayers provide valuable insights into historical practices, values, and traditions. The State is well-known for its year-long festivities, as each tribe marks their unique festival with a spectacular array of vibrant colours, beautiful music, and synchronised dances. Festivals are observed to honour various events, such as pre-harvest, harvest, post-harvest, and sowing festivities, as well as other important occasions. The festivals observed in the state include Aoleang (Konyak tribe), Hega (Zeliang Tribe), Mimkut (Kuki tribe), Miu (Khamniungan tribe), Metemneo (Yimkhiong tribe), Mongmong (Sangtam tribe), Moatsü (Ao tribe), Monyü (Phom tribe), Naknyulüm (Chang tribe), Ngada (Rengma tribe), Sükrünge (Chakhesang tribe), Sekrenyi (Angami tribe), Tokhu Emong (Lotha tribe), Tuluni (Sumi tribe), and Yemshe (Pochury tribe). The festivals are celebrated with great enthusiasm through the rendition of customary music, traditional dances, and the indulgence in feasts. Festivals also served as occasions for granting absolution, restoring balance, exchanging greetings, expressing affection, and fostering social unity among family members and acquaintances.⁴⁶

Nagaland exhibits a rich linguistic legacy, characterised by a plethora of languages associated with different tribes, wherein each language is distinct and specific to its respective tribe. It is of interest to note that even within a specific tribal language, there exist several

⁴⁶ Ngullie, R. C. (2023). Intangible cultural heritage of the nagas. *South Asian History, Culture and Archaeology*, 3(1), 137–142.

variations that are completely incomprehensible to one other. None of the Naga languages have been designated as an official or supplementary official language. Given the current circumstances, English has been chosen as the official language, although Nagamese, a simplified version of Assamese, has emerged as the primary spoken language. Every language is actively utilised and spoken by individuals.⁴⁷

The Nagas are a cohesive and autonomous ethnic group distinguished by their robust self-governance. Their village government, clan system, socio-cultural practices, and institutions are well-organized and clearly defined. The village is the central focus of Naga society's social structure. The village authority or village council plays a critical and fundamental part in the life of the Nagas, with a focus on prioritising the local identity over the tribal identity.⁴⁸

The Naga society places great significance on customary norms and traditions, which serve as the primary governing framework in various aspects of life. The Naga customary law received constitutional status in 1963 with the addition of Article 371 (A) of the Indian Constitution. This Article recognises the Naga laws and procedures, religious and social practices, administration of civil and criminal justice, and the ownership and transfer of land and its resources. The customary laws of the Naga people are firmly entrenched in their cultural customs and beliefs. They oversee social interactions, mediate disputes, govern property ownership, administer marriage traditions, inheritance, and various other facets of everyday existence. The Naga customary rules are often transmitted intergenerationally by oral tradition,

⁴⁷ Haokip, T. T. (2009). *Northeast India: Linguistic diversity and language politics*. Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses p. 8.

⁴⁸ Jamir, A. (2011). Understanding local self-governance in Nagaland- an essence of the institutions and their activities. *Special Issue: "Local Governance in North East India," Community Update*, 55(4), 1–13. <https://www.thenagarepublic.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Understanding-Local-Self-Governance-in-Nagaland.pdf>

encompassing the accumulated wisdom and shared experiences of the community. Community leaders, elders, and traditional institutions have a vital role in maintaining and explaining these values.⁴⁹

In Nagaland, land ownership system operates under a communal or collective structure. The land within Naga communities can be classified into four categories: communal village land, clan land, lineage land, and individual land. The common village land comprises the cemetery, village community platform, roads, church, monuments, designated forests and areas where people live. The clan land comprised discrete tracts of land, with each one being solely possessed and governed by a specific clan. The most senior male member of a clan assume the role of custodian or head of the clan's land. However, each member of the clan is entitled to get a share of the land based on their own requirements, be it for constructing a residence or for agricultural activities. The distribution of land was based on the members' seniority and availability of land. Within the clan's domain, the oldest male member of the lineage held supreme power over the ancestral land, which could include residential plots, cultivated fields, or even forests. Land can be acquired through inheritance or through the process of acquisition. The unique system of the Naga people serves as a prime example of their deep-rooted sense of community, cooperation, and interdependence. It has successfully ensured social harmony, equitable distribution of resources, and responsible land management.⁵⁰

Naga villages are divided into smaller units called Khel's, which are structured based on familial ties and consist of families with a common ancestry. Each Khel has a Morung, which is supervised by a Khel head or a senior member. Morung are community residences or dormitories that serve as important institutions among Naga communities. The Morung

⁴⁹ Ao, M. (2019). *A treatise on customary and fundamental laws of the Nagas in Nagaland* p. 7. Notion Press.

⁵⁰ Jamir, T. (2014). Gender land relations in Nagaland: Dilemma of balancing tradition and Modernity. *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies*, 2(1), 121–133.

functioned as living spaces where young individuals dwelt and acquired knowledge, abilities, and cultural values from their older counterparts. Furthermore, Morung functioned as venues for communal assemblies, deliberations, and the formulation of resolutions. However, the traditions and values of Naga society have undergone a significant change due to the impact of industrialization and the introduction of Western civilization. The Morung traditional role as a centre for education and social interaction has diminished as a result of the impact of Christianity, formal education, and the widespread influence of globalised lifestyles.⁵¹

The traditional Naga religion is commonly acknowledged as animism. Animism comprises a wide array of rituals, ceremonies, and offerings that seek to establish communication and cultivate a deep connection with spiritual entities. Our ancestors performed rituals to appease divine or supernatural entities, seeking their benevolent involvement to promote fertility, including bountiful crops and the birth of many healthy offspring. The religious practices of the Nagas presently encompass elements of ancestral animistic beliefs in conjunction with the influence of several religions, particularly Christianity. While animism is still practiced by some Naga clans, more than 90 per cent of the Nagas have embraced Christianity, leading to a substantial alteration of their religious customs. The Naga tribes were introduced to Christianity during the period of colonial rule and it witnessed significant acceptance in the early 20th century. Currently, Christianity is the dominant religious affiliation among the Nagas, with a significant number identifying themselves as adherents of various denominations such as Baptist, Catholic, and Pentecostal, among others. Christian churches and institutions hold a lot of significance in the religious and social lives of the Nagas. However, it is important to recognise that even among the Naga population, who have adopted Christianity, traces of ancient animism may still persist on occasion. A substantial proportion

⁵¹ Goswami, R. (2022). Once there was a 'Morung'. *International Journal for Transformative Research*, 9(1), 40-48.

of the Nagas people remains committed to preserving their traditional beliefs and practices, skillfully incorporating them within their Christian religion. The syncretic nature of this religion is apparent in its fusion of Christian teachings with traditional practices and beliefs in rituals, feasts, and ceremonial observances.⁵²

The Nagas have a distinct traditional attire that varies among different tribes. They often wear colorful shawls, headgears, and ornaments made from beads, feathers, and animal bones.⁵³ Naga tribes are also known for their exquisite craftsmanship, particularly in wood carving, basketry, pottery, metal works and weaving.⁵⁴ Nagas are embracing elements of modern lifestyles and values while still maintaining a connection to their cultural roots. This integration can be observed in various aspects of daily life, including fashion, music, cuisine, and leisure activities. Nagas are incorporating modern influences into their traditional practices, creating a unique blend that reflects their evolving identity.

2.8 Women in Naga Society

The status of women in Naga society is multifaceted, reflecting both progress and challenge. Traditionally, Naga society has been fiercely patriarchal, with gender roles and responsibilities strictly defined by traditional norms that often restrict women's participation in social and political arenas.⁵⁵ Customary laws, which are male-centered and discriminatory, further exacerbate this inequality by limiting women's access to power, status, and resources.⁵⁶ These traditional norms are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of various Naga

⁵² Luithui, S. (2001). Naga: A people struggling for self-determination. *International work groups for indigenous affairs*. Copenhagen. pp. 1–22.

⁵³ Gajrani, S. (2004). *History, religion and culture of India*, 6. Gyan Book Company, p.278.

⁵⁴ Pradhan, A. K. (2019). Innovation of traditional textile art and crafts in North East-India. *Int. J. Trend Sci. Res Develop*, 3(4), 1193–1197.

⁵⁵ Longkumer, B. (2023). Assessing the Role and Identity of Indigenous Women in Northeast India. *The Ecumenical Review*, 75(5), 507–518. <https://doi.org/10.1111/erev.12827>

⁵⁶ Yanthan, E. C. (2023). Gendered Practice of Naga Customary Laws: A Critical Analysis. *Journal of Education Society and Behavioural Science*, 36(8), 36–44. <https://doi.org/10.9734/jesbs/2023/v36i81246>

tribes, where gender roles are constructed and maintained through repeated performances of certain acts and behaviors.⁵⁷ Customary laws also restrict women's land rights, limiting their economic independence and reinforcing gender inequalities.⁵⁸ The influence of clan structures on electoral politics also play a role in shaping gender dynamics, as these traditional institutions are not static but are continually being reinvented and adapted to modern political contexts.⁵⁹ Additionally, the ongoing political struggle for Naga sovereignty and the quest for a separate state have created a complex socio-political environment that impacts women's roles and rights. This struggle has been marked by ethnic conflicts and insurgencies, which have further complicated the quest for gender equality.⁶⁰ Despite this, women have historically played crucial role in agriculture, which is the backbone of the Naga economy, and have been pivotal in sustaining their communities, although their contributions have often been overshadowed by men's achievements.⁶¹

Women in Nagaland have made significant strides in literacy, health, and entrepreneurship, often surpassing national averages, and are increasingly involved in various

⁵⁷ Kashena, N. R. (2024). Gender Performativity: An Examination of Femininity and Masculinity of the Naga Society. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.16457>

⁵⁸ Jamir, T. (2014). Gender land relations in Nagaland: Dilemma of balancing tradition and Modernity. *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies*, 2(1), 121-133.

⁵⁹ Kh, P. (2024). Tradition and Modernity: The Interface of Clan Structures and Electoral Politics in Naga Society. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i03.20064>

⁶⁰ Chakraborty, D. (2023). Exploring Naga Life, Culture, and Gender Representation through the Writings of Easterine Kire: A Study of Don't Run, My Love and the Nagas' Struggle for Self-Determination. *Praxis International Journal of Social Science and Literature*, 6(8), 96–105. <https://doi.org/10.51879/pijssl/060811>; Robert, L., & Walling, A. W. (2022). Tribalization in civic space: Locating civil society in the Naga context. *Asian Ethnicity*, 24(3), 423–444. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2022.2159322>

⁶¹ Yano, V., & Tsolo, K. (2015a). Economic Contributions of Women in Traditional Naga Society. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS)*, 2 (6), 158-162. <http://www.ijims.com/uploads/c52260d7c9caa8553ec724pdf.pdf>; Kikon, R. (2016). Women, Polygyny and Economy: An Analysis on the PreColonial Naga Society of North East India with Special Reference to the Lotha Nagas. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 21(09), 84–89. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2109058489>

economic activities such as trading, cottage industries, and floriculture.⁶² Nevertheless, women encounter numerous barriers in terms of their involvement and representation in politics. Despite the presence of a significant female voting population, only two women have been elected to the State Legislative Assembly since 1963, underscoring the presence of structural and institutional obstacles that impede women from engaging in decision-making process. One primary reason is the entrenched patriarchal norms and gender biases that pervade Naga society, which traditionally view political leadership as a male domain.⁶³ This cultural backdrop is compounded by a lack of political awareness among women, as studies indicate that women in Nagaland generally have lower levels of political information and engagement compared to men, which limits their involvement beyond voting.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, Women have demonstrated notable involvement in promoting peace and resolving conflicts in the region, a role that persists presently via groups such as the Naga Mother's Association, underscoring their potential to take on political leadership positions if given the opportunity.⁶⁵ There are emerging political and social movements aimed at challenging and redefining these gender norms. For example, the political scene in Nagaland is changing, with more women joining political groups and benefiting from specific measures designed to promote their inclusion, although significant barriers remain.⁶⁶

⁶² Chhabra, S. K., & Modi, S. (2024). A Study on the Women Folk in Naga Community. *International Journal of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.20469/ijhss.10.20001-1>

⁶³ Amer, M. (2013). Political status of women in Nagaland. *Journal of Business Management & Social Science Research*, 2(4), 91-95.

⁶⁴ Kuotsu, K. (2016). Political awareness and its impact in political participation: A gender study in Nagaland, India. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, 5(8), 190-197.

⁶⁵ Banerjee, P. (2000). The Naga Women's Interventions for Peace. *Canadian Women's Studies*, 19(4). <https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/article/download/7944/7075>; Zimik T, N. (2014). Naga Women as Peace Maker in War and Conflict Situation (Yesterday and Today). *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities (IJELLH)*, 2(1), 113–124.

⁶⁶ Zhimomi, J., & Kishorechand, N. (2024). Empowering women in the Naga Society: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(6), 2552-2558. <https://doi.org/10.53555/kuey.v30i6.5802>

Making history, Hekani Jakhalu Kense and Salhoutuonuo Kruse became the center of attention following their election victory as the first women representatives to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA) on March 2, 2023, ending a six-decade-long absence of female representation. Both women contested the election under the banner of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDDP). Their victory represents a beacon of hope, as they overcame a long-standing barrier that only a few women have dared to challenge, and many have been hesitant to confront.⁶⁷

Hekani Jakhalu Kense, an Indian politician and social entrepreneur from Nagaland, earned her Master of Laws degree from the University of San Francisco. She founded YouthNet, a Non-Governmental Organization dedicated to helping the youth of Nagaland pursue business opportunities. Her efforts were recognized with the Nari Shakti Puraskar award in 2018. Currently, she serves as the Advisor for Industries and Commerce in the Government of Nagaland.⁶⁸

Salhoutuonuo Kruse, a local entrepreneur, completed her pre-university education at Kohima College in 1986. She previously served as the President of the Angami Women Organization from 2011 to 2014 and was an advisory board member of the Angami Public Organization, a male-dominated top body of her tribe. Kruse was sworn in as the Minister of Women Resource Development & Horticulture in the 5th Rio ministry, making her the first

⁶⁷ Kense, A. T. (2023, March 2). *Lofty expectations ahead for Nagaland's first women MLAs*. MorungExpress. Retrieved June 6, 2024, from <https://morungexpress.com/lofty-expectations-ahead-for-nagalands-first-women-mlas>; Dhar, A. (2023, March 2). Nagaland scripts history in assembly poll, elects 2 women for first time. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved June 6, 2024, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/nagaland-scripts-history-in-assembly-poll-elects-2-women-mlas-salhoutuonuo-kruse-hekani-jakhalu-for-first-time-101677742088284.html>

⁶⁸ Barua, A. (2019, March 20). *Nagaland Woman Quits Dream Job to Build a Better Future for 1 Lakh Youngsters!* The Better India. Retrieved June 6, 2024, <https://thebetterindia.com/175314/nagaland-jobs-training-youth-employment-lawyer-nari-shakti/>;

female minister in the history of Nagaland.⁶⁹ Their leadership is seen as a potential bridge between traditional societal structures and the modern political framework, promoting a more cohesive and resilient Naga society.

Both elected members, Hekani Jakhalu Kense and Salhoutuonuo Kruse, are well-educated, empowered, and come from influential family lineages. Their empowerment, likely through education, experience, and personal development, enables them to confidently engage in leadership roles and advocate for their communities. This empowerment manifests itself in their capacity to effect change and propel initiatives based on their prior contributions to society. Due to their influential backgrounds, it is likely that they have access to networks and resources that might provide them with privileges in their political and social endeavours. The political landscape in the state has traditionally been male-dominated, with patriarchal norms significantly limiting women's participation and success. Political parties, mostly dominated by male members, have systematically marginalised women, resulting in limited prospects for them to attain influential positions of authority. The election of the two women signifies a move away from patriarchal norms, showing that women can achieve significant political power and influence despite societal norms that often restrict their roles. Their achievement demonstrates the ability to overcome barriers imposed by male-dominated political systems. It also undermines the narrative that political parties are unsupportive of women or provide them with equal opportunities. As educated and empowered women from influential families, they serve as role models, demonstrating that women can break through traditional barriers and succeed

⁶⁹ Gupta, S. (2023, March 7). Who is Salhoutuonuo Kruse — first woman minister of Nagaland? 5 things. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved June 6, 2024, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/salhoutuonuo-kruse-first-woman-elected-to-nagaland-assembly-takes-oath-101678179712801-amp.html>

in politics. Their election reflects a shift in the political landscape of Nagaland, where merit, education, and empowerment are beginning to be recognised and valued over gender biases.

2.9 Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

Out of the total 450 respondents interviewed, detailed data was collected about their general background to contextualize their political participation within broader social and economic factors.

Table 2.11: Socio-Economic Attributes of the Respondents

Profile	Attributes	Total No. of Respondents	Percentage
Age	18-29	142	31.56
	30-44	139	30.89
	45-59	96	21.33
	60 and above	73	16.22
Total		450	100
Marital status	Married	253	56
	Unmarried	183	41
	Divorced/Widowed	14	3
Total		450	100
Education	Illiterate	39	8.67
	Under matriculation	118	26.22
	Matriculation	62	13.78
	Higher secondary	66	14.67
	Graduation	123	27.33
	Post Graduate and above	42	9.33
Total		450	100
Occupation	Government service	112	24.89
	Self-employed	109	24.22
	Cultivator	128	28.44
	Unemployed	101	22.44
Total		450	100
Residence	Urban	202	45
	Rural	248	55
Total		450	100

Source: Field Work, 2021-2022

The sample respondents were classified based on their age, educational qualifications, marital status, occupational status and place of residence. This classification offers valuable insights into the demographic and socio-economic background of the respondents, revealing specific attributes that could impact their political participation. The majority portion of the sample consisted of individuals aged 30-44, who are married, graduate, government employees, and respondent who reside in rural areas. Table No. 2.11 provides a complete overview of the sample respondents categorised according to different components, including the percentage and total number of respondents interviewed in the surveys.

2.9.1 Classification of Respondents by Age

The age of the respondent is an important parameter for studying voting behaviour of voters. Age is often associated with distinct life phases, experiences, and perspectives that can influence one's political views and engagement. Different age cohorts have diverse goals, concerns, and viewpoints that can influence their political participation choices. This classification enables the examination of voting trends, political loyalties, and participation in the voting process among different age demographics, while also exploring the impact of these elements on their voting choices. To analyze the voting tendencies of women voters in various age brackets, the survey participants were segmented into four specific age cohorts: (i) 18-29 years, (ii) 30-44 years, (iii) 45-59 years, and (iv) 60 years and above.

Table 2.12: Sample Respondents by Age

Age	Percentage
18-29	31.56
30-44	30.89
45-59	21.33
60 and above	16.22

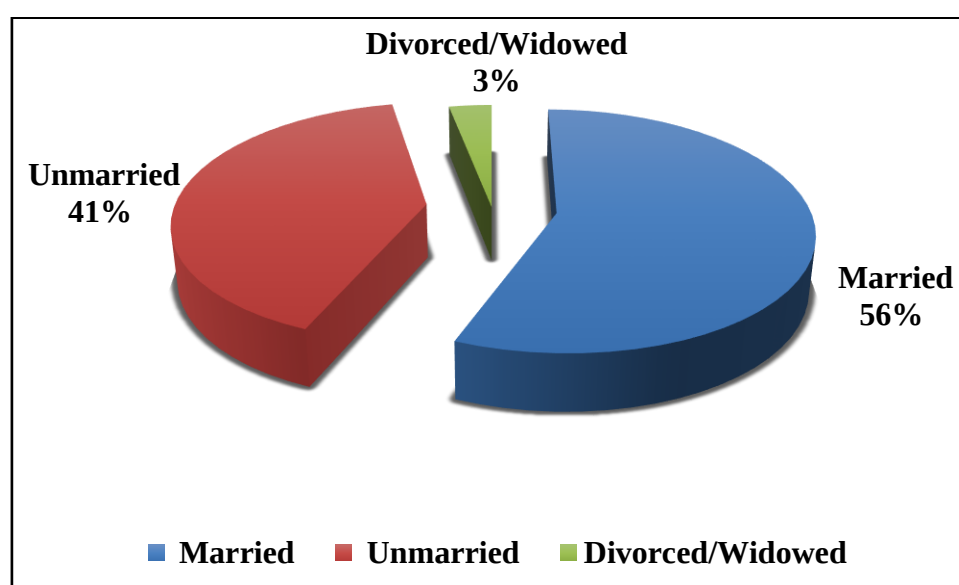
Source: Field Work, 2021-2022

As per data highlighted in Table 2.12, 31.56 per cent of the participants are in the 18-29 age group, 30.89 per cent are in the 30-44 age group, 21.33 per cent belong to the 45-59 age bracket, and 16.22 per cent are 60 years old or more. This data offers a precise representation of the dispersion of women among various age categories within the sample.

2.9.2 Classification of Respondent's by Marital Status

Basing on marital status the respondents are categorised into married, unmarried, and divorced or widowed category. This categorization enables the examination of how the experiences, priorities, and views of women in different marital groups influence their involvement in the electoral process.

Figure 2.2: Sample Respondents by Marital Status



Source: Field Work, 2021-2022

Figure 2.2, indicates that the majority of the sample consists of married respondents, accounting for 56 per cent, followed by unmarried individuals at 41 per cent. The divorced or widowed category represents 3 per cent of the sample respondents.

2.9.3 Classification of Respondents by Education

The educational background of the respondents warrants a thorough analysis as it significantly influences the political participation of the respondents. An examination of this component can provide valuable insights into how individual's educational backgrounds shape their political participation, opinions, and decision-making, thereby contributing to a comprehensive understanding of voting behavior among women. The respondents are classified into six groups according to their level of education, (i) Illiterate, (ii) Under Matriculate, (iii) Matric, (iv) Higher Secondary, (v) Graduation, (vi) Post graduation and above. Illiterate respondents are individuals who have not received any formal education and are unable to read or write. Respondents in the under matriculation category are individuals who have attended formal schooling but have not completed their tenth standard or high school education. The individuals who have successfully completed their tenth grade or high school education are classified as matriculates. The respondents who have completed their higher secondary education and have either discontinued their studies or are currently enrolled in a degree programme are categorised in the higher secondary group. The respondents who have finished their bachelor's degree and are currently engaged in advanced studies fall in the graduate category. Finally, the respondents who have completed postgraduate studies and are currently pursuing further education are categorised under the postgraduate cohort.

Table 2.13: Sample Respondents by Level of Education

Level of education	Percentage
Graduation	27.33
Under matriculation	26.22
Higher secondary	14.67
Matriculation	13.78
Post Graduate and above	9.33
Illiterate	8.67

Source: Field Work, 2021-2022

The data highlighted in Table 2.13, indicates that most of the respondents in the sample belong to the graduate category, accounting for 27.33 per cent, closely followed by under-matriculation at 26.22 per cent. The proportion of respondents in the higher secondary group is 14.67 per cent, while the matriculate category represents 13.78 per cent, and the postgraduate category makes up 9.33 per cent. The category with the lowest representation is the illiterate category, which comprises 8.67 per cent of the respondents. The variety of educational backgrounds in the sample offers unique insights and enables a thorough investigation of how various educational level may impact the political opinion and behaviour of the respondents.

2.9.4 Classification of Respondents by Occupation

The occupation of the respondent is a crucial determinant that influences their voting behaviour. A person's profession can significantly impact their perspective, interests, and concerns, all of which play a role in determining their political leaning and political participation. Therefore, analysing the respondent's occupation might provide valuable insights into how different occupational backgrounds affect their participation in the electoral process and their political behaviour. Table 2.4 indicates the distribution of respondents based on their occupation. The occupation of the respondents has been categorized into four main groups- (a) government service, (b) self-employed, (c) cultivator, and (d) unemployed. Government service includes employees working in both the central and state government service. The self-employed category individuals engaged in autonomous economic endeavours, such as managing their own enterprises, practicing a profession autonomously, or operating as sole proprietors. The cultivator category includes respondents who are engaged in agricultural activities such as farming, horticulture, or other agricultural practices. The unemployed category includes people who are students, housewives, and others who are not involved in meaningful employment.

Table 2.14: Sample Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Percentage
Cultivator	28.44
Government service	24.89
Self-employed	24.22
Unemployed	22.44

Source: Field Work, 2021-2022

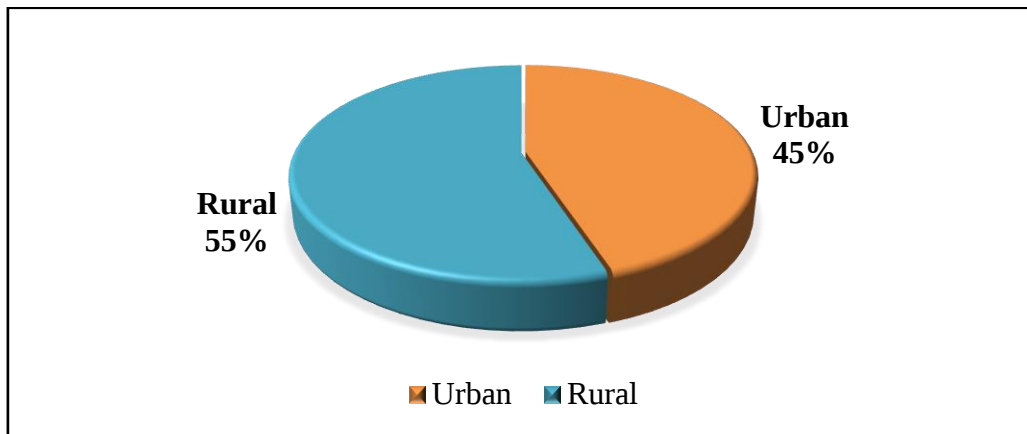
The data in Table 2.14, indicates that out of the total of 450 respondents, the maximum representation is from the cultivator category with 28.44 per cent, followed by the government service category with 24.89 per cent, the self-employed category with 24.22 per cent, and the unemployed category with 22.44 per cent. This distribution provides insights into the occupational composition of the sample respondents enabling a meticulous examination of how various occupational backgrounds could impact the political outlooks and behaviors of the respondents.

2.8.5 Classification of Respondents by Place of Residence

The respondent's geographical distribution is classified based on whether they live in urban or rural areas. This category is specifically created to ensure a viewpoint that facilitates the process of making comparisons. The purpose of this category is to examine and compare the political behaviour, beliefs, and decisions of individuals residing in urban and rural regions.

As per the data in figure 2.3, it is evident that the rural respondents make up the majority of the sample accounting for 55 per cent. The urban population constituted 45 per cent of the sample. These findings indicate that the sample is predominantly composed of respondents from rural areas.

Figure 2.3: Sample Respondents by Residence



Source: Field Work, 2021-2022

2.9. Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the topography and climate and the demographic profile of Nagaland. The society, economic background, administrative and cultural landscape and a brief description of women in Naga society has also been discussed. This was done because in order to describe, analyse and assess a society's political characteristics it is necessary to know its contextual background.

In order to have a clearer understanding and analysis of voting behaviour of women in Nagaland, it become necessary to know the socio-economic profile of the respondents. Background characteristics of an individual play an important role in formulating his/her political preference and decisions. Therefore, a brief account of the socio-economic profile of the sample respondents interviewed during the fieldwork has also been highlighted in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN'S VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN NAGALAND: NATURE, DIMENSION AND DETERIMANTS

3.1 Introduction

To understand the voting behaviour of women in Nagaland, one must look at the numerous dimensions and factors that influence their political activities and decision-making processes. This chapter therefore examines the nature, dimensions and factors of women's political participation. The study examines the role of different socio-economic determinants, including education, age, marital status, occupation and place of residence, in determining the participation of women in electoral activities. These factors play a key role in determining women's access to information, resources and social networks, all of which affect their level of political participation. Through these variables, the study will be able to comprehend the way women in various socio-economic status engage in the electoral process. Political participation is multidimensional, so the study uses several indicators to measure it, including participation in campaign, attending election meetings, engaging in political discussions, and participation in NGOs. All these indicators reflect the formal and informal dimensions of political activity, and they offer an overall picture of how women are engaged in the political arena.

3.2 Electoral Participation of Women in Nagaland: A Historical Overview

Women's involvement in the electoral process is vital for the development and effectiveness of democracy. Women's participation in politics can be characterised by their equal and unrestricted sharing of political power with their male counterpart, as well as the freedom and opportunities they have within the democratic structure of electoral politics. The active participation of women in the political process indicates a democracy that is more inclusive and representational, as it considers a wide range of voices and opinions. This not

only improves the democratic system, but also promotes fair and comprehensive decision-making.¹ However, traditional customs and practices still dominate much of the Naga society. The Indian constitution under article 371(A) provides the Naga people the right to uphold their traditional laws as well as social systems of decision making. While this safeguard protects the Naga identity and culture, it has had an unintended effect. Women are usually left out of the village councils, customary courts and other traditional governing institutions that are dominated by men. This under-representation is a serious barrier to women who want to engage in politics or in leadership role. The situation underscores the need to curb gender discrimination, which occurs due to such traditional practices.²

Since Nagaland became a state in 1963, no woman had ever been elected to the State Legislative Assembly for almost sixty years. Few women had previously contested elections, though none were successful because of social barriers and lack of support by political parties. Hekani Jakhalu and Salhoutuonuo Kruse were the first two MLAs to make history as female representatives.³ Rano M. Shiaza, a nominee of the United Democratic Front (UDF) was the first woman to be elected to Lok Sabha when she defeated Hokishe Sema (INC) in March 1977.⁴ On April 4, 2022, BJP party representative Phangnon Konyak was the first woman to

¹ Rai, P. (2011). Electoral participation of women in India: Key determinants and barriers. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47–55.

² Utpal, P. (February 8, 2018). Nagaland has never elected a woman to its assembly and chances look slim again this election. *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved June 16, 2023. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/nagaland-has-never-elected-a-woman-to-its-assembly-and-chances-look-slim-again-this-election/story-knTb4CuaialdhgbNTIyAhM.html>.

³ Kalita, K. (2023, March 2). Nagaland get its First two Women MLAs in NDPP's Hekani Jakhalu and Salhoutuonuo Kruse. *The Times of India*. Retrieved July 8, 2024, from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/elections/assembly-elections/nagaland/news/nagaland-gets-its-first-two-women-mlas-in-ndpps-hekani-jakhalu-salhoutuonuo-kruse/articleshow/98364124.cms>

⁴ Jamir, A. M. T. (March 17, 2023). Participation of Naga women in electoral politics (*With special reference to six other North Eastern States*), *Morung Express*. Retrieved June 17, 2023. <https://morungexpress.com/participation-of-naga-women-in-electoral-politics>

be elected into the Rajya Sabha. This made her the first uncontested female from Nagaland to have a seat in the Upper House.⁵

No woman contested in the first Nagaland Legislative Assembly election in the year 1964. It was only in the second NLA election conducted in 1969, that two women contested marking women's first entry into the electoral politics. Ravole U from UFN (United Front of Nagaland) party, representing western Angami constituency was defeated by Thepfulo Nakhro (NNO) with a vote margin of 34.80 per cent. R. L Kinghen, an independent candidate from 40-Bhandari, lost to her adversary Tsenlamo Kikon from NNO (Nagaland Nationalist Organisation) by a margin of 25.94 per cent. In 1982, Rano M Shaiza (IND) contested in the 5th Nagaland Legislative assembly election from the 8-Western Angami Assembly Constituency, but she was unsuccessful, receiving only a meagre vote share of 9.68 per cent. During the 1987 6th NLA election, only three women contested as candidates. Chubalemla, a candidate from the NNDP, contested from 22-Arkakong Assembly Constituency but did not succeed receiving a vote share of 27.35 per cent. Sibeule (IND), a female candidate, contested from 7-Peren Assembly Constituency but was unsuccessful obtaining a vote share of 7.88 per cent. Lochumlo Yanthan (IND) contested from the 40-Bhandari Assembly district, however she was unsuccessful, receiving only 3.07 per cent of the votes. In three consecutive Nagaland Legislative Assembly elections 1989, 1993 and 1998, no woman candidate contested. However, women's increasing desire to take part in election was imminent by their involvement in electoral competition from 2003 to 2023.

In the 10th NLA election in 2003, three women candidates participated. Chubalemla (NPF) contested from the 26-Aonglenden Assembly Constituency but was unsuccessful,

⁵ PTI. (2023, July 25). Phangnon Konyak First Woman MP From Nagaland To Preside Over Rajya Sabha. *NDTV News*. Retrieved July 24, 2024, from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/phangnon-konyak-first-woman-mp-from-nagaland-to-preside-over-rajya-sabha-4239340>

receiving a vote share of 9.95 per cent. Anupama Mech contested from the Dimapur-III constituency but was defeated, receiving a vote share of only 3 per cent. Akheli (IND) contested from the 5-Ghaspani-II constituency but was also unsuccessful, receiving a vote share of 2.32 per cent. In the 11th NLA election 2008, four women contested, although none of them managed to achieve success. Rosemary Jamir (IND) who contested from 30-Alongtaki Assembly Constituency secured a vote share of 1.16 per cent. Rakhila (NCP) contested from the 54-Tuensang Sadar-II Assembly Constituency and was defeated by Kejong (INC) with a vote share of 39.07 per cent. Zeneisele contested the Dimapur-I seat as a candidate from JD (U) party and secured a vote share of 1.23 per cent. Likewise, Soly contested the election from the 60-Pungro-Kiphire Assembly constituency as a representative of the BJP party, but received only a vote share of 1.79 per cent.

In the 2013 12th NLA election, two women contested but their attempts proved to be futile. Dr. Yangerla (IND) contested from the 27-Mokokchung Town Constituency and received 9.96 per cent of the votes. Rakhila (BJP) competed in the 54-Tuensang Sadar-II Assembly Constituency and obtained a vote share of 21.50 per cent. In the 2018 NLA election, five women contested as candidates from various constituencies, but none of them emerged victorious. Wedie-U Kronu (NPP party) suffered a defeat from the 3 Dimapur- III Assembly Constituency, securing just 1.45 per cent of the votes. Rekha Rose Dukru (IND) was unsuccessful from the 17 Chizami Assembly Constituency, garnering a vote share of 1.98 per cent. Dr. K Mangyangpula (NPP) was defeated from 5 Noksen Assembly Constituency, receiving a vote share of 6.23 per cent. Awan Konyak (NDPP), failed to win from 47 Aboi Assembly Constituency, securing a vote share of 43.04 per cent. Rakhila (BJP), suffered a

defeat from 54 Tuensang Sadar-II Assembly Constituency, securing a vote share of 18.20 per cent.⁶

In the 14th Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA) election held on February 27, 2023, four female candidates participated, namely, Hekani Jakhalu, representing the NDPP party from Dimapur-III constituency; Rosy Thomson, contesting from Tening on the Congress party ticket; Salhoutuonuo Kruse, representing the NDPP party from Western Angami; and Kahuli Sema, from the BJP party in Atoizu. Two of the four contestants emerged victorious and secured seats in the Assembly. This was the first instance in the history of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly where women achieved electoral success. Hekani Jakhalu, a candidate from the NDPP party, emerged as the winner from 3 Dimapur-III Assembly Constituency. She secured victory by defeating Azheto Zhimomi from the Lok Janshakti -Ram Vilas (LJP-RV) party with a margin of 4.84 per cent, which translates to a difference of 1536 votes. Salhoutuonuo Kruse, a candidate for the NDPP party, contested from the 8th Western Angami Assembly Constituency. She was victorious in the election with a slim margin of 0.05 percent, securing a lead of 7 votes over her opponent, Keneizhakho Nakhro.⁷ Rosy Thomson (INC) contested from 6 Tenning Assembly Constituency but was unsuccessful, with a vote share of 7.44 per cent. Er. Kahuli Sema, a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), contested from Atoizu Assembly Constituency. However, she was defeated by Picto by a margin of 3.76 per cent, amounting to 602 votes.⁸

⁶ Election Commission of India. (1964-2023). Statistical Report- Nagaland Legislative Assembly Election 1964-2023. Retrieved from <https://www.eci.gov.in/general-election-to-state-legislative-assembly>

⁷ Talukdar, S (March 4, 2023). Neiphiu Rio back in Nagaland as NDPP-BJP alliance emerges stronger. Retrieved 26 July 2023 from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/politics/nagaland-assembly-election-2023-neiphiu-rio-back-for-record-fifth-term-as-ndpp-bjp-alliance-emerges-stronger/article66579700.ece>

⁸ Election Commission of India. (1964-2023). Statistical Report- Nagaland Legislative Assembly Election 1964-2023. Retrieved from <https://www.eci.gov.in/general-election-to-state-legislative-assembly>

Table 3.1: Voting Patterns in Nagaland by Gender

Year of Election	Voters			Voters exercise their suffrage			Percentage of voters			Differences in vote polled in %
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
1964	124166		124166	41331	21388	62719	33.29		50.51	
1969	93829	83102	176931	71751	66907	138658	76.47	80.51	78.37	4.04
1974	224166	176156	400322	161166	136464	297630	71.9	77.47	74.35	5.57
1977	214812	183223	398035	176606	154795	331401	82.21	84.48	83.26	2.27
1982	330290	266163	596453	240272	203700	443972	72.75	76.53	74.44	3.78
1987	319379	262574	581953	266023	225878	491901	83.29	86.02	84.53	2.73
1989	320611	261805	582416	273654	225168	498822	85.35	86.01	85.65	0.66
1993	421250	381661	802911	387446	347489	734935	91.98	91.05	91.53	0.93
1998	136963	123683	260646	110462	95326	205788	80.65	77.07	78.95	3.58
2003	529477	485364	1014841	474181	417316	891497	89.56	85.98	87.85	3.58
2008	666391	635875	1302266	573021	549362	1122383	85.99	86.39	86.19	0.4
2013	608299	590150	1198449	541919	538968	1080887	89.09	91.33	90.19	2.24
2018	597281	579151	1176432	487832	498561	986393	81.68	86.08	83.85	4.4
2023	655355	649984	1305339	554485	570972	1125457	84.61	87.84	86.22	3.23

Source: Statistical Report- Nagaland Legislative Assembly Election 1964-2023, Election

Commission of India

From the above narrative it is apparent that women in Nagaland has had a very low electoral success. However, the paradox is that women voters have always recorded a high turnout revealing a participation-representation paradox. In many of the Assembly Elections in the state, female voter turnout exceeded that of men. While women's voter turnout has reached historic highs often surpassing male turnout in many of the Assembly Election held in the state, their electoral success as candidate remained low. Table 3.1 demonstrates that women have

surpassed male voters in terms of voter turnout in ten out of the 14 Assembly elections. The data demonstrates the persistent involvement of female voters in the electoral process, indicating their strong engagement and influence in shaping the outcomes of these elections. Based on the data presented in Table 3.1 and 3.2, it is evident that women in Nagaland have not been able to sustain their participation in the electoral process beyond the act of voting. According to the outcome of the 2023 NLA election, the representation of women in the assembly is at a mere 3.23 percent.

Table 3.2: Male/Female Candidates in the Assembly Election from 1964-2023

Year of Elections	Total No. of Seats	Total No. of Candidate Contested			Total No. of Male/Female Elected		Percentage		Difference in %
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1964	40	73	Nil	73	40	Nil	.....	.....	.....
1969	40	142	2	144	40	Nil	98.61	1.39	97.22
1974	60	219	Nil	219	60	Nil	.....	.....	.....
1977	60	204	Nil	204	60	Nil	.....	.....	.....
1982	60	244	1	245	60	Nil	99.59	0.41	99.18
1987	60	211	3	214	60	Nil	98.60	1.40	97.2
1989	60	140	Nil	140	60	Nil	.....	.....	.....
1993	60	177	1	178	60	Nil	99.44	0.56	98.88
1998	60	80	Nil	80	60	Nil	.....	.....	.....
2003	60	222	3	225	60	Nil	98.67	1.33	97.34
2008	60	214	4	218	60	Nil	98.17	1.83	96.34
2013	60	185	2	187	60	Nil	98.93	1.07	97.86
2018	60	191	5	196	60	Nil	97.45	2.55	94.9
2023	60	180	4	184	58	2	97.83	2.17	95.66
Total	60	2482	25	2507	798	2	99.00	1.00	98

Source: Statistical Report- Nagaland Legislative Assembly Election 1964-2023, Election

Commission of India

Table 3.2 provides a clear representation of the gender imbalance in Assembly elections from 1964 to 2023, showing that male candidates have outnumbered female candidates. The table reveals a significant disparity in the number of female candidates in elections, with only 25 women compared to 2482 male candidates. This constitutes a mere 1 per cent of the overall number of candidates. The gender gap among candidates has been extraordinarily significant reaching 98 per cent. This stark contrast highlights the inadequate representation of women in the political arena over the past several decades. Successive elections in the state have failed to increase women's presence among election candidates. Such a development may have taken place due to political parties' indifference and apathy to nominate women as candidates or due to woman not willing to run for office.

3.3 Women's Participation in Voting

Voting is widely acknowledged as the main avenue for people to participate in politics in liberal democratic societies.⁹ Voting is a crucial indicator of democratic participation and a demonstration of an individual's active involvement as a citizen. Furthermore, it serves as a useful tool for assessing the overall state of a democracy.¹⁰ Participating in the act of voting is of utmost importance in exerting influence on the process of selecting candidates. It acts as the main means by which citizens can keep their elected leaders accountable. Through the act of voting, voters guarantee that the policies and decisions enacted by individuals in positions of authority align with the requirements and preferences of the overall population, rather than showing bias towards particular privileged groups.¹¹

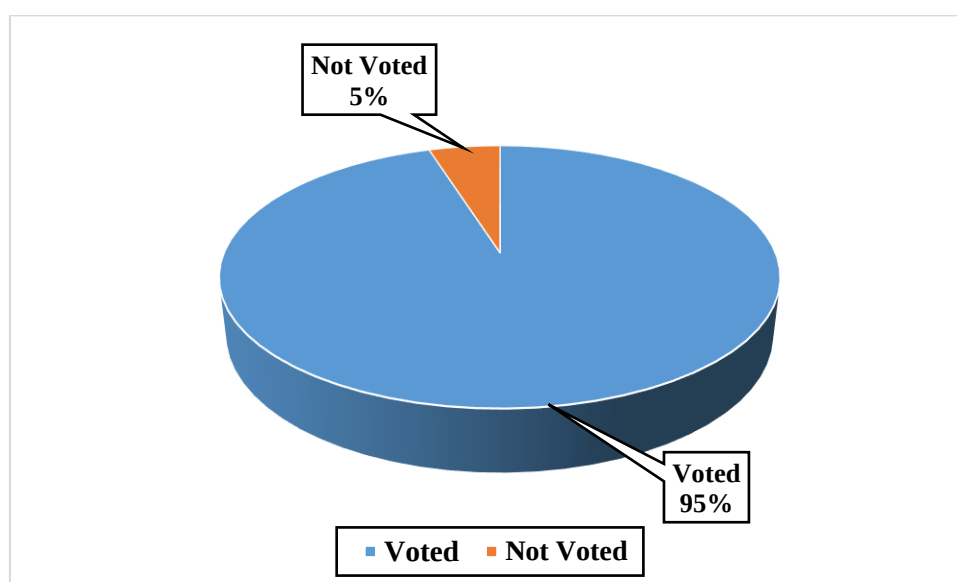
⁹ Fortunato, P. (2015). Democratic Government and Development: A Survey. The MIT Press, 32(2), 153-177. https://doi.org/10.1162/adev_a_00055

¹⁰ Caprara, G V. (2008). Will Democracy Win?. Wiley-Blackwell, 64(3), 639-659. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00581>.

¹¹ Cantoni, E. (2020). A Precinct Too Far: Turnout and Voting Costs. American Economic Association, 12(1), 61-85. <https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20180306>

The level of women's engagement in voting is assessed using a single question, "Did you cast your vote in the 2018 Nagaland State Assembly Election?". The respondents are given the option to either affirm their response as "yes" or "no". Those who voted in the Nagaland Assembly election of 2018 are categorised as voters who exercised their suffrage. And women who choose not to vote are categorised as persons who abstained from participating in the voting process. As illustrated in Figure 3.1, 95.11 per cent of the respondents voted, while 4.89 per cent refrained from casting their votes. The data suggests that women respondents have voted at a higher rate.

Figure 3.1: Percentage of Voters and Non-Voters



Source: Field Work, 2021-22

3.3.1 Reasons for Voting

At the time of election, voter's decision to vote is influenced by many factors, such as an individual's social status, psychological inclinations, the voting system, and the context of repeat election.¹² Rational choice theories suggest that individuals evaluate the benefits and

¹² Blais, A., & Dobrzynska, A. (1998, March 1). Turnout in Electoral Democracies. Wiley, 33(2), 239-261. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.00382>; Harder, J., & Krosnick, J A. (2008). Why Do People Vote?

drawbacks of their actions, such as the act of voting.¹³ On the other hand, sociological theories give great importance to issues that affect groups, such as social connections, cultural standards, and the procedures of making decisions as a collective group.¹⁴ Research indicates that those with a strong sense of political efficacy are more likely to engage in voting because they are aware of the substantial impact their actions may have. Conversely, those who perceive their vote to have less significance may be less motivated to participate in the democratic process.¹⁵

An examination of the factors influencing voter participation necessitates exploring the complex interactions between psychological, social, and economic factors. It is a common knowledge that voting is essential to a democratic society. When people believe their vote will have an impact, voting participation increases.¹⁶ Some suggests that the actions of individuals' friends, coworkers, or relatives might influence their voting behaviour.¹⁷ The personality of the candidate, the success or failure of the present government, and people's own financial circumstances are a few of the factors that could influence their voting behaviour.¹⁸ Research also shows that people are more likely to vote when they care about important social and

A Psychological Analysis of the Causes of Voter Turnout. Wiley, 64(3), 525-549. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00576>.

¹³ Kolovos, I., & Harris, P. (2005, November 1). Voter apathy in British elections: causes and remedies. https://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/bitstream/10523/1456/2/voter_turnout.pdf

¹⁴ Şener, T., BALKU, Y., Alkan, Y S., Doru, S., Dernek, K O., & Zenginoğlu, S. (2023, December 4). The socio-psychological factors affecting the voting behaviour of the postgraduate politics students: a Q-methodology study. Frontiers Media, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1218104>

¹⁵ Caprara, G V. (2008, August 5). Will Democracy Win?. Wiley-Blackwell, 64(3), 639-659. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00581>; Hassan, M S., Mohideen, R S., A'zmi, A A., Allam, S N S., Mustafa, F., & Ridzuan, A R. (2021, July 28). The Voting Decision: Social Media Use, Internal and External Efficacy Aspects. , 11(7). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v11-i7/10362>

¹⁶ Harder, J., & Krosnick, J A. (2008). Why Do People Vote? A Psychological Analysis of the Causes of Voter Turnout. Wiley, 64(3), 525-549. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00576>.

¹⁷ Şener, T., BALKU, Y., Alkan, Y S., Doru, S., Dernek, K O., & Zenginoğlu, S. (2023, December 4). The socio-psychological factors affecting the voting behaviour of the postgraduate politics students: a Q-methodology study. Frontiers Media, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1218104>

¹⁸ Banerjee, M. (2019, July 8). Money and Meaning in Elections: Towards a theory of the vote. Cambridge University Press, 54(1), 286-313. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x17000798>

political issues.¹⁹ Voting is more than simply performing one's civic duty; it is a complicated decision affected by many factors.

Therefore, the manner by which voters make their voting decision is an important aspects of the election process. To determine the factors that influenced women's voting decision, they were asked what mattered the most while deciding whom to vote for.

Table 3.3: Factors influencing Voting Decisions

Factors that Influence Voting Decision	Frequency	Percentage
Candidates	165	38.55
Party	116	27.10
Family Decision	49	11.45
Issues	42	9.81
Decision of Village Elders	33	7.71
Performance of Government	23	5.37
Total	428	100

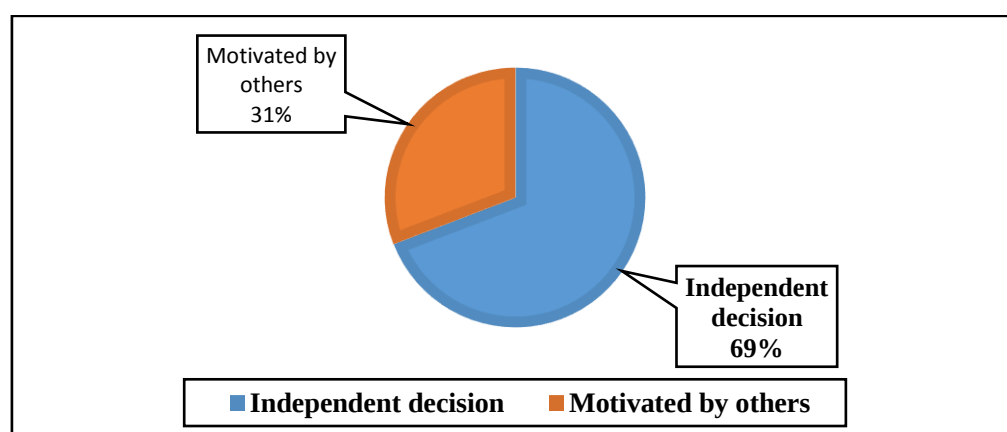
Source: Field Work, 2021-22

According to the data shown in Table 3.3, 38.55 per cent of women respondents consider candidates to be the main factor influencing their voting decision. The result indicate that individual traits, political strategies, and perceived competence of certain candidates have a considerable impact on the voting choices of these women. In contrast, 27.10 per cent of women consider political party as a significant factor when making their voting decision. The data suggest that party loyalty, political program, and ideological alignment significantly influence this set of voters. Some women are influenced by external societal factors while

¹⁹ Gerber, A S., Huber, G A., Doherty, D., & Dowling, C M. (2014). Why People Vote: Estimating the Social Returns to Voting. Cambridge University Press, 46(2), 241-264.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007123414000271>

making their voting decisions. Around 11.45 per cent of the respondents believe that family choices have a significant impact on their voting preferences. This underscores the significance of family discussion and perhaps patriarchal power structures within household in shaping their voting decisions. 7.71 per cent of women are influenced by the decision of village leaders, indicating that community norms or local collective decision-making processes have a substantial impact on their voting choices. The study reveals that 5.37 per cent of women prioritize government performance and trustworthiness when voting, while 9.81 per cent are motivated by life-affecting issues. Their voting choices are impacted by candidate personality, party affiliation, and to a lesser extent the influence of their family and community.

Figure 3.2 Did you vote for a candidate on your own free will or were you motivated by someone else?



Source: Field Work, 2021-22

Universal suffrage, which ensures that every individual has the right to vote, is a fundamental pillar of democracy.²⁰ The notion of "one person, one vote" is the epitome of representative democracy.²¹ In order to investigate this issue, women were asked whether they

²⁰ Ondercin, H L., & Fulton, S A. (2019). Bargain Shopping: How Candidate Sex Lowers the Cost of Voting. Cambridge University Press, 16(3), 711-737. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1743923x19000254>; Banducci, S., & Karp, J A. (2000). Gender, Leadership and Choice in Multiparty Systems. SAGE Publishing, 53(4), 815-848. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290005300407>

²¹ Lanning, K. (2008). Democracy, Voting, and Disenfranchisement in the United States: A Social Psychological Perspective. Wiley, 64(3), 431-446. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00571>.

use their voting rights independently or whether their decision to vote was influenced by external factors such as the family decision, influence of community leaders and peer groups.

Figure 3.2 demonstrates that 69 per cent of women used their voting rights independently. This implies that a significant proportion of female voters make their political decisions based on their own preferences and assessment without being influenced by external factors. While 31 per cent of women maintain that their voting decisions were influenced by the opinion of others, mostly due to cultural norms, family decision or under the influence of friends, neighbour or colleagues.

3.3.2 Reasons for not Voting

The study also aimed to understand the factors contributing to voting abstention. Individuals who did not participate in the 2018 Assembly elections were asked to provide reasons for abstaining from voting.

Table 3.4 Reasons for not Voting

Reason for Not Voting	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of Interest	6	27.27
Voted by someone else	5	22.73
Apathy due to unmet expectation	4	18.18
Out of Station	3	13.64
Busy	2	9.09
Did not like any of the candidates	2	9.09
Total	22	100

Source: Field Work, 2021-22

The data as presented in Table 3.4 sheds light on the diverse array of factors influencing vote abstention. According to the result, the primary reason given by non-voters was because

of lack of interest or political disillusionment, which accounted for 27.27 per cent of the respondents. 22.73 per cent of respondents indicated that they were unable to exercise their right to vote due to proxy voting, which implies possible occurrence of electoral fraud or coercion.

Moreover, a significant proportion of those who chose not to vote, 18.18 per cent, stated apathy due to unmet expectations as the reason for their abstention. Similarly, 18.18 per cent of women cited being out of town on polling day. 13.64 per cent of women abstained from voting due to their dissatisfaction with the candidates, underscoring the pivotal role of candidate quality and suitability in shaping electoral participation.

3.4 Voting Participation and Socio-Economic Indicators

The study examined the relation between political participation and socio-economic variables. The voting behaviour of the respondents is specifically assessed in connection to socioeconomic variables in the following section. This factors include educational attainment, income level, occupation, marital status and residential location to provide a comprehensive understanding of the elements influencing political participation. This study aimed to uncover patterns, disparities, and trends that may exist among various demographic groups, thereby enhancing our understanding of the various factors shaping democratic participation.

3.4.1 Voting Participation and Educational Status

Studies in the field of political science frequently demonstrate a robust correlation between educational attainment and voting behaviour. Individuals with a higher level of education are more inclined to engage in political activities, including voting, being well-informed, participating in discussions, volunteering, and actively becoming involved in

political campaigns.²² Education enhances an individual's propensity to engage in politics by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to comprehend and navigate the political framework.²³ This implies that those with higher level of education have a higher rate of participation.²⁴

Table 3.5: Percentage of Voters by Educational Status

Educational Level	No. of Voters	Percentage
Graduation	123	28.74
Under matriculation	111	25.93
Higher secondary	65	15.19
Matriculation	59	13.79
Post Graduate and above	42	9.81
Illiterate	28	6.54
Total	428	100

Source: Field Work, 2021-22

The data shown in Table 3.5, indicate that voting participation is highest among graduates (28.74%). They are followed by the under-matriculate with a turnout of 25.93 per cent, then those with higher secondary education at 15.19 per cent, matriculate respondents at 13.79 per cent, and postgraduate and above individuals at 9.81 percent. Illiterate women had the lowest rate of participation with just 6.54 per cent of them having voted.

²² Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1963). *The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. Princeton University Press; Kim, H. (2018). A Cross-national Examination of Political Trust in Adolescence: The Effects of Adolescents' Educational Expectations and Country's Democratic Governance. SAGE Publishing, 27(3), 245-278. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308818778439>

²³ Janmaat, J G., & Hoskins, B. (2021). The Changing Impact of Family Background on Political Engagement During Adolescence and Early Adulthood. Oxford University Press, 101(1), 227-251. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soab112>

²⁴ Syal, R. (2012). What Are the Effects of Educational Mobility on Political Interest and Participation in the Indian Electorate?. University of California Press, 52(2), 423-439. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2012.52.2.423>

3.4.2. Voting Participation and Age

The voting behaviour of the voters is influenced by their age, with certain age groups showing greater political engagement than others.²⁵ Research results suggest that women's voting participation is impacted by several institutional, cultural, socio-economic and demographic factors. The variation in these parameters differ significantly between age groups based on life stages and experiences.²⁶ Typically, the rates of voting participation among the youth are lower compared to those in older age groups. This trend is attributed to factors such as lower levels of political engagement and registration.²⁷ Women tend to participate more when they get older. This increase can be linked to greater political awareness, stability in residence, and higher levels of socio-economic resources, which facilitate political participation.²⁸ But there is a discernible drop in female voting participation as they get older. This is because as people get older they face barriers such as difficulties in accessing polling stations and a sense of political disengagement.²⁹ A general trend across several studies indicates that political participation tends to peak in middle age and decline with age. This decline is lessened when educational attainment is taken into account.³⁰

²⁵ Ansolabehere, S., & Hersh, E. (2013). *Gender, Race, Age and Voting: A Research Note*. 1(2). Multidisciplinary Studies in Politics and Governance. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v1i2.97>

²⁶ Maggini, N. (2017). *Young People's Voting Behaviour in Europe: Age, Generations and Voting Behaviour*. Palgrave Macmillan, 7-25. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59243-9>; Okinda, T. I., Ojwang, B. O., & Nyambuga, C. O. (2020). *Sociodemographic Characteristics and Political Attitudes as Correlates of Women Voters' Electoral Participation in Counties in Kenya: The Case of 2013 Polls*. *Politikon: The IAPSS Journal of Political Science*, 44, 63–87. <https://doi.org/10.22151/politikon.44.4>

²⁷ Binstock, R. H. (2006). Older People and Political Engagement: From Avid Voters to 'Cooled-Out Marks.' *Generations: Journal of the American Society on Aging*, 30(4), 24–30. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26555473>

²⁸ Cummins, R.L (2022). *She's the Difference: Survey of Likely Voters Age 50 and Older*. Washington, DC: AARP Research. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00537.001>; Gosnell, H. F. (1952). Participation in the forthcoming election. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 283(1), 156-160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271625228300118>.

²⁹ Purdam, K., & Taylor, H. (2023). Older and still voting? A mixed-methods study of voting amongst the older old in Europe and in the North-West of England. *Ageing & Society*, 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X23000120>

³⁰ Nie, N. H., Verba, S., & Kim, J. (1974). Political Participation and the Life Cycle. *Comparative Politics*, 6(3), 319–340. <https://doi.org/10.2307/421518>

Table 3.6: Percentage of Voters turnout by Age

Age	Who Voted	Percentage
30-44	132	30.84
18-29	128	29.91
45-59	96	22.43
60 and above	72	16.82
Total	428	100

Source: Field Work, 2021-22

The data in Table 3.6 shows that women aged 30-44 years were the most active voters, with 30.84 per cent turnout. This group is followed closely by young women aged 18-29 years, who recorded 29.91 per cent turnout. This indicate that young voters are also not apathetic. Women in the 45-59 years category voted less, at 22.43 per cent, and the 60 and above age group had the lowest turnout at 16.82 per cent.

3.4.3 Voting Participation and Marital Status

The correlation between marital status and voter turnout uncovers gender-specific trends, particularly among the female population. Studies suggest that married women generally display higher voter participation rates in comparison to single, separated, divorced, or cohabiting women, a phenomenon that can be linked to various socio-political and familial factors.³¹ The gap in voting behaviour between married and unmarried women is minimal, as both cohorts exhibit modest political influences based on their marital status. In general, despite some variations in political attitudes between married and unmarried women, the influence of

³¹ Denver, D. (2008). Another Reason to Support Marriage? Turnout and the Decline of Marriage in Britain. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 10(4), 666–680. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1467-856X.2008.00329.X>; Dehdari, S. H., Lindgren, K.-O., Oskarsson, S., & Vernby, K. (2022). The Ex-Factor: Examining the Gendered Effect of Divorce on Voter Turnout. *American Political Science Review*, 116, 1293–1308. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000144>

marital status on voting engagement remains relatively minor when juxtaposed with other determinants.³²

Table 3.7: Percentage of Voters by Marital Status

Marital status	No. of Voters	Percentage (%)
Married	251	58.64
Unmarried	163	38.08
Divorced/Widowed	14	3.27
Total	428	100

Source: Field Work, 2021-22

Table 3.7 presents differences in women's voting participation based on their marital status. Married women exhibit the highest degree of voting rate with 58.64 per cent, suggesting a significant correlation between being married and political participation. Unmarried women also voted at a high rate, with a turnout of 38.08 per cent, although lower than that of married women. In contrast, women who are divorced or widowed exhibit the lowest voting rate of 3.27 per cent. This implies that this specific demographic group may encounter challenges or barriers in participating in political activities.

3.4.4 Voting Participation and Occupational Status

Empirical research on voting behaviour reveals that women's employment status and other socioeconomic characteristics may influence their level of political participation.³³ Employed women demonstrate higher levels of confidence, self-acceptance, self-esteem, and

³² Kingston, P. W., & Finkel, S. E. (1987). Is There a Marriage Gap in Politics. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 49(1), 57–64. <https://doi.org/10.2307/352669>

³³ Lahtinen, H., Mattila, M., Wass, H., & Martikainen, P. (2017). Explaining social class inequality in voter turnout: The contribution of income and health. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 40(4), 388-410. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12095>

sociability compared to unemployed women. These factors may impact their willingness to engage in political activities.³⁴ The type of employment one has also plays a crucial role in shaping patterns of voter turnout. Public sector employees who work in stable and predictable work environments, exhibit greater levels of participation in the electoral process compared to those working in the private sector.³⁵ Additionally, in organisations where coworkers actively participate in politics it may be a strong political stimuli for others. Whereas unemployed people tend to be more concerned with resolving their own financial issues and will therefore be less likely to vote.³⁶ This means that a person's occupational status influences their chances of voting. Employed people are also likely to vote more frequently, whereas unemployed people are less likely to participate in elections.³⁷

Table 3.8: Percentage of Voters by Occupational Status

Occupational Status	Frequency	Percentage
Cultivator	127	29.67
Government service	108	25.23
Self-employed	101	23.60
Unemployed	92	21.50
Total	428	100

Source: Field Work, 2021-22

³⁴ Maqbool, M. (2014). A Comparative Study on Self-Concept of Employed and Unemployed Women. *Indian Streams Research Journal*, 4(8), 1-7.

³⁵ Geys, B., & Sorensen, R. J. (2022). Public sector employment and voter turnout. *American Political Science Review*, 116(1), 367-373. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542100099X>

³⁶ Österman, M., & Brännlund, A. (2023). Unemployment, workplace socialization, and electoral participation: evidence from Sweden. *European Sociological Review*, 40(1), 85-98. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcad014>

³⁷ Grafstein, R. (2005). The impact of employment status on voting behavior. *The Journal of Politics*, 67(3), 804-824. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2005.00340.x>

The data in Table 3.8 indicates that the cultivators have the highest voting participation rate of 29.67 per cent, followed by government servants with 25.23 per cent and the self-employed with 23.60 per cent. The rate of participation among unemployed women is the lowest, standing at 21.50 per cent. This trend indicates that occupation influences voter behaviour to some degree. Women who are economically active, especially in the agricultural and government workforce, are most likely to vote during elections. The disparity in voting participation among various occupational categories is minimal, and the low participation of unemployed women in voting is insufficient to justify the voting behaviour of women. This means other elements such as education, age, family pressure, access to information and social cultural standards, can have a greater impact in shaping female voting behaviour. Hence, even though occupation is a contributing factor, a conglomeration of social, economic and personal issues may likely influence a woman's voting behaviour.

3.4.5 Voting Participation and Place of Residence

This study encompasses both urban and rural locations in order to facilitate comparison in voting behaviour. When we examine the data shown in Table 3.9, it is evident that women from rural areas participate more in voting than their urban counterparts. The turnout rate for rural voters was 56.31 per cent, whilst urban voters had a turnout rate of 43.69 per cent.

The data in Table 3.9 highlights the varying levels of voting participation among the two demographic groups. One reason for the higher rural turnout is that most people in Nagaland live in rural areas (71.14%), while only a smaller share lives in urban areas (28.86%).³⁸ The data suggest that rural women vote more actively, possibly due to being strongly influenced by their community or due to a sense of feeling connected to local issues

³⁸ *Statistical hand Book of Nagaland (2022)*: Directorate of Economics & Statistics Government of Nagaland, Kohima,

or a stimulation to vote by local leaders.³⁹ On the other hand, women in the urban setting are less engaged which may be ascribed to their hectic work schedules, non-community affiliation and less individual mobilisation.⁴⁰ The data shows that place of residence is a significant factor in influencing the voting behaviour of women, as rural women compared to the urbanites are more likely to vote than urban women.

Table 3.9: Percentage of Voters by Place of Residence

Place of Residence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Urban	187	43.69
Rural	241	56.31
Total	428	100

Source: Field Work, 2021-22

The above analysis on voting participation indicates a high turnout among women with 95.11 per cent. This implies that women are actively exercising their suffrage rights and taking part in the democratic process. Although several research have been conducted on women voter participation, the correlation between different elements of socio-economic factors and voting is only partly validated in the study. The most active participants who engage in voting typically include women with graduate degree, married women, farmers or cultivators and women who resides in rural areas.

³⁹ Choudhary, A. K., Tiwary, P., Das, I., Raj, K., & Bharti, S. (2025). Gender and representation in local self-government: assessing the impact of women's political participation in panchayati raj institutions. *Lex Localis*, 23(10), 961–970. <https://doi.org/10.52152/801053>

⁴⁰ Mukherjee, P., & Agarwal, M. (2023). Factors influencing female workforce participation in urban India: a case study. *International Journal of Indian Economic Light*, 11 (2), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra12849>

3.5 Women Electoral Participation beyond Voting

This section examines whether women maintain the same level of enthusiasm in all modes of electoral activities. Voting is undeniably a crucial and widely embraced method of political engagement within a representative democracy. It serves as a primary means for voters to exert influence on government decision-making and to hold elected officials accountable.⁴¹ However, political participation encompasses activities that go beyond voting, allowing citizens to impact governmental decisions by engaging in electoral activities. The broader concept of political engagement includes both traditional and non-traditional forms, such as volunteering, participating in collective protests, and affiliating with social movements, interest groups, and political parties.⁴²

Electoral participation entails more than simply exercising one's vote. Voting demands less effort and commitment compared to other political activities that require more significant time, effort, and enthusiasm.⁴³ Focusing solely on voting participation limits our understanding of how, when, and why women engage in politics.⁴⁴ Thus, to thoroughly assess women's political participation in its entirety, it is imperative to move beyond the act of voting and explore their engagement in other political endeavours.

⁴¹ Evans, E., & Reher, S. (2024). *Disability and political representation: Voting Rights and Political Participation*. Oxford University Press, (pp. 53-79).
<https://doi.org/10.1002/POP4.1510.1093/oso/9780192859761.003.0003>

⁴² Duncan, L. E. (2022). Psychology and Political Participation. In *Oxford University Press eBooks* (pp. 63–82).
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198861126.013.5>; Kitschelt, H., & Rehm, P. (2023). Political participation. In *Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.334. Retrieved 1 Aug. 2024, from <https://www.oxfordpoliticstrove.com/view/10.1093/hepl/9780192846051.001.0001/hepl-9780192846051>

⁴³ Behera, M., & Dutta, R. (2021). Trends and dimensions of political participation in India: An analysis since 1989 general elections. *International Journal of Political Science and Governance*, 3(1), 44–48.
<https://doi.org/10.33545/26646021.2021.v3.i1a.88>

⁴⁴ Páez-Bernal, C., & Kittilson, M. C. (2022). Gender and Political Participation. In *Oxford University Press eBooks* (pp. 562–577). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198861126.013.33>

3.5.1 Women Participation in Election Campaign

The term election campaign refers to the organised efforts and activities carried out by a political party, candidates, and their supporters with the aim of persuading others to vote for them in the election. Election campaigns are important in the democratic process because they allow individuals to learn about the candidates, their political agendas, and their qualifications for public office.⁴⁵ Election campaign generally encompass a range of strategies and tactics, including the utilisation of social media, advertising, public events, and direct voter outreach.⁴⁶ In addition, elections campaign provide a forum for collaborative efforts, where individuals cooperate to generate public benefits, such as heightened political consciousness and voter participation, which have positive impact on the wider society.⁴⁷

Campaign activities indeed represent a multifaceted endeavour that extends far beyond the singular act of voting, involving a series of coordinated efforts aimed at influencing public opinion and mobilising voters. These activities encompass canvassing, attending rallies, and engaging in debates, all of which necessitate the allocation of time, money, resources and effort. Political parties and candidates utilise diverse mobilisation tactics to actively involve voters, with particular emphasis on various modes of participation such as voting, contributing financially, or engaging on popular social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.⁴⁸ For

⁴⁵ Campbell, J. E., & Dettrey, B. J. (2009). Context and Strategy in Presidential Campaigns: Incumbency and the Political Climate. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 8(4), 292–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377850903263797>

⁴⁶ Liebhart, K., & Bernhardt, P. (2017). Political Storytelling on Instagram: Key Aspects of Alexander Van der Bellen's Successful 2016 Presidential Election Campaign. *Media and Communication*, 5(4), 15–25. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v5i4.1062>

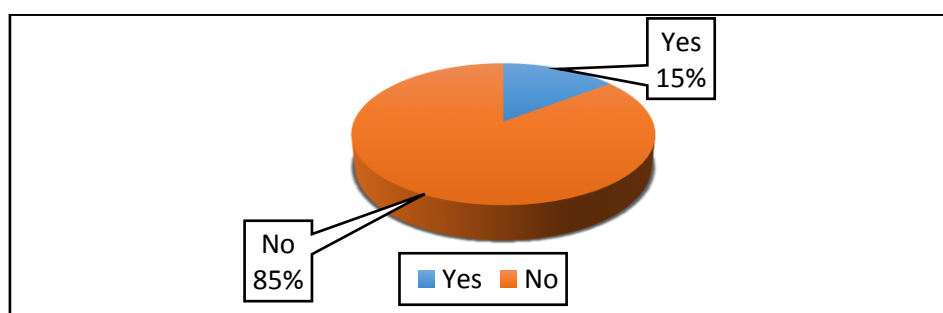
⁴⁷ Tobias, R. (2008). Exploring the Effects of Campaigning Strategies for the Organisation of Collective Action Using Empirical Data. In *IGI Global eBooks* (pp. 239–251). <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59904-522-1.ch018>

⁴⁸ Wurst, A. K., Pohl, K., & Haßler, J. (2023). Mobilization in the Context of Campaign Functions and Citizen Participation. *Media and Communication*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i3.6660>

Verba and Nie Campaign activities include canvassing, endorsing, persuading voters, donating money, and other campaign-related duties.⁴⁹

While voting is a fundamental aspect of democracy, campaign activities exert a more significant collective influence on decision-making by promoting political engagement, enhancing knowledge, and harnessing collective or diverse interests. For the purposes of this study, actively endorsing a candidate or party constitutes campaigning. Participation in campaign activities is an important indicator of political engagement and involvement. Individuals who actively participate in canvassing for candidates and parties, engaging in a range of campaign activities, and convincing others have a greater degree of political participation in comparison to those who solely cast their votes. Participation in election campaign shows a deeper commitment to the political process, as it requires substantial effort, time, and initiative. By engaging in these activities, individuals contribute more significantly to the democratic process, influencing public opinion and election outcomes more effectively than through voting alone.

Figure 3.3: Women Participation in Election Campaign



Source: Field Work, 2021-22

The data shown in Figure 3.3 indicate significant insights into the involvement of women in election campaign as per socio-economic status. Overall, only 15 per cent of women

⁴⁹ Verba, S. (1971). Norman H. Nie & Jae on Kim: The Modes of Democratic Participation. Sage publication, p.8; Olson, E. (2016). Changing Attitudes About Democratic Participation Through a Catalytic Experience. *Northwestern Journal of Law and Social Policy*, 11(2), 78-80. <https://11nq.com/zkg5h>

took part in election campaign related activities, while a majority (85%) did not participate. According to the data highlighted in Table 3.10, graduates exhibit the highest participation rate (54.35 %) in campaign activities. The graduate women are followed by the higher secondary group (17.39 %), PG and above (15.22%), the under-matric (8.70%), and the matriculate and illiterate with a participation rate of 2.17 per cent each. The result indicate that education background is important for participation in campaign activities for women.

According to Marital status involvement rate in political campaign is greater for married women, standing at 54.35 per cent, in contrast to 45.65 per cent for unmarried women. Married women take part in political campaigns and activities more may be because they are widely accepted in society and viewed as stable and respectable, making parties more open to engaging them. Moreover, shared political views with their husbands can create a supportive home environment and open up valuable networks and connections.⁵⁰ They may also have more economic security from shared household income, thereby enabling them to invest their time in campaigns without the financial pressure within political circles. In contrast, young single women tend to be more career oriented over unpaid political activism. The other reasons which make unmarried women not active in politics and campaigns are due to social stigma, cultural demand and financial issues which limit their participation.⁵¹ The study findings indicate that a host of reasons discourage unmarried women from political campaigning. An unmarried respondent stated that she avoids involvement in campaign activities, because she considers politics as corrupt and full of malpractices and therefore chooses to focus solely on

⁵⁰ Coloroso, C. (2010). *The political socialization effects of marriage for American women voters*. [MA Thesis, Georgetown University]. <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/553694>

⁵¹ Carpena, F., & Jensenius, F. R. (2021). Age of marriage and women's political engagement: Evidence from India. *The Journal of Politics*, 83(4), 1823-1828. <https://doi.org/10.2139/SSRN.3383080> ; Li, Y. (2024). Systemic and sociocultural factors impeding women's political participation and leadership development: A Sociological inquiry. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 187, 03016. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202418703016> ; Shah, A. (2024). Empowering Futures: The Role of Education in Advancing Women's. *International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies*, 03(10), 833–841. <https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-10-019>

her career ambitions. Another respondents expressed that she is unwilling to be directly involved in political activities especially in campaign activities because of the fear of gossip, judgment or harm to her personal reputation. Yet another respondent cited absence of connection with political leaders or parties as the cause of her non-participation. Such narratives demonstrate how individual choices, societal perceptions and institutional barriers combine to discourage women from engaging in political campaign.

Regarding occupation, government employees show the highest participation rate at 54.35 per cent. This phenomenon may be attributed to their familiarity with political processes and enhanced understanding of civic responsibilities due to their professional background. The participation rate for self-employed women is 23.91 per cent, whereas cultivators and unemployed women have lower rates of campaign participation with 13.04 per cent and 8.70 per cent respectively. These results indicate that the type of occupation influences political engagement, with individuals in more secure or informed professions being more inclined to participate. Interestingly, the statistics show that rural women exhibit a much higher proportion (63.04%) of participation in election campaign compared to urban women (36.96%). This suggests that rural women are more actively engaged in political mobilisation, because this may be due to the fact that campaigning in the village is more community-based, visible and interpersonal.⁵² In most rural areas, political campaign are usually in the form of community meetings, door-to-door mobilisation, or local gatherings where women are persuaded or expected to participate.⁵³ In contrast, urban women might be less involved because of their

⁵² Kishwar, M. (1988). Nature of women's mobilisation in rural India: an exploratory essay. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 23 (52/53), 2754-2763. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4394188>

⁵³ Jannah, N., Sampurna, A., Hasibuan, M. R., Ardianti, I., & AL Barry, A. A. (2024). Analysis Forms of Political Communication in Campaign Strategies to Increase Voter Participation in the 2024 Sumut Regional Elections. *International Journal of Education, Social Studies, and Management*, 4(2), 597–605. <https://doi.org/10.52121/ijessm.v4i2.322>

hectic work schedule, their individualistic lifestyles or their lack of direct contact with political workers.⁵⁴

Table 3.10: Women Participation in Elections Campaigns based on Socio-Economic Status

Characteristics	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Education		
Graduation	25	54.35
Higher secondary	8	17.39
Post Graduate and above	7	15.22
Under matriculation	4	8.70
Matriculation	1	2.17
Illiterate	1	2.17
Total	46	100
Marital Status		
Married	25	54.35
Unmarried	21	45.65
Divorced/Widowed	0	-
Total	46	100
Occupation		
Government service	25	54.35
Self-employed	11	23.91
Cultivator	6	13.04
Unemployed	4	8.7
Total	46	100
Place of Residence		
Rural	29	63.04
Urban	17	36.96
Total	46	100

Source: Field Work, 2021-22

⁵⁴ Banerjee, R. (2017). *Does Time Matter? – A Study of Participation of Women in Urban Governance*. 4(3), 62–76. <https://doi.org/10.20896/SACI.V4I3.232>

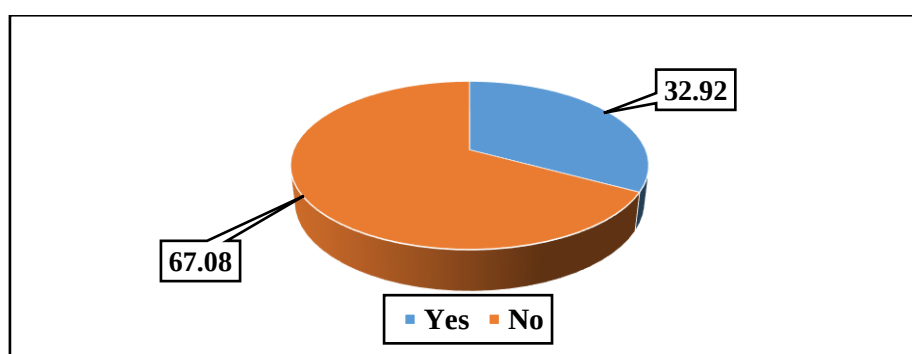
3.5.2 Participation of Women in Elections Meetings and Rallies

Attending election meetings or rallies is an important mode of electoral participation, acting as a direct communication conduit between political parties and the electorate. Election meetings are essential for disseminating information about the party's agenda and programmes to the prospective voters. Political rallies and meetings enable parties to present their programs and candidates directly to the electorate, often leveraging mass media to extend their reach beyond the immediate audience present at the event. Today political parties employ strategies, where social media campaigns are used to encourage voter participation and information-seeking behaviors.⁵⁵ Research indicates that exposure to political information, such as that provided in election meetings, can increase voter knowledge and participation.

The data in Figure 3.4 and Table 3.11 provide a detailed analysis of women's participation in electoral meetings and rallies, highlighting disparities in terms of various socio-economic factors. Overall, 32.92 per cent of women attended election meetings, while a majority (67.08%) did not participate. Education is a critical factor, as evidenced by the fact that highest participation in election meetings and rallies has come from the graduates (37.59%), indicating that higher education level may be correlated with participation in election meetings. This high percentage is followed by women having higher secondary education (19.55%). The under-matriculate at 15.79 per cent, matriculate at 13.53 per cent, and those with post-graduate degrees or higher at 11.28 per cent. The data indicate that education has a varied effect on the participation of women in election meetings and rallies. Graduates are the most active, while women with very low or high education are the least active.

⁵⁵ Wurst, A. K., Pohl, K., & Haßler, J. (2023). Mobilization in the Context of Campaign Functions and Citizen Participation. *Media and Communication*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i3.6660>

Figure 3.4: Participation of Women in Elections Meetings and Rallies



Source: Field Work, 2021-22

Marital status also affects participation rates. Married women have the highest attendance at 56.39 per cent, possibly due to greater stability or support systems that facilitate their involvement. Unmarried women exhibit a participation rate of 40.60 per cent, a statistically significant figure but, nonetheless, lower than that of married women. Divorced or widowed women show the least participation rate at 3.01 per cent.

Occupation also has a definite impact on political engagement as observed in the participation rate of government employees (39.10%). This may be because government employees are more exposed to public issues, have better awareness of policies, and are more connected to administrative processes.⁵⁶ Their working environment usually involves communication with authorities, programs, and government regimes, which may enhance their interest and involvement in politics.⁵⁷ Self-employed women participate at a rate of 28.57 per cent, indicating a moderate level of engagement. Unemployed women have a participation rate of 19.55 per cent. Cultivators have the least participation rate of 12.78 per cent, possibly due to time constraints or lack of access to political information. Therefore, the data supports the

⁵⁶ Ertas, N. (2015). Political Voice and Civic Attentiveness of Public and Non-Profit Employees. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 45(5), 607–626. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074014523117>

⁵⁷ Geys, B., & Sørensen, R. J. (2021). Public Sector Employment and Voter Turnout. *American Political Science Review*, 116(1), 367–373. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542100099X>

idea that women working in government jobs are more likely to participate actively in election meetings and rallies.

Table 3.11: Women Participation in Elections Meetings and Rallies based on Socio-Economic Status

Characteristics	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Education		
Graduation	50	37.59
Higher secondary	26	19.55
Under matriculation	21	15.79
Matriculation	18	13.53
Post Graduate and above	15	11.28
Illiterate	3	2.26
Total	133	100
Marital Status		
Married	75	56.39
Unmarried	54	40.6
Divorced/Widowed	4	3.01
Total	133	100
Occupation		
Government service	52	39.1
Self-employed	38	28.57
Unemployed	26	19.55
Cultivator	17	12.78
Total	133	100
Place of Residence		
Urban	76	57.14
Rural	57	42.86
Total	133	100

Source: Field Work, 2021-22

Further, place of residence has a strong influence on women's participation in election meetings and rallies. Urban women attend election meetings at a much higher rate (57.14%) than rural women (42.86%). This difference means that urban social environment have greater

exposure and opportunities for political participation. Urban women often enjoy access to information, more political activity, and more media coverage, which may influence them to participate in election-related activities. Urban women may also be better informed, have greater mobility or have organised platforms to participate.⁵⁸ In contrast, rural women might face several barriers, including the lack of information, fewer political activities, and family or mobility issues.⁵⁹ The data show that an urban setting is more conducive and encouraging for women to attend election meetings as compared to rural area.

3.5.3 Participation of Women in Political Discussion

Political discussion play a crucial role in developing political attitudes, fostering civic engagement, and shaping democratic societies. Political discussion are complex and involve various forms of interpersonal communication in the political realm, including conversations, debates, and deliberations.⁶⁰ It serves as a core element for the democratic wellbeing of societies, facilitating the exchange of political information, opinions, and potentially contrary views.⁶¹ Political dialogues have the potential to occur in a variety of contexts, which encompass direct exchanges between individuals and authorities, alongside virtual spaces like Reddit, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. These platforms provide communication spaces that cater to both politically like-minded individuals and those with divergent perspectives.⁶²

⁵⁸ Elder, L., & Greene, S. (2003). Political information, gender and the vote: the differential impact of organizations, personal discussion, and the media on the electoral decisions of women and men. *Social Science Journal*, 40(3), 385–399. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0362-3319\(03\)00037-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0362-3319(03)00037-5)

⁵⁹ Patel, G. S., & Dwarka, D. (2025). A Study of Socio-personal and Socio-economic Traits of Rural Women. *Advances in Research*, 26(3), 70–80. <https://doi.org/10.9734/air/2025/v26i31326>

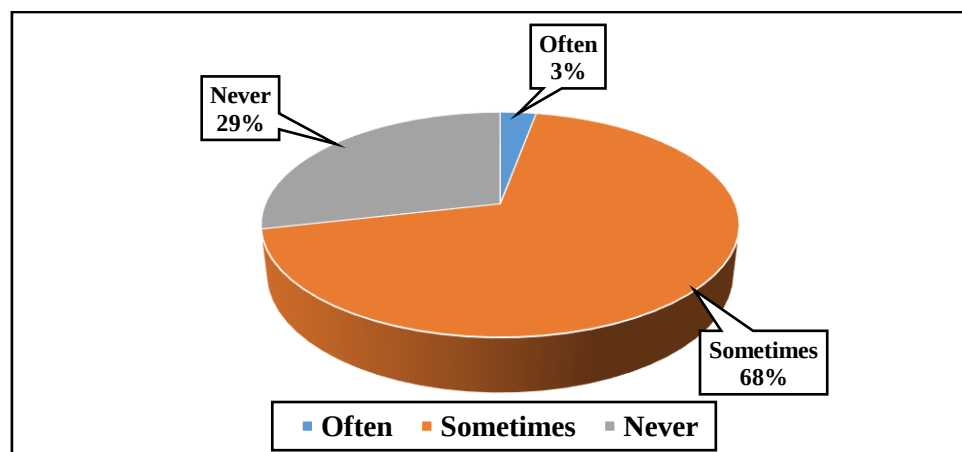
⁶⁰ Larrosa-Fuentes, J. S. (2021). Political Talk, Conversation, Discussion, Debate, or Deliberation? An Interpersonal Political Communication Definition and Typology. *Global Media Journal México*, 17(33). <https://doi.org/10.29105/gmjmx17.33-1>

⁶¹ An, J., Kwak, H., Posegga, O., & Jungherr, A. (2019). Political Discussions in Homogeneous and Cross-Cutting Communication Spaces. *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, 13, 68–79. <https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v13i01.3210>

⁶² Hâncean, M. G., Perc, M., Gheorghită, A., Yon, G. G. V., & Mihăilă, B. E. (2022). The formation of political discussion networks. *Royal Society Open Science*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.211609>

Political discussion have several functions, such as sharing information, exerting influence, highlighting popular or controversial issues, and understanding political alliances and oppositions.⁶³ Discussing politics and current events with others can significantly stimulate a sense of political engagement. Studies suggest that people are motivated by civic and societal factors to participate in political discourse, therefore fostering more involvement within their communities.⁶⁴ Political discussions may occur in many settings, including families, educational institutions, and wider social circles, all of which may increase knowledge and an interest to engage in electoral activities. .

Figure 3.5: Participation of Women in Political Discussion



Source: Field Work, 2021-22

Women's level of political discussion with others is measured using three frequencies, namely frequently, sometimes and never. The data presented in Figure 3.5 demonstrate that the majority of women (68 %) participate in political conversation occasionally, while 29 per cent never engage in such discussion, and only 3 per cent frequently discuss political issues and

⁶³ Tavares, R. L., Pimentel, M., & De Araujo, R. M. (2012). *Information Visualization in Political Discussions. Brazilian Symposium on Collaborative Systems*, pp. 75-83 <https://doi.org/10.1109/sbsc.2012.19>

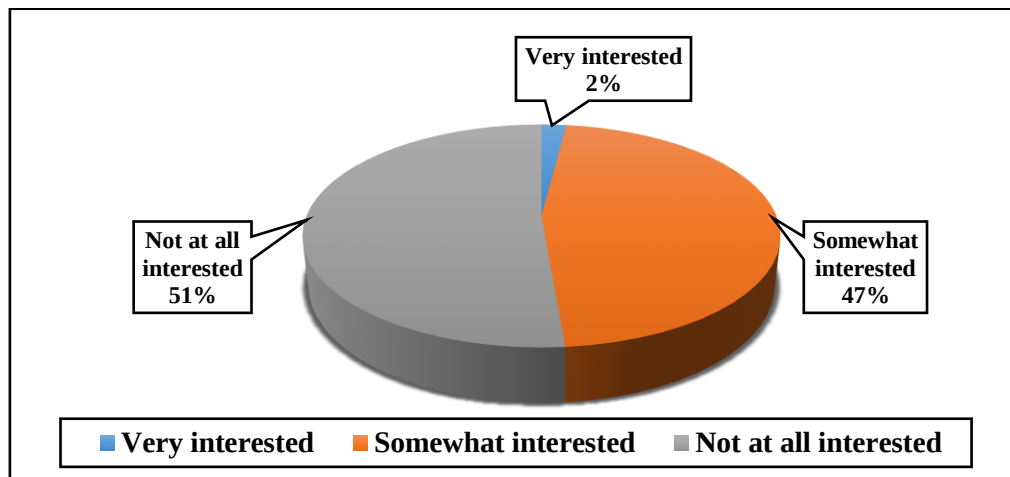
⁶⁴ De Zúñiga, H. G., Valenzuela, S., & Weeks, B. E. (2016). Motivations for Political Discussion: Antecedents and Consequences on Civic Engagement. *Human Communication Research*, 42(4), 533–552. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hcre.12086>

news. This observed pattern suggests a range of underlying factors. The high percentage of women discussing politics to some degree indicates a moderate level of engagement in political discussion. These women may partake in political conversation in response to significant events or during election periods, yet they do not consistently follow political developments. This sporadic involvement may be due to a lack of sustained interest or limited awareness of political matters. Women in this group may not prioritise political discussion in their daily lives, potentially because of other pressing responsibilities or interests. The 29 per cent of women who do not discuss politics at all are likely a sub-group with limited interest about politics, which is indicative of disinterest, political self-efficacy, or competing with family and social commitments. The finding is representative of broader patterns observed in feminist political theory where the political voice of women is restricted by structural barriers, gender-based roles and low political self-efficacy.⁶⁵ Research shows that in patriarchal societies, the interest and expression of women in political matters are suppressed, which is visible in the Indian context, where women are found less willing to express political opinion in the presence of their relatives or male members of society.⁶⁶ The small subset of women (3%) who frequently engage in political discussion represent a highly engaged minority. These individuals probably possess a strong interest in political affairs and actively seek out information and platforms for dialogue.

⁶⁵ Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1963). *The civic Culture: political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/The_Civic_Culture/J93o05MH3v8C?hl=en&gbpv=1; Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2003). *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*. <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam033/2002031077.pdf>

⁶⁶ Haider, E. A., & Nooruddin, I. (2023). Well-Behaved Women: Engendering political interest in public Opinion research. *Comparative Political Studies*, 57(12), 2046–2079. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231209961>

Figure 3.6: Women Interest in Politics



Source: Field Work, 2021-22

Women low level of engagement in political discussion may be because women are not interested in politics. Figure 3.6 highlight women's level of interest in politics. A majority of them (51 %) do not have an interest in politics, while 47 per cent of them have some interest in politics. Discussing politics with other is a matter of interest. As shown in Figure 3.5 majority of women (51%) do not have any interest in politics. Only when someone is interested in politics would one take part in political discussion with others. A small proportion of women (2 %) exhibit a high level of interest in politics does seem to impact their level of political discussion.

3.5.4 Women's Participation in NGOs

Non-governmental organisation (NGOs) have the distinct characteristic of being the necessary pathway for women to engage in political activities. Research suggests that women's engagement in social movements and NGOs significantly influences political activism of female advocates by enhancing their empowerment and fostering connections between local

authorities and female leaders at the grassroots level.⁶⁷ Civic engagement, which entails community-oriented actions, has been proven to encourage political participation by cultivating a sense of civic responsibility and empowering citizens to engage actively in the political process.⁶⁸ Participating in civic activities like volunteering, joining community organisations, or engaging in local governance processes provides individuals with the essential skills, information, and self-assurance needed to engage actively in politics.⁶⁹

The participation of women in Non-Governmental Organisations and social service groups is essential for accelerating social change and addressing societal problems.⁷⁰ Moreover, increasing the representation of women in leadership roles inside these establishments might possibly have beneficial outcomes for society at large. The participation of women in decision-making processes, may also help to develop policies and programmes that better respond to their particular needs, as well as other vulnerable groups.⁷¹ Furthermore, the outstanding leadership demonstrated by women in these groups could potentially inspire and motivate other women to engage more actively in civil and communal endeavours.⁷²

In order to investigate the participation of women in NGOs, participants were questioned about their current or past membership in such groups. The data in Table 3.12,

⁶⁷ González-Malabet, M. (2022). Women's Political Participation through Social Movements and Nongovernmental Organizations: The Case of Compromiso Ciudadano in Medellín, Colombia. *Social Politics International Studies in Gender State & Society*, 30(1), 93–114. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxac031>; Sener, T. (2013). Civic and Political Participation of Women and Youth in Turkey: An Examination of Perspectives of Public Authorities and NGOs. *Journal of Civil Society*, 10(1), 69–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2013.862083>

⁶⁸ Ekman, J., & Amna, E. (2012). Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology. *De Gruyter*, 22(3), 283-300. <https://doi.org/10.2478/s13374-012-0024-1>

⁶⁹ Gehrke, P. (2008). Civic Engagement and Nursing Education. *Lippincott Williams & Wilkins*, 31(1), 52-66. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.ans.0000311529.73564.ca>

⁷⁰ Singh, V., Vinnicombe, S., & Kumra, S. (2006). Women in formal corporate networks: an organisational citizenship perspective. *Emerald Publishing Limited*, 21(6), 458-482. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420610683462>; Malhotra, R K. (2023). Challenges of Women Leaders at the Workplace: An Empirical Study. , 55(1). <https://doi.org/10.48047/pne.2018.55.1.60>

⁷¹ Abakah, E. (2018). Participation without a voice? Rural women's experiences and participation in local governance activities in the Abura–Asebu–Kwamankese district of Ghana. *Cogent OA*, 4(1), 1549768-1549768. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2018.1549768>

⁷² Goryunova, E., Scribner, R. T., & Madsen, S. R. (2017). The current status of women leaders worldwide. In *Edward Elgar Publishing eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785363863.00008>

indicate that a small proportion of women are affiliated with NGOs (19.78%). The majority (80.22%) do not appear to have an inclination towards joining such groups.

Table 3.12: Women Membership in NGOs

Member of Any social service organisation or NGOs?	Total No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	89	19.78
No	361	80.22
Total	450	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021-22

The data in Table 3.13 indicate that the level of women's participation in NGOs is influenced by their socio-economic status. Graduate women (40.45%) have the highest membership, suggesting that higher education levels provide women with the skills, confidence, and networks necessary for active involvement in NGOs. The participation drops considerably for under-matriculate women (16.85%) and matriculate women (15.73%), indicating that lower educational qualifications might limit access to or awareness of such opportunities. Women with higher secondary education make up 13.48 per cent of the membership, while post-graduate and above women constitute 12.36 per cent. This slight dip in participation among post-graduates could be due to career commitment or other professional engagement. The lowest participation is seen among illiterate women at 1.12 per cent.

Married women (61.80 %,) are the most active in NGOs, which could be attributed to a sense of community responsibility or support from their families. Unmarried women's (33.71%) participation is also significant, but much lower. The minimal involvement of divorced or widowed (4.49%) women might be due to social stigma, financial constraints, or emotional stress.

Table 3.13: Women's membership in NGOs based on Socio-Economic Status

Characteristics	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Education		
Graduation	36	40.45
Under matriculation	15	16.85
Matriculation	14	15.73
Higher secondary	12	13.48
Post Graduate and above	11	12.36
Illiterate	1	1.12
Total	89	100
Marital Status		
Married	55	61.80
Unmarried	30	33.71
Divorced/Widowed	4	4.49
Total	89	100
Occupation		
Government service	35	39.33
Self-employed	27	30.34
Cultivator	9	10.11
Unemployed	18	20.22
Total	89	100
Place of Residence		
Urban	47	52.81
Rural	42	47.19
Total	89	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021-22

Women employed in government positions lead in NGO membership at 39.33 per cent, possibly because their jobs provide them with greater stability, resources and a civic-oriented mindset. Self-employed women (30.34%) also show significant participation, likely due to flexible schedules and entrepreneurial drive. The lower participation of unemployed (20.22 %) and women cultivator (10.11%) suggests economic and time constraints might limit their involvement.

Urban women (52.81 %) are slightly more involved in NGOs than their rural counterparts (47.19 %). This might be because urban areas offer greater access to opportunities, resources, and information. However, the relatively high participation of rural women indicates

a strong presence of NGOs in rural communities as well, possibly addressing local issues and needs.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined women's involvement in electoral activities such as voting, attending electoral meetings and rallies, campaign activities and participation in political discourse. The results reveal considerable disparities in women's engagement across these different forms of electoral participation. Notably, the high voter turnout percentage (95.11 %), implies a robust level of women's participation in the electoral process. Nonetheless, it is imperative to recognise that a high voter turnout does not always signify a high level of political involvement. Voting can be seen as a relatively accessible activity, allowing even those with limited political engagement to participate. In contrast, other forms of electoral involvement, such as campaigning and attending meetings which requires a greater investment of time, effort, energy and genuine political interest. The finding does not appear to be of much interest to majority of women. It is thus apparent that women political engagement is limited to voting.

Women's political participation is limited by a range of challenges that exist at the social, cultural, economic, psychological, and institutional levels, making it difficult for them to take full part in political life. One of the most significant barriers is the social and cultural demands, since they make many societies view politics as a male domain. This makes women feel pressured to stay silent and avoid public roles, which stops them from speaking in public, joining political events, or taking on leadership positions.⁷³ Economically, many women do not have the money needed for campaigning, travel, networking, or contesting elections. Women with low income or little financial independence are at a disadvantage even before they begin

⁷³ Goethals, G., Sorenson, G., & Burns, J. (2004). Barriers to women's leadership. *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, 4, 77–80. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412952392.n23>

their political activities because political involvement requires significant financial investment.⁷⁴

Psychological barriers also hinder entry of women into politics, with most women being brought up believing that politics is not their calling.⁷⁵ This mindset may lead to the emergence of a negative attitude, where they feel unfit or unworthy of a leadership position despite having the skills and knowledge. This insecurity may prevent them from speaking up, taking initiative or contesting for leadership roles. The problem becomes bigger when women do not receive leadership training or political education. Women often lack mentors and proper representation in party structures, which makes it difficult for them to progress in politics.⁷⁶ The end result is that due to these institutional and societal-instilled internal barriers, a significant number of women struggle to play an active role in politics and public life.

⁷⁴ Murray, R., Muriaas, R., & Wang, V. (2021). Editorial introduction: Gender and political financing. *International Political Science Review*, 44(1), 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01925121211040961>

⁷⁵ Shakil, A., Akram, S., Sultan, S., Aqeel, M., & Ayub, M. (2023). Women issues in Pakistan's politics: a case of psychological and economic challenges. *Bulletin of Business and Economics (BBE)*, 12(3), 303–309. <https://doi.org/10.61506/01.00036>

⁷⁶ Sanbonmatsu, K. (2010). Life's a Party; Do Political Parties Help or Hinder Women? *Harvard International Review*, 32(1), 36–39. <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-225384876/life-s-a-party-do-political-parties-help-or-hinder>

CHAPTER FOUR

CHALLENGES OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

In order to promote representative democracy around the world it is important to improve gender equality in political engagement. The effective and efficient participation of women in politics is not only a matter of human rights and sustainable development but equally encourages inclusiveness.¹ Women have achieved parity with men in terms of voting- a single aspect of political participation- in many countries but participation in other electoral activities and political representation continue to be a male domain.

As analysed in chapter 3, women in Nagaland tend to vote more than the male voters implying that women may be the deciding factor for elections in Nagaland. While this might appear to be a positive development in terms of empowerment of women, one must ask: does an increase in number (turnout) necessarily indicate more meaningful political participation? One must also keep in mind that political participation is not just voting. There are many modes of political participation that voters may take part.

Women do participate at a high rate when it comes to voting. But women in Nagaland display lower levels of political participation on many other measures. After voting, they seem to be interested in attending election meetings or rallies. But beyond these two electoral activities they seem not to be interested in taking part in other electoral activities. When it comes to more explicitly political activities such as party membership and campaign activities they participate less. Women also exhibit less interest in politics as well as in political

¹ OECD. (2018) *Women's political participation in Egypt barriers, opportunities and gender sensitivity of select political institutions*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/womens-political-participation-in-egypt.pdf>

discussion. Women also exhibit less interest in politics as well as in political discussion. This means that women are greatly marginalized and underrepresented in the political sphere of the state. These lower levels of engagement dilute women's political power and pose significant obstacles to the descriptive and substantive representation of women in political institutions.²

The problem does not end there. Women in Nagaland have lacked equitable representation in elected bodies. In a span of 59 years the state has elected only two women MLA's. Women representatives are important because they tend to advocate for policies that benefit and advance the interests of women.³ However, it is also important to note that if women are not on the ballot to begin with, then a disparity will continue in elected women politicians. This chapter will assess the challenges and barriers to women's representation in electoral activities from two perspectives, i.e., the role of political parties and the socio cultural barriers.

4.2 Political Representation of Women

The question of political representation of women has come to occupy a centre stage in the larger framework of the liberal democratic concept of representation. The political representation of women will improve women substantive representation,⁴ increase the perception of a parliament's legitimacy⁵ and contribute to the general political engagement of women. Furthermore, electing women to political office will inspire other women.⁶ They will motivate more women into politics.

² Pyeatt, N., & Yanus, A. B. (2017). Increasing Women's Political Participation: The Role of Women-Friendly Districts. *Representation*, 53(3–4), 185–199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2018.1438306>

³ Cowell-Meyers, K., & Langbein, L. (2009). Linking Women's Descriptive and Substantive Representation in the United States. *Politics & Gender*, 5(4), 491–518.

⁴ Kittilson, M. C. (2006). Challenging parties, changing Parliaments: Women and elected office in contemporary Western Europe, (p.22). Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

⁵ Gilardi, F. (2015). The temporary importance of role models for women's political representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(4), 957–970. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12155>

⁶ Alexander, A. C. (2012). Change in women's descriptive representation and the belief in women's ability to govern: A virtuous cycle. *Politics & Gender*, 8(4), 437–464. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X12000487>

Women's equal representation and leadership role in political and public life are critical to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Nevertheless, statistics indicate that women are underrepresented in every stage of decision making across the world and achieving gender equality in political life is a distant dream. The statistics from UN Women (as of 12 September, 2025) indicate that there are 32 women heads of state or government in 29 countries (out of the 193 countries that are members of the UN). This shows that while women's leadership at the top level has increased compared to the past, their representation is still limited, with less than one-fifth of UN member states having a woman leader. It is an indicator of not only progress but also presence of gender inequality in world leadership. Data compiled by UN Women show that women constitute 22.9 per cent of Cabinet members heading Ministries. The most popular portfolios among women Cabinet Ministers are Women and Gender Equality, followed by Family and Children Affairs, Social Inclusion and Development, Social Protection and Social Security, and Culture (UN Women, 2025).⁷ As per Table 4.1 only 27.1 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses are women.

Table 4.1: Global Average of Women's Representation in Parliament

Global Averages			
	Lower Chamber and unicameral	Upper Chamber	All Chamber
Total No. of MPs	37,293	7,149	44,442
Gender Break Down know For	36,868	7,149	44,017
Men	26,884	5,169	32,053
Women	9,984	1,980	11,964
Percentage of Women	27.1%	27.7%	27.2%

Source: IPU Parline: Global Data on National Parliament (as of August 2025)

⁷ UN Women. (2025, September 15). *Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation*. UN Women – Headquarters. Retrieved August 20, 2025, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-womens-leadership-and-political-participation#83880>

Table 4.2 Women's Representation in Parliament by Geographical Region

Region	Sub region	Parliamentary Representation of Women (in Percentage)
Americas		35.7
	Caribbean	40.7
	North America	39
	South America	32.1
	Central America	30.8
Europe		31.7
	Nordic countries	44.8
	Western Europe	35.8
	Southern Europe	31.3
	Central and Eastern Europe	25.3
Sub-Saharan Africa		26.9
	East Africa	32.1
	Southern Africa	30.8
	Central Africa	25.1
	West Africa	18.5
Asia		22.2
	Central Asia	26.9
	East Asia	23.9
	South East Asia	23.2
	South Asia	15.6
Pacific/Oceania		24.4
	Australia and New Zealand	48
	Pacific Islands	8.2
Middle East and North Africa		16.7
	Middle East	17.7
	North Africa	15

Source: IPU Parline: Global Data on National Parliament (as of August 2025)

As per Table 4.2, women hold 35.7 per cent of parliamentary seats in Latin America and the Caribbean and make up 31.7 per cent of parliamentarians in Europe and Northern

America. In sub-Saharan Africa, there are 26.9 per cent of women legislators, followed by Oceania with 24.4 per cent, Asia with 22.2 per cent, middle-east and Northern Africa with 16.7 per cent of women Members of Parliament.

Only six countries have 50 per cent or more women in parliament in single or lower houses: Rwanda (63.8%), Cuba (55.7%), Nicaragua (55%), Andorra (50%), Mexico (50.2%), and the United Arab Emirates (50%). Further, 23 countries have achieved or exceeded 40 per cent, including ten in Europe (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Monaco, Norway, Sweden, Spain, United Kingdom and Republic of Moldova), six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (Costa Rica, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Peru and Dominica), five in Africa (South Africa, Ethiopia, Senegal, Namibia and Cabo Verde) and two from Oceania or Pacific (Australia and New Zealand). Globally, there are 21 States in which women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, including three lower chambers namely Oman, Tuvalu and Yemen with no women representative at all (IPU Parline, 2025).⁸

The above statistic indicates that even though women make up nearly half of the world's population and their participation in politics has improved over the years, they still remain underrepresented in the National Parliament worldwide. As the data presented by the Inter-Parliamentary Union indicate, the percentage of seats occupied by women in most national parliaments is one-quarter to one-third of seats, which is significantly lower than the population representation.

4.2.1 Women's Political Representation in India

The question of women's representation in Indian politics is a complex phenomenon that is intimately tied to India's social customs, cultural practices and institutional structures.

⁸ IPU Parline (2025). *Global Data on National Parliament: Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments*. Retrieved August 20, 2015, from https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_year=2025&date_month=08

Indian women were not just silent observers but played an active role in the freedom movement. Leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant and Aruna Asaf Ali inspired hordes of women to join the fight for independence against not just the British but the male dominated social order as well.⁹ After independence, Indian Constitution of 1950 gave women equality by providing women with the right to vote and stand for an election. This was a progressive step which brought India ahead of many western democracies.¹⁰

Women's representation in India is characterised by a contradiction between symbolic and substantive representation. Symbolic representation is the presence of women as elected representatives in political institutions, but does not necessarily translate into women having actual influence over decisions, while substantive representation involves women having direct influence over policies and decisions that affect them and their issues.¹¹ In India, apart from the constitutional provision of equality and reservations of women in the local governance, their representation often remains limited to merely being present, with actual power not being easily accessible for them due to social and structural barriers.¹² This means women's representation in higher political office is still disproportionately low.¹³ This is indicative of a long-standing gap in political power between women and men.¹⁴

Women constitute nearly half of India's population but its representation in the parliament has ranged between 10 to 15 per cent, an alarming figure when viewed in the context

⁹ Forbes, G. (1996). The movement for women's rights. In *Women in Modern India* (pp. 92–120). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521268127.006>

¹⁰ Kishwar, M. (1996). Women and Politics: Beyond Quotas. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(43), 2867–2874. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4404714>

¹¹ Pitkin, H. F. (1967). The Concept of Representation. In *University of California Press eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520340503>

¹² Krook, M. L., & Zetterberg, P. (2014). Electoral quotas and political representation: Comparative perspectives. *International Political Science Review*, 35(1), 3–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512113508422>

¹³ Vishwakarma, B. K. (2025). Finding Women in Indian Democracy: Exploring the Institutional Structure and Substantive Political Participation. *Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science*, 19(3), 62–69. <https://doi.org/10.56557/jogress/2025/v19i39367>

¹⁴ Iyer, L., & Mani, A. (2019). The road not taken: Gender gaps along paths to political power. *World Development*, 119, 68–80. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.03.004>

of the country's demographics.¹⁵ The under-representation of women has been attributed to deeply ingrained patriarchal norms, social attitudes, institutional and party-level barriers.¹⁶

One of the biggest challenges of women's political representation is proxy leadership. This occurs when women are elected to positions that are reserved for them (such as in Panchayati Raj), but instead of them making decisions themselves, their husbands, fathers or other male relatives wield the power and make decisions for them. As such, the role of a woman becomes symbolic, while men exercise the real power.¹⁷ This defeats the very purpose of reservation as women may have formal positions in office without any power to make real decisions. Furthermore, cultural and patriarchal norms are also making it difficult for women to participate in politics independently or on their own, leading to tokenism rather than empowerment.¹⁸ Political Parties also often do not provide training, mentoring or resources for women to make meaningful contribution to governance.¹⁹

In the Parliament and state assemblies, there are far fewer women as compared to men. Even if women are present, they rarely hold positions of power within key committees such as the finance or the defence. This keeps their influence to a minimum and widens the gap between simply being present and actually exercising power.²⁰ Even when women are elected, the way

¹⁵ Kaushal, A. (2023). Role of Women in Indian Politics - Overview. *Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 8(7), 162–166. <https://doi.org/10.31305/rrijm.2023.v08.n07.022>

¹⁶ Kumar, K., & Dwivedi, R. C. (2024). The Role of Women in Local Governance and Their Political Representation in India. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 5(12), 906–910. <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.1224.3418>; Anukriti, S., Calvi, R., & Chakravarty, A. (2023). Can Effective Policy Implementation Alter Political Selection? Evidence from Female Legislators in India. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 16639, 1–49. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4651060>

¹⁷ Choudhury, S. H. (2024). The Symbolic Use of Women in Indian Politics: A critical study of legal tokenism and the illusion of equality. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(6), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i06.34136>

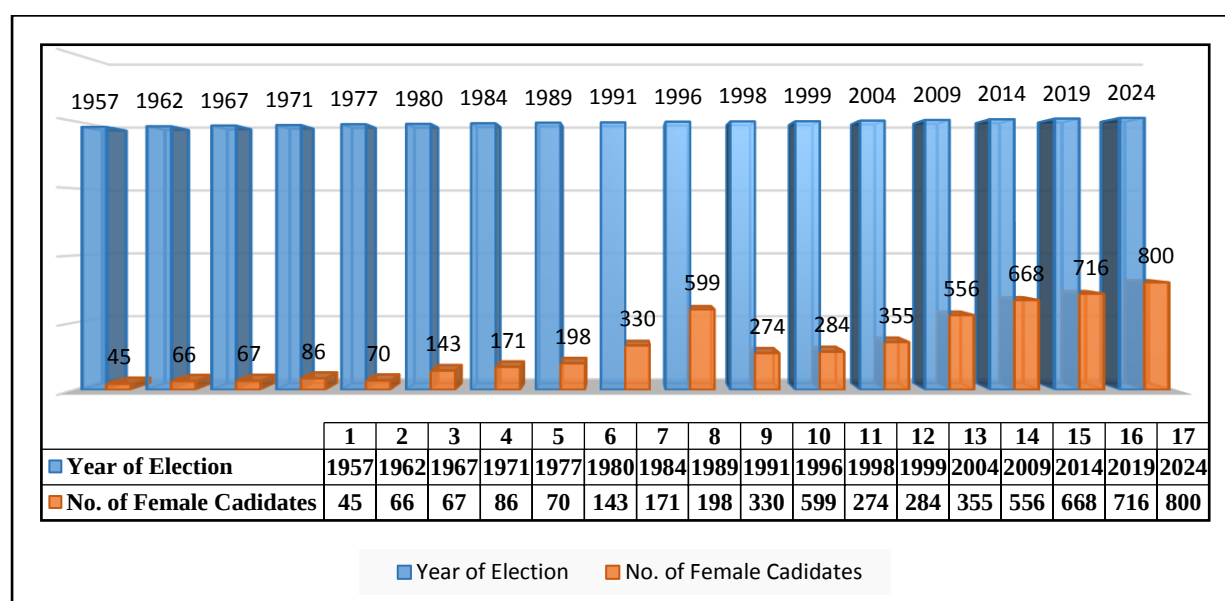
¹⁸ Aggarwal, A. (2025). *From Symbolic Seats to Substantive Power: Women in Local Governance in India*. Jindal School of Government and Public Policy. Retrieved September 5, 2025, from https://jgu.edu.in/jsgp/jindal-policy-research-lab/from-symbolic-seats-to-substantive-power-women-in-local-governance-in-india/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁹ Lata, K. (2025). Gender equity for women in political leadership in India. In *IGI Global eBooks* (pp. 427–448). <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-2903-1.ch016>

²⁰ Ghosh, A. (2022). Women's Representation in India's Parliament: Measuring progress, analysing obstacles. *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*, 382, 3–26. <https://www.orfonline.org/public/uploads/posts/pdf/20230717151038.pdf>

parties, institutions and the electoral system functions makes it harder for women to rise to powerful position. Moreover, some scholars believe that the reservation bill is more of a symbolic law rather than real reform as it does not necessarily guarantee women empowerment. This creates doubts about how much real change it can bring in improving women's role and influence in politics.²¹

Figure 4.1: Number of Women Candidates in the Lok Sabha Elections (1957- 2024)



Source: Election Commission of India

Studies indicate that women who get involve in local governance are more concerned with the community's needs. This has in some cases led to more spending on essential services like schools, health care and clean water that have a direct impact on people's everyday lives. However, these gains are uneven since women leaders face structural challenges and have limited authority.²² Experience from India suggests that mere representation of women in

²¹ Singh, T. (2023). *Women's Reservation Act of 2023: A Symbolic Gesture or a Significant Stride towards Empowerment?* Economic and Political Weekly. <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/womens-reservation-act-2023-symbolic-gesture-or-0>

²² Beaman, L., Duflo, E., Pande, R., & Topalova, P. (2010). Political reservation and substantive representation: Evidence from Indian village councils. *India Policy Forum 2010-11*, 168–201. https://www.ncaer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/4_Lori-Beaman_Esther-Duflo_Rohini-Pande_Petia-Topalova.pdf

government alone is not sufficient to bridge the gender gap. For real empowerment and progress, structural reforms are necessary such as capacity building for leadership, facilitation for women inclusion in political parties, equitable access to resources and removing cultural barriers that restrict their autonomy.²³ Only then will women's representation translate from numbers to meaningful political representation.

The number of women candidates put up by major political parties in both the parliamentary and state assembly elections remained fairly low, but have increased significantly since the mid-1990s (Figure 4.1). Political scientist Francesca R. Jensenius has argued that the introduction of women reservations in local self-governing institution since 1992 has increased the representation of women in local government. In the wake of the 1996 elections, the proposal of reserving seats for women in Parliament and State assemblies created awareness and exerted pressure on political parties to nominate more women candidates to contest elections. As a result, even though the reservation has not yet been fully implemented at the national and state levels, many major political parties began to nominate more women candidates than before, so they could be seen as supporting women's representation.²⁴

As per the data in Table 4.3, from 1951 to the late 1970s, very few women about 20 to 30, were elected to the Lok Sabha making up just 4 to 6 per cent of the members. In 1984, the number rose substantially with 43 women (8%) becoming MPs, but this did not continue through the next elections. From the 1990s onwards, the numbers began to slowly rise, crossing 40 and reaching 49 in 1999 (9%). The real upward trend started after 2004, with women's representation steadily growing from 59 in 2009 (11%), 66 in 2014 (12%), and 78 in 2019

²³ Vishwakarma, B. K. (2025). Finding Women in Indian Democracy: Exploring the Institutional Structure and Substantive Political Participation. *Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science*, 19(3), 62–69. <https://doi.org/10.56557/jogress/2025/v19i39367>

²⁴ Jensenius, F. R. (2016). Competing Inequalities? On the intersection of gender and ethnicity in candidate nominations in Indian elections. *Government and Opposition*, 51(3), 440–463. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2016.8>

(14%), the highest so far. However, the number has slightly dropped to 74 in 2024 and is currently standing only at 13 per cent. Overall, the representation of women in Lok Sabha has increased gradually over the years but is still extremely low remaining below 15 per cent.

Table 4.3: Women Representation in Lok Sabha (1951-2024)

Year of Election	No. of Women Representatives	Percentage of Women Representatives
1951	22	5
1957	22	5
1962	31	6
1967	29	6
1971	28	5
1977	19	4
1980	28	5
1984	43	8
1989	29	6
1991	39	7
1996	40	7
1998	43	8
1999	49	9
2004	45	8
2009	59	11
2014	66	12
2019	78	14
2024	74	13

Source: Election Commission of India

Table. 4.4: Women Representation in the Rajya Sabha

Year of Election	No. of Women Representatives	Percentage of Women Representatives (%)
1952	15	6.9
1954	17	7.8
1956	20	8.6
1958	22	9.5
1960	24	10.2
1962	18	7.2
1964	21	8.9
1966	23	9.8
1968	22	9.6
1970	14	5.8
1972	18	7.4
1974	18	7.5
1976	24	10.1
1978	25	10.2
1980	29	12
1982	24	10.1
1984	24	10.3
1986	28	11.5
1988	25	10.6
1990	24	10.3
1992	17	7.2
1994	20	8.3
1996	19	7.8
1998	19	7.7
2000	22	9
2002	25	10.2
2004	28	11.4
2006	25	10.2
2008	24	9.8
2010	27	11
2012	26	10.6
2014	31	12.7
2016	27	11
2018	28	11.4
2020	25	10.2
2022	24	10.25
2024	39	16.7

Source: *Election Commission of India*

As per the data in Table 4.4, in the Rajya Sabha, women representation stood at 6.9 per cent in 1952, 7.8 per cent in 1954, 8.6 per cent in 1956, 9.5 per cent in 1958, 10.2 per cent in 1960, 7.2 per cent in 1962, 8.9 per cent in 1964, 9.8 per cent in 1966, 9.6 per cent in 1968, 5.8 per cent in 1970, 7.4 per cent in 1972, 7.5 per cent in 1974, 10.1 per cent in 1976, 10.2 per cent in 1978.

Women's representation stood at 12 per cent in 1980, 10.1 per cent in 1982, 10.3 per cent in 1984, 11.5 per cent in 1986, 10.6 per cent in 1988, 10.3 per cent in 1990, 7.2 per cent in 1992, 8.3 per cent in 1994, 7.8 per cent in 1996, 7.7 per cent in 1998, 9 per cent in 2000, 10.2 per cent in 2002, 11.4 per cent in 2004, 10.2 per cent in 2006, 9.8 per cent in 2008, 11 per cent in 2010, 10.6 per cent in 2012, 12.7 per cent in 2014, 11 per cent in 2016, 11.4 per cent in 2018, 10.2 per cent in 2020, 10.25 per cent in 2022 and 16.7 per cent in 2024.

In India, women account for just 13.8 per cent of the members of parliament, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2025. Similarly, the proportion of women holding ministerial positions has decreased from 6.5 per cent to 5.6 per cent, despite the fact that women make up almost half of the electorate (World Economic Forum (EPF), 2025).²⁵ Barriers in terms of structural factors at the party level, patriarchy, unequal opportunity and discriminatory choice of candidates, still exist to hinder women's involvement in politics.²⁶ 2023 Reservation Act has reserved 33 per cent of seats for female representatives in Lok Sabha and state legislative assembly, but its enforcement will be subject to completion of delimitation process, which is likely to be done in the year 2029. As a result, the challenge before the Indian democracy is not merely to bring about cultural and institutional changes but to introduce certain legal

²⁵ World Economic Forum (EPF). (2025). *Global Gender Gap Report 2025*. Retrieved August 28, 2025, from https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2025.pdf

²⁶ Ghosh, A. (2022). Women's Representation in India's Parliament: Measuring progress, analysing obstacles. *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*, 382, 3–26. <https://www.orfonline.org/public/uploads/posts/pdf/20230717151038.pdf>

reforms so as to provide a conducive environment for encouraging women to actively participate in the domain of politics.²⁷

4.2.2 Women's Political Representation in Northeast India

The Northeastern states of India is culturally varied, but most of them still follow a patriarchal system. As a result, men still dominate most decision-making roles, and women often have less power or influence in society. The cultural practices and expectations make it harder for women to participate in politics, so fewer women end up becoming leaders or getting political opportunities.²⁸ The inadequate representation of women in positions of power and decision-making has marginalised them in politics, despite the important role they play in their families and communities.²⁹

The Northeast region functions differently from the rest of India because both modern government and customary structures co-exists side by side. Since men dominate both systems, women face two kinds of barriers. Traditional bodies hardly allow women official roles, and in modern politics they find it hard to get recognised, supported or chosen by parties. This special political situation in the region makes it even more difficult for women to enter and succeed in politics.³⁰ The region's linguistic and ethno-cultural diversity, coupled with ongoing militant activities and identity politics, has created a complex environment where women's

²⁷ Singh, T. (2023). *Women's Reservation Act of 2023: A Symbolic Gesture or a Significant Stride towards Empowerment?* Economic and Political Weekly. <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/womens-reservation-act-2023-symbolic-gesture-or-0>

²⁸ Singh, A., Yangzes, T., & Khosla, M. (2020). Status of women in North-East India. *IJ's Research Journal of Social Science & Management (RJSSM)*, 10(4), 47–54. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351302710_Status_of_women_in_North-East_India

²⁹ Chakma, M., & Pandey, N. (2022a). Women identity crisis in Northeast India With special reference to village council of Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya. *International Journal of Health Sciences (IJHS)*, 6(S5), 6094–6104. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS5.10192>

³⁰ Wouters, J. J. (2022). Introduction: Vernacular Politics in Northeast India: Democracy, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity. In *Oxford University Press eBooks* (pp. 1–54). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192863461.003.0001>

rights and political participation are often sidelined.³¹ The long-standing traditions and customary laws make it difficult for women to be accepted as equal participants in politics.³² The political system at the village level traditionally allows only male members to hold office, thereby restricting women's direct involvement in political administration.³³ Traditional leadership structures still hold a lot of influence, and they usually give decision-making power to men. In most cases, only men can participate directly, or male members are selected from each clan or group to represent them in the village councils. Because women are left out of these structures, their marginalisation becomes even stronger (Haokip, 2022).³⁴ This complicates the ability of women to have their voices heard, be supported or even elected into spheres of politics.³⁵

According to Table 4.5, women's representation in the Legislative Assemblies of the North Eastern states shows variation, but overall, the numbers remain very low compared to men. Tripura has the maximum percentage of women legislators at 15 per cent followed by Sikkim at 12.5 per cent. Manipur comes next with 8.33 per cent, while Mizoram records 7.5 per cent. Likewise, the representation of women in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya is 5 per cent each, which means that women are not represented adequately in the legislative Assembly. Assam, despite being one of the largest and politically important state of the region, has only 4.76 per cent representation of women. Nagaland has the lowest at 3.33 per cent, which

³¹ Haolai, S. (2022). Identity politics in northeast India. *International Journal of Health Sciences, (IJHS)*, 6(S2), 4366–4371. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6ns2.6008>; Mehta, B. J. (2021). Contesting Militarized Violence in “Northeast India.” *Meridians*, 20(1), 53–83. <https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-8913107>

³² Roselima, K. P. (2014). Customary law and women in North East India. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(9), 59-62. <http://www.isca.in/IJSS/Archive/v3/i9/9.ISCA-IRJSS-2014-163.pdf>

³³ Soanes, R. (2022). Gender and Political Participation in the Traditional Political System of the Village: A Study on the Khasi tribe of Mawkyntse village in Meghalaya. *The Oriental Anthropologist a Bi-annual International Journal of the Science of Man*, 22(2), 213–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972558x211063737>

³⁴ Haokip, T. (2022). Traditional Ideas and Institutions of Democracy in India's North East. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 2455328X2110696. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328x211069680>

³⁵ Das, N. (2019). Indigenous Feminism and Women Resistance: Customary Law, Codification Issue and Legal Pluralism in North East India. *Journal of Cultural and Social Anthropology*, 1(2), 19–27. <https://doi.org/10.22259/2642-8237.0102004>

indicates the underrepresentation of women in state politics. This general trend indicates a continuing gender gap in political representation in North-east India, wherein even Tripura with the highest percentage (15%), is still well below the global or national average of women political representation.

Table 4.5: State-wise Current Representation of Women in NE Assemblies

State	Strength of the Assembly	Women Representation (%) in the Assembly
Assam	126	4.76
Arunachal Pradesh	60	5
Manipur	60	8.33
Mizoram	40	7.5
Meghalaya	60	5
Nagaland	60	3.33
Tripura	60	15
Sikkim	32	12.5

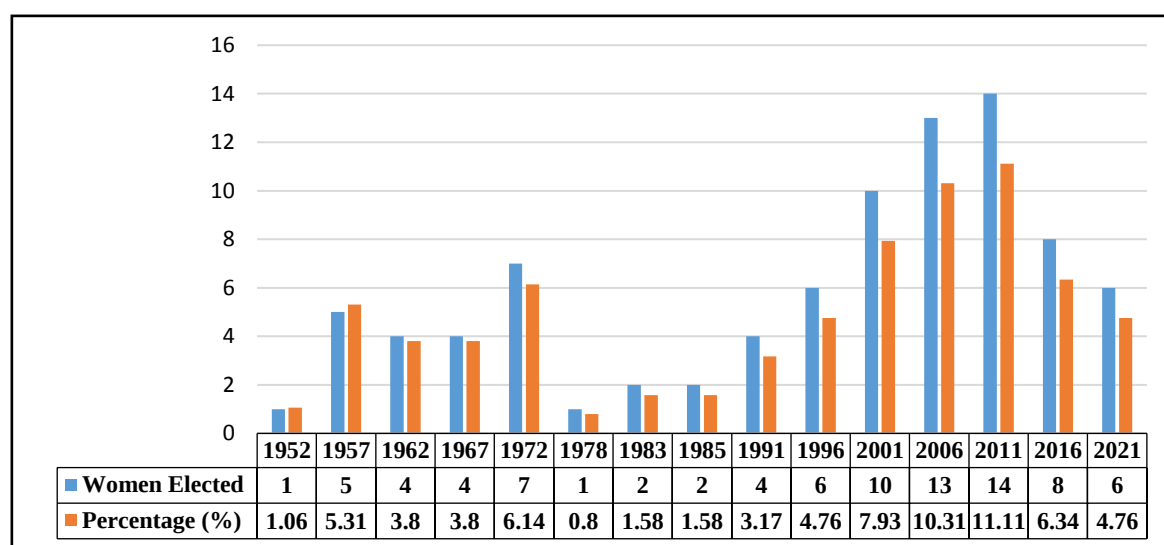
Source: Election Commission of India

Assam

The data in Fig. 4.2, depicts the number and percentage of women elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly election. In the early years (1952-1985) the representation of women was very low (usually between 1 to 5 women and less than 5 per cent). A noticeable increase is seen starting after the 1990s with a continuous increase in both the numbers and the percentage. The highest point is in 2006 and 2011, where 13-14 women were elected, which is around 10-11 per cent, which is the highest in the whole timeline. After 2011, numbers go down slightly with

the number of women elected reducing to 8 in 2016 and 6 in 2021 and with percentages falling to around 6 per cent and 4.7 per cent. Overall, the trend reflects slow progress with significant increase around the 2000s but a drop again in recent years suggesting that representation of women is uneven and still relatively low.

Figure: 4.2: Women Representation in Assam Assembly (1967-2021)



Source: *Election Commission of India and statistics on Assam Legislative Assembly elections*

In the 2021 election to the Assam Legislative Assembly, six women have been elected as MLAs into the 126-member House, which is a percentage of about 4.76 per cent of all seats. As per Table 4.6, the Congress and Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) had the highest with nine each, followed by the SUCI and BJP with seven each, the JDU with four, and the Voters Party International (VPI) with three. The AGP, BGanP and LJP had two nominees each, BPF, RJD, RPPRINAT, AIUDF, JP, RUC and AJM had one each. There were also 24 independent women candidates, which demonstrated that women ran both in major and smaller parties, but the overall representation was low.³⁶ Despite a total of 76 female contestants representing various

³⁶ Bahn, D. (2021, May 5). Gradual decline in Assam women MLAs continues, just six emerge victorious in 2021. *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from

parties, only three of the BJP, two of the INC, and one of the AGP made it, and that depicts the persistently low representation of women in the state legislature. Nandita Gorlosa (BJP), Sri Suman Haripriya (BJP), Ajanta Neog (BJP), Nandita Das (INC), Sibamoni Bora (INC) and Renupoma Rajkhowa (AGP) are the current elected MLAs.³⁷

Table 4.6: Women Nominated/Elected Assam Assembly Election, 2021 (Party-wise)

Political Parties	No. of Tickets to women	Elected
INC	9	2
ASMJTYP	9	0
BJP	7	3
SUCI	7	0
JD (U)	4	0
VPI	3	0
AGP	2	1
BGanP	2	0
LJP	2	0
BOPF	1	0
RJD	1	0
RPPRINAT	1	0
AIUDF	1	0
JP	1	0
RUC	1	0
AJM	1	0
IND	24	0
Total	76	6

Source: Election Commission of India and statistics on Assam Legislative Assembly elections

Arunachal Pradesh

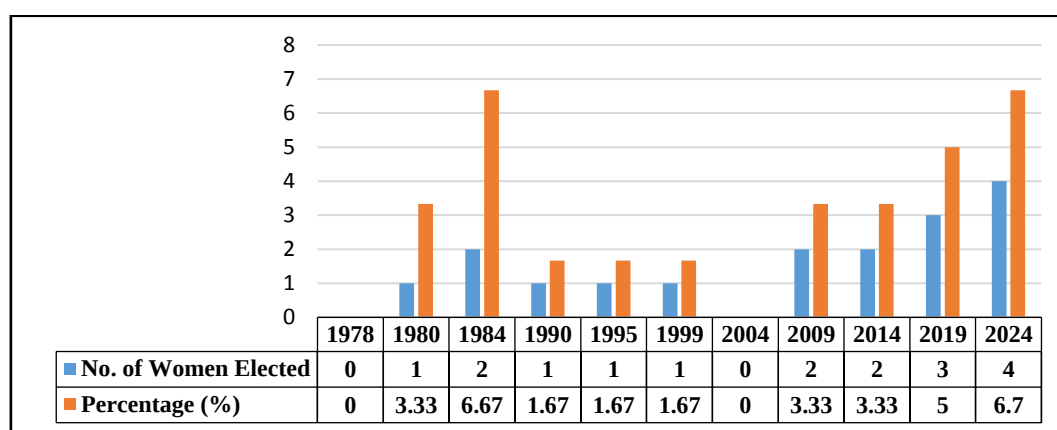
The data in Figure 4.3, shows the number and percentage of women in Arunachal Pradesh elected over several election years. In the early years (1978-1999), the representation

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2021/May/04/gradual-decline-in-assam-women-mlas-continues-just-six-emerge-victorious-in-2021-2298390.html?utm>

³⁷ Election Commission of India. (2021). *statistical report-Assam Assembly Election 2021*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/13620-assam-general-legislative-election-2021/>

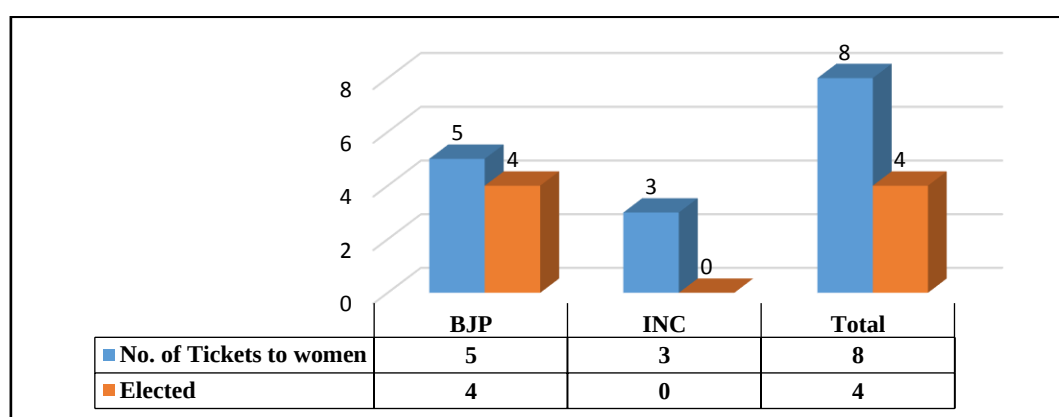
of women was very low, mostly below 3 per cent except for an increase in 1984 with the election of 2 women (6.67%). After the year 2004 there is a gradual improvement. In 2009 and 2014, two (02) women were elected each time (around 3.33%). The proportion continues to increase in 2019, with Three (03) women (5%) and reaches its highest point in 2024 with 4 women being elected, representing 6.7 per cent. Overall, the data shows slow but steady growth in the representation of women although the numbers are still small which means women are still under-represented.

Figure: 4.3: Women Representation in Arunachal Pradesh Assembly (1978-2024)



Source: Election Commission of India and statistics on Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly elections

Figure: 4.4: Women Nominated/Elected Arunachal Pradesh Assembly Election, 2024 (Party-wise)



Source: Election Commission of India and statistics on Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly elections

Figure 4.4 indicates the allocation of tickets to women candidates by BJP and INC and the number of elected women representatives. Out of the eight (08) tickets given to women in total, five (05) were from BJP and three (03) from INC. The results show that four (04) women were elected, all from BJP, while none of the INC women candidates won. This means BJP had a very high success rate (80%; 4 out of 5 women candidates won), whereas INC had a zero per cent success rate for its women candidates. However, women's representation comprises only 6.67 per cent in the 60-member Assembly.³⁸ Dasanglu Pul, the wife of the late Chief Minister Kalikho Pul, was re-elected back to the Hayuliang seat for a third successive term. Tsering Lhamu, the wife of the former MLA Jambey Tashi was reelected to the Lumla seat and Chakat Aboh, the wife of the late former MLA Tirong Aboh was reelected to the Khonsa West seat. Newcomer Nyabi Jini Dirchi was elected from Basar constituency defeating sitting National People's Party (NPP) MLA Gokar Basar by a margin of 1,791 votes.³⁹

Manipur

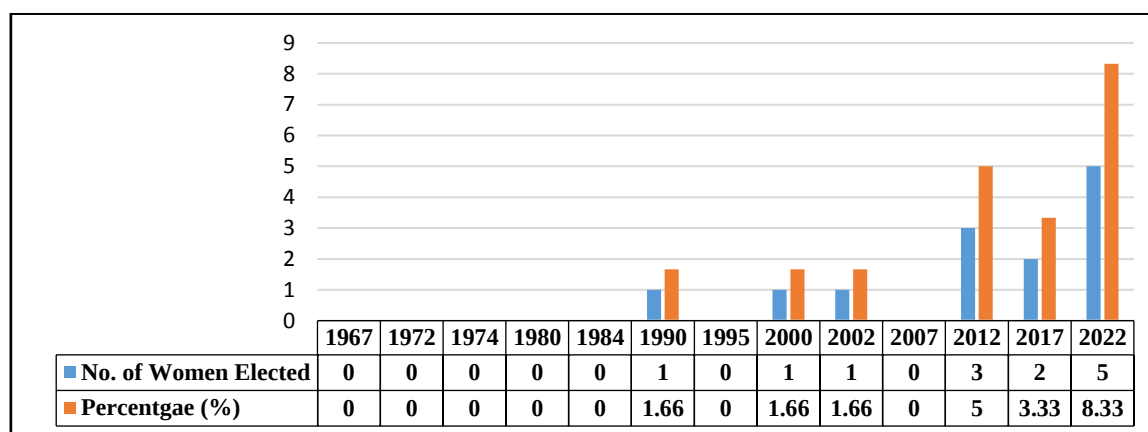
The data in Figure.4.5, shows that from 1967 to 1984, in Manipur Assembly, no women were elected showing zero representation for many years. A small change is noticed in 1990 where 1 women (1.66%) was elected but the numbers remain low throughout the 1990s and early 2000s with only 0 or 1 women being elected in each election. A significant improvement begins after 2012, when 3 women (5%) were elected. Representation continues to increase in 2017 with 2 women (3.33%), and reaches the highest point in 2022 where 5 women (8.33%) were elected representatives (Fig.4.6). Overall, the data reveals a large gap of no representation

³⁸ Morung Express. (2024, June 3). Women members make up only 6.66 per cent of 60-member Arunachal Assembly. *The Morung Express*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://morungexpress.com/women-members-make-up-only-666-per-cent-of-60-member-arunachal-assembly?utm>

³⁹ PTI. (2024, June 2). Assembly Election 2024 | All four women candidates of BJP win in Arunachal polls. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://www.deccanherald.com/elections/arunachal-pradesh/assembly-election-2024-all-four-women-candidates-of-bjp-win-in-arunachal-polls-3048634?utm>

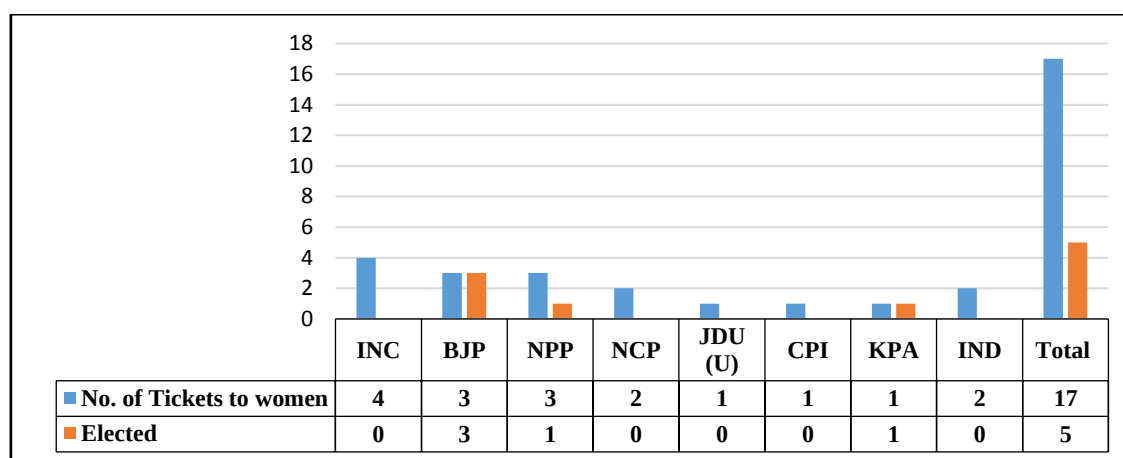
for an extensive period of time, and then a steady growth in recent years, which indicates progress but still underrepresentation of women in the political field.

Figure: 4.5: Women Representation in Manipur Assembly (1967-2022)



Source: Election Commission of India and statistics on Manipur Legislative Assembly elections

Figure: 4.6: Women Nominated/Elected in Manipur Assembly Election, 2022 (Party-Wise)



Source: Election Commission of India and statistics on Manipur Legislative Assembly elections

Women make up nearly 52 per cent of the total of over 20 lakh voters in the state but their representation inside the Assembly or even in elections has been dismal. At present, women's representation in the Assembly is only 8.33 per cent. In the 2022 polls, 17 women

candidates or 6.42 per cent of the total 265 contenders, from various parties, were in fray.⁴⁰ They included four from the Congress, three each from the ruling BJP and NPP, two from the Nationalist Congress Party, one each from the Communist Party of India, Janata Dal-United and KPA and two independent aspirants (Figure 4.6). The five women elected are S.S Olish (Chandel AC), former Minister Nemcha Kipgen (Kangpokpi AC) and Sagolshem Kebi (Naoriya Pakhanglakpa AC) from the BJP, Irengbam Nalini of the NPP (Oinam AC) and Kimneo Haokip Hangshing of the Kuki Peoples Alliance (Saikul AC).⁴¹ Punam Rani Wangkhem, fighting on an NCP ticket explains the difficulties faced by women. “In our society, whether it's fighting crime or even sorting our smaller issues, you will see women take lead but our politics is totally male dominated and they would not allow an outspoken woman to rise,”⁴²

Meghalaya

Women representation in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly has been a slow shifting trend in decades. Although Meghalaya is the state of matrilineal society, the cultural component has not led to the successful female representation in the political arena. As shown in Figure 4.7, the number of women's representation in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly has been very low, and there has been sporadic improvement over the years. From 1972 to 1983, almost no women were elected. There was a slight growth in 1978, but it was not sustained. There was

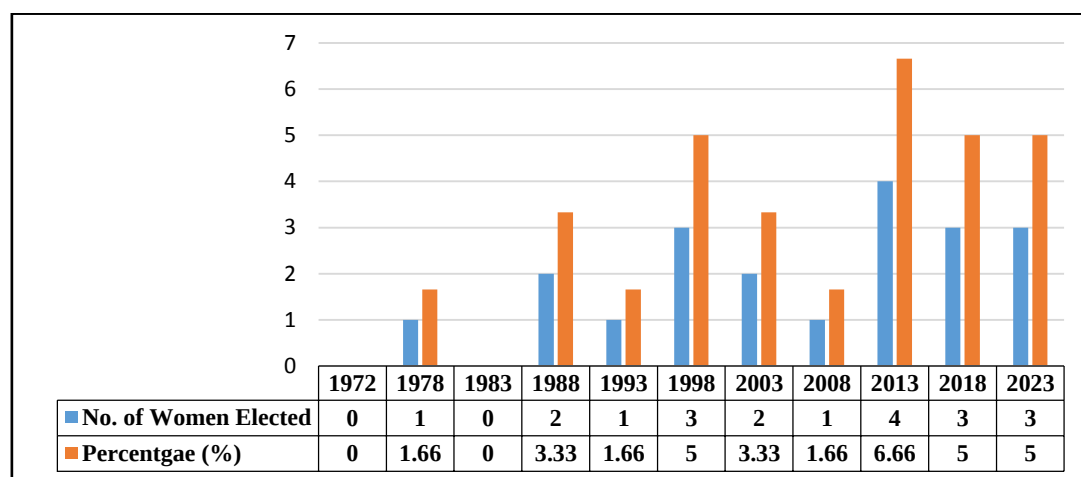
⁴⁰ Business Standard. (2022, March 11). Manipur sees highest number of women elected to Assembly in 2022 Polls. *Business Standard*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from https://www.business-standard.com/article/elections/manipur-sees-highest-number-of-women-elected-to-assembly-in-2022-polls-122031001743_1.html?utm

⁴¹ Staff Reporter. (2022, March 12). State Sees Record 5 Women MLAs. *The Sangai Express*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://www.thesangaiexpress.com/Encyc/2022/3/12/By-Our-Staff-ReporterIMPHAL-Mar-11-For-the-first-time-in-the-history-of-Manipur-Legislative-Asse.html>

⁴² Choudhury, R. (2022, February 22). Women Outnumber Men Voters In Manipur, But Only 6% Are Female Candidates. *NDTV News*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/women-outnumber-men-voters-in-manipur-but-only-6-are-female-candidates-2783524>

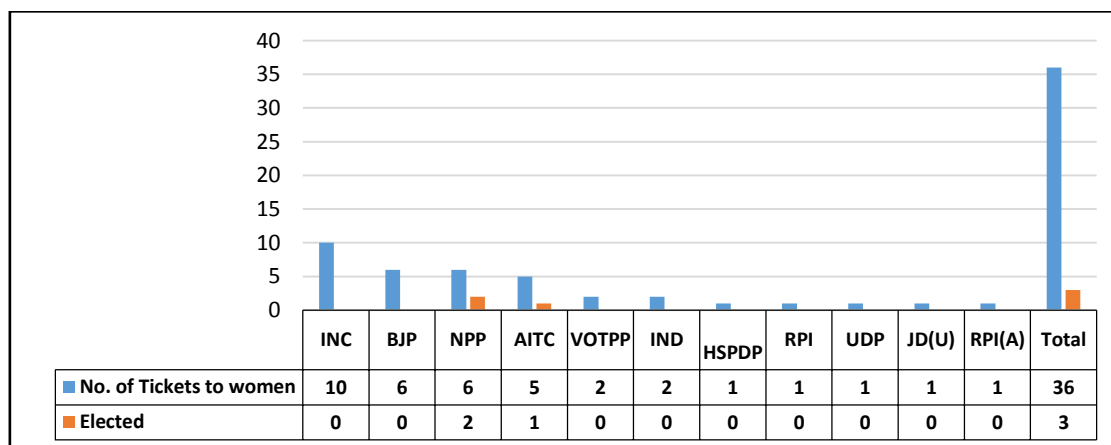
a more obvious improvement beginning in 1988 when two women were elected and the figures increased slightly in later years with 5 percent (3 women) in 1998.

Figure 4.7: Women Representation in Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (1972-2023)



Source: Election Commission of India and statistics on Meghalaya Legislative Assembly elections.

Figure: 4.8: Women Nominated/Elected in Meghalaya Assembly Election, 2023 (Party-Wise)



Source: Election Commission of India and statistics on Meghalaya Legislative Assembly elections

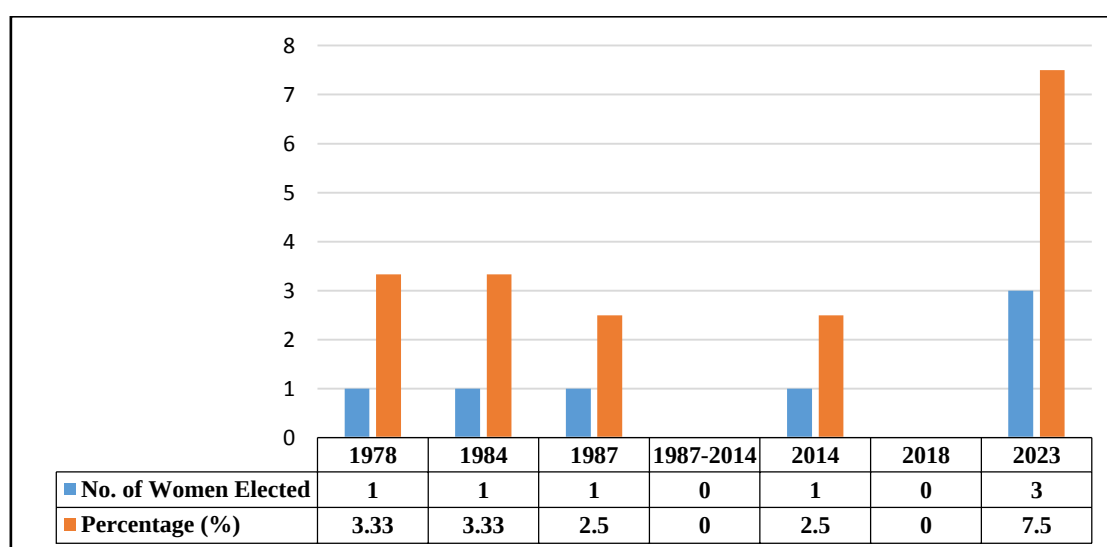
The best outcome was in 2013, when four women (6.66%) won seats, but even this is still very low. The proportions of women elected during the previous two elections (2018 and 2023) amounted to 5 per cent each time. In general, the trend is characterized by slow and uneven development and women are still largely underrepresented in the politics of the state. Santa Mary Shylla (NPP) and Dr. Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh (NPP) and Miani D. Shira (AITU)

were elected in the 2023 MLA election out of thirty six women who contested the election (Fig.4.8).⁴³

Mizoram

The data in Figure 4.9 shows that women's representation in Mizoram has been consistently very low for many years. In 1978, 1984 and 1987 only 1 woman was elected each time with percentages around 2.5 per cent to 3.33 per cent. From 1987 till 2014, no women were elected, which demonstrates that the women had an extremely long period of zero representation. A small improvement appeared in 2014, where 1 woman (2.5%) was elected, but again in 2018, the number dropped to zero. The biggest rise was in 2023 when 3 women (7.5%) were elected which is the highest number of women ever voted into office in the entire period. Overall, the trend shows decades of very poor representation, with a positive, but still minimal increase in the last election.

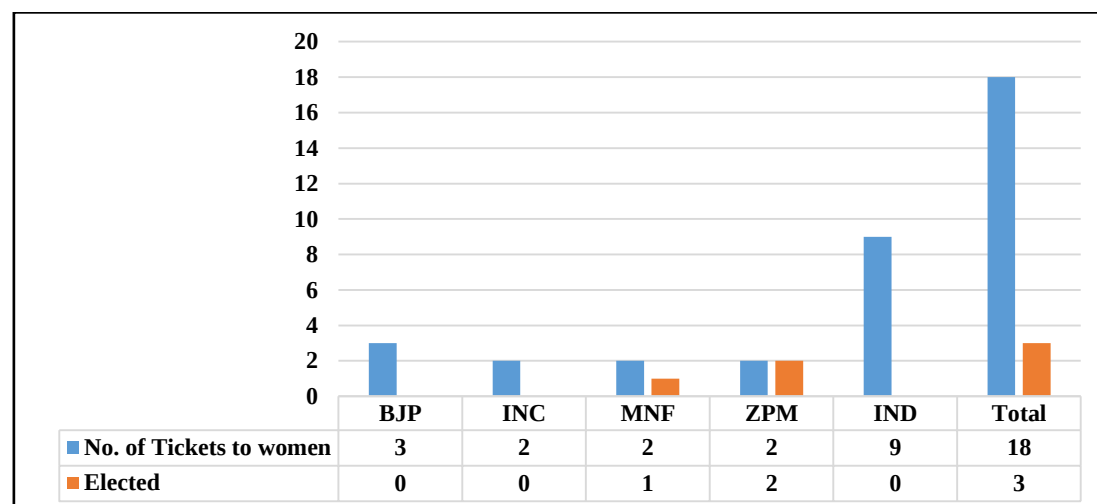
Figure 4.9: Women Representation in Mizoram Legislative Assembly (1987-2023)



Source: Election Commission of India and statistics on Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections

⁴³ Election Commission of India. (2023). *statistical report-Meghalaya Assembly Election 2023*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/15053-meghalaya-general-legislative-election-2023-including-ac-23/>

Figure 4.10: Women Nominated/Elected Mizoram Assembly Election, 2023 (Party-wise)



Source: Election Commission of India and statistics on Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections

As per the data in figure 4.10, out of 18 tickets given to women candidates across all parties and independents in the 2023 Assembly election in Mizoram, only 3 women were elected, giving an overall success rate of 16.6 per cent. Among the major parties, the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) performed the best in terms of women's representation, as it nominated 2 women, and both were successfully elected, giving it a 100 per cent strike rate. The Mizo National Front (MNF) fielded 2 women, and 1 of them won, with a 50 per cent success rate. On the other hand, the BJP (3 tickets), INC (2 tickets), and independents (9 tickets) failed to secure any victory for women despite collectively nominating the highest number (14 candidates).

The elected women representatives were Lalrinpuii (Lunglei East) and Baryl Vanneihsangi (Aizawl South-3) of ZPM and Pravo Chakma (West Tuipui) of MNF.⁴⁴ Baryl Vanneihsangi of Zoram People's Movement became the First Woman Speaker in Mizoram

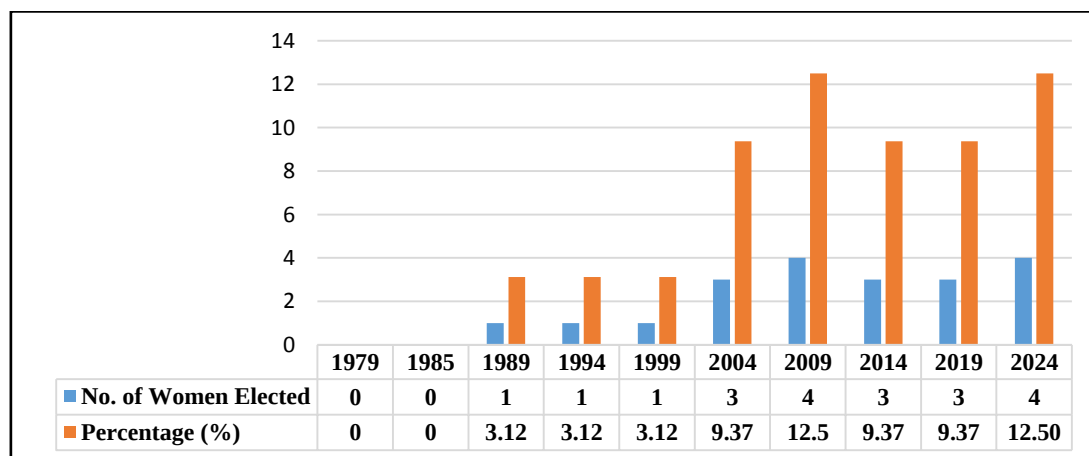
⁴⁴ Vanlalruata, H.C. (2023, December 4). Mizoram elects a record three women to state assembly. *The Times of India*. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/mizoram-elects-a-record-three-women-to-state-assembly/articleshow/105736088.cms?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Assembly and also the youngest MLA in the state.⁴⁵ This shows that women's representation in the Mizoram legislature has been limited and sporadic throughout the decades.

Sikkim

The data in Figure.4.11, indicates that from 1979 to 1985, no women from Sikkim were elected, showing zero representation. A small change begins in 1989, 1994, and 1999, when 1 woman (3.12%) was elected in each of these elections. Women's representation greatly increased during the 2000s. In 2004, 3 women (9.37%) were elected and in 2009, there were 4 representatives at its highest (12.5%). Although the numbers slightly drop in 2014 and 2019, with 3 women (9.37%) each year, it increased again in 2024 when 4 women (12.5%) were elected. Overall, it is clear from the data that there is persistent growth of women over time and women's representation rose significantly after the 2000s but remains a small proportion of the total assembly.

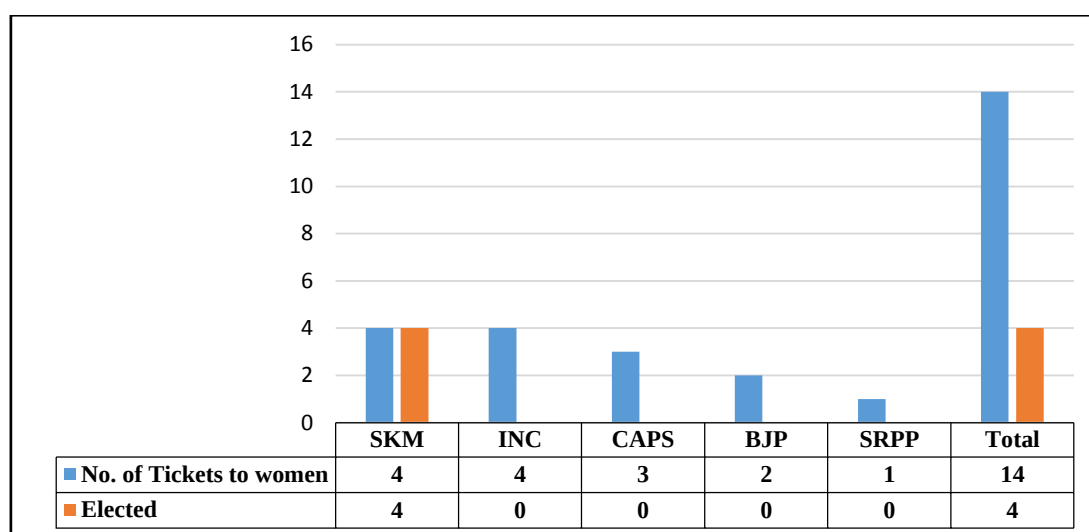
Figure 4.11: Women Representation in Sikkim Legislative Assembly (1979-2024)



Source: Election Commission of India and Statistics on Sikkim Legislative Assembly

⁴⁵ Reporter, S. (2024, July 15). *Mizoram's First Woman Speaker Makes Historic Strides*. SheSight. https://shesightmag.com/mizorams-first-woman-speaker-makes-historic-strides/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Figure 4.12: Women Nominated /Elected Sikkim Assembly Election, 2024 (Party-wise)



Source: Election Commission of India and Statistics on Sikkim Legislative Assembly

As per Figure 4.12, out of a total of 14 women candidates nominated across different parties, only 4 women were elected, giving an overall success rate of about 28.6 per cent. The only party that managed to win women seats was the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM). It nominated 4 women, and all 4 were elected, achieving a 100 per cent success rate. Krishna Kumari Rai (Namchi-Singhithang AC), Raj Kumari Thapa (Rangang-Yangang), Pamin Lepcha (Gnathang-Machong AC) and Kala Rai (Upper Burtuk) are the elected women MLAs.⁴⁶ In contrast, the Indian National Congress (INC), Citizen Action Party (CAPS), BJP and SRPP together nominated 10 women, but none of them won. This shows that the success of women in 2024 was solely concentrated in SKM, and other parties could not convert nominations into victories.

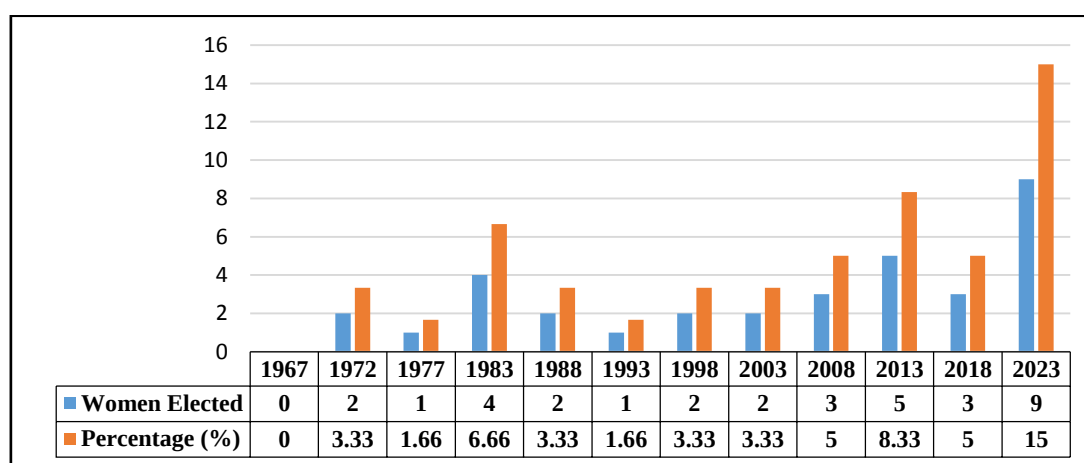
Tripura

The data in Figure. 4.13, shows that women's representation in Tripura Legislative Assembly has gradually increased over the years. In the preceding decades (1967-1983) the

⁴⁶ Election Commission of India. (2024). Statistical Reports-Sikkim Legislative Assembly Election, 2024. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://www.eci.gov.in/sikkim-legislative-assembly-election-2024>

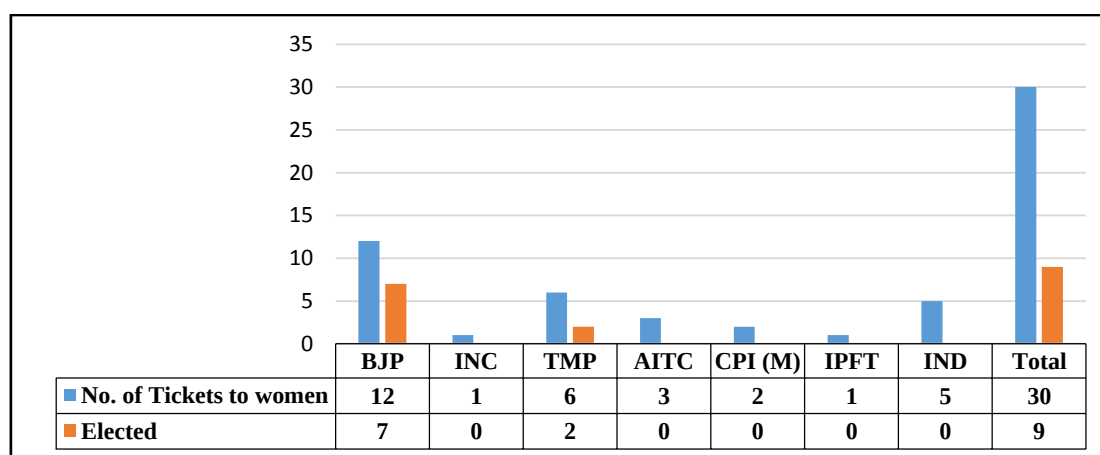
number of women elected varied within the range 0-4 and the percentages were mostly below 7 per cent. There is some fluctuation throughout the 1980s and 1990s with 1-2 women elected each election maintaining low representation at around 1.6 per cent to 3.3 per cent. A more noticeable improvement starts from the 2000s with 2-3 elected women (around 3-5%). In 2013, 3 women (5%) were elected and in 2018, 5 women (8.33%). In 2023, the largest number (09) and percentage (15%) of women's representation was observed in Tripura Assembly elections in the entire history.

Figure 4.13: Women Representation in Tripura Legislative Assembly (1967-2023)



Source: Election Commission of India and Statistics on Tripura Legislative Assembly

Figure 4.14: Women Nominated/ Elected Tripura Assembly Election, 2023 (Party-Wise)



Source: Election Commission of India and Statistics on Tripura Legislative Assembly

In 2023, nine (09) women were elected to the Assembly out of the 30 women candidates set up by different political party and as independent candidate (Fig 4.14). Swapna Debbarma Mandaibazar (ST) from TMP, Mina Rani Sarkar (Badharghat (SC) AC), Antara Sarkar Deb (Kamalasagar AC) and Pratima Bhoumik (Dhanpur AC) Kalyani Saha Roy (Teliamura AC)\, Swapna Majumder (Rajnagar (SC) AC), Swapna Das Paul (Surma (SC) AC) from the BJP, Santana Chakma (Pecharthal (ST)).⁴⁷

Nagaland

During the 1969 Assembly election, for the first time two women contested; Ravole U (6-Western Angami) ran on the United Front of Nagaland (UFN) party ticket but lost to Thepfulo Nakhro of the Nagaland Nationalist Organisation (NNO) by 34.80 per cent, and R. L. Kinghen (40-Bhandari) ran as an independent candidate but was defeated by Tsenlamo Kikon of the Nagaland Nationalist Organisation (NNO) by 27.94 per cent.⁴⁸ In 1982, the only female candidate, Rano M. Shaiza (8-Western Angami), ran as an independent candidate, and lost to Setu Lietise of the Naga National Democratic Party (NND) by a margin of 10.35 per cent.⁴⁹ In 1987, Sibeule (7-Peren), an independent candidate, secured a vote share of 7.88 per cent and was defeated by Bandi Eheilung of the Naga National Democratic Party (NND). Chubalemla (22-Arkakong) of the NND secured a vote share of 27.35 per cent and was defeated by Jonpongchiten (INC). Lochumlo Yanthan (40-Bhandari), an independent candidate, secured a vote share of 3.07 per cent and was defeated by T. Kikon of the Naga National Democratic Party (NND).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Election Commission of India. (2023). *statistical report-Tripura Assembly Election 2023*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/14875-tripura-general-legislative-election-2023/>

⁴⁸ Election Commission of India. (1969). *statistical report-Nagaland Assembly Election 1969*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/3633-nagaland-1969/>

⁴⁹ Election Commission of India. (1982). *statistical report-Nagaland Assembly Election 1982*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/3636-nagaland-1982/>

⁵⁰ Election Commission of India. (1987). *statistical report-Nagaland Assembly Election 1987*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/3637-nagaland-1987/>

In 2003, three women contested in the Nagaland Assembly elections but lost. Anupama Mech, an independent candidate from Dimapur-3, secured only 3 per cent of the votes against Kihoto Hollon of the Nationalist Democratic Movement (NDM). Similarly, Akheli, another independent candidate from Ghaspani-2, got 2.32 per cent of votes and lost to Rokonicha of the INC. Chubalemla, who contested as an NPF candidate from Aonlenden-26, lost to S.C. Jamir of the INC and received only 9.59 per cent of the vote share.⁵¹ This shows that women's participation was visible but their electoral performance remained weak.

In 2008, four women participated in the Nagaland Assembly elections but lost. Zeneisele of the JDU from Dimapur-1 got 1.52 per cent of the vote share and lost to K.L. Chishi of the INC. Rose Mary Jamir, an independent from Alungtaki, secured 1.38 per cent of votes and lost to Sakusangba of the NPF. Rhakila of the NCP from Tuensang Sadar-II put up the strongest performance with 41.56 per cent of votes but was defeated by Kejong Chang of the INC. Soly of the BJP from Pungro-Kiphiri got 1.92 per cent of the votes and lost to Torechu of the NPF.⁵² This demonstrates that women candidates participated, but they could not succeed. During the Nagaland Assembly elections in 2013, Dr. Yangerla, an independent candidate contesting from Mokokchung Town, got 11.60 per cent of the votes but lost to C. Apok Jamir of the INC. Rhakila of the BJP also contested from Tuensang Sadar-II, got 23.49 per cent of the votes but was defeated by Kejong Chang of the NPF.⁵³ This is indicative of the continued participation of women, but with little success in winning.

During the 2018 Nagaland Assembly elections, some women contested, although none of them could win. Wedie-U Kronu of the NPP from Dimapur-3 got 1.80 per cent of the votes

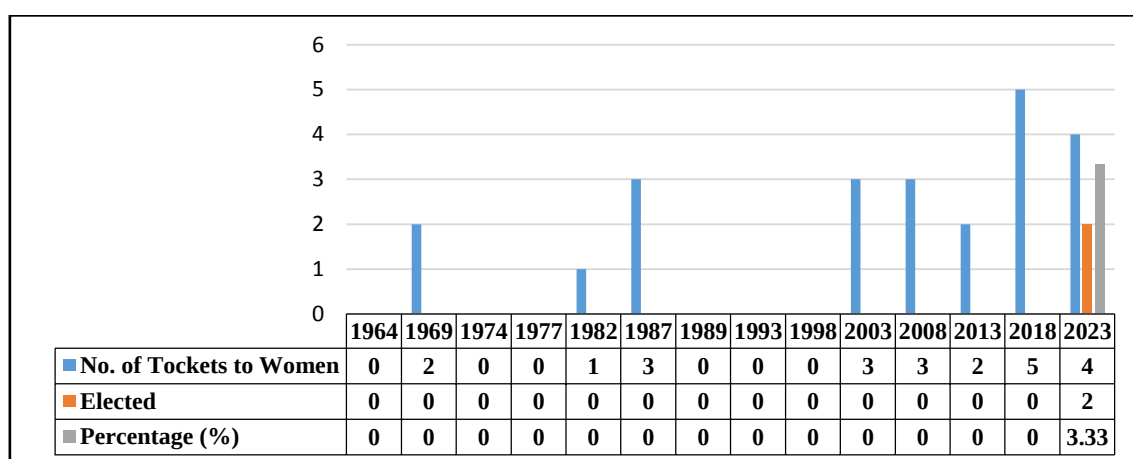
⁵¹ Election Commission of India. (2003). *statistical report-Nagaland Assembly Election 2003*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/3642-nagaland-2003/>

⁵² Election Commission of India. (2008). *statistical report-Nagaland Assembly Election 2008*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/3644-nagaland-2008/>

⁵³ Election Commission of India. (2013). *statistical report-Nagaland Assembly Election 2013*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/3646-nagaland-2013/>

and lost to Azheto Zhimomi of the NPF. Rekha Rose Dukru, an independent candidate from the Chizami constituency, obtained 2.22 per cent of votes and lost to Kezhienyi Khalo of the NPF. Awan Konyak of the NDPP put up the strongest fight in Aboi with 45.95 per cent of the votes but lost to Eshak Konyak of the NPF. Dr. K. Manyangpula Chang of the NPP from Noksen managed 7.23 per cent of votes but lost to C.M. Chang of the NDPP. Rhakila of the BJP from Tuensang Sadar-II secured 20.51 per cent of the votes but was again defeated by Kejong Chang of the NPF.⁵⁴ This shows women's visible presence in the elections, though without electoral success.

Figure 4.15: Women Representation in Nagaland Legislative Assembly (1964-2023)



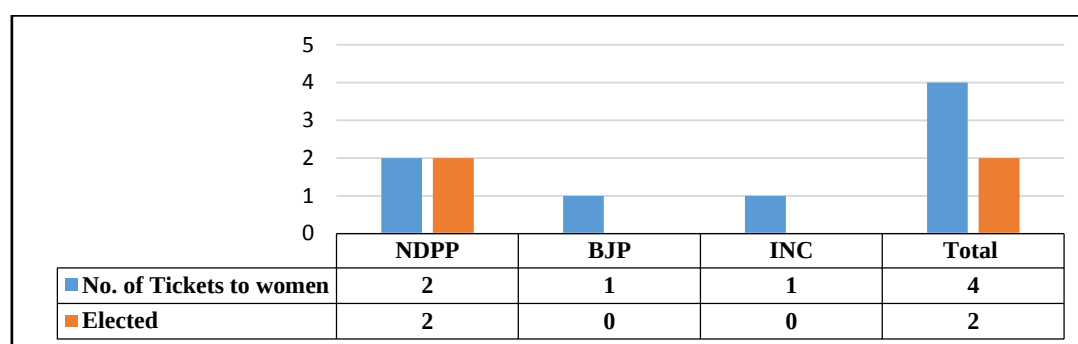
Source: Election Commission of India and Statistics on Nagaland Legislative Assembly

The data in Figure. 4.15, indicates a lack of political opportunities in Nagaland among women. Party tickets to women in the period between 1964 and 2018 were very limited and this indicates that the women had limited space in the electoral process. Although there were nominations occasionally, all the women who ran for office failed to win, pointing to low political support as well as structural barriers that were not favourable to them. Nevertheless, the 2023 election is a great milestone. There were four women who contested, and for the first

⁵⁴ Election Commission of India. (2018). *statistical report-Nagaland Assembly Election 2018*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/3652-nagaland-general-legislative-election-2018/>

time in the electoral history of Nagaland, two women succeeded. This result not only gives women a 3.33 per cent share in the Legislative Assembly but also shows that political parties are more open to giving tickets to women and that voters are becoming more willing to support women leaders. It implies that the women inclusion in politics, despite being gradual, is leaving an impact in the state.

Figure 4.16: Women Nominated/Elected NLA Election, 2023 (Party-Wise)



Source: Election Commission of India and Statistics on Nagaland Legislative Assembly

As per Figure 4.16, the NDPP (Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party) gave tickets to two women, and both of them won, reflecting strong success and acceptance of their women candidates. On the contrary, both the BJP and INC allocated one ticket each to a woman candidate, but neither could win. Hekani Jakhalu (Dimapur-III) of the NDPP secured a vote share of 45.16 per cent defeating his rival Azheto Zhimomi of the LJP (RV). Rosy Thomson of the INC contested from Tenning but lost to Namri Nchang of the NCP, sourcing only 7.44 per cent of votes. Salhoutuonuo Kruse of the NDPP defeated independent candidate Keneizhakho Nakhro by only 7 votes (0.05 per cent) in a fight between two candidates representing Western Angami. Er. Kahuli Sema of the BJP lost from Atoizu to Picto of the NCP by 602 votes (3.76 per cent).⁵⁵ Overall, although the number of women candidates per

⁵⁵ Election Commission of India. (2023). *statistical report-Nagaland Assembly Election 2023*. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/14874-nagaland-general-legislative-election-2023/>

ticket was low (only 4 in total), the performance of NDPP women candidates was remarkable, as it was the first occasion women were elected to the Nagaland Legislative Assembly, breaking the vicious cycle of under-representation of women in the state politics.

4.3 Cultural Barriers to Women's Political Representation

The patriarchal structures and strong cultural norms are the major impediments to women's representation in politics. Most societies perceive political leadership as a male-dominated field, which discourages or even prohibits women from actively participating in politics.⁵⁶ In male-dominated societies, women are often restricted to home roles, while public roles like politics are seen as men's space.⁵⁷ Women are expected to be caregivers and housewives, and as such, they have less time and fewer opportunities to participate in public life.⁵⁸ Women are frequently raised in ways that make them less likely to develop political ambition compared to men, which reduces their chances of deciding to contest elections. This is one of the significant causes of women being reluctant or demoralised to venture into politics.⁵⁹

Gender stereotypes often prescribe that women are not as good or fit to be in leadership positions, as men.⁶⁰ Due to this, party leaders might not be ready to nominate women even when they are qualified, thus denying them opportunities to get into politics.⁶¹ As a result, even

⁵⁶ Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2001). Cultural Obstacles to Equal Representation. *Journal of Democracy*, 12(3), 126–140. <https://doi.org/10.1353/JOD.2001.0054>

⁵⁷ Khelghat-Doost, H., & Sibly, S. (2020). The Impact of Patriarchy on Women's Political Participation. *The International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(3), 396–409. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/V10-I3/7058>

⁵⁸ Khelghat-Doost, H., & Sibly, S. (2020). The impact of patriarchy on women's political participation. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(3), 396–409. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v10-i3/7058>

⁵⁹ Elder, L. (2004). Why women don't run: Explaining women's underrepresentation in America's political institutions. *Journal of Women Politics & Policy*, 26(2), 27–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477x.2004.9971038>

⁶⁰ Corbett, C., Voelkel, J. G., Cooper, M., & Willer, R. (2022). Pragmatic bias impedes women's access to political leadership. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(6), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2112616119>

⁶¹ Morrison, B. (2020). *The Role of Gender Stereotypes in a Political Campaign: An Exploration of the Gender Gap within American Politics*. 5(1), 9–16. <https://doi.org/10.29173/PSUR156>

well qualified and capable women could encounter challenges in receiving recognition, encouragement or nomination to political offices.⁶² This is a common perception that exists in many cultures and contributes to the under-representation of women in politics.⁶³

In certain parts of the world, cultural norms do not permit women to move freely, especially in rural or conservative communities. Women might be required to have a male escort or permission to travel or meet party workers or take part in political campaigns. This restriction makes political work, usually requiring public engagement, much harder for women.⁶⁴ Communities are usually unwilling to accept woman candidates since conventional rules favour male leadership. Political parties, village councils and local bodies may want to nominate men as they feel they will represent the values of the community.⁶⁵ Women candidates, therefore, face an uphill task gaining recognition and acceptance.

Religious doctrines in most of the places are interpreted using a male-dominated perspective, thereby restricting the capabilities of women beyond the household duties. The cultural or religious rules can prevent women from moving freely, require them to get approval from a man to take part in public activities, or discourage them from speaking or taking leadership roles in public. This means that, communities influenced by these beliefs strongly oppose women who wish to get into politics or assume leadership positions.⁶⁶

Social pressure and stigma are cultural barriers that are very strong to discourage many women to engage in political life. In many societies, gender rules are very strict, and women

⁶² Asante, A. K., & Attom, L. E. (2022). Socio-Economic and Cultural Barriers that Affect Women's Participation in Local Level Governance in the Central Region of Ghana. *Universal Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2(4), 234–258. <https://doi.org/10.31586/ujssh.2022.556>

⁶³ Fellegi, Z., Hrbková, L., & Dubrow, J. (2023). Women's political power: Global progress, persistent challenges. *Women S Studies International Forum*, 101, 102818. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2023.102818>

⁶⁴ Prillaman, S. (2023). Patriarchy, inequality, and the political lives of rural Indian women. In *Cambridge University Press eBooks* (pp. 38–60). <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009355797.003>

⁶⁵ Stuart, N. G., & Vanes, J. C. (1978). Women in local politics. *Community Development*, 9(2), 43–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.1978.9987067>

⁶⁶ Neves da Silva, C., & Soares, A. (2024). The legitimization of women's subalternity in christianity and islam. *Revista Paralellus*, 15(36), 209–220. <https://doi.org/10.25247/paralellus.2024.v15n36.p209-220>

are expected to focus on traditional duties like caring for the family, being modest, and managing the home. At the same time, roles like being a leader or taking part in politics are usually perceived as male dominated behaviour.⁶⁷ When women break these norms and venture into politics, they tend to be judged, gossiped and criticised by public, which leads to the reinforcement of the notion that they are not acting in accordance with the socially accepted behaviour.⁶⁸ This means that when women try to take part in politics or public activities, people may judge them harshly. The community expects women to behave in certain "feminine" ways, so anyone who steps outside these roles faces blame or negative comments. Women who follow traditional feminine roles are accepted, while those who challenge them are pressured to stop.⁶⁹

In addition to social disapproval, women tend to fear being criticised, harassed and even exposed to violence when they seek to engage in politics. Research indicates that women politicians in all parts of the globe experience greater levels of online abuse, personal attacks, and public shaming than men, thus eroding their credibility and discouraging other women who might have aspired to hold leadership roles.⁷⁰ A hostile online and offline community poses mental barriers for women who are politically active, resulting in psychological distress, anxiety and fear. Thus, even well-educated and talented women can step out of politics or avoid contesting elections due to fear of backlash or reputational damage or social isolation.⁷¹ The exclusion of woman from political power has perpetuated the dominance of male in political

⁶⁷ Rojo, L. M. (2006). Gender and political discourse. In *Elsevier eBooks* (pp. 742–749). <https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-08-044854-2/00723-9>

⁶⁸ Okimoto, T. G., & Brescoll, V. L. (2010). The Price of Power: Power Seeking and Backlash Against Female Politicians. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36(7), 923–936. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167210371949>

⁶⁹ Krook, M. L. (2017). Violence against women in politics. *Journal of Democracy*, 28(1), 74–88. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0007>

⁷⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union (2018). Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2018-10/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-europe>

⁷¹ Koch, L., Riva, M. P. R., & Steinert, J. I. (2025). Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence Against Politically Active Women: A Systematic review of psychological and political consequences and women's coping Behaviors. *Trauma Violence & Abuse*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380251343185>

leadership, and this cultural norm has remained as a force, in the political landscape even today.⁷²

The deep-rooted patriarchal culture that dictates gender roles and expectations in the society is one of the most significant barrier to the political representation of women in Nagaland. Conventionally, leadership, authority, and making decisions in the society is the prerogative of male whereas women are supposed to concentrate on household and supportive duties.⁷³ These traditional beliefs put men in a superior position within the family and society, creating the impression that women are not fit to be leaders. Consequently, women are usually opposed when they seek to join public or political life.⁷⁴ Even though the Indian Constitution guarantees women the same rights as men, in Nagaland, social customs and cultural practices still restrict women's role in politics. The customary laws protected under Article 371A of the Constitution reinforce the traditional practices which tend to marginalise women from the process of local governance and decision-making.⁷⁵ This is how such customs strengthen patriarchal values, with men having more social power while limiting women's positions and decision-making power.⁷⁶

In Nagaland traditional institutions like village councils, tribal groups, clan groups and religious committees still adhere to the time-honored traditions, which put men in leadership

⁷² Dittmar, K. (2018). United States: Gendered institutions, processes, and outcomes. In *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks* (pp. 437–453). https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59074-9_30

⁷³ Amer, M. (2013). Political status of women in Nagaland. *Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences Research (JBM&SSR)*, 2(4), 91-95.

⁷⁴ Zhimomi, J., & Kishorechand, N. (2024). Empowering women in the Naga Society: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(6), 2552-2558. <https://doi.org/10.53555/kuey.v30i6.5802>

⁷⁵ Das, P., & Chubatila, Dr. (2022). Structural Barriers to Women's Political Participation in Nagaland. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 10(10), a596–a598. <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2210069.pdf>

⁷⁶ Longkoi, K. T. (2023). Is Naga Society egalitarian and Democratic? The Gender Questions on Customary Law and its Practices in Nagaland. *History and Sociology of South Asia*, 18(1), 23–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/22308075231201907>

role.⁷⁷ Studies on Naga customary law observe that the village systems of governance are often male-dominated and governed by traditional norms, which do not recognise women as a constituent of formal systems of governance.⁷⁸ These councils are an important institution that handles vital issues like land distribution, customary justice, dispute resolution, and planning at the community level, which means women are still structurally marginalised in making vital socio-political decisions. The lack of women in these institutions is an indication of ingrained traditional interpretations that fail to recognise women as political subjects in governing communities.⁷⁹ Through generations, the societal conditioning norms become so instilled that it has become a cycle where women are constantly underrepresented.⁸⁰ Despite government policies that provide women seats in local governments, the effectiveness of their participation has remained low since traditional norms still continue to influence the attitudes of communities.⁸¹

The social attitudes and expectations are also strong obstacles to women representation. Females who aspire to get into politics are usually judged, criticised, lacked support of the community leaders as well as their own families.⁸² The lack of support and encouragement discourages women from standing up and voicing themselves in the political arenas.⁸³ The

⁷⁷ Pious, P. B. (2025). Village Councils of Nagaland: Customary laws, gender-roles and developmental challenges. In *Royal Book Publishing* (pp. 246–251). <https://doi.org/10.26524/royal.228.51>

⁷⁸ Fernandes, W., Pereira, M., & Khatso, V. (2014). *Tribal Customary Law and Women's Status: An introduction*. National Commission for Women, New Delhi. <https://ncwapps.nic.in/pdfreports/Customary%20Law.pdf?utm>

⁷⁹ Yanthan, E. C. (2023). Gendered Practice of Naga Customary Laws: A Critical Analysis. *Journal of Education Society and Behavioural Science*, 36(8), 36–44. <https://doi.org/10.9734/jesbs/2023/v36i81246>

⁸⁰ Longkumer, B. (2023). Assessing the role and identity of Indigenous women in Northeast India. *The Ecumenical Review*, 75(5), 507–518. <https://doi.org/10.1111/erev.12827>

⁸¹ Kumar, S., & Ghosh, A. (2024, January 31). *Elected Women Representatives in Local Rural Governments in India: Assessing the Impact and Challenges*. Observer Research Foundation (ORF). Retrieved August 22, 2025, from <https://www.orfonline.org/research/elected-women-representatives-in-local-rural-governments-in-india-assessing-the-impact-and-challenges?utm>

⁸² Jamir, T. (2009). Engendering Public Space in Naga Society: Tradition and Modernity. *Indian Folklife*, 33, (p.18)

⁸³ Murry, C. (2024). Political participation of Naga women in electoral politics. *International Journal of Research - Granthaalayah*, 12(12SE). <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v12.i12se.2024.5892>

cultural and social barriers continue to hold women back from participation and representation in the political arena, even with constitutional rights that promote equality between genders.

To elicit women's views on the barriers to women's political representation they were asked the following question "Do you agree or disagree that 'the entrenched traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes in Naga society are a barrier to women's entry into formal politics'?" The question is designed to investigate the way in which cultural values and well-established social norms influence the perception and behaviour of women themselves as far as political representation and participation are concerned. Further, the question helps uncover whether cultural convictions still confine women's opportunities, confidence, and willingness to enter politics or whether there is a change of mind with increasing acceptance of women as leaders.

Table 4.7: Do you agree or disagree that “the entrenched traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes in Naga society is a barrier to women’s entry into formal politics?”

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	352	78.22
Disagree	45	10
Doesn’t matter	53	11.78
Total	450	100

Source: *Field Work, 2021-2022*

An overwhelming number of the women (78.22%) strongly agree that traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes make it tougher for them to become involved in politics (Table 4.7). Old-fashioned views of gender roles, family responsibilities and social expectations in various societies tend to discourage women from venturing into politics or may lead them to feel that politics is not their field. These norms lead to the establishment of barriers, such as low self-

confidence, lack of publicity or reliance on male approval.⁸⁴ The political representation of women is not only influenced by the external factors such as discrimination or lack of support but also by the way they embrace and adhere to the cultural beliefs. When women internalise such norms, it can reduce their confidence or make them feel that politics is not their business, hence directly impacting their willingness and capability to participate in politics.⁸⁵

Around 10 per cent of respondents did not agree with the statement, hence some of the women might not be convinced that tradition and culture is a barrier. This could be due to the fact that they were brought up in a more progressive environment. On the other hand, 11.78 per cent were indifferent which indicates either being unaware, uninterested in political issues or having the opinion that other reasons such as education or economic status could be more important obstacles.

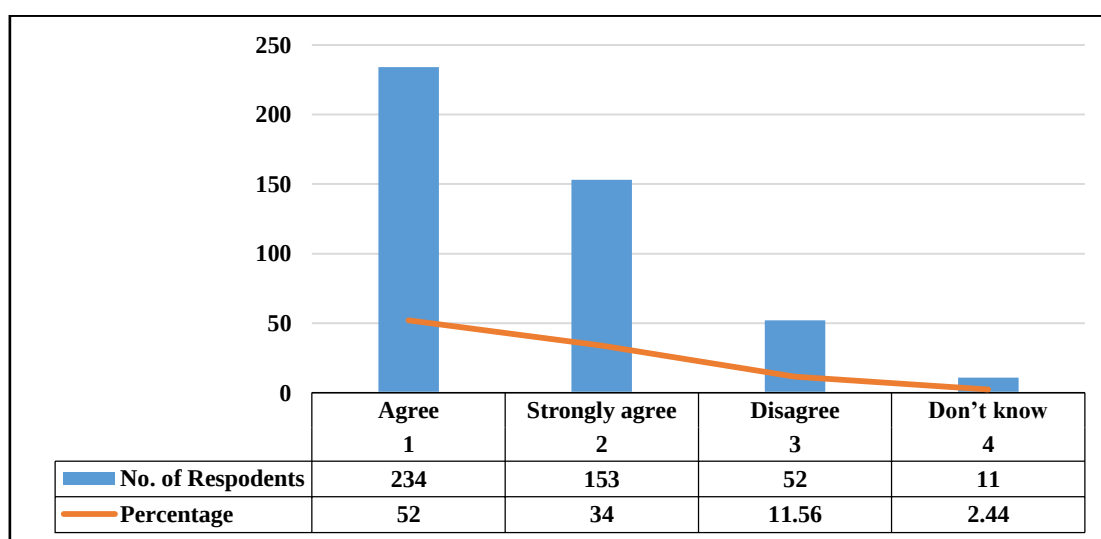
The idea that women follow the decision of the male household members is a widely discussed concern. In order to examine this they were asked the following question, “How much influence male members of the family have in terms of women's political decisions?” If most respondents agree, it would mean that women's political choices are not independent but shaped by patriarchal family structures. Such dependency would reflect a cultural barrier, because women are taught to rely on men for political guidance, preventing them from making their own independent political choices.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Maheshwari, M., & Lenka, U. (2022). An integrated conceptual framework of the glass ceiling effect. *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness*, 9(3), 372–400. <https://doi.org/10.1108/joepp-06-2020-0098>

⁸⁵ Cislighi, B., & Heise, L. (2019). Gender norms and social norms: differences, similarities and why they matter in prevention science. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 42(2), 407–422. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13008>

⁸⁶ Khelghat-Doost, H., & Sibly, S. (2020b). The impact of patriarchy on women's political participation. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(3), 396–409. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v10-i3/7058>

Figure 4.17: Many women follow the decision of her husband/brother/uncle when it comes to politics. To what extent do you agree with the statement?



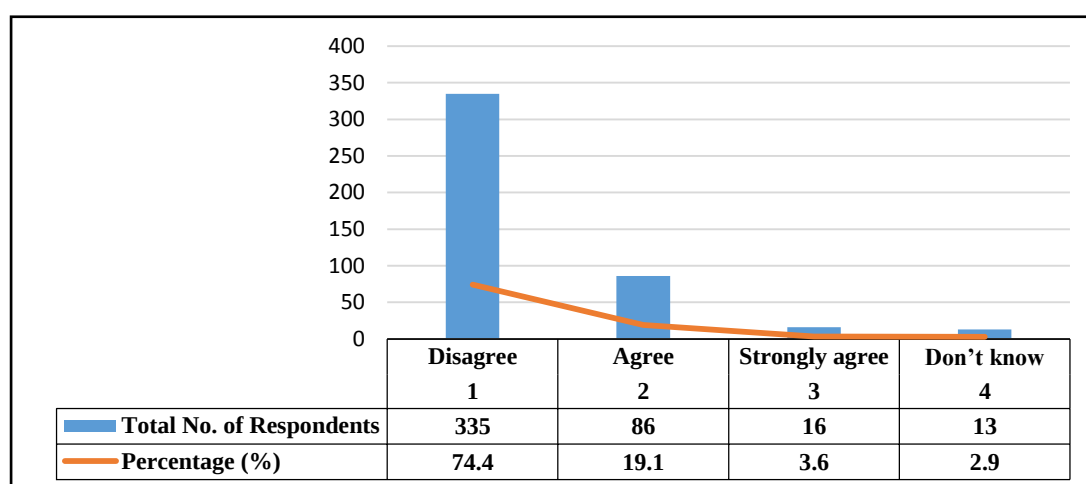
Source: *Field Work, 2021-2022*

The data in Figure 4.17 shows that an overwhelming majority of female respondents (52%) agree, whereas 34 per cent strongly agree, that women's political decisions are strongly shaped by male family members, such as husbands, brothers, or uncles. This indicate that in many household, women are not free to make independent political choices but are expected to follow the guidance of men. Only 11.56 per cent disagreed, that many women fallow male household members in making political decisions. Meanwhile, a small percentage of respondents (2.44%) who said “don’t know” may be uncertain or hesitant to comment on how men influence women’s political choices, either due to lack of awareness or they chosed to be neutral. The responses indicate how patriarchy continue to limit women's autonomy in politics.

This dependency on male household members might stem from factors other than the unequal power structure in the household. Families or households plan and organise their political activities and voting choices in a way that they believe will bring the greatest benefit and well-being to themselves. Family members debate and decide among themselves who to

support and which party or group to vote for. Bargaining power in the family is allocated based on the availability of "exit options" or choices outside the home,⁸⁷ which is a function of access to employment outside of the household,⁸⁸ ownership and control of money or property, and whether they have support from others and freedom given by social customs.⁸⁹ As a result, men often have more bargaining power than women in the household and the preference of men receive greater weight. Men also emerge as the political agent of the household.

Figure 4.18: Men make better leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women. To what extent do you agree with the statement?



Source: Field Work, 2021-2022

Figure 4.18, reveals a large majority of the respondents (74.4%), do not accept the statement that men make better political leaders than women. This means that a significant

⁸⁷ Manser, M., & Brown, M. (1980). Marriage and Household Decision-Making: A Bargaining analysis. *International Economic Review*, 21(1), 31-44. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2526238>

⁸⁸ Iversen, T., & Rosenbluth, F. (2006). The Political Economy of Gender: Explaining Cross-National Variation in the Gender Division of Labor and the Gender Voting Gap. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(1), 1-19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3694253>

⁸⁹ Agarwal, B. (1997). 'Bargaining' and gender relations: within and beyond the household. *Feminist Economics*, 3(1), 1-51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135457097338799>

number of respondents rejected such a negative view of women in leadership role. This suggests that most women participants support gender equality in leadership and do not perceive male superiority in political or organisational positions. On the other hand, 19.1 per cent agreed with the statement, while a small minority (3.6%) strongly agreed with the notion that men make better leaders. This indicates that some people still have traditional or patriarchal attitudes concerning men as being more suitable for leadership roles. The percentage is small but these findings are concerning because biases against women leadership still exist and such attitude may act as barriers to women political representations. Further, 2.9 per cent indicated ignorance (Don't know), which might be the result of ambivalence, lack of knowledge or limited exposure to political dynamism in the state.

To gain a deeper understanding of women's perceptions and experiences regarding the barriers they encounter entering the political sphere, they were asked to give reasons which best reflects their thoughts about the issues affecting females in entering politics?" This question sought to understand their attitudes, awareness and opinions about the different structural and institutional challenges that act as a barriers to political participation. The question listed possible reasons like cultural norms, lack of resources, weak institutions, and psychological barriers to understand what women think are the main causes of their low political representation. By examining women's viewpoints through this inquiry, the goal of this study was not only to determine the nature of these obstacles, but also how they affect women's motivation, confidence and opportunities to participate meaningfully in political activities and leadership roles.

Table 4.8 “Which of the following reason comes closest to your views regarding the problem faced by women in getting into politics?”

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Due to cultural and traditional norms	148	32.89
Political parties do not give opportunity to females candidates	141	31.33
Psychological and Motivational barriers (Low confidence, fear of criticism and feelings of inferiority)	87	19.33
Due to lack of Time and Money	69	15.33
Any others (Please specify).	5	1.11

Source Field Work, 2021-2022

Table 4.8 shows that about 32.89 per cent of the respondents believe cultural and traditional norms are the main barriers to women's political participation. This implies that there are many women who feel restricted by societal expectations regarding gender roles, hence discouraging them or preventing them from joining politics. In many traditional communities, politics is considered a man's arena, and as such participating in political life is often criticised socially or not supported by families. Around 31.44 per cent of the women respondents felt that political parties lack support or do not give enough opportunities to women candidates. They pointed out that in the absence of other measures such as mentorship programmes, gender quotas or supportive policies, women have less opportunities to participate in decision-making and are often left out of party affairs. Likewise, 19.33 per cent of the respondents mentioned psychological and motivational barriers, such as low confidence, fear of criticism or feelings of inferiority. 15.33 per cent of the women assert lack of resources,

such as money, political connections or access to information, limits their political participation. The data indicate that traditional and cultural beliefs are the main barriers keeping women from entering politics. However, other factors like weak institutions, party bias, personal struggles, and lack of resources also play a big role. This means both cultural change as well as structural reforms are required to increase women's representation in politics.

4.4 Political Party and Women's Political Representation

There are many factors that determine women's political representation such as institutional factors, prior political experience, available time,⁹⁰ domestic responsibilities, prevailing cultural attitudes, traditional gender roles and cultural attitudes.⁹¹ Of all these factors institutional factors (political parties) are seen as the most important as they determine women's political participation and representation regardless of other factors of culture and socio-economic status of women.⁹²

Parties are central for women's ability to rise in politics because they decide whom they recruit, promote and how much support they give to candidates.⁹³ Women cannot be elected without being selected by the parties as candidate to run for political office. Political parties are in a position to influence the gender composition of elected assemblies because of the fact that political parties select and field candidates for elections. It means that political

⁹⁰ Norris, P. (1997). *Passages to power: Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies*. Cambridge University Press.

⁹¹ Julie Ballington. (2008). *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments (Geneva reports and Documents No.54)*. Inter-Parliamentary Union. Retrieved from https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Equality_in_Politics/ZFd77Twyn3sC?hl=en&gbpv=0

⁹² Vogel, K. (2011). 'Gender and politics', in Tshiyama JT & M Breuning (eds), *21st Century Political Science, A Reference Hand Book*, California: SAGE Publications, Inc. p.233-41

⁹³ Kenny, M., & Verge, T. (2016). Opening up the black box: Gender and candidate selection in a new era. *Government and Opposition*, 51(3), 351-369. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412979351.n28>

representation of women takes place through political parties.⁹⁴ Given their role in recruiting and selecting candidates for decision-making positions

However, most parties are controlled by men and follow male-dominated traditions and practices, women often struggle to fit in, gain influence, and become empowered.⁹⁵ These problems become worse because government institutions, election systems and political culture are mostly controlled by men. This male dominance makes it even harder for women to take part in politics and often keep them out of political representation.⁹⁶ In the UK, for instances, the Conservative Party's way of selecting candidates shows clear gender inequality. Most of the nominees are men, and the party has not made enough changes or reforms to fix this imbalance.⁹⁷ In Indonesia, the limitation of women's political representation is a result of their lack of supportive networks and discrimination within political institutions. They have fewer connections in politics and receive little help or backing from their parties.⁹⁸ Indonesian women also face problems like lack of money, favouritism in politics and very little support from political parties. These issues reflect the larger weaknesses in the country's political system.⁹⁹ Similarly, in Pakistan, deep-rooted traditions and a male-dominated society make it difficult for women to participate meaningfully in politics despite the existence of gender quotas to

⁹⁴Verge, T., & Escribà-Folch, A. (2008). The Multidimensionality of Political Representation: An Empirical Test on Spanish Political Parties and Voters. *Representation*, 44(1), 51-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344890701869124>

⁹⁵ Verge, T., & De La Fuente, M. (2014). Playing with different cards: Party politics, gender quotas and women's empowerment. *International Political Science Review*, 35(1), 67-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512113508295>

⁹⁶ Cickaric, L. (2009). Women in political arena: Insiders or outsiders? *Sociologija*, 51(4), 423-436. <https://doi.org/10.2298/SOC0904423C>

⁹⁷ Collignon, S. (2024). Addressing barriers to women's representation in party candidate selections. *The Political Quarterly*, 95(2), 363-367. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923x.13397>

⁹⁸ Li, Y. (2024). Systemic and sociocultural factors impeding women's political participation and leadership development: A Sociological inquiry. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 187, 03016. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202418703016>

⁹⁹ Harahap, A. F., Jakimow, T., Siahaan, A. Y., & Yumasdaleni, N. (2022). Is money an insurmountable barrier to women's political representation in transactional democracies? Evidence from North Sumatera, Indonesia. *Politics Groups and Identities*, 11(4), 733-749. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2022.2041442>

expand their representation.¹⁰⁰ Political parties often do not take strong steps towards supporting women and many still see women as merely symbolic figures, rather than actual leaders. This wrong mindset makes women's position in politics even weaker.¹⁰¹

In India, women's political representation is still limited because politics is mostly controlled by men. Structural barriers, social norms, lack of support and resources, low income and less education, make it even more difficult for women to enter the political domain or occupy leadership positions. Traditional beliefs tend to put women's responsibilities in the home and family rather than taking public or leadership roles.¹⁰² Women often have less access to money, networks and campaign resources, making it difficult to run for or hold on to political office.¹⁰³ The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of 1992 tried to improve the representation of women in the local government by reserving a third of the seats for women. However, despite these changes at the grassroots level,¹⁰⁴ women still find it difficult to access real political power and obtaining decision-making positions at the state and national levels because of persistent social, cultural, and institutional barriers.¹⁰⁵ This creates a gap in local and higher-level representation, meaning that women are more active in politics on the local level but are still poorly represented at the state and national levels.¹⁰⁶ Even after being elected, women often do not have full control of their roles. In "proxy politics," male family members

¹⁰⁰ Khatoon, S., & Majid, A. (2023). Examining Political Representation of Women in Pakistan through Liberal Feminist Perspective: A Case Study of 2024 General Elections. *Global Sociological Review*, VIII(III), 1–9. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2023\(viii-iii\).01](https://doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2023(viii-iii).01)

¹⁰¹ Meldianto, R., Hanida, R., & Hasnita, S. (2024). Exploitation of women in the changing power dynamics. *Jurnal Governansi*, 10(2), 137–146. <https://doi.org/10.30997/jgs.v10i2.13611>

¹⁰² vajiramandravi. (2025, August 31). Women in politics, Status in India, Challenges, measures. *Vajiram and Ravi*. <https://vajiramandravi.com/upsc-exam/women-in-politics/?utm>

¹⁰³ Godara, G. S. (2025, October 12). Political Representation of Women in India – Status & Challenges. *Padhai*. <https://padhai.ai/blogs-padhai/political-representation-of-women-in-india?utm>

¹⁰⁴ Kishwar, M. (1996). Women and Politics: Beyond Quotas. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(43), 2867–2874. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4404714>

¹⁰⁵ Rai, S. M. (2011). The Politics of Access: Narratives of women MPs in the Indian Parliament. *Political Studies*, 60(1), 195–212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2011.00915.x>

¹⁰⁶ Parray, R. A., & Hussain, M. I. (2023). Political reservation and its impact on women's political participation in India: A review. *International Journal of Political Science and Governance*, 5(1), 54–56. <https://doi.org/10.33545/26646021.2023.v5.i1a.202>

take decisions for them, which weakens the aim of women's quotas and prevents them from truly taking part in politics.¹⁰⁷ The way the political parties operate as well as the competitive nature of elections also pose as obstacles for women. Parties often do not provide women with proper training, support or seats that they can realistically win. The existence of such conditions hinders the ability of women to acquire power of influence or hold up important positions within parties.¹⁰⁸ Elections typically favour candidates with money and powerful networks and this puts women, who often lack these resources at a disadvantage.¹⁰⁹ The research findings in different contexts indicate that there are structural and institutional barriers often pushing women to the sidelines in politics. These challenges make it difficult for women to attain real power, influence or occupy important positions within political parties, therefore preventing true gender equality in political leadership.¹¹⁰

Political parties are seen as the most important institutions for tackling gender imbalances in political participation and representation.¹¹¹ They are the main gatekeepers of women's representation in elected bodies, and although political parties in the state have gone beyond lip-service and have incorporated programmes for gender equality in their respective

¹⁰⁷ Neha, Padiyar, G. S., Gulshani, & Ansari, G. (2025). Women's political representation: Navigating barriers and shaping impacts. *International Journal of Political Science and Governance*, 7(5), 09–15. <https://doi.org/10.33545/26646021.2025.v7.i5a.518>

¹⁰⁸ Roy, U., & Ghosh, B. (2021). The grim political scenario in india and its impact on women's representation in politics. *ShodhKosh Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v2.i1.2021.5058>

¹⁰⁹ UN Women. (2024, September 10). *Why so few women are in political leadership, and five actions to boost women's political participation*. UN Women, for All Women and Girls. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/09/five-actions-to-boost-womens-political-participation?utm>

¹¹⁰ Thelma, C. C., & Ngulube, L. (2024). Women in Leadership: Examining Barriers to women's advancement in leadership positions. *Asian Journal of Advanced Research and Reports*, 18(6), 273–290. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajarr/2024/v18i6671>

¹¹¹ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). (2014). *Handbook on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties*. OSCE/ODIHR, Warsaw. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/f/120877.pdf>; Nhundu, R. (2013). *Political Parties in Africa through a Gender Lens*. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/political-parties-in-africa-through-a-gender-lens.pdf>; Ballington, J., Davis, R., Reith, M., Mitchell, L., Njoki, C., Kozma, A., & Powley, E. (2011). Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties: A guidebook to promote women's Political participation. In UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Empowering-women-for-stronger-political-parties-eng.pdf>

constitution (INC, NPF, etc.), strategies to facilitate and enhance women's representation are hindered by internal or informal practices within the parties.

Political parties openly express their commitment to gender equality. But this commitment are not reflected in their actions. In many countries, political parties have established wings or branches to advance their political participation. Through these platforms, the women's wing can advocate within the party on issues of particular concern for women and women party members, influence the party policy positions, promote women's leadership at all levels within the party, lobby for and oversee gender policies, and mobilise women voters and support for the party and its candidates during elections.¹¹² In Nagaland as well, political parties seem to involve women through the women's wings, but in reality, women are mostly left out of the top party hierarchy. Most of the women's wings of political parties perform symbolic functions, their major function being mobilisation of prospective voters for the party. Research shows that they are often excluded from the central bodies of parties, where real power and important decisions are made.¹¹³

Parties can take different measures to encourage women to enter politics and public life. For instance, a political party can establish a women's wing. Parties may also encourage women to submit their candidature, or they may also encourage women to take part in politics. In order to find out whether political leaders encourage women to participate in the political process, the following question was asked: Do political leaders from your constituency encourage participation of women in politics?

¹¹² NDI- National Democratic Institute. (n.d). "Political Party Women's Wings Fact Sheet". <https://www.ndi.org/dcc-parties>

¹¹³ Rame, C., & Ahmad Bhat, J. (2022). Political Participation of Women : A Case Study of Nagaland in North-Eastern State of India. *Paripex - Indian Journal of Research*, 13(07), 58–64. https://www.worldwidejournals.com/paripex/recent_issues_pdf/2024/July/political-participation-of-women-a-case-study-of-nagaland-in-northeastern-state-of-india_July_2024_7610112672_3606296.pdf

Table 4.9 Do Political leaders from your constituency encourage women's participation in Politics?

Responses	No. of Responses	Percentage
NO	278	61.78
Don't know	80	17.78
To some extent	63	14
Yes	29	6.44

Source: Field Work, 2021-2022

The data in Table 4.9 reveals that only 6.44 per cent of women respondents feel that political parties in their constituency are active in encouraging women to the participate in politics. It signifies that political parties do not make much effort to promote gender inclusion within their party. Majority of the women who were surveyed (61.78%) expressed that there is no political support by the political parties. 14 per cent reported that political parties promote women participation in politics to some extent and 17.78 per cent of the women respondents reported that they are not aware of whether political parties foster the participation of women in politics or not.

It can be seen from the responses of the respondents (Table 4.9) that levels of party commitment to encourage women to enter public life or to take part in politics is very low. *“There are very few political leaders who encourage women to participate in public life”*¹¹⁴ and on the contrary *“those few women with political aspiration have to undergo a long political apprenticeship or volunteer for party work before they have a good chance of being selected. This can be a problem for many women, who due to familial responsibilities, have less time*

¹¹⁴ Respondent

available to volunteer for party work”¹¹⁵ These statements highlight the challenges women face in the political spaces.

People can participate in different modes of electoral activities including being a member of a political party. Party membership requires greater dedication and regular involvement in political affairs. Unlike voting, which only happens occasionally, party members often attend meetings, help make decisions, and sometimes take part in protests or campaigns.¹¹⁶ People who join parties usually know more about politics and stay more involved, making them part of a more active group in society.¹¹⁷ This kind of regular involvement is important for keeping democracy strong, as it gives parties steady support and helps them function well.¹¹⁸ Also, people with better education and higher social or economic status are more likely to take part in party activities and political volunteering.¹¹⁹

People join political parties for different reasons. Some join to gain influence, material favour, information, social benefits or mental satisfaction.¹²⁰ Paul Sabatier (1992) has developed a 'commitment theory', according to which individuals join and become active in a political organisation because of their strong ideological sympathies with the organisation's political goals. Some members also claim they joined because of social reasons, such as family tradition and social norms.¹²¹ Some listed influence of family and friends as the reason for

¹¹⁵ Respondent

¹¹⁶ Berry, D. (1969). Party membership and social participation. *Political Studies*, 17(2), 196–207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1969.tb00635.x>

¹¹⁷ Siaroff, A. (2009). The Decline of Political Participation: An Empirical overview of voter turnout and party membership. In *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks* (pp. 41–59). https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230240902_3

¹¹⁸ Haute, E., & Gauja, A. (2015). *Party members and activists* (1st ed). Routledge research on social and political elites (pp.1-16). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315722214>

¹¹⁹ Zimmer, A., Smith, D. H., & Alijla, A. (2016). Political parties and Political Volunteering/Participation. In *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks* (pp. 495–515). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-26317-9_24

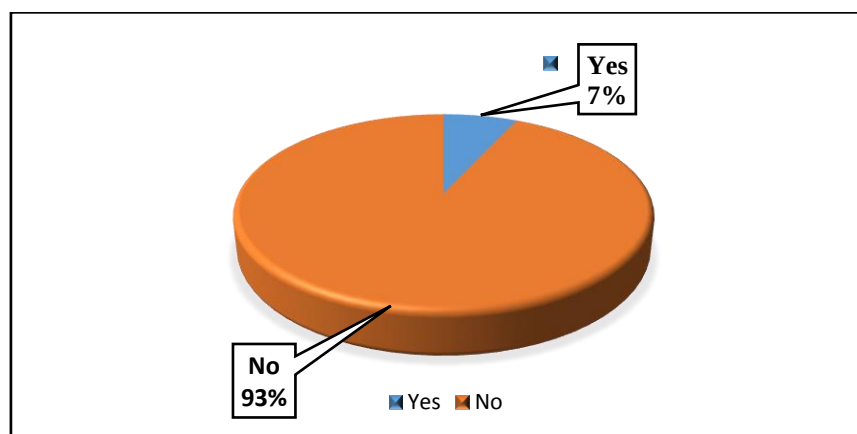
¹²⁰ Deschouwer, K. (2006). Political parties as multi-level organizations. In R. S. Katz, W. Crotty (Eds.) *Political parties as multi-level organizations* (pp. 291-300). SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608047.n25>

¹²¹ Heidar, K. (2006). Party membership and participation. In R. S. Katz, W. Crotty (Eds.) *Party membership and participation* (pp. 301-315). SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608047.n26>

membership.¹²² In the United Kingdom, people do not necessarily join political parties only because of the social or economic benefits, but because of their internal beliefs related to the party ideas and their selfless desire to promote democracy, thus increasing their voter turnout..¹²³

Figure 4:19 indicate that a relatively small proportion of women (7%) are members of political parties, compared with the 93 per cent who have no formal affiliations. This reflects the dismal attempts by political parties to include women in their organisational and leadership echelons. Party strength is measured through its anchorage in society¹²⁴, and any signs of diminishing records are interpreted as a growing distance between citizens and political parties.

Figure 4:19 Women Membership in Political Party



Source-Field Work, 2021-2022

In the case of Nagaland, although women are turning up to vote in large numbers, their official political party membership remains low. In almost every area of party politics, such as

¹²² Barnes, S. H. (1967). *Party Democracy; Politics in an Italian Socialist Federation*. United Kingdom: Yale University Press.

¹²³ Poletti, M., Webb, P., & Bale, T. (2018). Why do only some people who support parties actually join them? Evidence from Britain. *West European Politics*, 42(1), 156–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2018.1479921>

¹²⁴ Poguntke, T. (1996). Anti-party sentiment-Conceptual thoughts and empirical evidence: Explorations into a minefield. *European Journal of Political Research*, 29(3), 319-344. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1996.tb00655.x>

becoming members, attending meetings, organising events, campaigning or holding leadership roles, men are more active than women. No matter which activity we examine, the overall trend shows that men participate in political parties at much higher rates than women. This is a problem for parties because having low numbers of female party members makes it harder for parties to credibly represent and respond to their female supporters. For example, in parties which let their members vote on important party decisions, half the population may be conspicuously under-represented. Having fewer women members may also complicate party efforts to nominate women candidates.¹²⁵ The following statements explain why women are not interested to join political party.

“Lack of formal and informal mechanism to promote gender equality by the party”

“We don’t feel that politics is meant for women like us. Men have all the power, and they often ignore us or don’t value our opinions”

“Even when we join political parties, we’re mainly there to show that women are included to help with campaign work, but we don’t get to be part of the real decision-making”.

“Political party membership isn't something I can do because I don't have the ime”

“Women are often not given chances to become leaders in political parties because male politicians and party workers don’t take them seriously”

The statements show that women have a biased and negative opinion on political parties, indicating a general sense of negativity and disengagement. The lack of trust may be why so few women are involved in political parties. Women see political parties as a male-dominated environment in which decisions are never transparent or collaborative, and women's

¹²⁵ Ponce, A. F., Scarrow, S. E., & Achury, S. (2020). What can political parties do to involve more women in party politics?. *Democratic Audit Blog*. https://researchonline.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/107837/1/dit_com_2020_02_18_what_can_political_parties_do_to_involve_more.pdf

voices are never heard. This may be the reason why women are either left out of major political decisions. Therefore, changes affecting a party's elite level might increase the attractiveness of grassroots participation (increased supply of interested activists) meaning more people are willing to join, volunteer or take part in party activities. For instance, women might find more reason to participate in parties if they see women leaders and legislators as role models, or if parties with more women at the top emphasise issues that are of greater interest to women supporters. Quotas may motivate women to join by providing clearer opportunities for women activists to pursue political careers of their own.¹²⁶

4.5 Conclusion

The present chapter has examined and discussed the challenges to women's political representation. The study has highlighted the issue of the political representation of women globally as well as in the context of India and northeast. There are many barriers to women's political representation. This study has focused on the social- cultural barriers and political party. Since Naga society is still traditional and patriarchal, the social cultural factors become important in understanding issue of women's underrepresentation in politics. One of the main functions of political parties is to nominate and back their candidates for election, therefore playing an important role as gatekeepers in election. Thus, political parties and women representation has been a theme for analysis in the present chapter.

¹²⁶ Springer, F., Klein, M., & Lüdecke, Y. (2023). The impact of party quotas on women's political ambition. *Journal of Women Politics & Policy*, 45(2), 213–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477x.2023.2206978>

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDING AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary and Finding

This study was undertaken to provide an in-depth examination of women's voting behaviour in Nagaland, a state where political participation is still strongly influenced by long-standing social, cultural and traditional norms. Recognising that political participation is multidimensional, the research does not limit itself to voting alone. Instead, it explores a wide range of activities through which women engage with the electoral process. These include participation in election campaign, either by supporting a party or an individual candidate, attending election meetings and rallies, and taking an active role in political discussions within their families, communities or peer groups. The study also look at women's membership in political parties, as well as their involvement in non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which often serve as important platforms for political learning and mobilisation.

The main findings of the present study provide important insights into women's voting behaviour and participation in other electoral activities. The results of the field survey and data clearly show that the turnout of women in the voting process is very high, which means that females in the study area are becoming more conscious about their political rights and duties. Nevertheless, when it involves participating in other forms of electoral activity, like campaigning, attending meetings, political discussions or party membership, the opposite trend is observed. Women's participation in these activities is very low, implying that the women are active voters but are cautious or inhibited in matters that involve more visible political engagement.

Beyond mapping political participation, the study also tried to identify and analyse the barriers that restrict women's political representation in Nagaland. These barriers include

deeply rooted cultural and traditional expectations that limit women's mobility and decision-making power, structural constraints within political institutions, inadequate support or encouragement from political parties, and psychological challenges such as low confidence, fear of criticism or lack of motivation to enter a male-dominated political space. By studying these challenges alongside women's actual patterns of participation, the research attempted to provide a comprehensive understanding of how women in Nagaland engage with electoral politics and what factors influence their level of political involvement and representation. The study aimed to present a detailed and holistic picture of women voting behaviour and their participation in electoral politics, the opportunities available for them, and the various obstacles that hindered their political visibility and representation. Through this analysis, the study hopes to contribute to broader discussions on gender, democracy and inclusive political participation in the state.

In this study, several important factors were considered essential for analysing women voting behaviour and how women participate in the electoral process in Nagaland. These factors or variables relate mainly to women's socio-economic status, such as their age, level of education, marital status, occupation, and whether they live in rural or urban areas. These variables helped the study understand what influences women's voting behaviour and their level of political representation. Through the research, certain socio-economic characteristics were found to have a positive relationship with women's participation, meaning that women with certain backgrounds were more likely to vote, take part in political activities or show interest in leadership roles.

To gain a clearer understanding of women's voting patterns, the study first presents the socio-economic profile of the respondents. This includes details about their age category, educational background, occupation, marital status and place of residence. These factors are important because they often shape woman's access to information, confidence level, mobility

and exposure to political activities. While income could have been an important variable, the study did not include it because many respondents did not provide reliable income information, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions.

The educational profile of the respondents show that most women fall in the graduate category, followed by those who are under-matric, women with higher secondary education, matriculated women, postgraduates and above, and lastly, illiterate women (Table. 2.13). This indicates that a fairly large number of women in the study have attained higher education.

When looking at the occupational status of women, the study finds that majority are cultivators, reflecting the agricultural nature of the state. They are followed by government employees, self-employed women and finally unemployed women. This occupational pattern shows that many women are engaged in farming and related activities (Table.2.14). Considering the fact that 71.1 per cent of Nagaland's population lives in rural areas, it is not surprising that most respondents come from rural background (Fig.2.3). This rural concentration helps explain many aspects of voting behaviour, as rural communities often rely heavily on traditional norms, community decisions and local-level political influences. The socio-economic profile provides a strong foundation for understanding how different groups of women in Nagaland participate in elections and what factors shape their political involvement and representation. Majority of the women respondents are married (Fig.2.2).

The study shows that an overwhelming majority of women actively participate in voting (Fig.3.3). This high voter turnout demonstrates that despite social and cultural limitations, women in Nagaland take the act of voting seriously and consider it an important civic responsibility. Even though women may not always be active in other forms of political participation such as campaigning or joining political parties they still make sure to cast their vote during elections. The study shows that many factors influence women's voting decision.

The most important factor for most women is the political party, which they choose based on loyalty, family decision, community influence or long-term trust. This means party identity strongly shapes their choices. For some women, however, the candidate matters more. They look at the candidate's personality, reputation, behaviour and contributions to the community before deciding whom to vote for. This indicates that some women are beginning to shift their focus from party-based voting to evaluating individual leadership qualities. Another significant finding is that the opinion and decision of family members and elders have a major influence on women's voting behaviour. In many cases, women follow the advice of husband, parents or community leaders when deciding whom to vote for. This reflects the dominant role of social structure and collective decision-making in Nagaland's political culture (Table 3.3).

The study also examined the reasons as to why some women did not vote, and responses to this question by non-voters indicate several important trends. Among the different reasons given, the most common response was "lack of interest" in politics. This is an indication that non-voting women felt disconnected from the politics or did not have the political interest to vote in the election. The second major reason was "voted by someone else". This statistic is a serious concern, as it shows that many women were unable to exercise their democratic right because their vote had already been cast by other individuals. This may be the result of social pressure, poor surveillance at polling stations or traditionalism whereby family members or community members vote on behalf of women. Such situations indicate that people do not have full freedom to make their own decisions and point to the need for stronger electoral safeguards. Another reason mentioned by non-voters was "apathy due to unmet expectations". This means that some women felt discouraged or disappointed because political leaders did not fulfil election promises. As a result, they lost faith in the electoral process and chose not to vote. Some non-voters claimed to be busy, out of town or did not like the candidates. The responses indicate that some women prioritise their personal duties, while others are uninterested because

the candidates in the election do not motivate or inspire them. The findings (Table 3.4) show that women avoid voting for several reasons, such as not being interested, issues like proxy voting, feeling discouraged, or giving priority to their personal responsibilities. These findings show that there is a need for better political awareness, stronger protection of voting rights, and more inclusive options in politics for women.

Since socioeconomic factors play an important role in shaping political participation, the study examines women's voting behaviour by looking at their social and economic backgrounds. In Nagaland, the findings show that not all social and economic factors influence women's voting participation, but some do have a strong impact. These show that educated and employed women who are more exposed to urban life are more likely to vote, while those without resources or freedom of movement may have trouble doing so. Therefore, only a few specific socio-economic factors in Nagaland influence women's participation in electoral activities.

Education is widely considered an important determinant of electoral participation, because individuals with higher education usually have better civic knowledge, awareness of political issues and confidence to engage in democratic processes. Consistent with this expectation, women with graduate degree recorded the highest participation in the study. However, a surprising finding was that women with education below the matric level voted more than women who had completed matric, higher secondary, or even postgraduate and above studies (Table 3.5). This surprising trend indicates that education in this context does not have a consistent and profound impact on the voting behaviour of women. One possible explanation is that women with less education may be strongly influenced by their community, family members, or local leaders, which encourages them to come out and vote in large numbers. Conversely, educated women may be more occupied with work, their studies, or personal preferences, and they may be selective and critical, which could prevent them from

voting if they dislike the candidates or the political parties. Therefore, in this study, education does not show a significant or predictable impact on voter turnout among women.

Occupation has generally been assumed to affect political participation, but the findings indicate a mixed trend. Cultivators had the highest voter turnout compared to any other occupational group followed by government employees and self-employed women. On the other hand, unemployed women had the least electoral turnout. The results in this case suggest that occupation does not influence women's voting behaviour uniformly. One of the reasons that could explain the high turnout among cultivators could be the close community relations and more exposure to village-level political mobilisation. Government employees and self-employed women may also participate more actively in voting because they are more aware of political matters and regularly deal with public offices and institutions. Conversely, women who are unemployed might be less motivated, less politically active or less informed which may lead to their lower participation. The findings of the study show that the occupational status is neither strong nor clear with the extent to which women participates in politics (Table 3.8).

The study shows that women between the ages of 30–44 years recorded the highest voter turnout at 30.84 per cent, followed closely by women in the 18–29 years age group at 29.91 per cent. This indicates that younger women have a strong willingness to participate in elections and show enthusiasm for exercising their voting rights. Their participation is usually an indication of increased awareness, greater access to education, exposure to media and shifting social attitudes that foster political participation. The findings also indicate that as women grow older, their level of engagement in the voting process gradually decreases. A possible explanation could be that, as women grow older, family responsibilities, health problems, physical weakness, or difficulty travelling to polling stations may reduce their participation (Table 3.6).

Another finding of the study is that married women demonstrate higher levels of electoral participation compared to unmarried women and other groups. This may be because married women feel more responsible to their family and community, or they may be influenced by household decisions and discussions (Table 3.7). Unlike the common belief that urban residents vote more, the results show that women in rural areas actually have higher voting turnout than women in urban areas. A possible explanation for this outcome could be because in rural areas, family and local leaders often encourage or pressure women to vote, which might result in higher voter turnout. In urban areas, women might be career-orientated, not so involved with their community and less pressure to vote, so their participation may be lower. This means that living in urban areas does not necessarily increase or improve women's participation in voting as per the finding of the study (Table 3.9).

Electoral participation is not only associated with voting, but a host of other activities that help the democratic process.¹ The study also examined the participation of women in other modes of electoral activities. This broader perspective on participation encompasses participating in political discussion, election campaigns, attending meetings, rallies and various other political activism.² Women in Nagaland take part in election campaign activities, but their level of participation is very low (Fig. 3.3). This is mainly because activities like campaigning require moving around a lot, staying out at odd hours, and meeting people, which can be difficult for women who manage dual responsibilities. Campaign work also need resources such as time, money, skills and strong commitment, however women have less access to such resources. As a result, many avoid engaging in these activities. The study found that women who do get involved in campaigning are mostly graduates, married, working in

¹ Claggett, W., & Pollock, P. H. (2006). The Modes of Participation Revisited, 1980-2004: *Political Research Quarterly*, 59(4), 593–600. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290605900408>

² Weber, L. (2003). Rugged individuals and social butterflies: the consequences of social and individual political participation for political tolerance. *Social Science Journal*, 40(2), 335–342. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0362-3319\(03\)00014-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0362-3319(03)00014-4)

government jobs, or living in rural areas. This shows that education, stable family life, secure employment and close community ties can help women participate more actively in such election-related activities (Table 3.10).

The study further reveals that only a small number of women attend election meetings and rallies, indicating a generally low level of engagement in public political events (Fig. 3.4).. However, among those who do participate, certain groups stand out with higher attendance. Women with graduate degree has the highest percentage of attending such events, possibly because they have greater political awareness and confidence to engage in public discussions.³ Married women also show higher participation, which may be linked to their stronger sense of social responsibility and involvement in community affairs.⁴ Government employees tend to attend more often, likely due to better exposure to public matters and a clearer understanding of political processes.⁵ Further, urban women record higher attendance than rural women, as urban areas typically provide easier access to political events, better transportation, and more frequent opportunities for public gatherings (Table 3.11).⁶ The findings highlight that education, marital status, occupation, and place of residence play important roles in shaping women's participation in election meetings and rallies.

The study found that most women talk about political issues only once in a while (68%). About 29 per cent never take part in political discussions, and only 3 per cent talk about politics regularly (Fig.3.4). The study shows that most women only talk about politics once in a while, which suggests that political discussions are not a regular part of their daily lives. This

³ Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1996). Voice and equality: civic voluntarism in American politics. *Choice Reviews Online*, 33(06), 33–3597. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.33-3597>

⁴ Carpena, F., & Jensenius, F. R. (2019). Age of Marriage and Women's Political Engagement: Evidence from India. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3383080>

⁵ Kabeer, N. (2005). Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1. *Gender & Development*, 13(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552070512331332273>

⁶ Charan, U., & Chikara, A. (2025). Access of women to public spaces: Socio-Cultural impact on their identity and dignity. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, IX(V), 4503–4508. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2025.905000346>

occasional engagement may be due to limited interest, lack of confidence or fewer opportunities to join political conversations.⁷ The fact that 29 per cent of women never discuss politics indicates a significant group that remains completely disconnected from political dialogue. This could be linked to cultural norms that discourage women from speaking about public issues, limited access to information, or the belief that politics is not their responsibility.⁸ The very small group of women (3%) who frequently talk about political issues reflects how few women feel actively involved or informed enough to engage regularly.⁹ These patterns show that women's political engagement in Nagaland is low and uneven, with many women staying on the margins of political discussion. This limited participation may affect their ability to make informed choices during elections and weakens their overall role in the democratic process.

The study also shows that most women (51%) are not interested in politics. About 47 per cent have some interest, while only a very small group (2%) are highly interested in political matters (Figure 3.5). The low level of women's engagement in political discussion may be linked to the fact that many women are not interested in politics, and this lack of interest can come from several social and personal factors. First, Many women feel politics is complicated and unrelated to their daily duties. Since they handle many responsibilities at home, they often lack the time and mental energy to engage with political issues. This reduces their interest in politics and contributes to the gender gap in political participation.¹⁰ Second, in many families and communities, political talk is traditionally dominated by men, which discourages women

⁷ Wolak, J. (2020). Self-Confidence and Gender Gaps in Political Interest, Attention, and Efficacy. *The Journal of Politics*, 82(4), 1490–1501. <https://doi.org/10.1086/708644>

⁸ Haider, E. A., & Nooruddin, I. (2023). Well-Behaved Women: Engendering political interest in public Opinion research. *Comparative Political Studies*, 57(12), 2046–2079. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231209961>

⁹ Beauvais, E. (2020). The Gender Gap in Political Discussion Group Attendance. *Politics & Gender*, 16(2), 315–338. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18000892>

¹⁰ Weeks, A. C. (2025). The political consequences of the mental load. *European Sociological Review*, XX, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaf019>

from taking part or makes them feel that their opinions are less valued.¹¹ Third, limited exposure to political information such as news, debates, or discussions reduces their confidence to engage in meaningful conversation. This is especially true for women with fewer educational opportunities or those living in rural areas where access to media is limited.¹² Fourth, Cultural expectations also play a role, many women grow up believing that politics is “not for them,” which reduces their motivation to stay informed or engage in discussions.¹³ As a result, this lack of interest becomes both a cause and a consequence of their low participation, creating a cycle where women remain outside political dialogue and decision-making spaces. The finding suggests that women’s low interest in politics is not simply personal preference but is rooted in social norms, limited exposure and structural barriers that restrict their political interest and engagement.

The study also indicates that graduate women (40.45%), married women (61.80%), women working in government jobs (39.33%), and urban women (52.81%) are more involved in NGOs (Table 3.13). Socio-economic status plays an important role because women with higher income, better education, and stable employment usually have more time, confidence and resources to join social organisations or NGOs. Women with higher socio-economics status are more exposed to information, community networks and opportunities for public involvement.¹⁴ In contrast, women with lower income, less education, unstable jobs, or those living in rural areas may lack time, confidence, and access to information, which makes it

¹¹ Rojo, L. M. (2006). Gender and political discourse. In *Elsevier eBooks* (pp. 742–749). <https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-08-044854-2/00723-9>

¹² Nanz, A., & Matthes, J. (2022). Democratic Consequences of Incidental Exposure to Political Information: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Communication*, 72(3), 345–373. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqac008>

¹³ Elizabeth, M. Z., Putra, H. S. A., Sholihan, N., & Arikhah, N. (2023). Queen-bee phenomenon: Barriers to women’s participation in politics. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2266896>

¹⁴ Caplan, P. (1980). Joiners and Non-Joiners : A South Indian City Suburb and its Women’s Club. *Sociological Bulletin*, 29(2), 206–221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038022919800205>

harder for them to join such organisations.¹⁵ Therefore, socio-economic status strongly shapes women's involvement in social service groups and explains why participation levels differ across various groups. As a result, socio-economic inequalities strongly influence whether women engage in social service activities, which explains why only 19.78 per cent are affiliated with such organisations while a large majority (80.22%) are not (Table 3.11).

The study shows that only a very small number of women just (7 %) are members of political parties, while a large majority (93 %) do not have any formal affiliation with political parties (Fig. 4.19). This finding clearly highlights the extremely low level of women's participation in organised political structures. When so few women join political parties, it limits their chances of being trained, mentored or selected for leadership positions. Political parties are the main entry points for contesting elections, accessing resources and engaging in political decision-making. Therefore, when women remain outside party membership, they miss out on opportunities to build political experience, network with party leaders and influence policy decisions. Many women may feel discouraged due to household responsibilities, lack of awareness or the belief that politics is dominated by men. Others may not join because parties themselves do not actively encourage or recruit women. As a result, women's voices, interests and concerns remain underrepresented in political processes, further widening the gender gap in political participation and representation.

The study shows that women in Nagaland play an important role in election in terms of high voter turnout. Voting is a serious issue to many women and they consider it a civic responsibility. However, women in Nagaland have not been able to sustain their participation in the electoral process beyond the act of voting (Table 3.1 and 3.2). The 2023 election to the

¹⁵ Acero, N. a. L. V. G., Araque, N. W. O. A., & Orozco, N. H. L. J. (2024). Constraining Factors to Rural Women's Empowerment: A Perspective from the Specialized Literature. *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture*, 86–104. <https://doi.org/10.70082/esiculture.vi.953>

NLA indicates that the women have a dismal 3.33 per cent seats. This implies that very few women got elected, which highlights that the representation of women in the state assembly is still extremely low.

The most notable cause of this restricted participation is the social, economic and structural barriers. Election activities involve time, energy and meeting many people, which are sometimes not easy for women due to traditional gender roles and household responsibilities. The patriarchal system in Nagaland is also very restrictive of women, which means that they can have less access to resources and decision-making arenas, which complicates their entry into the political arena. Further, lack of money, limited support from family, limited free time, fear of judgement, social expectations, and lack of exposure to political discussions affect their confidence in engaging more actively in political activities. These combined barriers hence restricted women to freely engage in politics and electoral processes (Table 4.7).

The findings show that, although many women actively take part in politics as voters, they still have very low presence in actual decision-making positions. Over several decades since 1964 to 2022, Nagaland did not have women elected into the State Assembly. This means that even though women make up a large part of the electorate, their voices were not represented in the place where laws and important policies are made. It was only in 2023 when Hekani Jakhalu and Salhoutuonuo Kruse became the first women MLAs in the electoral history of Nagaland. Their election marked a breakthrough, but it also highlighted how long women have been absent from political leadership (Fig. 4.15).

The study shows that most women feel that traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes are major barriers that stop them from taking part in politics. This means that most women feel that society's expectations and long-held customs make it difficult for them to take up political

roles. Traditional standards prevailing in the Naga society still position women primarily in domestic setting, including housekeeping or taking care of the family. These cultural concepts tend to imply that politics is the domain of men and women should not interfere in the affairs of the society or politics. Due to such beliefs, women can be discouraged by their family members and unsupported by society in case they attempt to join politics. These attitudes may affect how women see themselves in political space. A lot of women might not want to contest elections, speak publicly or take on leadership roles because they might feel that the society does not accept women in such positions. Consequently, competent and educated women can be denied the opportunity to participate in politics. This finding shows that deep-rooted cultural norms remain one of the biggest barriers to women's political representation and participation (Table 4.8). Until these social attitudes change, it will be difficult for women to gain equal opportunities in political and leadership spaces.

Most women (86%), believe that their political choices are either affected or influenced by men in their families. Most women believe that men in the family, such as husbands, brothers, fathers or uncles, play a big role in deciding whom they should support or vote for (Fig.4.17). This is very typical of most societies whereby men are perceived to be the decision-makers of the home.¹⁶ Because of this, women may not feel free to choose a candidate or party based on their own opinions. Instead, they can go with the decision of male family members even when they might have a different opinion. This influence can happen through direct pressure, strong suggestions or simply because women have been raised to trust men's decisions more than their own.¹⁷ This situation limits women's independent participation in politics.

¹⁶ Prillaman, S. (2023). The patriarchal political household. In *The Patriarchal Political Order: The Making and Unraveling of the Gendered Participation Gap in India* (pp. 89–118). Cambridge University Press eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009355797.006>

¹⁷ Schaffer, F. C. (2014). Not-So-Individual Voting: Patriarchal Control and Familial Hedging in Political Elections around the World. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 35(4), 349–378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2014.955407>

Even though they vote in large numbers, their vote may not fully reflect their own choices. Because of this, the political voice of women is diminished, and the capacity of expressing their preferences is limited. This finding shows that male-dominated systems still affect women's political freedom, and it is hard for women to be equal partners in politics.

The study reveals that most of the women surveyed feel that political parties are not doing enough to promote gender inclusion. A very high percentage (61.78 %) of women respondents stated that political parties are making very little effort to include women or create opportunities for them in politics. This means that many women believe parties are not giving them enough support, encouragement or space to participate meaningfully. On the other hand, only 6.44 per cent of the women surveyed said that political parties in their constituency are active in encouraging women's participation. This is a very small number, showing that only a few women have seen positive steps from party leaders, such as encouraging women to contest elections, involving them in decision-making or giving them roles within party structures. The finding highlights a major gap, women want to participate, but political parties are not providing enough support or opportunities. This is where the parties fail to help and contribute to making women elected leaders and visible in political arenas (Table 4.9).

The study also reveals that a large majority of women (74.4 %) do not agree with the idea that men are better leaders than women (Fig.4.18). they clearly reject the belief that leadership ability is something only men possess. They believe that women are equally capable of leading and taking on political leadership role. Traditionally, many societies have assumed that men are better suited for leadership roles in politics, community affairs and even within the family.¹⁸ However, the above responses reveal that women are confident that they can lead

¹⁸ Yates, E. A., & Hughes, M. M. (2017). Cultural explanations for men's dominance of national leadership worldwide. In *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks* (pp. 101–122). https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-48240-2_5

just as well as men, given equal opportunity and support. It shows growing awareness among women that leadership is not based on gender, but on individual talent, commitment and capability. The finding shows that there is a shift in attitude where women realise their potential and do not want the stereotype of participation in leadership and politics. Such an attitude is significant towards creating a more inclusive and equal political space.

There is an interesting contrast in the study of women voting behaviour and electoral participation in Nagaland. On one hand, women have low political awareness; many do not fully understand party ideologies, election issues, or how political decisions affect their lives. In spite of such a low level of knowledge, women are active voters, and they have outnumbered their male counterparts in many elections.¹⁹ This means that political awareness is not the main factor influencing their participation. Rather, study indicates that women's voting behaviour is influenced by the political environment, social expectations and cultural practices. Most of the Naga people regard voting as a community responsibility and social obligation. Women may vote due to their family or village pressures or because they wish to assist the candidate selected by their community or clan.²⁰ Consequently, women can be active voters despite their lack of profound political knowledge since the social and cultural setting stimulates them to vote, and in some cases forces them to do so. This finding is an indication that electoral turnout does not depend on individual awareness of politics but rather on the political environment of the woman in question.

The analysis of socioeconomic variables does not align with popular assumptions. Marital status and place of residence do not show a consistent and strong influence on women's

¹⁹ Amer, M. (2009). Political Awareness and its Implications on Participatory Behaviour. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 16(3), 359–374. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097152150901600303>

²⁰ Wouters, J. J. P. (2018). Nagas as a 'Society against Voting?' *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 36(2), 113–132. <https://doi.org/10.3167/cja.2018.360210>

participation. Only education and occupation show some relationship with voting and electoral activities. This implies that the patterns of women's political engagement cannot be solely explained by socio-economic variables, since other non-economic factors can also influence women's voting behaviour. The study, therefore, highlights the socio-cultural and institutional barriers that affect women's political representation. Women are still prevented by traditional gender norms and cultural expectations, lack of political party support and access to resources to engage actively in political space outside voting. These are hindrances to their representation and visibility in politics.

The study, therefore clearly indicates that women continue to face several challenges when trying to enter politics. To start with, traditional and cultural norms are a significant barrier. Politics remains a male domain in most societies, and women are supposed to take care of the house, not public life. Such social pressures make women avoid politics and reduce their presence in political leadership. Second, party-level policies aimed at encouraging women representation are absent. Most political parties do not have proper rules, fixed quotas, or training programs to support and prepare women for elections. In the absence of these support arrangements, women will struggle to compete with their male counterparts who have already established better networks and support. Third, the study highlights that political parties often do not support women's candidature. Even when women show interest and capability, they are frequently denied party tickets. Leadership of different parties tends to prefer male candidates with the assumption that they are more likely to win, which results in fewer opportunities for women to stand in elections. Fourth Many women face mental and emotional challenges that stop them from entering politics. They might be insecure, afraid of criticism, or they might feel inferior. Since politics is very competitive and sometimes aggressive, women can feel discouraged, especially if they do not have mentors, proper training, or a supportive environment. The fear of public judgement and negative comments may demotivate them from

taking part in political activity. Lastly, women may struggle because of a lack of time, money, and resources. Women have family commitments and therefore have little time to engage in political activities. Moreover, campaigning demands financial resources, mobility and access to social networks that are not available to a large number of women. This makes it difficult for them to run effective campaigns or build political connections. These findings indicate that the low participation of women in politics is not an inability issue but a number of external and internal factors hindering their participation and representation. The culture, lack of party support, psychological issues, lack of resources, and other factors make it more challenging for women to enter politics and become leaders.

5.2 Conclusion

Women's political behaviour and their representation have become important ways to understand how actively they engage in democratic systems because their participation shows not only their interest in public affairs but also how inclusive democracy truly is. Research indicates that when women vote, attend meetings, join parties, or even run for office, they make political debates wider as they introduce issues like education, health, gender equality, and community welfare to the political agenda.²¹ Even though women form half of the population, they still face problems such as male-dominated traditions, lack of resources, and social pressures that limit their chances to take part in politics.²² The reason why the representation of women in elected institutions should increase is that women leaders tend to increase the level of inclusiveness and inspire other women to join politics.²³ Hence, the study of women in

²¹ Paxton, P., & Hughes, M. (2014). *Women, Politics, and Power: A Global perspective* (2nd ed.). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452275482>

²² Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2004b). Rising tide: gender equality and cultural change around the world. *Choice Reviews Online*, 41(05), 41–3062. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.41-3062>

²³ Ellerby, K. (2011). Quotas for Women In Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide By Mona Lena Krook. *Journal of Women Politics & Policy*, 32(2), 164–166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477x.2011.562139>

politics and their representation can be used to determine the true extent of democracy and whether a system is indeed empowering its citizens.

The promotion and visibility of women role models at different levels of public life is one of the best measures of raising the participation and representation of women in politics. The presence of successful women in leadership positions, whether in politics, administration, civil society, or community organizations has a powerful influence on empowering and inspiring other women.²⁴ Role models have the ability to break the stereotypical notions of what women can do, show that women's leadership is possible, and create a positive cycle of aspiration and participation.²⁵ To do this, civil society organisations, political institutions, educational bodies and media platforms should make conscious efforts of bringing out and glorifying the success of women leaders.²⁶ This involves capturing their contributions, publishing their narratives in social awareness campaigns and giving them forums to express their lives. The presence of women role models can have a very powerful incentive, especially for the younger women who might otherwise feel marginalised or even scared of the political world.²⁷

Moreover, mentorship programs would make women more confident and better equipped to participate in politics. Experienced women leaders can mentor new entrants, impart valuable political lessons, and help them overcome such challenges as gender bias and negative publicity. This can facilitate the entry and success of women entrants in politics.²⁸ Women role

²⁴ Wolbrecht, C., & Campbell, D. E. (2007). Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Models. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(4), 921–939. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1540-5907.2007.00289.X>

²⁵ Ladam, C., Harden, J. J., & Windett, J. H. (2018). Prominent Role Models: High-Profile Female Politicians and the Emergence of Women as Candidates for Public Office. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(2), 369–381. <https://doi.org/10.1111/AJPS.12351>

²⁶ Campus, D. (2013). *Media Coverage of Women Leaders* (pp. 39–53). Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137295545_4

²⁷ Campbell, D. E., & Wolbrecht, C. (2006). See Jane Run: Women Politicians as Role Models for Adolescents. *The Journal of Politics*, 68(2), 233–247. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1468-2508.2006.00402.X>

²⁸ McGowan, S., & Gil, E. (2022). *Mentorship as an Approach to Promoting Gender Equity in Higher Education Leadership* (pp. 162–172). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003219897-17>

models are crucial for increasing women's participation in politics. In making women leaders visible, approachable, and appreciated, this can break the social and cultural barriers and encourage more women to engage in politics.

To improve the political representation of women, it is necessary to strengthen their social capital because strong network, community ties, and mutual support structures play a vital role in boosting the confidence of women and their chances to participate in politics.²⁹ If women in Nagaland receive strong support from their community, friends, and local groups, they will feel more confident and better informed to join politics. Since Naga society already has strong community connections, these networks can encourage women, help them share ideas, and give them the support they need to become leaders. This support can help them overcome social and institutional barriers that stop them from participating fully in politics.

Empowering women's political capital is also needed in giving women the knowledge, confidence, support networks, resources and opportunities for them to actively participate in politics and take leadership roles. Many women face barriers such as limited political exposure, lack of party support, cultural restrictions and low confidence.³⁰ To overcome these challenges, it is important to build their political capital through training, mentorship, financial assistance and institutional support.³¹ Political parties should also provide equal opportunities, such as the distribution of party tickets, leadership roles, and memberships in important decision-making bodies.³² One way of developing the system of support in which women can learn and feel encouraged is to empower women's groups, such as women's wings of political parties,

²⁹ Lowndes, V. (2004). Getting on or getting by? Women, social capital and political participation. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 6(1), 45–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1467-856X.2004.00126.X>

³⁰ Varghese, T. (2020). Women's Political Participation and Leadership in India: Examining the challenges. *Public Policy and Administration*, 19(1), 111–125. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ppaa.19.1.25228>

³¹ Carson, S. (2022). The New Girls' Clubs: Candidate Training Programs and the Women Changing the Face of United States Politics. *Open Anthropological Research*, 2(1), 59–75. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opan-2022-0121>

³² Collignon, S. (2024). Addressing barriers to women's representation in party candidate selections. *The Political Quarterly*, 95(2), 363–367. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923x.13397>

NGOs, and community groups.³³ Funding is also a key factor since most women do not have finances to campaign, travel, or advertise. Women can be in a better position to compete equally by providing them with financial help, sponsorships, and political funding.³⁴ Moreover, awareness campaigns can be carried out to make families and communities realise the importance of women's leadership in reducing social resistance and motivating them to engage in politics freely.³⁵ With the right support and opportunities, women can probably participate in elections, win seats, get involved in decision-making and become better representatives of their communities. This recommendation aims to establish an enabling community that will assist Naga women to join politics effectively and have more representation at all levels of politics.

The study indicates that, although women of Nagaland are actively involved in the electoral process as voters, a number of social, cultural and political barriers still restrict their full involvement and representation in leadership. The political and social capital of women can be enhanced; their access to resources can be increased; and the environment can be made favourable, such that more women can participate not only as voters but also as candidates and decision-makers. Once these measures are implemented appropriately, Nagaland will be able to proceed to more inclusive and representative political system in which the voices of women could be heard and respected equally.

³³ Itzwa, S. E. (1990). Another View of Feminine Networks: Tunisian Women and the Development of Political Efficacy. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 22(1), 21–36.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074380003316X>

³⁴ Harahap, A. F., Jakimow, T., Siahaan, A. Y., & Yumasdaleni, N. (2022). Is money an insurmountable barrier to women's political representation in transactional democracies? Evidence from North Sumatera, Indonesia. *Politics Groups and Identities*, 11(4), 733–749.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2022.2041442>

³⁵ Awain, A. M. B., Jaboob, A. S., Alsheyadi, A., & Ali, K. a. M. (2024). Empowering women worldwide. In *Advances in logistics, operations, and management science book series* (pp. 17–36).
<https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-7107-7.ch002>

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Appendix 1

AC

P.S Code

Questionnaire on the Topic-Voting Behaviour of Women: A Study of Nagaland

A.C. Name	
P.S. Name	
Respondent serial No. as in the Electoral Roll	
Date of interview (dd/mm/yy)	
Name of the field investigator	

A. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Kindly put a tick mark (✓) where multiple choices are given.

A1. Gender

- 1. Male ()
- 2. Female ()

A2. What is your age?

- 1. 18-29 ()
- 2. 30-44 ()
- 3. 45-59 ()
- 4. 60 and above ()

A3. What is your marital status?

- 1. Married ()
- 2. Unmarried ()
- 3. Divorced/Separated/ Widowed ()

A4. What is your highest degree or level of education?

1. Illiterate ()
2. Under matriculation ()
3. Matriculation ()
4. Higher secondary ()
5. Graduation ()
6. Post Graduate and above ()

A5. Occupation

1. Government service ()
2. Self-employed ()
3. Cultivator ()
4. Unemployed ()

A6. What is your average monthly income?

1. 10,000- 25,000 ()
2. 26,000- 50,000 ()
3. 51,000- 75,000 ()
4. 75,000- 99,000 ()
5. Above One Lakh ()

A7. Residence

1. Urban ()
2. Rural ()

B. HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT

B1. Who owns the house?

1. Father ()
2. Mother ()

- 3. You ()
- 4. Others (Please specify) _____

B2. Who takes the major decisions at home?

- 1. Father ()
- 2. Mother ()
- 3. You ()
- 4. Jointly ()

B3. Who controls the financial matters at home?

- 1. Father ()
- 2. Mother ()
- 3. You ()
- 4. Jointly ()

C. PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC ACITIVITY

C1. Are you/have you ever been a member of any social service organization or NGO?

- 1. Yes ()
- 2. No ()

C2. (If Yes) Which organization are you/have you been a part of? _____

D. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

D1 (i). Did you vote in the last Nagaland State Assembly Election of 2018?

- 1. Yes ()
- 2. No ()

(ii) If No, please state the reason why you did not vote? _____

D2. Did you vote for a candidate on your own free will or were you motivated by someone else?

1. Independent decision ()
2. Motivated by others ()
3. Any other reasons (please specify) _____

D3. How often do you discuss politics with others?

1. Often ()
2. Sometimes ()
3. Never ()

D4. Besides voting, did you participate in any of the election related activities?

1. Attending election meeting /rallies ()
2. Taking part in the campaign activities ()
3. Door to door canvassing for party or candidate ()
4. Others (Please specify). _____

D5. In the past two years did you meet the MLA from your constituency?

1. Yes ()
2. No ()

D6 (i). Are you a member of any Political party?

1. Yes ()
2. No ()

(ii) If Yes, Which party? _____

D7. People have different consideration while deciding whom to vote for, in your opinion what mattered to you the most while voting in elections?

1. Party ()
2. Candidates ()
3. Any other (Please specify) _____

D8 a. (If Party in Q D7). What was the most important consideration in favour of party? *(Tick one option which you think is relevant from the following options)*

1. People of my tribe/community supported that party ()
2. The group in the village supported the party ()
3. My family members are traditional supporters/voters of the party ()
4. The party has good leadership ()
5. The overall programme of the party is good ()
6. Others (Please specify)._____

D8 b. (If Candidate in Q D7). What was the most important consideration in favour of the candidate? *(Tick one option which you think is relevant from the following options)*

1. Candidate belong to my tribe or community ()
2. The group in the village supported the candidate ()
3. We have family ties or good relations with the candidate ()
4. I am impressed by the candidate's personality ()
5. Gender consideration was taken into account ()
6. Others (Please specify)._____

D9. Generally speaking, how interested are you in politics?

1. Very interested ()
2. Somewhat interested ()
3. Not at all interested ()

D10.(i) Do you aspire to run for any political office?

1. Yes ()
2. No ()

(ii) Why? (Please give reason/s)

D11. Which of the following sources do you rely on the most to get news on elections and politics?

1. Newspaper/Magazine ()
2. Television ()
3. Radio ()
4. Internet ()
5. Family/Relatives/Friends ()
6. Others (Please Specify). _____

D12. How often to you follow news about politics?

1. Everyday ()
2. Several times a week ()
3. Once or twice a week ()
4. Never ()

D13. How likely are you to vote in the coming General elections?

1. Will certainly vote ()
2. Most likely to vote ()
3. Probably won't vote ()
4. I won't vote ()

D14. Indicate your level of trust in the following political/public institutions (Please grade them as A, B, C, D or E) from the stated options: **(A) A great deal; (B) Quite a lot; (C) Not very Much; (D) Not at all; (E) can't say/ No option**

Sl.No	Political/Public institutions	Grade (Remarks)
1	Elected Government	
2	Political Parties	
3	NGO's	
4	Election Commission	
5	Police	

6	Courts	
7	Civil Service	

D15. (i) Are you satisfied with the performance of the present government in Nagaland?

1. Satisfied ()

2. To Some Extent ()

3. Not at all satisfied ()

(ii) Please give two reasons for your answer

(a) _____

(b) _____

E. WOMEN REPRESENTATION AND POLITICAL PARTIES

E1. (i) Do you agree that in Nagaland politics is dominated by men?

1. Yes ()

2. No ()

(ii) Please give some reasons

E2. In your opinion why women are not part of decision making committees of political parties in Nagaland?

E3. (i) Are you in favour of reservation of seats for women in legislative bodies?

1. Yes ()
2. No ()

(ii) Please give reasons

E4. According to you what measures should political parties in the State take to promote women in political arena?

E5. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement, “the entrenched traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes in Naga society is a barrier to women’s entry into formal politics?”

1. Strongly agree ()
2. Disagree ()
3. Doesn’t matter ()

E6. Which of the following reason comes closest to your views regarding the problem faced by women in getting into politics? (Please tick one option)

1. Due to cultural and traditional norms ()
2. Due to lack of resources females cannot participate in politics ()
3. Lack of formal and informal institutional mechanism to promote gender equality by the party ()
4. Political parties do not give opportunity to females candidates ()
5. Due to psychological and motivational barriers women’s participation is not possible ()
6. Any others (Please specify). _____

E7. Do political leaders from your constituency encourage women’s participation in politics?

1. Yes ()

- 2. No ()
- 3. To Some extend ()
- 4. Don't know ()

F. GENERAL QUESTIONS

F1. A man's job is to earn money, and women's job is to look after the home and family. *To what extent do you agree with the statement?*

- 1. Strongly agree ()
- 2. Agree ()
- 3. Disagree ()
- 4. Don't know ()

F2. Men make better leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women. *To what extent do you agree with the statement?*

- 1. Strongly agree ()
- 2. Agree ()
- 3. Disagree ()
- 4. Don't know ()

F3. Many women follow the decisions of her husband/brother/uncle when it comes to politics. *To what extent do you agree with the statement?*

- 1. Strongly agree ()
- 2. Agree ()
- 3. Disagree ()
- 4. Don't know ()

F4. If a women from your Assembly constituency is contesting for election will you vote for her?

- 1. Yes ()
- 2. No ()

If No Why? (Please specify) _____

F5. Do you have any suggestion for improving women representation in politics?

F6. Do you have any issues or queries that you would want the political party you support to address?

Thank you very much for your participation

Appendix 2

DETAILS OF SURVEY PROFILE

Sl.No	Assembly Constituency	AC. NO	Selected Polling Station	No. of Respondents
1	Dimapur-II	2	11-Industrial Village Razhuphe-I (E/W)	10
			35- Kacharigaon /Industrail Village	10
			59-Senjum Village	10
2	Ghaspani-I	4	37- Shokhuvi	10
			75- Shozukhu III	10
			113- Tenyiphe Village-IV	10
3	Peren	7	20- New Jalukie (N/W)	10
			41- Peren Town 'A' Sector W/W)	10
			62- Gaili Namdi	10
4		10	2- Peraciezie	10

	Northern Angami-I		11-P. Khel-I	10
			20-Mission Compound	10
5	Southern Angami-II	15	2- Viswema (Z. Khel)	10
			10- Kidima (Upper)	10
			18- New Colony (R.Khel Viswema)	10
6	Chazouba	18	11- Chesezu Village 'A' Wing	10
			25- Chesezu Nasa Village	10
			39- Chozuba Village 'D' Wing	10
7	Impur	23	3- Mopungchuket-I	10
			9- Longjang-II	10
			15- Chami	10
8	Jangpetkong	29	3-Changki-III	10
			9-Waromong-I N/Wing	10
			15-Waromong Compound	10
9	Zunheboto	35	3-North Point	10
			16-DC Hill S/Wing-I	10
			29-Old Zunheboto N/W-II	10
10	Wokha	38	9-Wokha Town-I	10
			28-Wokha Village-II	10
			47-Wokha Town-XXIII	10
11	Wakching	42	2-Naginimora Hq.	10
			13-Wakching Hq.	10
			24-Wanching Village	10
12	Aboi	47	2-Aboi Hq	10
			9-Sowa Village	10
			16-Longching Village	10
13	Longkhim Chare	52	10-Chungliyimti	10
			21-Sangsomong/Yangli	10
			32-Angangba 'B'	10
14	Noklak	56	7-Noklak Village 'A'	10
			16-Nokhu 'A'	10
			25-Noklak Hq 'A'	10
15	Pungro Kiphire	60	4-Mission Compound Kiphire Town	10
			27-Longkhimong	10
			50-Anatonger 'A'	10
	Total	15	45	450