

Youth in Politics: Assessing the Impacts of Student Political Engagement in Arunachal Pradesh, India

Dr. Tobi Lollen*, Assistant Professor, Don Bosco College, Itanagar, Rajiv Gandhi University.

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Tobi Lollen

Manuscript Received: Mar 18, 2026; Revised: Mar 20, 2026; Published: Mar 21, 2026

Abstract: The participation of students in politics particularly in Arunachal Pradesh has been crucially significant for socio-political strata of the state. The study is an attempt to explore and comprehend the impacts of student's participation in politics of state, focusing on how such involvement shapes their civic engagement, political awareness and societal contributions. Drawing on existing literature and empirical studies, the paper examines the various ways of student's engagement in politics that begins with voting, opinion building, activism, and advocacy. It also discusses the factors that influence students' political participation such as education, social networks and political environment. Furthermore, the paper analyzes the consequences of their participation in politics both positive and negative political engagement, both at the individual and societal levels. Highlighting its potential to foster a more informed and participatory electorate. Accordingly, tools for data collection were administered to obtain relevant and significant information to comprehend the objectives of study undertaken. The study is primarily focused on relooking and researching outlook of student's participation in politics. However, the study can be extended with new research design with larger scope in future. The subject has vast prospective for further searching and accomplishments. Various dimensions can be drawn from the study and carry forward with new research proposals.

Keywords: Student, Politics, Participation, Tribal, society, Roles, Rights, Arunachal Pradesh.

Introduction

Arunachal Pradesh, the land of down-lit mountains, is home to diverse cultures and represents unity in diversity in every sense. The journey of Arunachal Pradesh as full-fledged state has an integral contribution to youth participation in politics, the influence and the impacts continue as the state politics lacks strong opposition parties to participate in democratic political setup. This makes it very important to understand its overarching influence with a rational set of minds and to come up with possible solutions to overcome its challenges, especially in the digital age in which the youth are exposed to. First of all, what is political participation? Oxford dictionary has loosely defined it as citizens activities affecting politics. The youth which hold the key to shaping our nations destiny, participation in politics has been playing an integral part when it comes to policy making and governance especially, in a democratic form of political setup all around the world in which Arunachal Pradesh is so exceptional.

There are different forms of youth participation in politics which could be classified in the forms of voting, contact with politicians, online engagement, volunteering discussion and activism, etc. They include;

- **Voting:** Youth with eligible age participate in elections by casting votes for candidates. Several factors influence such as clan, the role of village youth leader, present/former leaders, village elders of the locality, family relations and the voters' perception.
- **Connection with politicians:** Interacting with elected officials, attending town halls or writing letters.
- **Online engagement:** It is a recent phenomenon where youths are using social media, blogs or online petitions to express opinions.
- **Volunteering:** Youth also participate in politics contributing time to political organizations or community service.
- **Discussion:** Talking about politics with peers, family or in educational settings.

- **Activism:** In simple words, it refers to engaging in social movements, campaigns and protest to advocate for change and it is most visible form through which the youth participate, etc.

1.1: Objectives of Study

The study has three primary objectives:

- To study overview of students' participation in politics in Arunachal Pradesh.
- To examine positive impacts of students' participation in politics.
- To comprehend negative impacts of students' participation in politics.

1.2: Methodology:

The data for the present study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through the use of observation methods as well as structured and unstructured interviews. The principal research instrument consisted of a carefully designed, structured, open-ended questionnaire administered using a stratified random sampling technique. A total sample size of 200 respondents was drawn from three major educational institutions in Arunachal Pradesh: Rajiv Gandhi University, Don Bosco College, and Dera Natung Government College. In addition, respondents included both former and incumbent student leaders from various student organizations, such as All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union and different District Students' Unions. For reasons of convenience and clarity, the questionnaire was prepared in English. Secondary data were gathered from relevant official Acts, reports, records, scholarly articles, and other published as well as unpublished materials.

1.3: Understanding Impacts of Students' Participations in Politics

Students play pivotal role in politics or electoral politics in different manners. They perhaps are considered as Voice for change; as students often bring fresh perspectives and idealism to political discourse, advocating for issues such as social justice, environmental sustainability and human rights. They also are essential part of political socialisation and mobilization; their energy and enthusiasm can mobilize broader segments of society, including fellow students, young people and even older generations leading to increased civic engagement and participation. Through their activism, lobbying and voting, students can influence discourses of policy making, especially those that directly affect their education, future opportunities and quality of life, etc. that contributes to build general welfare of society. Students through education and awareness their involvement in politics can serve as a valuable educational experience, fostering critical thinking, civic responsibility and an understanding of governmental process.

Students contribute for good social change; students have historically played pivotal roles in driving social change, from the civil rights movement to protests against wars and oppressive regimes, demonstrating the potential for political action to effect meaningful societal transformation. Their roles in Cultural and ideological shifts have been immense. students' participation in politics can contribute to broader cultural and ideological shifts within society. For example, student led movements advocating for gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, racial justice, and environmental sustainability have helped reshape public discourse and influence mainstream attitudes and policies on these issues. Their social media and digital activism augment their importance as students are adept at using social media platforms and digital tools to organize protests, raise awareness about important issue, and hold public figures and institutions accountable. Online activism has become an integral part of political engagement for many young people allowing them to connect with like- minded individuals, amplify their voices, and mobilize support for their causes.

1.3.1: Positive Impacts of Students' Participation

Participation of students in politics have various positive results for the students' community as well as society as a whole. Some of most significant impacts of students' participation in politics are as follow;

- Leadership Development:** Involvement in student union provides opportunities for student to develop leadership skills. They learn to organize events, manage resources and represent the interest of their peers, which help in their personal and professional growth. Like for instance we could see or witness the APPSU election which is being periodically conducted in the state, that the leader of the student's union developed his/her personality and get the

courage to further participate in the politics of Local Governance and even Legislative Assembly. In fact, the history of Arunachal Pradesh tells us that the students' politics has been the foundational stage for almost all the political leaders of current time.

- ii. **Voice and Representation:** Students Union gives students a platform to voice their opinions, concerns and ideas or any problem which concerned students' welfare. By participating in these unions students can actively contribute to decision-making processes within their educational institutions leading to a more inclusive and student centric environment. For example; The student union of state such as ANSU (All Nyshi Student's Union), AAPSU (All Arunachal Pradesh Student's Union) and other students-based organizations on the matter of paper leakage related to the APPSC (Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission) they took initiative to expose the corruption that practiced in the system for years. Further mobilized to assert a strict action against those officers and persons involved in corrupt practices. Hence, they continue to put forward for the voice of students and young aspirants.
- iii. **Skill Enhancement and Activism:** In addition to leadership skills, involvement in student union helps students to develop a wide range of transferable skill such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving and event and human resource management, which are highly valued in the professional world. Student unions often play a crucial role in advocating for student's rights, social justice issues, and policy changes within educational institutions and beyond. By participating in these activities student learns about the importance of activism and civic engagement in effecting positive change. For examples; roles and participations of student's community in Refugee's issues (Chakma and Hajjons), Inner Line Permit, Land and Forest Rights Issue, Anti-Dam movements, Anti- Corruption movements, etc. in the state.
- iv. **Civic Engagement:** By participating in politics, students learn about the importance of civic engagement and the role and right of citizens in a democracy. This can lead to increased voter turnout and greater involvement in community activities. Student union often engage in various community service activities, fostering a sense of social responsibility among students through volunteering and community outreach programs, students develop empathy and a deeper understanding of societal issues.
- v. **Youth Perspective and Promote Accountability of Government in the State:** Students often bring unique perspective to political discussions. They may highlight issues that are particularly relevant to young people, such as students dept, educational reform and climate change. By participating in politics, students ensure that these issues are given the attention they deserve in political discourse. The student community in Arunachal Pradesh led by different student's organizations play the role of disguised opposition party. As state doesn't have strong opposition party, the role of student is very significant to make government answerable to the public. The party politics in state is often played or considered as satellite system of Centre. In such scenario, students take up the responsibility to protect and promote the interests of indigenous people through various democratic manners. The sad reality of state is that the student community is the one which can make government accountable of its role and responsibility.
- vi. **Source of Earning:** It is a matter of perspective yet we cannot deny the fact that for some good numbers of students, politics is also their source of earning. Through our study we have found that there are good number of students who pay their own bills; admission fee, tuition fee, pocket money etc. via earning from their participation in politics. From this perspective we can conclude that it lessens the burden of parents and students themselves from the load of paying bills.
- vii. **Platform of Recognition:** Involvement and participation of students provide avenue of recognition from the incumbent leaders or party's High commands. Getting recognition from major party high command opens up one's way to meet aspiration of becoming future leader. One doesn't become politician overnight it takes stages to attain one's political ambition. Thus, participation during student's life counts for future political endeavor.

Therefore, participation of students in politics do have positive impacts for student's individual growth and development as well as for the development of society as whole. As such it is worthwhile for the students to take part in political discourses and activities.

1.3.2: Negative Impacts of Students' Participation

The participation of students in politics in the state has its share of positive results for the overall growth of society. However, it also has its share of negative impacts on student's community and tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh in general. Following are some negative impacts of student's participation in politics:

- i. **Diversion of Focus and Academic Disruption:** Instead of concentrating on their studies and personal growth, students involved in politics may channel their time and energy into political activities, affecting their academic environment and hinder learning. It perhaps led to increasing rate of school or college drop outs. Political activism among students can lead to disruptions on campus including strikes, protest and clashes which can disturb the peaceful academic environment and hinder teaching learning process and other curriculum of school, college and university.
- ii. **Polarization, Conflicts and External influences:** Student involvement in politics may lead to the deepening of political divisions, ideological differences and conflicts within campuses, potentially creating a hostile atmosphere among students. This sometimes further intensify possibilities of youth unrest and crimes in educational institutions and society to larger extend. Students' involvement in politics may be vulnerable to manipulation by external political forces and other factors, which can compromise their autonomy and objective thinking, leading to biased perspective and actions. Students very often manipulated by the higher up like incumbent leaders, officers and other stakeholders of the society. The possibility of distortion of moral authority of student is very high. For example; students exposer to huge flow of money and other materialistic elements can easily make students fall for it.
- iii. **Neglect of Personal development and of Key Issues:** Excessive focus on political activities may results in neglect of personnel development opportunities, such as internship, extracurricular activities, or career exploration which are important for future success. Except for some hand full of individuals, personality growth and development of students as learners mostly get compromised due to their participation in politics. Students engaging in political activities may prioritize political agendas over crucial academic and social issues that require attention and solutions, diminishing their ability to address pressing concerns effectively. Many a time in Arunachal Pradesh student's organisation remained quiet on crucial issues by compliance their stand with the incumbent government. This shows their deflected role and responsibility towards the society.
- iv. **Erosion of Institutional Credibility:** Undue political involvement by students can undermine the credibility and reputation of educational institution, portraying them as politically influenced entities rather than impartial centres of learning. Every now and then we see the teaching-learning process gets paralyse due to politicization of issues within the campus of educational institutions. However, it is the students themselves who are the victim of their own doings. Such as; non completion of syllabus within standard time, disturbance in co-curriculum activities, scheduled for various examinations, etc. Students who are involved in politics may clash with school administrations or other authorities, leading to disciplinary actions or conflicts that can negatively impact their academic careers. Sense of respect, discipline, honour, sincerity, moral accountability etc. take back step sometimes when one is completely consumed by political activities.
- v. **Emotional Stress:** Political immersion can be emotionally taxing, especially in highly charged or contentious environments, potentially leading to increased stress and mental health issues among students. When political endeavour takes up by students doesn't go as their plans there is any and every kind of probable externalities. This leads to problem of Students- Politician Continuum, where students unable to make clear stand or position of their own.
- vi. **Negative Stereotyping:** Students involved in politics may be subjected to negative stereotyping or stigmatizing, which can impact their personal growth, social relationships and overall well-being. Thus, it could go against the principle of inclusive teaching-learning system process or system of education.

Therefore, participation of students in politics has its share of both positive as well as negative impacts on the student's community and society in general. To comprehend student's involvement in politics researchers have conducted interviews and schedules from various respondents from distinct Educational Institutions and other

stakeholders of Arunachal Pradesh. Through which it is comprehended that student’s participation is important yet has its share of challenges.

1.4: Findings:

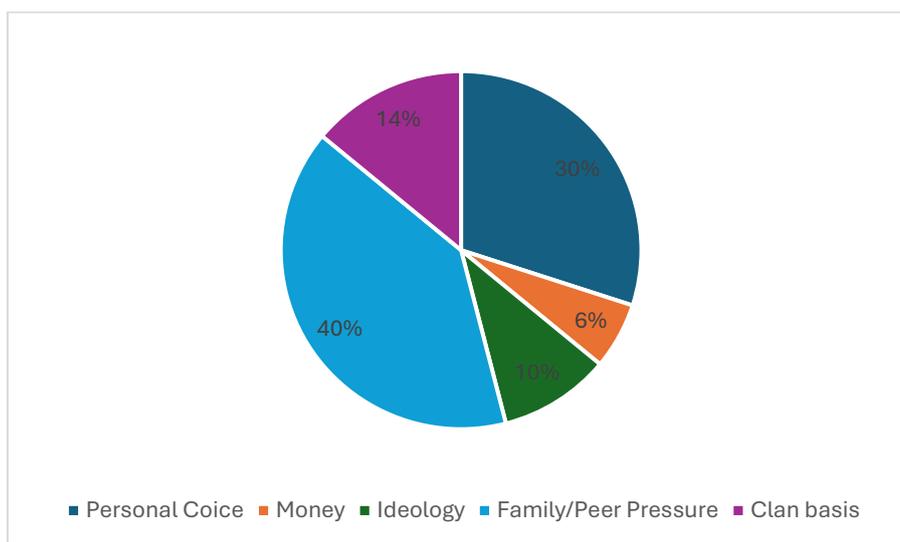
The findings of the study are based on students’ perceptions, elicited through a carefully designed interview schedule and a structured open-ended questionnaire administered using a stratified random sampling technique. A total of 200(two hundred) respondents participated in the study, of which 150(one hundred fifty) were exclusively students. Among the student respondents, 50(fifty) were selected from various departments of Don Bosco College, including the Departments of Commerce (B. Com), Social Work (BSW), Economics, English, History, Political Science, and Sociology. Another 50 (fifty) respondents were drawn from different departments of Dera Natung Government College, namely Anthropology, Geography, Education, and Hindi. The remaining 50 (fifty) student respondents were selected from Rajiv Gandhi University. In addition, the final 50(fifty) respondents comprised former and incumbent student representatives from Arunachal Pradesh, thereby ensuring the inclusion of experienced perspectives in the study.

The perceptions taken are exclusively based on the subject under taken. To obtain data for the subjects undertaken various questions were asked from the respondents through above mentioned tools. Thus, following table and pie charts contained the opinions/response of students over some of the most significant questions asked.

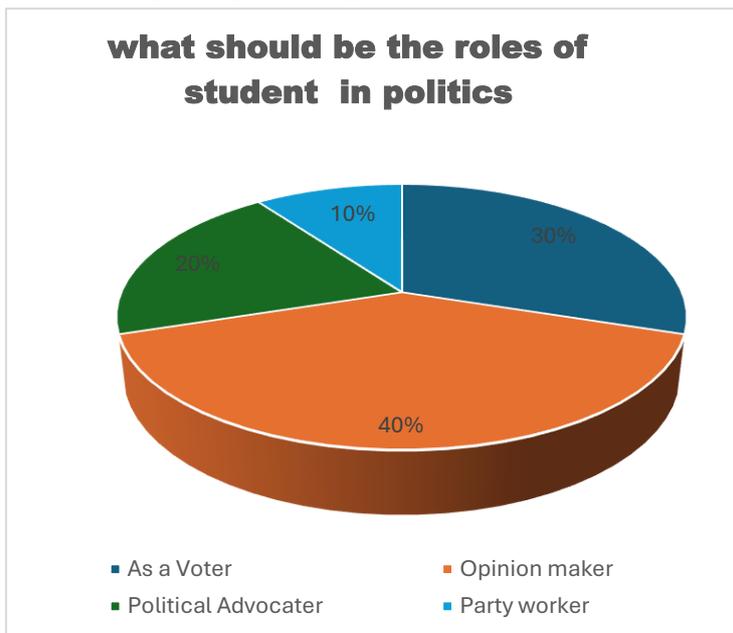
TABLE: 1.1:
Opinion of students

Sl.No	Questions	Yes	No
1.	Do you have any interest in politics?	60%	40%
2.	Have you ever participated in politics?	90%	10 %
3.	Whether student should participate in politics or not?	66%	34%

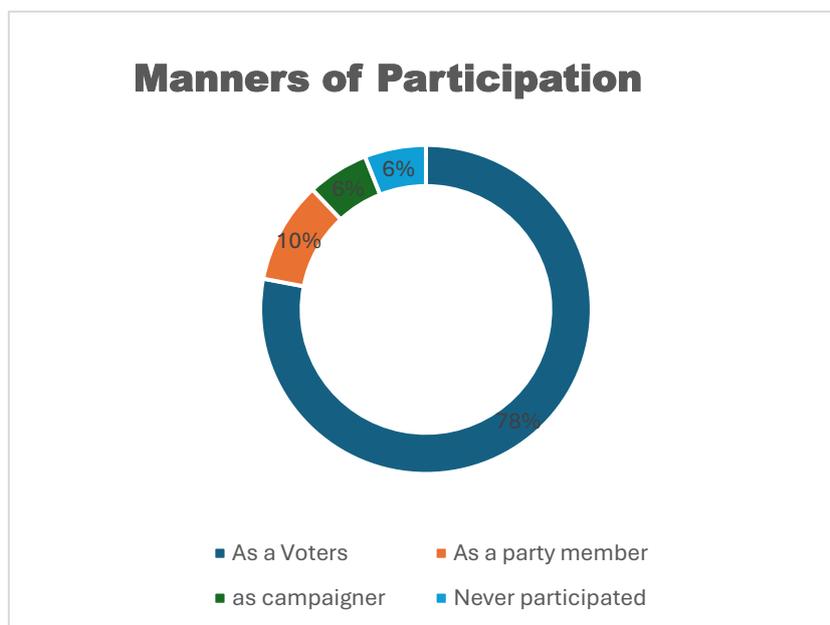
Q: What shapes your voting behaviour?



Q. What should be the roles of student participation in politics/elections?



Q: What was the manner of your participation in politics/elections?



Q: What is the One Principle Quality you seek from your representative or leader?

Ans: - Some answers as below;

- Honesty
- Visionary
- Educated
- Trustworthy
- Activeness
- Charismatic personality
- Willingness to serve the society
- Communication skill or good orator

1.5: Recommendations

The observation and comprehensive analysis of findings facilitate for conclusive shape of the research. After analysing facts, figures, suggestions from informants and overall glimpse of subject undertaken, the study came down with some recommendations.

- Moral upbringing of children should be given primary consideration.
- Ethical political culture and socialization should begin with the family.
- To keep oneself informed about socio-economic and political issues.
- Education should be given fundamental attention by students and parents before anything.
- Promotion of awareness campaigns regarding pros and cons of student's participation in politics by stakeholders of the state.
- Strengthening laws to check and balance the students, politicians, party workers, and party high commands engagement in politics for greater good.

Conclusion

In conclusion, student participation in politics in Arunachal Pradesh is crucial for the development and representation of youth voices in governance. It offers a platform for young individuals to contribute to decision-making processes and advocate for their interests. Through active involvement in political processes, students not only contribute fresh perspectives and ideas but also ensure their voices are heard in decision-making. While this engagement fosters civic responsibility and empowerment among students, it's imperative to ensure ethical conduct, transparency, and a focus on education alongside political involvement. Ultimately, harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of student participation can lead to a more inclusive and progressive political environment in Arunachal Pradesh. However, it's essential to maintain a balance between academic pursuits and political engagement to ensure holistic development. However, it is essential to ensure that such participation is guided by principles of transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct to foster a positive impact on the political landscape of the region. The study though planned with meticulous details, however, may suffer from inherent drawbacks. The study is confined to the objectives and scope set for the subject undertaken. The present study is limited to the secondary sources and primary data collected from some selected respondents. Thus, the study can be called as a preliminary enquiry about the student's participation in politics of Arunachal Pradesh limited by its sample. There are also certain limitations like non-availability of resources, difficulty in contacting desired informants for personal interview, etc., in spite of these limitations, the work is accomplished with utmost caution, and the findings reveal the purpose for which the study was conducted and drafted.

6. Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest in this present research paper. This research work is not a part of any other study and is my original work.

5.References

- [1] Chowdhury, J.N. (1982) *Arunachal Through Ages*, Srimati Jaya Chowdhury, Shillong.
- [2] Dubey, Sanjay (2005) *Dynamics of Tribal Local Polity and Panchayat Ray in Arunachal Pradesh*, New Delhi: Premiere Publishing House.
- [3] Dutta, Sristidhar (1998) *Student Movements in Arunachal Pradesh*, Sole Distributor, Shillong.
- [4] Panyang, Kuku (2017) *All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union: A Study of its History and Leadership*, International Journal of Research in Social Science and Humanities.
- [5] Prasad, Chunnu (2007) *Students' Movement in Arunachal Pradesh and the Chakma-Hajong Refugee Problem*, Economic and Political Weekly.
- [6] Riba, Joba (2021) *Political Mobilization and Political Participation of Youths in Arunachal Pradesh*, Rajiv Gandhi University, Doimukh, unpublished.