

Citizen Participation and Effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh: A Quantitative Study of Local Governance

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Abstract : Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) constitute an important component of decentralized governance and grassroots democracy in India. In tribal states such as Arunachal Pradesh, the effectiveness of local governance institutions depends significantly on the level of citizen participation and political awareness among rural communities. The present study examines the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh. The study adopts a quantitative research design and is based on primary data collected from 200 respondents through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were employed to analyze the data and test the proposed hypotheses. The findings indicate that higher levels of political awareness positively influence citizen participation, which in turn contributes to improved perception regarding transparency, accountability and effectiveness of local governance institutions. The study highlights the importance of strengthening participatory mechanisms and awareness programs to enhance the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions in tribal regions. The research contributes to the understanding of grassroots democracy and participatory governance in the context of Arunachal Pradesh.

IndexTerms - Panchayati Raj Institutions, Citizen Participation, Local Governance, Grassroots Democracy, Arunachal Pradesh, Political Awareness, Decentralization

1.INTRODUCTION

Decentralization and grassroots democracy constitute essential components of democratic governance in India, particularly after the institutionalization of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Panchayati Raj Institutions were introduced with the objective of strengthening local self-governance by promoting citizen participation, improving accountability and ensuring inclusive rural development. Effective functioning of these institutions depends not only on administrative arrangements but also on the level of political awareness and active participation of citizens in local decision-making processes. In recent years, participatory governance has gained increasing importance in policy and academic discussions, as citizen engagement is widely recognized as a key factor influencing transparency, responsiveness and effectiveness of local governance institutions.

In tribal regions such as Arunachal Pradesh, the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions assumes particular significance due to the state's unique socio-cultural and geographical context. The coexistence of traditional community-based decision-making systems and modern democratic institutions creates a distinct environment in which local governance operates. Understanding how Panchayati Raj Institutions function within this context is therefore essential for examining the relationship between citizen participation and institutional effectiveness. Accordingly, the following section discusses the structure and functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh to provide the institutional background for the present study.

2. Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh

The development of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Arunachal Pradesh has followed a historical trajectory that differs from many other Indian states due to its unique tribal social structure and geographical conditions. The idea of local self-governance in the region predates the constitutional framework of Panchayati Raj and was traditionally practiced through customary village councils and community-based decision-making systems. In order to extend democratic decentralization in the region, the Government of India appointed the Daying Ering Committee in 1964 to examine the possibility of introducing local self-government institutions in the then North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). The recommendations of this committee laid the foundation for the introduction of Panchayati Raj institutions in the region, which were later formalized through the NEFA Panchayat Regulation of 1967 and subsequently replaced by the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997 (Dibang Valley District Administration, 2022; Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997).

With the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, Panchayati Raj Institutions across India were constitutionally recognized as instruments of decentralized governance aimed at strengthening grassroots democracy and citizen participation. In Arunachal Pradesh, institutional reforms continued over time, and a significant structural change occurred in 2018 when the state adopted a two-tier Panchayati Raj system by removing the intermediate level (Anchal Samiti) in order to improve administrative efficiency and reduce operational costs (Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 2018). The present system therefore consists of Gram Panchayats at the village level and Zilla Parishads at the district level, both functioning as elected local self-governing bodies

responsible for development planning, implementation of government schemes and facilitation of citizen participation through Gram Sabha meetings.

Arunachal Pradesh presently consists of **27 districts**, and Panchayati Raj Institutions operate across these districts through a network of Gram Panchayats and Zilla Parishads. According to recent official data related to Panchayat elections and administrative structure, the state has **27 Zilla Parishads with approximately 245 Zilla Parishad constituencies and about 2,103 Gram Panchayats comprising more than 8,000 Gram Panchayat constituencies** (State Election Commission, Arunachal Pradesh; Eastern Sentinel, 2024). These institutions collectively form the foundation of rural governance and democratic participation in the state.

Table 1 *structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh (Recent Status)*

Level of Institution	Institutional Unit	Approximate Number	Major Functions
District Level	Zilla Parishad	27	District planning, coordination and supervision of development programmes
Constituency Level	Zilla Parishad Constituencies	245	Representation of local areas in district-level decision making
Village Level	Gram Panchayats	2,103	Implementation of schemes, local development planning, public service delivery
Village Representation	Gram Panchayat Constituencies	8,181	Direct representation of citizens in local governance

Source: Compiled from State Election Commission, Arunachal Pradesh and recent PRI election data (2024–2025).

The Gram Sabha occupies a central position in the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions, as it provides a platform for direct citizen participation in governance. Through Gram Sabha meetings, citizens are expected to discuss development priorities, review the implementation of government schemes and hold elected representatives accountable. However, studies conducted in Arunachal Pradesh indicate that the effectiveness of Gram Sabha functioning varies across districts and is influenced by levels of political awareness, accessibility and socio-cultural participation patterns within tribal communities (Sig, 2015). Another important feature of Panchayati Raj functioning in Arunachal Pradesh is the interaction between customary tribal practices and formal democratic institutions. In many rural areas, traditional leaders and community elders continue to influence decision-making processes, which sometimes complements and at other times overlaps with the formal authority of Panchayati Raj Institutions. This interaction creates a unique governance environment where citizen participation is shaped not only by institutional arrangements but also by social norms and community structures. Recent district-level studies have also indicated that participation and awareness differ across regions depending on literacy levels, administrative accessibility and community mobilization (Chiring & Komow, 2024).

Despite institutional reforms aimed at strengthening decentralization, challenges remain in ensuring effective participation and transparency in local governance. Limited awareness regarding the roles and responsibilities of Panchayati Raj Institutions, irregular participation in Gram Sabha meetings and administrative constraints have been identified as factors affecting institutional effectiveness. Therefore, examining the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions becomes essential for understanding the functioning of grassroots democracy in Arunachal Pradesh.

3. Review of Literature

The functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and the role of citizen participation in local governance have received considerable academic attention in the broader context of decentralized democracy in India. The introduction of the Panchayati Raj system through constitutional reforms aimed to strengthen grassroots democracy by promoting local participation, accountability and inclusive development. In tribal states such as Arunachal Pradesh, scholars have particularly examined the interaction between traditional governance practices and modern democratic institutions, highlighting both opportunities and challenges in the implementation of decentralized governance. Early studies examining decentralized governance in Arunachal Pradesh emphasized institutional and administrative challenges affecting the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Sig (2015) observed that although PRIs have expanded opportunities for democratic participation at the grassroots level, their effectiveness is often constrained by limited awareness among citizens and inadequate participation in Gram Sabha meetings. Similarly, Sharma (2016) noted that institutional capacity and administrative coordination remain important challenges in strengthening local governance in tribal regions of Northeast India. These studies highlighted the importance of citizen awareness but largely focused on institutional limitations rather than empirical assessment of participation patterns. Subsequent research has focused on the socio-cultural dimensions of governance in tribal areas. Panyang (2018) examined the role of traditional community institutions in Arunachal Pradesh and argued that customary practices continue to influence decision-making processes at the village level. The study emphasized that the coexistence of traditional authority structures and formal Panchayati Raj institutions creates a hybrid governance system where participation is shaped by cultural norms and community relationships. Similar observations were made by Baruah (2017) and Singh (2019), who argued that decentralization in Northeast India cannot be understood without considering the role of customary institutions and local socio-cultural dynamics.

Several studies have also examined the relationship between participation and governance outcomes in rural India. **Mathew (2016)** emphasized that effective decentralization depends on active citizen engagement rather than mere institutional existence. **Kumar and Sahu (2017)** found that higher levels of participation in Gram Sabha meetings contributed to improved transparency and accountability in local governance. In the context of tribal regions, Das (2018) argued that geographical isolation and limited access to information often restrict citizen participation in governance processes.

Recent studies have increasingly emphasized the role of awareness and participation in improving local governance outcomes in Arunachal Pradesh. **Chiring and Komow (2024)**, in their study on Gram Sabha participation in Namsai district, found that awareness regarding Panchayati Raj functions significantly influenced citizen engagement in local decision-making processes. Similarly, **Tsering (2021)** observed that awareness campaigns and local mobilization efforts contributed to increased participation in certain districts, although disparities continued to exist across regions. Studies by **Dutta (2020) and Nath (2022)** also highlighted that educational background and political awareness significantly affect participation levels in local governance institutions in Northeast India. Research conducted in the broader context of decentralized governance in India further supports the importance of citizen participation as a determinant of institutional effectiveness. **Oommen (2018)** argued that decentralization succeeds only when citizens actively participate in planning and monitoring development activities. Likewise, **Rao and Reddy (2019)** emphasized that participation strengthens accountability mechanisms and improves governance outcomes at the grassroots level. Studies by **Hazarika (2020) and Boro (2023)** focusing on Northeast India also pointed out that administrative limitations, literacy levels and infrastructural challenges influence citizen engagement in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Despite these contributions, a review of existing literature indicates that most studies on Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh have primarily focused on institutional problems, administrative constraints or descriptive assessments of participation patterns. While several scholars have acknowledged the importance of awareness and participation, limited research has attempted to quantitatively examine the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions from the perspective of citizens themselves. Existing studies are often confined to specific districts or rely predominantly on qualitative analysis, thereby leaving a gap in empirical understanding of how these variables interact in shaping governance effectiveness.

Therefore, there exists a need for systematic empirical research that examines these relationships using quantitative methods. The present study attempts to address this gap by analyzing how political awareness influences citizen participation and how participation, in turn, affects the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh. By adopting a quantitative approach and focusing on citizen perception, the study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of participatory governance and decentralized democracy in tribal regions.

4. Research Gap and Need of the Study

The review of existing literature on Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh and the broader Northeast region indicates that considerable attention has been given to institutional structure, administrative challenges and the socio-cultural context of decentralized governance. Earlier studies have contributed significantly to understanding the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions, the influence of traditional governance systems and the challenges associated with implementing grassroots democracy in tribal areas. Many scholars have also emphasized the importance of citizen participation and awareness in strengthening local governance. However, most of the existing studies remain descriptive in nature and primarily focus on institutional problems, governance challenges or localized case studies. Limited research has systematically examined the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions using quantitative methods. In particular, there is a lack of empirical studies that analyze these variables simultaneously from the perspective of citizens across different social and educational backgrounds in Arunachal Pradesh. Furthermore, while previous studies acknowledge the importance of participation in improving transparency and accountability, insufficient attention has been given to understanding how political awareness influences participation and how participation, in turn, affects public perception regarding the effectiveness of local governance institutions. In a geographically diverse and socio-culturally distinct state such as Arunachal Pradesh, where governance outcomes are closely linked with community engagement, such empirical examination becomes necessary.

Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap by adopting a quantitative research approach to examine the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh. The study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on participatory governance and by offering a citizen-centered assessment of local governance effectiveness in a tribal context.

5 Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to examine the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh with special reference to citizen participation and political awareness. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the level of political awareness among citizens regarding Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh.
2. To analyze the extent of citizen participation in local governance processes such as Gram Sabha meetings and development-related decision-making.
3. To examine the relationship between political awareness and citizen participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

4. To assess the influence of citizen participation on the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in local governance.
5. To evaluate citizen perception regarding transparency, accountability and overall functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh.

6. Hypotheses of the Study

In order to achieve the above objectives, the following hypotheses have been formulated for empirical testing:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between political awareness and citizen participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

H₁₁: There is a significant relationship between political awareness and citizen participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

H₀₂: Citizen participation does not significantly influence the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

H₁₂: Citizen participation significantly influences the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

H₀₃: Political awareness has no significant influence on the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

H₁₃: Political awareness has a significant influence on the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

7. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Model

The current study is theoretically grounded in the concepts of decentralization and participatory democracy, which emphasize the importance of citizen involvement in governance at the local level. Decentralization theory argues that transferring decision-making power from higher levels of government to local institutions improves administrative responsiveness, accountability and development outcomes. Panchayati Raj Institutions in India were established with this objective of strengthening grassroots democracy by enabling citizens to participate directly in governance processes and local decision-making. Participatory democratic theory further explains that the effectiveness of local governance institutions depends not only on institutional arrangements but also on the active involvement of citizens in governance activities. **Arnstein's (1969)** concept of the "Ladder of Citizen Participation" highlights different levels of public participation, ranging from passive involvement to active citizen control, suggesting that higher levels of participation lead to greater empowerment and institutional accountability. In the context of Panchayati Raj Institutions, participation through Gram Sabha meetings, public discussions and local development planning plays an important role in ensuring transparency and responsiveness of governance structures.

In tribal regions such as Arunachal Pradesh, the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions operates within a unique socio-cultural environment where traditional decision-making practices coexist with formal democratic institutions. Studies conducted in the region indicate that political awareness significantly influences citizen engagement in local governance processes (**Siga, 2015; Chiring & Komow, 2024**). Citizens who possess greater awareness regarding the roles and responsibilities of Panchayati Raj Institutions are more likely to participate in governance activities, which in turn contributes to improved perception of institutional effectiveness. Based on these theoretical perspectives, the present study assumes that political awareness acts as an important factor influencing citizen participation, and increased participation subsequently enhances the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The study therefore examines the interrelationship among these variables within the framework of participatory governance and decentralized democracy.

7.1 Conceptual Model of the Study

The conceptual framework of the study is developed to explain the relationship among the major variables considered in the research. Political awareness is treated as the independent variable, citizen participation as the mediating variable, and perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions as the dependent variable. The conceptual relationship among variables can be represented as follows:



Figure 1.0 : Conceptual Model of the study

This model assumes that higher political awareness encourages greater participation in local governance processes, and increased participation improves citizens' perception regarding transparency, accountability and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The proposed conceptual model provides the analytical basis for hypothesis testing and quantitative analysis in the present study.

8. Research Methodology

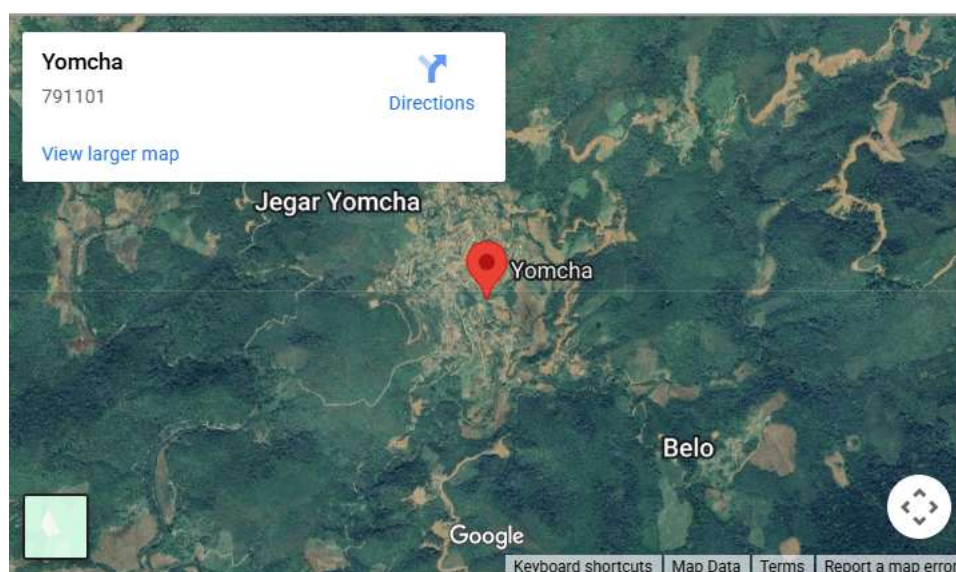
8.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and the role of citizen participation in local governance in Arunachal Pradesh. A quantitative approach is considered appropriate as the study seeks to analyze the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions through measurable variables and statistical analysis. The study follows a descriptive and analytical research design, aiming to explain relationships among selected variables based on empirical data collected from respondents.

8.2 Study Area

The present study was conducted in Yomcha town and surrounding areas under the Liromoba–Yomcha Block in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. Yomcha serves as a subdivision headquarters and functions as an administrative and socio-cultural centre within the district. The area was selected for the study due to the active functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions and the presence of more than 450 registered voters, which provides an adequate population base for quantitative analysis. The study area represents typical rural governance conditions in tribal areas of Arunachal Pradesh where traditional community practices coexist with formal Panchayati Raj institutions. Therefore, the area provides a suitable setting for examining the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The location of the study area is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Location map of Yomcha subdivision, West Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh.



(source: <https://www.mapsofindia.com/villages/aranachal-pradesh/west-siang/yomcha-circle/>)

8.3 Population of the Study

The population of the present study consists of adult citizens residing in Yomcha town and the surrounding areas under the Liromoba–Yomcha Block in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The population includes registered voters who are eligible to participate in local governance processes under Panchayati Raj Institutions. Since the study focuses on citizen participation and awareness regarding Panchayati Raj Institutions, only individuals above 18 years of age having basic familiarity with local governance activities were considered as part of the study population. According to local electoral and administrative records, the study area consists of more than 450 registered voters. This population provides an appropriate base for examining citizen participation and perception regarding the functioning and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in a rural tribal governance context.

8.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

The present study was conducted among adult citizens residing in Yomcha town and surrounding areas under the Liromoba–Yomcha Block in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The study area consists of more than 450 registered voters who form

the population of the study. Out of this population, a sample of 200 respondents was selected for data collection. The selected sample represents approximately 40–45 percent of the total voting population of the study area and is considered adequate for quantitative analysis in social science research. A purposive sampling technique was adopted for selecting respondents, as the study required participants who possessed basic awareness of Panchayati Raj Institutions and had experience or familiarity with local governance processes such as Gram Sabha meetings and development-related activities. Efforts were made to include respondents from different age groups, gender categories and educational backgrounds in order to capture variations in political awareness and levels of citizen participation. The sampling approach ensured that the collected data remained relevant and reliable for examining the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the study area.

8.5 Sources of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to the respondents. Secondary data were obtained from government reports, official documents, academic journals and previous research studies related to Panchayati Raj Institutions and decentralized governance in Arunachal Pradesh and Northeast India.

8.6 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used as the main tool for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions designed to measure political awareness, citizen participation, awareness of PRI functions, transparency, satisfaction and perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The instrument was designed to ensure clarity and ease of response for participants.

8.7 Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure reliability and internal consistency of the research instrument, the questionnaire items were carefully designed based on previous studies on local governance and citizen participation. The Likert-scale format helped maintain uniformity in responses and suitability for statistical analysis.

8.8 Tools and Techniques of Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to summarize respondent characteristics and perceptions. Inferential statistical tools such as correlation analysis and regression analysis were applied to examine relationships between political awareness, citizen participation and perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The hypotheses of the study were tested on the basis of statistical results obtained from the analysis.

9. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from 200 respondents were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques in order to examine the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Arunachal Pradesh. The analysis is presented in three parts: demographic profile of respondents, descriptive statistical analysis of major variables, and hypothesis testing through correlation and regression analysis.

9.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents: The demographic characteristics of respondents provide an understanding of the social background of participants included in the study.

Table 2 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	118	59.0
	Female	82	41.0
Age Group	18–30 years	72	36.0
	31–45 years	83	41.5
	Above 45 years	45	22.5
Education	Primary	54	27.0
	Secondary	86	43.0
	Graduate & Above	60	30.0

Interpretation:

The demographic characteristics of respondents provide an understanding of the social background of participants included in the study and help in interpreting variations in political awareness and citizen participation in local governance. As presented in Table 2, male respondents constitute 59 percent of the total sample, while female respondents account for 41 percent, indicating reasonable

gender representation in the study area. The age distribution shows that a majority of respondents (41.5 percent) belong to the age group of 31–45 years, followed by 36 percent in the 18–30 years category and 22.5 percent above 45 years. This indicates that most respondents belong to the economically and socially active age group, which is generally more involved in community affairs and governance-related activities.

With regard to educational qualification, 43 percent of respondents possess secondary education, 30 percent have graduate or higher qualifications, and 27 percent have primary education. The diversity in educational background suggests differences in access to information and awareness regarding Panchayati Raj Institutions, which may influence participation levels and perception of institutional effectiveness. The demographic composition of respondents therefore provides an appropriate basis for examining the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the study area.

9.2 Descriptive Statistics of Major Variables : Descriptive statistics were used to examine the average perception of respondents regarding political awareness, citizen participation and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Major Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Political Awareness	3.62	0.81
Citizen Participation	3.48	0.76
Awareness of PRI Functions	3.55	0.72
Transparency	3.31	0.85
Satisfaction with PRI	3.29	0.88
Perceived Effectiveness of PRI	3.44	0.79

Interpretation:

Descriptive statistics were used to examine the overall perception of respondents regarding political awareness, citizen participation and the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The mean score for political awareness (M = 3.62) indicates a moderate level of awareness among respondents regarding the roles and responsibilities of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Similarly, the mean value for citizen participation (M = 3.48) suggests that participation exists but remains moderate in nature. The comparatively lower mean scores for transparency (M = 3.31) and satisfaction with PRI functioning (M = 3.29) indicate that respondents perceive certain limitations in administrative functioning, information dissemination and communication between institutions and citizens.

These findings suggest that although institutional mechanisms for participation are present, improvements are required in transparency and service delivery in order to enhance citizen satisfaction and institutional effectiveness. The descriptive analysis supports the objective of the study that seeks to evaluate citizen perception regarding the functioning and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh. The findings indicating moderate levels of political awareness and participation are consistent with earlier studies conducted in Arunachal Pradesh and other tribal regions of Northeast India, where awareness and participation were found to vary depending on educational background and accessibility to governance institutions (Siga, 2015; Nath, 2022). The relatively lower perception of transparency and satisfaction also supports observations made by Hazarika (2020), who highlighted administrative and communication challenges affecting local governance effectiveness in the region.

9.3 Correlation Analysis : Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Table 4 Correlation Matrix of Major Variables

Variables	Political Awareness	Citizen Participation	Effectiveness of PRI
Political Awareness	1	0.54**	0.48**
Citizen Participation	0.54**	1	0.62**
Effectiveness of PRI	0.48**	0.62**	1

Note: p < 0.01 (Significant at 1% level)

Interpretation:

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between political awareness, citizen participation and perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The results presented in Table 4 indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between political awareness and citizen participation (r = 0.54, p < 0.01), suggesting that individuals possessing higher levels of awareness regarding Panchayati Raj Institutions are more likely to participate in local governance activities such as Gram Sabha meetings and development discussions. Citizen participation also shows a strong positive correlation with perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions (r = 0.62, p < 0.01), indicating that increased participation contributes to improved perception regarding transparency, accountability and institutional performance. The positive correlation between political awareness and perceived effectiveness (r = 0.48, p < 0.01) further indicates that awareness indirectly strengthens institutional effectiveness through participation.

Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H_{01}), which states that there is no significant relationship between political awareness and citizen participation, is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_{11}) is accepted. The observed positive relationship between political awareness and citizen participation supports the theoretical argument of participatory democracy, which emphasizes that informed citizens are more likely to engage in governance processes. Similar findings were reported by Kumar and Sahu (2017), who observed that awareness enhances participation and strengthens accountability mechanisms in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

9.4 Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing: Regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of political awareness and citizen participation on the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Table 5 Regression Analysis Showing Effect on PRI Effectiveness

Independent Variable	Beta Value	t-value	Significance (p-value)
Political Awareness	0.29	4.12	0.000
Citizen Participation	0.41	5.63	0.000
$R^2 = 0.46$			

Interpretation:

Regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of political awareness and citizen participation on the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The results presented in Table 5 show that both political awareness ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.01$) and citizen participation ($\beta = 0.41, p < 0.01$) have a positive and statistically significant influence on institutional effectiveness. The R^2 value of 0.46 indicates that approximately 46 percent of the variation in perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions is explained jointly by political awareness and citizen participation.

The results further indicate that citizen participation has a stronger influence on institutional effectiveness compared to political awareness, suggesting that awareness becomes meaningful only when it translates into active engagement in governance activities. Based on the regression results, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_{12}) is accepted, as citizen participation significantly influences the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Similarly, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_{13}) is accepted, as political awareness also shows a significant influence on perceived institutional effectiveness. The regression results further reinforce earlier empirical findings that citizen participation acts as a key determinant of institutional effectiveness in decentralized governance systems (Oommen, 2018; Rao & Reddy, 2019). The stronger influence of participation compared to awareness suggests that institutional effectiveness depends not only on knowledge of governance structures but also on active citizen engagement in decision-making processes.

9.5 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

The statistical analysis confirms that political awareness significantly influences citizen participation, and citizen participation in turn significantly affects the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. All alternative hypotheses of the study are accepted, indicating that participatory governance and political awareness are important determinants of effective local governance in the study area.

10. Findings and Discussion

The findings presented in this section are derived from the statistical analysis discussed in Section 9. So, the analysis reveals that the level of political awareness among respondents is moderate, indicating that citizens possess basic knowledge regarding the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions but may lack detailed understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This finding supports earlier observations made by Siga (2015), who emphasized that limited awareness remains a significant constraint in strengthening participatory governance in Arunachal Pradesh. The results suggest that awareness plays a crucial role in encouraging citizens to engage in governance processes, as respondents with higher awareness levels were found to participate more actively in Gram Sabha meetings and local decision-making activities. The study further indicates that citizen participation has a significant positive influence on the perceived effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Respondents who reported higher levels of participation also expressed greater satisfaction with transparency, accountability and overall functioning of local governance institutions. This finding is consistent with participatory democratic theory, which argues that active citizen involvement strengthens institutional responsiveness and improves governance outcomes. Similar conclusions have been drawn by Kumar and Sahu (2017) and Oommen (2018), who noted that participation enhances accountability mechanisms at the grassroots level.

Another important finding of the study is the mediating role of citizen participation between political awareness and institutional effectiveness. The results indicate that political awareness alone does not automatically improve governance outcomes unless it leads to active participation in governance processes. This finding is particularly relevant in the context of Arunachal Pradesh, where socio-cultural factors and geographical constraints often influence levels of engagement in formal governance structures. The coexistence of customary practices and statutory institutions may also affect participation patterns, as observed in earlier studies by Panyang (2018), which highlighted the influence of traditional community structures in local decision-making. The study also reveals that respondents perceive transparency and satisfaction levels to be comparatively lower than awareness and participation levels. This suggests that although institutional structures exist and citizens are willing to participate, improvements are required in administrative efficiency and communication between Panchayati Raj Institutions and citizens. Similar observations have been made

in studies focusing on decentralized governance in Northeast India, which point out that infrastructural limitations and administrative challenges continue to affect institutional performance (Hazarika, 2020; Nath, 2022).

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh is closely linked with citizen participation, which in turn is influenced by political awareness. The results support the theoretical argument that decentralization becomes meaningful only when citizens actively participate in governance processes. The study therefore highlights the importance of strengthening awareness programs, improving communication mechanisms and encouraging greater participation in Gram Sabha activities in order to enhance the effectiveness of local governance institutions in the state.

11. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The present study examined the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh with particular emphasis on the role of political awareness and citizen participation in local governance. The findings of the study indicate that Panchayati Raj Institutions have created an institutional framework for grassroots democracy; however, their effectiveness largely depends on the extent to which citizens actively participate in governance processes. The study demonstrates that political awareness positively influences citizen participation, and higher levels of participation significantly contribute to improved perception regarding transparency, accountability and effectiveness of local governance institutions.

The results highlight that although citizens in Arunachal Pradesh possess moderate levels of awareness about Panchayati Raj Institutions, participation in governance processes such as Gram Sabha meetings and development-related discussions remains uneven across communities. The coexistence of traditional governance practices and formal democratic institutions creates a unique governance environment in which participation patterns are shaped by socio-cultural factors as well as administrative accessibility. The study therefore supports the argument that decentralization becomes effective only when institutional structures are complemented by informed and active citizen engagement. From a policy perspective, the findings suggest the need for strengthening awareness and capacity-building initiatives at the grassroots level. Government agencies and local administrative bodies should focus on conducting regular awareness programmes, training sessions and community meetings to enhance public understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Increasing awareness among citizens can encourage greater participation and improve accountability in local governance processes. The study also highlights the importance of strengthening Gram Sabha functioning as a platform for participatory decision-making. Ensuring regular meetings, improving communication between elected representatives and citizens, and promoting inclusive participation of women and youth can enhance the effectiveness of local governance institutions. In addition, improving transparency in the implementation of development schemes and strengthening monitoring mechanisms may help build public trust in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh is closely linked with the level of citizen participation and political awareness. Strengthening participatory governance mechanisms can contribute to more responsive and accountable local governance in tribal regions. The study contributes to the understanding of decentralized governance by providing empirical evidence from Arunachal Pradesh and emphasizes the need for policy interventions that promote active citizen engagement in grassroots democracy.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all the respondents of Yomcha town and surrounding areas of the Liromoba–Yomcha Block, West Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh, for their valuable time and cooperation during the data collection process. The author is also thankful to local community members and Panchayati Raj representatives who provided necessary support and information for the successful completion of this study. The author further acknowledges the guidance and encouragement received from teachers, colleagues and well-wishers during the course of this research work. Any errors or shortcomings in the study remain the sole responsibility of the author.

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