

Political Awareness and Participation of Women in Senapati District of Manipur: A Sociological Analysis

Prof. Temjensosang

Professor in the Department of Sociology
Nagaland University; Hqrs; Lumami.
Email: temjenimsong1@gmail.com

Th. Luckson

Ph.D Scholar in the Department of Sociology
Nagaland University, Hqrs; Lumami.
Email: lucksonrong25@gmail.com

Abstract

The present work is a sincere effort to look at women's participation and awareness in the electoral process and decision-making. It also examined to the extent the objective of the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (five) of gender equality is moving to achieve its goal. Decision-making in electoral process gave space to express one's ideas and allows in bringing the social development. Moreover, it examines the hindrance of women to participate in politics to facilitate a deeper understanding the phenomenon of the under-representation of women in politics. India is a democratic country; the representation of every section of the society is needed in voicing their grievances and making known to the policymakers, and make changes for the development of every section of people. Thus, the under-representation of women in politics is also a hindrance to social development as their voice is not been heard by the policymakers. Some of the positive findings of this paper are very high participation in voting, political awareness through newspapers. However, it is not without any challenges, custom and tradition, patriarchy, education, financial dependence, lack of political socialization, house hold chores etc. are some of the challenges that remain barrier to political participation.

Keywords: *Political Representation, Democracy, Political socialization, political awareness*

Introduction

Awareness is the state or ability to perceive, to feel, or to be conscious of events, objects, or sensory patterns. In that, the level of consciousness, sense data can be confirmed by an observer without necessarily implying understanding. The first variable of this paper, political awareness is often understood the extent to which an individual pays attention to politics and understand what he/she encounters. Political awareness is important to citizen of a democratic country like India (Shamsinar, Rahman, 2018). This is because they need to know and understand how to react to any political matters that is happening around him or her. Different terminologies are often used to denote political awareness such as political sophistication, political information, political knowledge and political expertise. All these terminologies however, aim to talk about political awareness. Therefore, according to DelliCarpini and Keeter (1996), Political awareness refers to voters' knowledge of politics. In general, political awareness entails access to political information, political involvement, media exposure, political interest, and education.

The second variable of this paper is political participation. Indeed, it is the act of taking active part in politics. Several political sociologists have been using the concept of political participation for analyzing the behavior of the people in the political system. In fact, the process by which people participate in the political process is referred to as political participation. According to Almond and Powell 'political participation can be defined as the involvement of the members of the society in the decision-making processes'. Political participation is a voluntary activity of the members of the society in selection of their rulers and formation of public policy. Political participation is considered as the civic duty and best method in ensuring that one's interest and opinion are not neglected. It can also be considered as an action of one's individual in seeking to influence or support government and politics. Political participation is closely related to gender equality because as women exercise their role in politics that is the electoral process, they are able to raise their voice and share their grievances that will help the policy makers to look into the matters and bring the necessary changes in the society.

Politics, in a narrow sense, refers to the actions of governments, politicians, or political parties. A larger definition encompasses interpersonal interactions - between men and women, parents and children, individuals and groups as well as the exercise of power at all levels of human interaction.

Political participation extends beyond party politics. Indeed, it encompasses a broad spectrum of acts in which individuals establish and express their beliefs about the world and how it is controlled, as well as tries to influence and shape decisions that impact their lives. These activities range from developing an individual's or family's thinking about social issues, taking part in various groups and organizations, and campaigning at the local, regional, or national level, to formal political activities such as voting, joining a political party, or becoming an elected official. In short political participation includes both the narrow

sense as well as broader sense of politics ranging from the activities of primary unit (i.e. family) to political parties and its governance.

A working definition of this paper on political awareness and political participation can be presented as citizen's knowledge and information on politics and its active participation affecting the politics. It is difficult to present a comprehensive definition since awareness and participatory activities have endless list such as voting, demonstrating, contacting public officials, boycotting, attending party rallies, guerrilla gardening, posting blogs, volunteering, joining flash mobs, signing petitions, buying fair-trade products, and even suicide protests etc.,. Therefore, political awareness and participation is relevant to any society whether advance or backward, and it is an indispensable feature of democracy: "Where few take part in decisions there is little democracy; the more participation there is in decisions, the more democracy there is" (Verba&Nie, 1972, p. 1).

The present study is conducted in the Senapati district of Manipur state. The Senapati district, also known as 'Tahamzan' (the land of butterflies), was previously known as Manipur North district, which was created in 1969 as one of the 5 (five) districts of Manipur under the district re-organization of the state under Section 3 of the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act of 1960¹. Manipur North district was renamed as Senapati district on August 5, 1983, by Manipur Gazette Extra Ordinary No.174². Senapati district Manipur is located in the northern section of the state, between 93.29° and 94.15° East Longitude and 24.37° and 25.37° North Latitude. The district is bounded by Kohima and Phek districts of Nagaland state in the North, while Ukhrul district in the east, Tamenglong district in the west and Kangpokpi district in the south of Manipur state³.

It may be mentioned that Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a Global initiative adopted in 2015 by United Nations with the action plan to ensure peace and prosperity of the people by 2030. It has integrated 17 SDGs and in particular SDG No. 5 concerns the gender equality and ensured to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls, violence against women in public and private, promotion of social protection policies in shared of responsibility with the household and family. It also targets to bring reforms in giving equal right to women in economic resources, access to ownership, control of property and land, inheritance, and natural resources in accordance with the national laws. It also targets to empower women to adopt and strengthen policies in the legislation to promote gender equality. Hence, this study attempts to understand the political awareness and participation of women in Senapati district in the run up for achievement of social justice and gender equity as enshrined above in SDG. It is often observed that political participation among the women of Senapati district is comparatively higher than male counterparts especially in the voters' turnout during successive elections since 1972 onward. In spite of political awareness and participation in electoral process there have been a very negligible percentage of women representatives in Manipur Legislative Assembly since then. Therefore, this study aims to find out if there are any hidden forces that might be discouraging women from contesting elections and to understand the gender disparity in

¹Manipur Government Order No.20/39/69-D dated November 12, 1969

²Manipur Government Order No.43/2/81-R(pt) dated 15.7.83

³ District Census handbook, Senapati, 2011

political field. While trying to investigate on the subject as stated, relevant research question are placed such as Senapati district still loom under traditional social mindset, Patriarchal structure of society is a barrier towards equitable society. Motivations and resources allocation is still far from reach in order to have gender equality in Senapati district.

Methodology

This study is based on both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The required primary data was collected by adopting group discussion and in-depth personal interview as well as by distribution of questionnaire. While secondary data was collected from the published books, journals, and also from government records and publications. The study was conducted in Senapati district of Manipur state. The study employed probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling based on population distribution in different blocks of Senapati district. The targeted sample size was 400 respondents belonging to aged 18 years and above. The data is gathered while taking into account all of the factors such as social, political, economic, religious, and other historical significance.

Discussions and Findings

India exercises the largest democracy in the world. The largest democracy is not because of the size of the population but because peoples' exercise for adult franchise is significantly practiced even at the lowest level of governing institutions. Democracy is defined as government of the people, by the people and for the people. It may be mentioned here, in ancient India women were depicted as 'shakti' and women were respected and believed to have divine presence.⁴ During the medieval period it was witnessed the gradual decline in the position and status of women. This period emerged social evils like infanticide, sati and child marriage in the Hindu society.⁵ Thus the framers of the Indian constitution felt the need of true democracy, not only equality but justice. In that, every section of the society is given the equal privilege under the Indian constitution.

The 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution provides the introduction of Panchayati Raj. The Panchayati Raj is a state subject in which Article 243D Clause (3) of the Indian constitution ensures women participation in the Panchayati Raj Institution of not less than one-third of the total numbers to be filled by direct election. In addition, the 74th Amendment to the Constitution have allocated seats in every municipality for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in proportion to their population, with women receiving one-third of the total number of seats.

The women folk in Manipur enjoy the liberty despite of the deep-rooted patriarchal system of the society. Before the British rule, Manipur had witnessed many outstanding women personalities who have played an influential and active role in political activities of the state. For instant, Maharani Gomti, Maharani Kumudini, Shija Tampha and so on are just few examples. Till today Manipur women can be seen participating in electoral politics although it's very marginal. It can be mentioned here that women in Manipur have always been a torch bearer in social and political sphere with the spirit of non-violence and peaceful movements. In that, during the British rule women were seen actively involved in the national

⁴ Leela Darmdaramenon, India and the international women's year, vol. 31 No 3 175. P 278

⁵ Ram sharan Sharma, Aspect of political Ideas and Institution in Ancient India, Delhi 1968. P- 78-102

movement against the British forceful occupation. For instant, Nupi-lan⁶ movement of 1904 and 1939 respectively is a clear example. In recent years the 'Meira Paibi'⁷ which is a force of womenfolk emerges in 1980s is also an example of women role in socio-political activity. It must be noted here that one of the pioneers of women politician among the Manipur women Smt M.K Bonodini Devi who have contested from Khurai constituency and won the seat during when Manipur was under union territory. There were also women who were nominated to the Territorial Council (1957-1963) and in Territorial Legislative Assembly (1963-1969) among them were Smt. A Bimola Devi, Smt. Akim Anal, Smt. Lhingjaneng Gante and Smt. R K Mukhara Devi. After Manipur's attainment of statehood in the union of India on 21st January 1972 the numbers of women's participation in electoral politics as candidates have increased to a large extend. In every successive general election woman are seen, though marginally in the fray for the seat in the assembly.

While trying to understand the level of political awareness among the women of Manipur in general and particularly in the Senapati district, the data shows the responses of the respondents in the following manners.

Table No 1 Sources of political news updates

	Frequency	Percent
Newspaper	142	35.5
Radio	19	4.8
Television	92	23.0
Magazine	8	2.0
Social media	93	23.2
Friends	45	11.2
Others	1	.2
Total	400	100.0

The above table shows the opinion of the respondents on the source of their political news updates. Out of 400 respondents surveyed in this study, majority of 35.5 per cent of the respondents updates political news through various local and national newspapers while Television and social media scored 23 per cent and 23.2 per cent respectively, sources from friends and Radio could secured 11.2 and 4.8 per cent respectively. Magazine and others constitute only 2.0 and 0.2 per cent respectively. From the above analysis it can be concluded that majority of the respondents updates the political news through newspapers which also indicates in one way that women are literate so as to access information from newspapers. Newspapers, whether local or national, vernacular or English, are the reports of latest happenings around us. Therefore, these data analysis led us to construe that women in Senapati district are well informed and aware about the latest political development in their state. Moreover, due to difficulty in excess of newspaper, many also rely on different source

⁷Meira Paibi is a women's social movement in Manipur, India. Meira Paibi, also known as the "guardians of civil society," was founded in 1977 in the present-day Kakching district. It gets its name from the flaming torches carried by the women as they march through city streets, often at night.

like Television, radio, magazine, social media which includes like face book, twitter, WhatsApp,etc and also through friends and family discussion.

Further, the respondents were asked about their awareness on the voting rights. Data points to the respondents' views in this regard which are given in the below -

Table No 2 Exercise of voting right by women

	Frequency	Percent
Very active	117	29.2
Active	159	39.8
Neutral	114	28.5
Inactive	9	2.2
Very inactive	1	.2
Total	400	100.0

Data in the above table points that voting rights exercised by women while trying to understand the political awareness level. The assertion here is that, if there is no political awareness then women will not exercise their voting rights. Data points to the fact that 29.2 percent of the respondents were 'very active' in terms of exercising their voting right while 39.8 per cent were 'active'. However, though not majority, there is a sizable portion of 28.5 per cent respondents who remain neutral while 2.2 per cent says 'inactive' and 0.2 per cent as 'very inactive' respectively. It must be noted, an overwhelming majority of the respondents are well aware of their rights while negligible percentages are inactive because of their reason best known. However, what is in the gray area are the respondents falling under the neutral percentage which need to educate or create awareness among them. It must be mentioned here that women literacy rate in Senapati district is relatively lower i.e, 57.67 per cent when compared to Manipur state as a whole with 70.26 per cent of literacy rate according to 2011 census⁸. In this regard, education is a direct cause of political awareness in relation to involvement. Political information and specialized skills required for participation are taught in school. Knowing how the political system works, citizens' rights and roles, how to vote, and verbal ability are all examples of "capacity for self-rule." (Verba et al. 1995, DelliCarpini & Keeter 1996, Nie et al. 1996).

Given the discussion of political awareness as above, an attempt is also made to understand the level of political participation among the women of Senapati district in particular and Manipur women in general from the government records on successive elections conducted in the state of Manipur.

⁸ Statistical handbook of Manipur 2017.

Table No 3 Percentage distributions of male and female voters from 1972 to 2022 Legislative Assembly Elections of Manipur.

Year	Male electors voted	Female electors voted	Percentage of electors voted	Total number of electors
1972	49.9	50.1	78.8	588962
1980	49.4	50.6	82.9	909262
1984	49.1	50.9	87.2	1013678
2000	48.7	51.3	90.6	1447772
2002	48.7	51.3	90.2	1418636
2007	48.03	51.65	86.73	1707204
2012	47.65	52.34	79.80	1748399
2017	48.6	51.4	86.63	1914547
2022	47.9	52.1	78.30	1968476

Source: Election Report, Manipur Legislative Assembly

The above table shows that the participation of women's voter is consistently higher compared to her male counterparts from 1972 till 2022 election. The data as shown in the above table also leads us to a conclusion that women's level of political awareness and empowerments are comparatively not less than the male counterparts. However, the irony is, in spite of high turnover in the exercise of franchise, women candidate representing any constituency as Member of Legislative Assembly (Manipur) is unfairly represented as compared to male counterpart that need deeper enquiry or understanding although becoming an MLA is not the sole indicator to determine women's political participations.

Table No 4 Number of women candidates from 1972 to 2022 and total No. of seat won

Year	Total No. of women candidates	Total seat won
1972		1
1980	7	0
1984	5	0
2000	14	1
2002	7	1
2007	12	0
2012	14	3
2017	11	2
2022	17	5

Source: Election Report, Manipur Legislative Assembly

In the house of 60 seats in Manipur state Legislative Assembly, data from the above table shows that in all consecutive terms of assembly elections since 1972 till 2022 women could secured only a negligible percentage of seats in spite of the fact that participation of

women voters has always been higher than the male voters. To state further, in the State Legislative Assembly from 1972 till 2022 the highest number of women representatives in a term has shown only 5 in 2022 general election. Many assumptions and argument have been presented of which a reasonably convincing finding is that due to out migrations of male members to different parts of the country in search of jobs is one major reason as to why turnout of male voters is relatively lesser than women. It must be noted, unemployment rate is very high in the state of Manipur hence out migration in search of job are significantly high not just among the youth but also among the married ones. However, larger question still remains as to why women representatives are very negligible in Legislative Assembly of Manipur. To add further, no women have so far been elected to the Legislative Assembly of Manipur since 1972 to 2022 from the Senapati district. It may be stated Senapati district has three constituency seats at present.

Women and autonomous district council

To safeguard the Hill Areas and protect Tribal's in Manipur, the Government of India promulgated an Act of Parliament called Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act 1971 under section 4 of sub-section 3 Vide Bill No. 76 of 26/12/1971, this provides for the creation of six ADC in Hill Areas of Manipur and for eventual conversion to full-fledged District. Following independence, the Government of India pledged to protect the well-being and interests of the Hill Tribals by incorporating provisions in the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution, necessitating the declaration of "Hill Areas" in Manipur. The Manipur (Hills Areas) District Council Act was passed by the Indian Parliament on December 26, 1971. The Act was intended to establish a local self-government organization so that changes in socio-economic trends could be brought about from within, while still preserving the distinctive traditional values⁹. Furthermore, Article 371(c) was enshrined in the constitution (27th amendment) Act 1971, which provides for the formation and operation of a committee comprised of MLAs elected from Manipur's Hill Areas, as well as all responsibilities in order to ensure proper functioning in matters relating to Hill affairs and for the purpose for which it was formed¹⁰.

Since the attainment of Manipur statehood on 21st January 1972 the functionaries in the hill areas have been left out at the mercy of the state government. In due course, the Tribal of Manipur realized that the Autonomous District Council had been rendered ineffective, and it could no longer function as the intended institution of Local Self-Government, prompting the Hill Area Committees to adopt a resolution on 18th July 1990 stating that no election to members of the ADC Manipur will be held until and unless the provisions of the sixth scheduled were extended. In Manipur, the Hill people have boycotted the ADC- election for the last 21 years. After a break of 21 years the Autonomous District Councils was resurrected and successfully participated in the ADC election in 2010 with faith and trust in the Government of India as well as the Government of Manipur, which had made

⁹http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?cv=1&src=news_section.opinions.Politics_and_Governance.Autonomous_District_Councils_Manipur_in_brief_By_Haokholal_Hangshing

¹⁰<https://www.thesangaiexpress.com/autonomous-district-councils-manipur-in-brief/?cv=1>

an unequivocal commitment to bring development to the Hill Areas of Manipur. Furthermore, the Government of Manipur has made various commitments to increase and devolve enough powers to allow ADCs to function as an institution of Local Self Government under the provisions of Act 71 and its amendments. What actually important is the "faith" granted to ADCs and the State Government's vows to empower. In the case of Manipur, the 33% reservation of seats for women in local bodies is implemented in the valley areas but in the hill areas where Autonomous District Council (ADCs) exist 33% reservation for women is yet to see its reality as no women have come forward to contest to become member of ADC.

Challenges ahead of women

The barriers of women participation in politics may vary from society to society. Many women deterred from active participation in politics due to fears of violence, harassment, assassination etc. In fact, the insecurity of women can be accorded as major factor for the less participation of women in politics. Besides many other reasons some of the sociological factors causing women under-representation are discussed below.

Patriarchy system

Patriarchy is a set of relationships, beliefs, and values embedded in political, social, and economic systems that structure male-female gender inequality. Attributes perceived as "feminine" or related to women are undervalued, whereas attributes perceived as "masculine" or related to men are privileged. Many respondents are of the view that patriarchy system or the male dominance is one of the factors that act as a barrier for women political participation especially in electoral politics. Therefore, this study put forth a straight question to the respondents whether patriarchal forms of society bear any reason for women's inability or non-participation in political sphere. The respondents who were mixtures of both men and women totaling to 400 numbers were given a close ended options of either 'Yes', 'No', and 'can't say' as shown in below table.

Table 5 Patriarchal forms of society is the reason for no participation of women in politics

options	Frequency	Percent
Yes	187	46.8
No	152	38.0
Can't Say	58	14.5
No Response	3	.8
Total	400	100.0

Data shows 46.8 per cent of respondents admitting to the fact that patriarchal form of society is the reason for women's inability to find a space in politics. While 38.0 per cent denied the assertion and said 'No', there were however a margin of 14.5 per cent whose opinion was marked as 'Can't say', though this margin may be small in terms of percentage yet it cannot be ignored. There was a negligible percentage of .8 per cent or specifically three respondents did not answer on this query. The above analyses lead to the conclusion that there is still gender stereotyping between male and female. Thus, this stereotyping of male

dominance hindered the women participation in politics as men considered themselves superior to female. With modernization and education spread across length and breadth coupled with globalization women in Manipur state particularly in hill areas of Senapati district are excelling in many front and that often it is proclaimed, stereotyping is fading out of place in the society, but base on this empirical data gender stereotype still remained an obstacle for women of Senapati district of Manipur state to participate in politics is once again ascertained.

Customs and Traditions

A custom is a widely accepted way of behavior or doing something in a given society, location or time and is valued by the members of the society. A tradition is the passing down of customs, beliefs and practices handed down from one generation to the next. The tradition and custom that are in practice in the society includes some taboos which differentiate male and female in terms of gender roles. While understanding about customs and traditions in the context of political awareness and participation, Meena Patel (2018) has lucidly presented the status of women among the Naga society. It reads, 'The patriarchal society with a strong warrior tradition values the birth of a boy. A Naga woman is traditionally expected to be obedient and humble. Her role is complex and varied: wife, mother, child bearer and rearer, food producer and household manager. She supplements the household income by weaving and selling colorful shawls, an activity done exclusively by women. Women are traditionally not included in the decision-making process of the clan or the village'. Although many respondents are of the view that those taboos act as a glass ceiling and it hindered women political participation especially in electoral politics. However, field data shows a reverse opinion as shown below.

Table 6 Opinion of respondents on tradition and custom as a barrier on women political participation

Opinion	Gender distribution of respondent			
	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Yes	62	91	153	38.25
No	71	134	205	51.25
Can't Say	17	25	42	10.50
Total	150	250	400	100.00

Generally, in a patriarchal society and particularly among the tribal community tradition and custom act as a barrier to women's political participation. While many writers and scholars have confirmed to this argument, however, field data shows that from a total 400 respondents in this study only 38.25 per cent agrees to the assertion, while an overwhelming majority of 51.25 per cent do not agree to this statement while 10.50 percent were neither in denial nor in support of the statement. Despite of many tags of backwardness people have been introduced to education for long period and an ample exposure to the outside world, while on the other hand people are broad minded towards change. It is for these reasons majority of the respondents do not agree on the statement of tradition and custom acting as

barrier for women political participation but are not completely exempt from being a barrier for women political participation. There may in this case, have other reasons which are significantly playing under net.

Household Chores

Household chores are tasks that must be completed on a regular basis at home, such as cleaning, washing, and ironing etc. Generally, in many societies and particularly in tribal society of Senapati district household chores are largely been performed by women. The traditional practices where man go out in search of food while women stay home to look after the young ones is still a dominant practice. Due to poor economic situation of the state, head of the family move out to different places in search of job to feed his family members. This phenomenon of out migration as pointed out in the preceding discussion is also another factor for the less participation in politics. Time immemorial women are expected to stay at home and do the household work and care the young one. Moreover, they were expected to work in the field, weaving and rearing of domestic animals. On the other hand, men were considered as the bread winner of the family. Thus, women have less expose to the outside's environment. In fact, women in the district as they continuously engaged in the household activities and with the household workload she shoulders, they become politically less socialized and less motivated hence are unable to participate actively in politics is an important finding of this study.

Lack of education

Lack of education is also another factor for less women participation in politics. In the past there was a preference of education based on the sex. In that, Mr. John, a respondent has this to say "*in the past people think that educating a girl child brings home no benefit because she will take her education to another house after marriage (groom's family) so male child was given more preference*".¹¹ No doubt the preference was given to male than to female child, in the past, however, this trend has little place in the society with the increase of education among the parents. As per data available in statistical handbook of Manipur 2017 the literacy rate of the district stands at 63.60 per cent with 69.21 per cent male and 57.67 per cent for female respectively. Indeed, the overall literacy rate of the district still remain low compared to the Manipur state as a whole with its record of 76.94 per cent with male 83.58 per cent and 70.26 per cent for female.

Financial constraint

According to the study, financial difficulty is also one of the barriers for women to participate in politics. Financial constraint is defined as insecurity or a lack of financial resources. A person's financial problems can be caused by a lack of property, a lack of skill, a lack of efficiency, a lack of jobs, and so on. All of this can result in lower or no earnings. In reality, this will have an impact on their income and cause them to face financial difficulty.

¹¹ A person name has change for identity reason

Table 7 Opinion of respondents whether financial constraint is a barrier towards women political participation.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	32	8.0
Agree	256	64.0
Neutral	44	11.0
Disagree	61	15.2
Strongly disagree	4	1.0
No Response	3	.8
Total	400	100.0

Data in the above table shows a woman earning lower income is one of the barriers to political participation, particularly in the electoral process. 8.0 percent strongly agree with the view, while 64.0 percent agree. There were however, 11.0 percent neutral to this view while 15.2 percent disagree to the view and 1.0 percent strongly disagrees. There were however 3 respondents who did not responded on this query constituting 0.8 per cent. The analysis of the above data leads to the conclusion that women's financial independent also plays an important role in their political participation. Needless to mention, today with corruption at its brim money plays a significant role. People look not at the candidates' quality but the wealth. Very often it is alleged the winning of elections are through the use of money for votes. Thus, financial independence of women is a major factor for women's political participation is a significant finding of this study.

Lack of political socialization

Political socialization is the process by which individuals acquire and adopt a political lens that frames their perceptions of how power works and how the world operates. People's conceptions of who they are and how they should act in the political and economic institutions in which they live are molded and governed by such perceptions. Lack of political socialization also has an impact leading to under-representation of women in the politics particularly electoral politics. People usually give the king post i.e. president, chairman of any organization of both male and female to the male in spite women can hold the same post. While the lower post in the hierarchy is given to women. Even the women themselves give preferences to male in those posts. They are socialized politically in that way which make difficult for the women to compete with the male in the political field. In other words, women themselves don't promote women. Data given below substantiate this argument.

Table 8 Opinion of respondents on lack of political socialization as a barrier of women political participation

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	72	18.0
Agree	314	78.5
Cannot decide	3	.8
Disagree	3	.8

Strongly disagree	8	2.0
Total	400	100.0

The above table reflects respondents' views on women's lack of political socialization as a barrier to political participation. The respondents were asked whether lack of socialization among women is a barrier to women's political participation. Respondents were given an option to respond with strongly agreed, agree, cannot decide, disagree, and strongly disagree. In that, 18.0 percent strongly agreed while 78.5 per cent agreed on the view. There were 0.8 per cent who cannot decide on this view and another 0.8 per cent who disagreed and 2.0 percent strongly disagreed respectively. Through the analyses of the above, it can be concluded that lack of political socialization act as a barrier of women political participation.

Ignorance

Ignorance refers to lack of knowledge or information. Sometimes the ignorance of women leads to the less representation of women in politics. When they do not update politically, they lack knowledge and get less information about politics and the things happening in the society. With less information they have less interest in politics and they feel that they should not involve in politics. In fact, their ignorance makes men's advantage in a sense instead. Ignorance of the socio-political environment around would mean less educated or in another word society need to put more efforts in making education accessible to all particularly women.

Opportunities of women to political empowerment.

Political empowerment of women and their participation in decision-making becomes the topic of discussion and need of an hour. Almost every citizen of the country and people around the world feels the need of women political empowerment and their involvement in decision making. In spite of all the barriers or challenges faced by women there is still a wider scope that can still be improved. There are scheme that are taken up by the government for the overall empowerment of women like Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) which was establish for the socio-economic empowerment of women, Support to Training and Employment Program for Women (STEP) program which aims to make a significant difference in the lives of women by improving self-employment and wage employment skills, National Mission for Women's Empowerment (NMEW) with the goal of achieving holistic women's empowerment, Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls for overall empowerment of women, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination, ensuring girl child survival and protection and their education and many more scheme in order to uplift the overall status of women.

Apart from the government initiatives schemes, the constitution also provides certain right for women empowerment like Article 14 (equality before the law), Article 15(3) (special provision that can be made by the state in favor of women and children), Article 16 (equal opportunities to all the citizens in employment and appointment in any office). Article 39(a) directs state policy toward ensuring equal rights to livelihood for men and women, while Article 39(d) provides men and women equal paid for equal work. Article 42 provides for just and humane working conditions as well as maternity leave. Moreover, in order to let women

participate in the decision making, 33% reservation has been given to women in Panchayati Raj and municipality council.

CONCLUSION

Gender equality can be equated with the equal representation of men and women in politics. Many world Government Organizations and other Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) advocate about women empowerment and gender equality. Women representation in the politics is one of the parameters that can be measured for women empowerment and its gender equality. Through the proportionate representation of women in politics they can voice their grievances and make the laws in the areas where women are neglected. From the finding of women representation in the electoral process it shows that there is still gender gap in the politics especially in representing the government. One of the findings shows women are active in electoral participation as a voter; however, their activeness is limited only in voting and not beyond.

As a democratic society it is important for the equal representation of every section of people. Education paves the way for the women in their value judgment and in their decision-making process. However, women still find hard to come out to the front and make its impact in society as a decision-maker at least in legislative assembly of Manipur. The reasons being largely due to male dominance, household duties, ignorance, financial constraint, tradition and custom, lack of political socialization etc. Women as a whole need to break the barriers by valuing their femininity and stand with courage to bring a change in the society. Moreover, Women Organization, NGOs and others associations must inculcate and sensitize the ideas of gender equality and bring awareness to achieve gender parity and bring about equitable social development.

References

1. Ali Ashraf, Sharma, L.N. "Political Sociology: A New Grammar of Politics", *Noida: University Press*, (2019)
2. Bakshi, S. R. "Empowerment of Women and Politics of Reservation", Jaipur: Book Enclave, (2002)
3. Carpini, M. X. D., & Keeter, S. "What America knows about politics and why it matters", Yale University Press, (1996)
4. District Census handbook, Senapati, 2011
5. Dutta P.S (ed) (1986). "Electoral Politics in North East India", New Delhi: Omsons Publications
6. Devi, Ksh. Bimola, "Women in Social Movement in Manipur, in Karna, M.N, (ed), Social Movements in North East India", New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, (1998)
7. Haokholal Hangsing, *Autonomous District Councils Manipur in brief*. Retrieve in http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.opinions.Politics_and_Governance

8. Kaur Ajaypal, Gender and Politics, New Delhi: Rawat Publication, (2020)
9. Nie NH, Junn J, Stehlik-Barry K. "Education and Democratic Citizenship in America". Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, (1996)
10. Parratt John. Wonded Land Politics and Identity in Modern Manipur, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, (2005)
11. Patel, Meena (2018) Tribal Studies in North East India, Silchar, Assam: NE Books and Publishers, (2018)
12. Roy,J . History of Manipur, Calcutta: East Light Book House, (1973)
13. Ram Sharan Sharma, "Aspect of political Ideas and Institution in Ancient India", Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. (1986) Ltd P- 78-102
14. SatyabrataChakhraborty (ed), Political Sociology, New Delhi: Trinity Press, (2016)
15. Statistical handbook of Manipur 2017
16. Toshimenla J. "Women and Politics in Nagaland: Challenges and Imperatives", New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd,(2012)
17. Verba S, Schlozman KL, Brady HE. "Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics". Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press (1995)