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## A Case Study of Voting Behaviour Among College Students in Williamnagar, East Garo Hills, Meghalaya

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### ABSTRACT

Voting is an essential component of democracy, and the participation of young voters plays an important role in strengthening democratic governance. This study examines the voting behaviour of college students in Williamnagar, East Garo Hills, Meghalaya. Based on a descriptive survey of 106 respondents, it examines political interest, sources of political information, candidate characteristics, political parties, family and friends, social media, local development, employment opportunities, and candidates' past performance. The findings indicate that candidate character and past performance are particularly important considerations, while local development and employment opportunities also influence electoral choices. The study highlights the importance of understanding youth voting behaviour within its local socio-political context.

**Keywords:** Voting Behaviour; College Students; Youth Political Participation; Political Awareness; Meghalaya

### 1 Introduction

Youth voting behaviour is influenced by a variety of factors, including education, political awareness, family influence, social media, peer groups, economic conditions, ethnicity, and the performance of political parties and candidates. In recent years, digital media and online political campaigns have also emerged as important sources of political information, affecting the attitudes and electoral choices of young voters. However, these influences often vary across regions depending on local socio-cultural and political contexts.

In Williamnagar, East Garo Hills, Meghalaya, young people constitute an important segment of the electorate. Understanding the factors that influence their voting behaviour can provide valuable insights into youth political participation and help identify ways to encourage informed and responsible voting. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the voting behaviour of college students in Williamnagar and the factors that influence their electoral decisions.

The findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of youth political participation in Williamnagar and provide useful insights for election authorities, policymakers, political parties, and civil society organisations working to strengthen democratic participation.

## 2 Objectives

- To examine the voting behaviour of college students in Williamnagar, East Garo Hills, Meghalaya.
- To identify the major factors influencing the voting decisions of college students.

## 3 Literature Review

DeSouza, Kumar and Shastri (2009), in *Indian Youth in a Transforming World: Attitudes and Perceptions*, examine young people's attitudes towards politics, democracy, development, unemployment, and aspirations. The study provides a broad national context for understanding the political attitudes of Indian youth.

Jeffrey and Young (2012), in "Waiting for Change: Youth, Caste and Politics in India," examine educated young people in India and their political attitudes and engagement, particularly in relation to unemployment, caste, and political participation.

Gaur (2021), in *Youth Political Participation and Voting Behavior in India: An Empirical Study*, examines factors influencing political participation and voting behaviour among Indian youth aged 18–29 years. The study identifies political interest, civic engagement, educational attainment, and social media use as important factors and emphasises civic education, political awareness, and digital literacy.

Kumar and Kumar (2024) examine youth voting in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and the political choices of young voters. Their work provides a contemporary national context for examining youth voting behaviour.

Manikanta (2026), in *One Vote Matters: A Case Study on Political Awareness and Youth Voting Behavior in Tamil Nadu*, examines the relationship between political awareness and electoral participation among young voters, with attention to youth-oriented political communication, social media, digital engagement, voter-awareness programmes, educational institutions, and political campaigns.

The literature indicates that youth voting behaviour is shaped by political awareness, socio-economic conditions, social relationships, candidate and party considerations, and changing communication technologies. However, the literature reviewed here gives limited attention to college students in Williamnagar, East Garo Hills. The present study addresses this local context by examining the electoral preferences and stated influences of 106 college students.

## 4 Research Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the voting behaviour of college students in Williamnagar, East Garo Hills. The study focuses on understanding the factors that influence young voters' political awareness, electoral participation, and voting decisions.

### 4.2 Sources of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to youth voters in Williamnagar, East Garo Hills. Secondary data were collected from books, research articles, government reports, and other relevant publications related to voting behaviour and youth political participation.

### 4.3 Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of young voters in Williamnagar, East Garo Hills. A total of 106 respondents participated in the survey. The original research material supplied for this paper does not specify the formal sampling technique, the names of all participating institutions, or the exact period of data collection; these details should be added if available.

### 4.4 Data Collection Tool

A structured questionnaire was used as the main tool for data collection. The questionnaire included questions related to demographic characteristics, political awareness, voting participation, sources of political information, and factors affecting voting decisions.

### 4.5 Data Analysis

The responses are presented using simple descriptive percentages. The analysis identifies the distribution of responses and the factors that respondents reported as influential in their electoral choices.

### 4.6 Scope and Limitations

The study focuses specifically on youth voters in Williamnagar, East Garo Hills; therefore, the findings may not represent the voting behaviour of all youth in Meghalaya. The study is also limited by the sample size and the accuracy of responses provided by participants.

## 5 Findings and Discussion

### 5.1 Age and Gender Profile

Out of the 106 respondents, 43 per cent were around 18–20 years of age and 57 per cent were around 21–23 years of age. In terms of gender, 42 per cent of the respondents were male and 58 per cent were female. Thus, the sample was composed of young adults, with a somewhat higher proportion of female respondents.

### 5.2 Political Interest

When asked about their interest in politics, 31 per cent of respondents answered that they were very interested, 33 per cent were somewhat interested, 31 per cent were neutral, and 5 per cent were not very interested. The responses indicate that most respondents expressed at least some degree of interest in politics.

### 5.3 Sources of Political Information

Social media was the most frequently reported source of political information. Seventy-eight per cent of respondents identified social media as their main source, 15 per cent reported social media and newspapers, and 5 per cent reported social media and friends as their main sources of political information. The finding indicates the prominent role of digital platforms in the political information environment of the respondents.

### 5.4 Candidate Character and Political Party Influence

Candidate character was reported as a particularly important consideration. Ninety-five per cent of respondents agreed that they vote based on a candidate's character, while 5 per cent were neutral. In contrast, 42 per cent agreed that political parties influence their vote, 53 per cent disagreed, and 5 per cent were neutral.

The difference between these responses suggests that respondents place greater emphasis on individual candidate characteristics than on political party influence when describing their voting decisions.

### 5.5 Family, Friends and Social Media

Family and friends were reported to have comparatively limited influence on voting decisions. Five per cent agreed that family and friends influence their voting decision, 68 per cent disagreed, and 26 per cent were neutral. Regarding the influence of social media on political opinion, 31 per cent agreed, 31 per cent disagreed, and 36 per cent were neutral.

These responses show an important distinction: social media is the dominant reported source of political information, but respondents were divided about whether it directly influences their political opinions.

### 5.6 Local Development and Employment

Local development was identified as an important consideration. Seventy-three per cent agreed that local development influences their voting decision, 15 per cent disagreed, and 10 per cent were neutral. Employment opportunities were also important: 57 per cent agreed that employment opportunities influence their voting decision, 21 per cent disagreed, and 21 per cent were neutral.

The findings indicate that practical developmental concerns form an important part of respondents' electoral considerations, particularly local development and employment opportunities for young people.

### 5.7 Candidate Past Performance

Candidate past performance was another highly influential factor. Eighty-nine per cent of respondents agreed that they vote based on a candidate's past performance, while 10 per cent were neutral. This result, together with the finding on candidate character, indicates a strong emphasis on candidate-level evaluation.

### 5.8 Summary of Findings

Overall, the reported responses indicate that college students in the survey demonstrate a predominantly candidate- and performance-oriented approach to voting. Candidate character and past performance received the highest levels of agreement. Local development and employment opportunities were also prominent considerations. Political party influence and family and friends were comparatively less influential in the reported responses, while social media was the main source of political information.

### 5.9 Summary Table

| Factor                                      | Agree / Positive | Disagree / Negative | Neutral |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Candidate's character                       | 95%              | —                   | 5%      |
| Political party influence                   | 42%              | 53%                 | 5%      |
| Family and friends                          | 5%               | 68%                 | 26%     |
| Social media influence on political opinion | 31%              | 31%                 | 36%     |
| Local development                           | 73%              | 15%                 | 10%     |
| Employment opportunities                    | 57%              | 21%                 | 21%     |
| Candidate's past performance                | 89%              | —                   | 10%     |

Source: Primary survey data reported in the present study.

## 6 Conclusion

The responses to the open-ended question indicate that college students' voting behaviour is largely influenced by the qualities and performance of political candidates. Many respondents stated that they consider a candidate's capabilities, qualifications, leadership qualities, and ability to provide effective

governance before making their voting decision. Others emphasised the importance of a candidate's track record, particularly their ability to fulfil promises and remain accountable to the people.

The responses also show that development-related concerns play an important role in students' voting decisions. Issues such as local development, employment opportunities for youth, and overall progress were mentioned as important factors. This suggests that students tend to evaluate candidates not only on their personal qualities but also on their ability to address practical issues affecting society.

Overall, the responses suggest that college students demonstrate a relatively informed and performance-oriented approach to voting. Their choices appear to be influenced by leadership, qualifications, accountability, past performance, and expectations of future development, particularly in areas such as youth employment and local development.

## 7 Bibliography

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