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Political Awareness and Its Impact in Political Participation: A Gender Study in Nagaland, India

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Abstract:

The objective of this paper is to identify gender gap in political awareness and aim to analyze the factors underlying the gender gap in political awareness, whether media exposure, political interest, political discussion and Socio Economic Status (SES) factors have an impact on their level of political awareness. Simultaneously, whether any impact on political awareness influences their participation in electoral activities. Findings of the study indicate that majority of women are insufficiently informed about politics and related issues whereas, majority of men have moderate awareness about politics. The voters level of political awareness is accounted for, by their level of interest in politics, paradigm of media use and frequency of political discussion, indicating that, women in Nagaland have low level of political information and could be able to strengthen their political presence only as voters. In this mode of activity, women have surpassed men by voting at a large number. However, engagement with other modes of political activities remains very much a minority pursuit for women in Nagaland. As compared to men, women's representation in elected bodies is almost invisible. Amongst the socio-economic factors only education, place of residence and gender has positive relationship with the level of political awareness. Therefore, the result reports a high impact of political awareness on men voters' participation in electoral activities but a limited impact of political awareness on women voters.

1. Introduction

The political awareness is a broad term in political science literature. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) define political knowledge as “the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long-term memory”¹. According to them, appropriate levels of political knowledge are thought to be important to allowing individuals and groups to effectively participate in politics, represent their own needs before the system, and develop attitudes that are based on more than emotion. Their work marks a watershed when it comes to political awareness and engagement in politics. Robert C. Luskin defined political awareness as a function of three elements: They are,

- (i) Level of exposure to political information
- (ii) Intellectual ability to retain and organize the encountered information
- (iii) Motivation to obtain and comprehend the political information.²

Political awareness means access to political information, political participation, media exposure, interest in politics and education-with political information being the best indicator over all.

The importance of political awareness for electoral participation need hardly be overemphasised. Democratic citizens should have a minimum understanding of the political system in which they express preferences and elect representatives³. Political awareness has been shown to play a significant role in explaining variation in political participation (Converse 2000). The higher the level of political awareness, the higher would be the level of participation in electoral activities⁴. Certain level of political awareness is indispensable for voters activity. They need to keep themselves informed about political issues, functions of political institutions, and more importantly their political rights and their role as political participants. It is necessary to have some awareness not only of the political institutions and the process of politics but also about the issues. Therefore, it stands to reason that people who are unfamiliar with

¹ Delli Carpini, Micheal X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

² Robert C. Luskin. (1990) “Explaining Political Sophistication.” *Political Behaviour* 12-335.

³ Richard Niemi., and Jane Junn. (1998) *Civic Education; What makes Students Learn*. New Haven: Yale University Press. p.1.

⁴ Delli Carpini, Micheal X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why it Matters*, p.186. New Haven: Yale University Press.

politics and related issues would be less interested to participate. In other words, political awareness is important for making an informed choice. Such a choice may be expressed by the citizens by selecting policies and candidates of their choice.

Citizen's interest in politics is important because it is interest that motivates an individual to follow political events and acquire information. Political interest is also considered to be a consequence, as well as a cause of political activity (Verba et. al 1978). Those who are interested in politics will try to acquire political information that will ultimately lead, in turn, to higher levels of political information. Political awareness of the voters is mostly influenced by the information that they get from different sources. Mass media is one of such source of information on politics. Voters' pattern of media use is likely to increase their level of political awareness (Gerber et al. 2006)

Discussing politics with others is a matter of interest and awareness. Those who engage in political discussions with others usually show an interest in politics and some level of knowledge. The experience of discussing politics with others may also stimulate a sense of political engagement (Gastil and Dillard 1999).

2. Data and Methods

The study is based on a field level investigation of research undertaken during the year 2014-2015. It is done among the electorate who is 18 years and above, selected from four districts of Nagaland, ie, Kohima, Mokokchung, Peren and Tuensang. These four districts represent the urban unit whereas Mezoma, Hakchang, Mokokchung village and Ngwalwa village represent the rural area. The study sample was drawn from the above four towns and four villages. As it is practically not possible to make direct observation of every individual in the population a representative sample was selected from the above urban and rural units to make inferences for the entire population. The selection of the sample was made on the basis of random sampling. The study has a total sample of four hundred and two (402) respondents. Data was collected from the field by questionnaire schedule method. To supplement data obtained from the field, data was also collected by interviewing people who are well informed about the issue at hand.

To test socio-economic explanations for the gender gap, the study includes age, education, employment status, place of residence, and marital status. Five modes of political activities are indicated for the present analysis, such as voting, campaigning for a candidate, attending election meetings, party membership and political discussions.

The study has examined voters level of political awareness. Such an examination is made to know how knowledgeable the respondents are about politics and related issues. A minimal degree of interest in politics coupled with possession of political information is a basic requirement for citizens' involvement and participation in politics. To measure level of political awareness the respondents were asked questions pertaining to names of public figures, political institutions and public issues regarding Nagaland politics. A knowledge scale was calculated to place the voters in one of the three levels of political awareness scale – high political awareness, medium political awareness and low political awareness. This was calculated by summing up the number of correct answers based on political awareness questions. Those respondents who scored between 1-3 points were placed in 'low political awareness' category, those who scored between 4-5 were placed in 'moderate political awareness' and those securing 6-8 points were placed in 'high political awareness' category.

Voters' level of interest in politics was assessed by using the standard question on political interest, 'How much interest do you have in politics and its related issues?' with three options, 'a great deal, some interest and not at all interest'. Frequency of mass media exposure was based on the question, 'How often do you read newspapers and watch/ listen to television and radio broadcasts about politics and its related issues?' with multiple responses, 'a great deal, sometimes and never'. A media exposure index was devised to determine voters' exposure index as being 'high, moderate, low and no media exposure. Those who watch / listen to news programmes on television and radio and read newspapers regularly falls under 'high exposure' category. Voters in 'moderate exposure' category are those who are often but not regularly exposed to the television and radio and read newspapers. Those who are exposed to the three media outlets several times a month belong to the 'low exposure' category, and those who are never exposed to the three media outlets are placed in the 'no exposure' category. Besides, voters' frequency of political discussion was also measured by the question, 'How often do you discuss politics with others?' and they were given three options- 'frequently, sometimes and never'.

3. Discussion

Looking at the Table 1, the study reveals that the knowledge gap remains with women being less aware about politics than men.

Knowledge Scale	Male	Female
High Political Awareness	77(37.50%)	26(12.50%)
Moderate Political Awareness	102(50.00%)	48(25.00%)
Low Political Awareness	25(12.50%)	124(62.50%)
Total	204(100%)	198(100%)

Table 1: Political Knowledge Scale (In Percentage)

Source: Field Survey 2014

The study indicate that majority of the women respondents are insufficiently informed about politics and related issues (Table 1). The number of women falling in the high and moderate level of knowledge scale is relatively few. They dominate the low awareness category. On the other hand majority of male respondents are at the moderate knowledge score followed by high knowledge score and

low knowledge score. It is quite surprising that a knowledge gap exists despite the fact that Naga women have made advances in many areas and have a similar education level as men. The level of education of Naga women is quite high (76.1%)⁵. Such level of education is expected to lead to an increase in political awareness. If one group is less knowledgeable than the other there may be implication for democracy. The danger of women being less politically informed than men lies in the fact that they will not be as equipped as men to present their concerns and voice their opinions⁶.

3.1. Factors leading to Differences in Level of Political Awareness

Having identified that there is a gap in terms of political awareness, the study examined whether such a gap can be explained by differences in political dispositions like attention to news or exposure to media, interest in politics, taking part in political discussion and socio-economic status.

3.1.1. Political awareness and Mass Media Exposure

The mass media is an important source of political information. Therefore, patterns of media consumption produce differential levels of political awareness.

Index score	Gender	
	Male	Female
High	67(32.84)	28(14.14)
Moderate	49(24.02)	37(18.69)
Low	55(26.96)	73(36.87)
No Exposure	33(16.18)	60(30.30)
Total	204 (100%)	198 (100%)

Table 2: Index Score of Media Exposure by gender (In Percentage)
Source: Field Survey 2014

The study shows that majority of men as compared to women are exposed to the different media outlets at high level (Table 2). Such a pattern of mass media use by the women respondents may be an important factor in explaining why majority of women are not adequately informed about political issues and events as compared to the male voters.

3.1.2. Political Awareness and Political Interest by Gender

Another factor that has been considered to explain gender gap in political awareness is political interest. An individual's interest in politics is important because it is interest that motivates citizens to follow political events and acquire information. The study finds a strong support for the proposition that an interest in politics lead to an increase in political awareness of the respondents (Table 3). Women as compared to men have less interest in politics.

Political Interest	Level of political awareness							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Not at all	25(12.25%)	99(50.00%)	15(7.35%)	9(4.55%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	40(19.61%)	108(54.55%)
Some	0(0.00%)	25(12.63%)	85(41.67%)	39(19.70%)	35(17.16%)	14(7.07%)	120(58.82%)	78(39.39%)
A great deal	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	2(0.98%)	0(0.00%)	42(20.59%)	12(6.06%)	44(21.57%)	12(6.06%)
Total	25(12.25%)	124(62.63%)	102(50.00%)	48(24.24%)	77(37.75%)	26(13.13%)	204(100%)	198(100%)

Table 3: Political awareness and Political Interest by Gender (In Percentage)
Source: Field Survey 2014

3.1.3. Political Awareness and Political Discussion by Gender

Participation in political discussion with others has also been included to find out whether it has any relation with levels of political awareness. The study reveals that frequency (never, sometimes and frequently) of political discussion is important in assisting individuals in gathering political information and increasing political knowledge (Table 4). Compared to men women are less keen to engage in political discussion with others.

⁵ Statistical Handbook of Nagaland, Government of Nagaland, 2011.

⁶ Emily Marie Guynan, 2004. 'The Gender Gap in Political Knowledge: A Comparison of Political Knowledge Levels in the United States, Canada and Great Britain'. A thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Mechanical College in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts. http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-04082004-150047/unrestricted/Guynan_thesis.pdf

Frequency of political discussion	Level of political awareness							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Never	15(7.35%)	124(62.63%)	7(3.43%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	22(10.78%)	124(62.63%)
Sometimes	10(4.90%)	0(0.00%)	94(46.57%)	48(24.24%)	7(3.43%)	17(8.59%)	112(54.90%)	65(32.83%)
Frequently	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	70(34.31%)	9(4.55%)	70(34.31%)	9(4.55%)
Total	25(12.25%)	124(62.63%)	102(50.00%)	48(24.24%)	77(37.75%)	26(13.13%)	204(100%)	198(100%)

Table 4: Political awareness and political discussion by Gender (In Percentage)

Source: Field Survey 2014

3.2. Political Awareness and Socio-Economic factors by Gender Political Awareness and Age by Gender

It is expected that age will have a positive effect on political awareness. The older respondents presumably will be more politically knowledgeable than the younger respondents, because as people grow older they may have more exposure to politics which is often considered as an important source of political information.

Age	Low		Moderate		High	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
18-29	12(23.53%)	34(66.67%)	22(43.14%)	12(23.53%)	17(33.33%)	5(9.80%)
30-44	3(4.92%)	48(60.76%)	36(59.02%)	22(28.21%)	22(36.07%)	9(11.54%)
45-59	3(5.88%)	24(51.06%)	23(45.10%)	12(25.53%)	25(49.02%)	11(23.40%)
60 +	7(17.07%)	18(85.71%)	20(48.78%)	2(9.52%)	14(34.15%)	1(4.76%)
Total	25(12.25)	123(62.44%)	102(50%)	48(24.37%)	77(37.75%)	26(13.20%)

Table 5: Political Awareness by Age and Gender (In Percentage)

Source : Field Survey 2014

The result as shown in Table 5 reveals that political awareness does not necessary increase with age. If we look at data for men high political awareness was scored by men in the 45-59 age group followed by 30-44 years, and 60 and above and 18-29 years respectively.

A similar result is highlighted for the women respondents. The highest score on political awareness was secured by those in the 45-59 age group with 23.4 per cent. They are followed by those in the 30-44 age group with 11.54 per cent, and 18-29 above group with 9.8 per cent and lastly those in the age group of 60 and above with 4.76 per cent. Therefore, the study result does not show strong association with age and level of political awareness.

3.2.1. Political Awareness and Educational Qualification by Gender

Education increases ones knowledge of politics; both by enhancing one's ability to acquire, organize and retain political information, and by increasing ones motivation to acquire such information⁷. One needs to be informed to participate in elections and its related activities⁸. The better educated are not only more aware politically they take comparatively more interest in it.

Education affects level of political awareness in many ways. It provides direct exposure to political information by widening the scope of one's acquaintance with political facts. Those who are more educated may learn more about politics and political issues than the less educated individuals. This may be because through education people get the capacity necessary to understand and process political information. Further, education helps in developing a sense of civic obligation which creates interest in politics⁹. It also plays a significant role in the process of participation in electoral activities and information retention¹⁰.

Educational Qualification	Low		Moderate		High	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Illiterate	6(50%)	19(76%)	4(33.33%)	4(16%)	2(16.67%)	2(8%)
Non Metric	12(16.67%)	57(67.06%)	35(48.61%)	18(21.18%)	25(34.72%)	10(11.76%)
Undergraduate	5(7.81%)	31(57.41%)	33(51.56%)	15(27.78%)	26(40.63%)	8(14.81%)
Graduate & above	2(3.57%)	17(50%)	30(53.57%)	11(32.35%)	24(42.86%)	6(17.65%)
Total	25(12.25%)	124(62.63%)	102(50%)	48(24.24%)	77(37.75%)	26(13.13%)

Table 6: Political Awareness and Educational Qualification by Gender (In Percentage)

Source : Field Survey 2014

⁷ A.S Blinder (1973), 'Wage discrimination: Reduced form and structural estimates'. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 8, 436-455.

⁸ P.K Majumdar and P.K Mandal, December 1979, 'Political awareness of the voters of west Bengal'. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.40.No.4, pp. 574-591: www.jstor.org/stable/41855008

⁹ Elections Archives and International Politics, "Psychological Involvement in Politics", Vol.20, November-December 1989, p.68.

¹⁰ Kate Kenski, and Kathleen hall Jamieson. 2001. "The 2000 Presidential Campaign and Differential Growths in Knowledge: Does the 'Knowledge Gap' Hypothesis Apply to Gender as Well as Education?" Presented at 2001 American Political Science Association Meeting.

The data reveals from Table 6 that political awareness does increase with the increase in education. The highest political awareness was scored by those in the Graduate and above category followed by Undergraduate, Non Metric and Illiterate for both male and female.

The number of years of formal education has been found to be positively related to level of political awareness for education directly contributes to ones store of political knowledge. In other words, political awareness is directly proportional to the level of educational qualification of the respondents. Each rise in the level of education is accompanied by a corresponding rise in the level of political awareness of the respondents.

The above result have also shown that the percentages of low scorers steadily drops as the educational level rises and the percentages of low score is low among those who have the highest qualification. Therefore, the study establishes a strong association between education and levels of political awareness.

3.2.2. Political Awareness and Occupational Status by Gender

It is held that those who are gainfully employed tend to have high levels of political interest and to be more knowledgeable about politics¹¹. This could be due to the fact that occupation of a person is clearly related to the degree of his formal education¹².

Occupation	Low		Moderate		High	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Govt employee	3(4.41%)	23(52.27%)	38(55.88%)	14(31.82%)	27(39.71%)	7(15.91%)
Self Employed	5(11.90%)	16(64.00%)	21(50.00%)	6(24.00%)	16(38.10%)	3(12.00%)
Cultivators	7(21.21%)	27(71.05%)	14(42.42%)	7(18.42%)	12(36.36%)	4(10.53%)
Unemployed	10(16.39%)	58(63.74%)	29(47.54%)	21(23.08%)	22(36.07%)	12(13.19%)
Total	22(12.25%)	124(62.63%)	102(50.00%)	48(24.24%)	77(37.75%)	26(13.13%)

Table 7: Political Awareness and Occupational Status by Gender (In Percentage)

Source : Field Survey 2014

However, it can be observed that occupational status does not have much impact on political awareness level (Table 7). High awareness about politics has come from the respondents who are government employee, but percentage is not high. It appears that very few women have high awareness about political issues.

Therefore, the association between being gainfully employed and political awareness shows a mixed result observed among the respondents from the four occupational categories from both the gender.

3.2.3. Political Awareness and Marital status by Gender

It is expected that marital status of the respondents will have a positive effect on levels of political awareness, with the married respondents having higher awareness about politics than the unmarried. This suggestion is made because of the potential of political discussion between the husband and the wife and the political views of one partner may have an effect on the views of the other marital partner.

Marital Status	Low		Moderate		High	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Married	15(11.03%)	83(64.34%)	65(47.79%)	32(24.81%)	56(41.18%)	14(10.85%)
Never Married	9(13.85%)	34(57.63%)	36(55.38%)	14(23.73%)	20(30.77%)	11(18.64%)
Others	1(33.33%)	7(70.00%)	1(33.33%)	2(20.00%)	1(33.33%)	1(10.00%)
Total	25(12.63%)	124(62.63%)	102(50.00%)	48(24.24%)	77(37.75%)	26(13.13%)

Table 8: Political Awareness and Marital status by Gender (In Percentage)

Source : Field Survey 2014

As illustrated in Table 8, unlike men, for women, being married does not necessarily lead to high awareness about politics. Marriage and parenthood are anticipated to have a stronger negative effect among women than among men, thus marriage might lower political participation among women and boost it among men¹³. For instance, reading data from the high political awareness column, the unmarried women have more political awareness (18.64%) than the married respondents whereas, in the case of men, married respondents were more knowledgeable (41.18%). The reason why married women have less knowledge about politics could possibly

¹¹ S.J Rosenstone, "Economic Adversity and Voting Turnout". *American Journal of Political Science*,26,(1982),p.33.

¹² M. L. Goel (1974), "Political Participation in a Developing Nation: India". Asia Publishing House, New Delhi. In D.H. Smith (1980) et al. (eds) *Participation in Social and Political Activities*. San Francisco, Washington, London: Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Fransisco.University Press of America.

¹³ T. Rotolo, 'A time to join, a time to quit: the influence of life cycle transitions on voluntary association membership'. *Social Forces*. 2000;78:1133–1161.

be due to resource constraint. In order to acquire political information one needs some resource especially in terms of time. There is a strong possibility that focus on the home, children and related responsibilities stand in the way of married women, by either reducing the time available for acquiring political information or by simply reducing their interest in politics. Therefore, the result reveals mixed results on the relationship between marital status and levels of political awareness.

3.2.4. Political Awareness and Place of Residence by Gender

The urban dwellers as compared to the rural dwellers are expected to be more knowledgeable about political issues. Such a suggestion is advanced because urban areas generally have higher levels of literacy and wider mass media coverage, such as newspaper, internet and other media sources. These factors are considered important in increasing citizen's awareness about issues pertaining to politics.

Place of Residence	Low		Moderate		High	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Urban	8(5.48%)	47(52.22%)	76(52.05%)	26(28.89%)	62(42.47%)	17(18.89%)
Rural	17(29.31%)	77(71.30%)	26(44.83%)	22(20.37%)	15(25.86%)	9(8.33%)
Total	25(12.25%)	124(62.63%)	102(50.00%)	48(24.24%)	77(37.75%)	26(13.13%)

Table 9: Political Awareness and Place of Residence by Gender (In Percentage)

Source : Field Survey 2014

The above Table 9 shows that, urban men have higher political awareness than the rural dwellers for all categories of political awareness, except for low level of political awareness in which the rural voters outsourced the urban dwellers.

Similar pattern is found for women in all the levels of political awareness. Respondents from the urban areas have higher political awareness than the rural dwellers in the category of 'high' and 'moderate' levels of political awareness. In the low political awareness, women from the rural area predominate the sample as compared to women from urban areas.

As expected, respondents from urban area have higher political awareness than their counterparts from rural areas across gender.

3.2.5. Political Awareness and Gender

One of the most robust findings in the study of political behaviour is that men score higher than women on measures of political knowledge. Table 10 indicates that men have higher level of political awareness than their female counterparts. 37.75 per cent men whereas 13.13 per cent women have high level of political awareness. Housewifization of women steals from women their own resources, which they need for their sustenance. It destroys the social networks and other atomizes them¹⁴.

Gender	Low	Moderate	High
Male	25(12.25%)	102(50.00%)	77(37.75%)
Female	124(62.63%)	48(24.24%)	26(13.13%)

Table 10: Political Awareness and Gender (In Percentage)

Source: Field Survey 2014

Overall, the study reveals that the socio economic factors have different impact on levels of political awareness. Amongst the socio-economic factors only education, place of residence and gender itself has positive relationship with level of political awareness. An increase in education, living in urban area and being male does seem to be associated with an increase in political knowledge.

3.3. Political Awareness and Political Participation by Gender

Political awareness has been shown to have an impact on political participation. It is generally assured that higher the level of political awareness, higher would be the level of participation in electoral activities. Therefore, this section examines if there is any connection between political awareness and participation in electoral activities.

Activities	Participation in electoral activities		Level of political awareness					
			Low		Moderate		High	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Voting	184(90.2%)	186(93.94%)	11(5.40%)	117(59.10%)	102(50%)	45(22.72%)	71(34.80%)	24(12.12%)
Campaign	191(93.63%)	76(36.36%)	12(5.88%)	6(3.03%)	102(50.00%)	44(22.22%)	77(37.25%)	26(13.13%)
Party Membership	96(47.06%)	21(10.61%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	32(15.69%)	0(0.00%)	64(31.37%)	21(10.61%)
Attending Meeting	168(82.35%)	139(70.20%)	3(1.47%)	88(44.44%)	100(49.02%)	32(16.16%)	65(31.86%)	19(9.60%)

Table 11: Political Awareness and Political Participation by Gender (In Percentage)

Source: Field Survey 2014

¹⁴ Mies Maria, Veronika Bennhott Thomson & Clandia Von Wellof (ed) (1988), 'Women: The Last Colony', New Delhi : Kali for women, p. 9.

Table 11. Highlights the relationship between political awareness and participation in electoral activities among respondents. For the male voters having moderate awareness about politics seem to matter when it comes to taking part in voting, campaign activities and attending election meeting. In these electoral activities, men having moderate level of political awareness have recorded a high participation rate as compared to those men in low and high political awareness category. High level of political awareness seems to be important for being a member of a political party. Party membership has been highest for men having high level of political awareness.

On the other hand, for the female voters, level of political awareness does not seem to matter when it comes to voting. The highest voting turnout has come from women with low level of political awareness. Participation in campaign activities requires some level of awareness about parties. Campaigning for a party or candidate is one electoral activity which mobilize, educate, activate pre-dispositions and change mind of the voters. In this category of electoral activity, women with moderate level of political awareness had participated at a high rate as compared with women with low and high level of political awareness. Respondents who did not engage in political campaign dominated in the low level of awareness. We found positive relationship with campaign and political awareness.

The data further reveals that political awareness is important for being a member of a political party. Party membership is highest among women having a high level of political awareness. Being a member of a Political party may be the most common channel for gaining political experience. Joining a political party, being a member is likely to generate an interest to take part in electoral activities as well as acquire information about politics. Similar to the act of voting, political awareness does not seem to be important for attending election meeting.

Therefore, it shows that there is no positive relation with higher voting turnout rate and higher level of political awareness. Being member of a Political party may be the most common channel for gaining political experience. Joining a political party, being a member is likely to generate an interest to take part in electoral activities as well as acquire information about politics. Similar to voting, political awareness does not seem to be important for attending election meeting.

Except in voting, men percentage was higher than women in other activities, and their level of political awareness was higher than women in all the categories irrespective of their lower level of voting turnout. Thus the study shows that the relation between political awareness and political participation for women is not strong. Except for being a member of a political party and to some extent taking part in campaign activities, political awareness does not seem to be an important factor for participation in electoral activities. For the male voters, political awareness is important for being a party member. Further, having moderate level of political awareness does seem to matter for taking part in voting, campaign activities and attending election meeting. Political environment, socio-cultural values and practices matters more than political awareness in political participation.

Political knowledge accumulated by exposing to mass media and as a result, such information motivate citizens' interest in politics, which in return automatically stimulate individual to engage in social organisation, political campaign, attending election meeting, political discussion and to be a part of political parties. Therefore, men higher level in all such activities leads them to be more aware of politics and its related issues.

4. Conclusion

This article examined whether there is a gap in the level of political awareness between men and women and the factors accounted for the differences. It also examined the impact of political awareness on electoral participation by gender. The discussion shows that majority of men have moderate level of political awareness and are better informed than women about a variety of political topics. Whereas, majority of the women have come under low level of knowledge score. Restated, political awareness of the women respondents is low. Citizens with very low levels of political awareness are more likely to be unaware of the fact that their group had been descriptively excluded from representation than the more aware¹⁵. It shows that majority of Naga women are not aware of their exclusion in decision-making.

The study also found that the respondents showed differences in their level of political awareness and these differences are produced by different influences. On examination it was found that among all the factors, which account for differences in levels of political awareness were the factors such as educational qualification, place of residence, being male, engagement in political discussion, political interest, and patterns of media use have strong impact on the amount of political information. Indicating that the pattern of mass media use, level of political interest and frequency of political discussion are important factors in explaining why majority of women are not adequately informed about political issues and events as compared to the male voters.

Another finding that emerges is the apparent limited impact of political awareness on women electoral participation. Political awareness, in short, is not a sufficient for electoral participation for women. It is pertinent to mention here that women in Nagaland have been able to strengthen their political visibility only as voters. They duly go to the polls to cast their votes but their participation ends there.

Further, political awareness does not seem to be an important criterion for those women who participate in electoral activities. This does not mean that political awareness is not important or relevant, it does matter as it is one reason for high participatory rate of men in electoral activities than women, but political awareness is not a sufficient condition for electoral participation for voters of Nagaland. Rather, political environment, socio-cultural values and practices matters more than political awareness in political participation.

¹⁵John R.,Zaller, 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

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