

Youth and Politics: An analysis of Political interest among Students.

Dr. Dipmala Bhawal

Assistant Professor, Gangarampur B.Ed. College

ABSTRACT

Youth play a crucial role in shaping the democratic and political landscape of a nation. In a democratic country like India, the participation and political awareness of young people, particularly students, are essential for the effective functioning and sustainability of democratic values. The present aims to examine the level of political interest among students of higher education and to analyze whether significant differences exist in political interest with respect to selected categorical variables such as gender, location, level of education, stream of study, and type of institution. The study adopted a quantitative approach and was descriptive in nature. A survey method was used to collect data from the respondents. The collected data were analyzed using independent sample t-tests to determine differences among the groups. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant difference in the political interest of students based on gender, where male students demonstrated a higher level of political interest compared to female students. However, no significant differences were found in political interest with respect to location (urban and rural), level of education (graduation and post-graduation), stream of study (arts and science), and type of institution (government and self-financed).

Keywords: *Political, Interest, Higher Education, Students.*

INTRODUCTION

Youth constitute one of the most dynamic and influential segments of society, and their participation in politics plays a crucial role in shaping the democratic framework of a nation. In India, which is often described as the world's largest democracy, young people represent a significant proportion of the population. Their political awareness, interest, and participation are therefore essential for the healthy functioning and future development of the democratic system. The involvement of students in political processes not only reflects their awareness of social and national issues but also contributes to the development of responsible citizenship.

In recent years, the nature of youth political participation has evolved due to the influence of education, media, and digital communication. Social media platforms, online campaigns, and increased access to information have created new avenues for students to express political opinions and engage with political issues. However, despite these opportunities, concerns remain regarding political apathy, lack of political awareness, and declining participation in traditional political activities among some sections of youth.

Educational institutions play a significant role in shaping students' political attitudes and awareness. Universities and colleges often serve as spaces where young individuals encounter diverse political ideas, debates, and ideologies. Student organizations, campus elections, and political discussions contribute to the development of political interest and democratic values among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Oommen (1984) has studied on the student politics in Delhi University. The inquiry concentrates on the institutional context of student politics. The student union exercises the student power on the university campus. **Upreti (1987)** studied on the youth politics in India. He interviewed 185 students of Rajasthan University. Study reveals that socio-economic conditions play an important role in shaping the youth and their orientations. Mass media was found the main source of information and generates consciousness among students. Large number of students liked to participate in politics but not the political interference in university which creates unrest. Student unions were found a primary centre for political activity. Students get initial political training in organizing the campaign, propagandas, influencing the authorities and other political skills. **Chandrakar and Kumar (2016)** studied on political interest and democratic attitude of prospective teachers of Chhattisgarh. Democracy is based on the faith in dignity and worth of every single individual as a human being. In this paper the researchers made an attempt to know that what the prospective teachers themselves think about politics and democracy, and do they follow the democratic principles in their classroom and teaching learning process. **Pritzker, Springer, and McBride (2009)** studied on learning to vote: informing political participation among college students. This study revealed that educationally-based civic influences that specifically address political content are more strongly associated with political behavior than is service based activity. This supports an on-going reform discourse that targets civic education as a promising avenue for increasing youth participation in American elections and suggests a key role that universities can play during election years. **Idnurm and Toots (2010)** conducted a study on political activism of low achieving and high achieving students in ten European countries. The analysis resulted in four clusters differing by respondents' self-efficacy, and real or expected participation in various forms. Regarding current activism in school, low achieving students belong mainly to one cluster whereas in future political activism they become divided into two opposite groups – one is totally alienated from politics whereas another group has high self-efficacy and

readiness for multiple participation. Contrary to low achievers, high achieving students become more uniform in their future political activism. There is also interesting cross country variance in the clustering. By focusing on youth subgroups current analysis contributes to the better understanding of contemporary youth citizen activism and helps to design better targeted measures for education policy interventions. **Stromback (2013)** conducted a study on the Dynamics of Political Interest and News Media Consumption: A Longitudinal Perspective. This longitudinal study investigates whether the impact of political interest a key motivational factor behind news consumption on various forms of news consumption has increased over time. The analysis is based on a unique large-scale representative annual survey conducted in Sweden over the years 1986–2010, enabling a comprehensive analysis of citizens' total and specific news consumption across multiple channels and platforms. Results show that news consumption has become more polarized between news-seekers and news-avoiders over time, and that political interest has become a more important determinant of news consumption in today's high-choice media environment. **Sarfaraz and Ahmed (2014)** conducted a qualitative study on reasons for political interest and apathy among university students. The research focused on exploring why some youngsters are interested whereas others are apathetic towards our political system. The analysis revealed that although all participants unanimously agreed that there are flaws in the political system but participants who were interested in politics held an optimistic point of view regarding the situation and believed that through their involvement in politics they can bring about a change. People who were apathetic mostly had a pessimistic point of view and as a result had developed the feelings of learned helplessness and believed that no matter what they do all their efforts will be fruitless.

RESEARCH GAP

From the appraisal of the previous research literatures, no study was found about proposed area. Hence, it can be said that there was an ample amount of scope to carry out the study on '*Youth and Politics: An analysis of Political interest among Students*'.

OBJECTIVES

1. To compare students' political interest in the higher education due to the categorical variable like Gender (Male-Female), Location (Urban-Rural), Levels of Education (Graduation-Post Graduation), Stream (Arts-Science), Types of Institutions (Government-Self Financed).

HYPOTHESES

Ho.1: There is no significant difference in the mean score of political interest among students' of higher education in relation to gender (Male and Female) variation.

Ho.2: There is no significant difference in the mean score of political interest among students' of higher education in relation to Location (Urban and Rural) variation.

Ho.3: There is no significant difference in the mean score of political interest among students' of higher education in relation to Levels of Education (Graduation and Post Graduation) variation.

Ho.4: There is no significant difference in the mean score of political interest among students' of higher education in relation to Stream (Arts and Science) variation.

Ho.5: There is no significant difference in the mean score of political interest among students' of higher education in relation to Types of Institutions (Government and Self Financed) variation.

DELIMITATION

The study was confined into under graduate, post graduate college and universities of three districts (Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and DakshinDinajpur) of West Bengal considering its educational environment. It was also delimited to five government institutions and three self-financed institutions.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was adopted for the present study. The present study was descriptive in nature and aimed to explain at the status of variables like political interest with respect to several categorical variables. A survey obtains through a series of questions posed by the investigator.

Population:

The population consisted of all under graduate and post graduate students who are studying in various colleges and universities of West Bengal state.

Sample:

In the present study, random sampling technique was used to select the sample of 564 under graduate and post graduate students from government and self-financed institutions of Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur districts in West Bengal.

Tool:

Political Interest Scale (PIS) developed by – Suresh Kumar Singh and B.B. Pandey (2005) was adopted. In present study, reliability of the scores was computed by using Cronbach's Alpha and was found to be .784 for Political Interest of students. This indicates that the scale was reliable enough to measure higher education student's interest in politics.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

(i) Testing of Hypothesis 1:

Ho.1: There is no significant difference in the mean score of political interest among students’ of higher education in relation to gender (Male and Female) variation.

Table 1: Group Statistics of Political Interest of Students due to Gender Variation

Group Statistics	Variation		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Political Interest	Gender	Male	239	129.42	13.93	.901
		Female	325	125.23	10.68	.592

From the **Table 1** it was observed that gender variation wise there was difference in the mean scores and standard deviation of the categorical variable. Therefore, it was thought obligatory to study the significance of difference between the two sub-samples of each of the categorical variable. Therefore, the independent sample test was adopted to find out the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances and ‘t’ test for equality of means.

Table 2: Independent Samples Test of Political Interest of Students-Male vs. Female

Political Interest	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender Variation (Male vs. Female)	Equal Variances not Assumed	18.448	0.000	3.890*	429.180	.000

(*Significant at 0.05 level)

Table 2 shows that in case of Levene’s Test for equality of variances of Male and Female calculated F value is 18.448 and p value is 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), so equal variances not assumed between the groups. For testing the significance of difference between the mean score of political interest of male and female students, the calculated $t_{(429.180)} = 3.890$ and $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, ‘t’ was significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the **Ho1** is rejected. So it can be safely said that the Male students (mean = 129.427) were significantly different from the Female students (mean = 125.231) with respect to the political interest.

(ii) Testing of Hypothesis 2:

Ho.2: There is no significant difference in the mean score of political interest among students’ of higher education in relation to Location (Urban and Rural) variation.

Table 3: Group Statistics of Political Interest of Students due to Location Variation

Group Statistics	Variation		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Political Interest	Locale	Urban	152	126.59	12.30	.997
		Rural	412	127.16	12.35	.608

From the **Table 3** it was observed that gender variation wise there was difference in the mean scores and standard deviation of the categorical variable. Therefore, the independent sample test was adopted to find out the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances and ‘t’ test for equality of means.

Table 4: Independent Samples Test of Political Interest of Students-Urban vs. Rural

Political Interest	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Locale Variation (Urban vs. Rural)	Equal Variances Assumed	.080	.778	-.479**	562	.632

(** Not Significant at 0.05 level)

Table 4 shows that in case of Levene’s Test for equality of variances of Urban and Rural calculated F value is 0.080 and p value is 0.778 ($p > 0.05$), so equal variances can be assumed between the groups. For testing the significance of difference between the mean score of political interest of urban and rural students, the calculated $t_{(562)} = 0.479$ and $p = 0.632$ ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, ‘t’ was not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the **Ho.2** could not be rejected. So it can be safely said that the urban students (mean = 126.59) were not significantly different from the rural students (mean = 127.16) with respect to the political interest.

(iii) Testing of Hypothesis 3:

Ho.3: There is no significant difference in the mean score of political interest among students’ of higher education in relation to Levels of Education (Graduation and Post Graduation) variation.

Table 5: Group Statistics of Political Interest of Students due to Levels of Education Variation

Group Statistics	Variation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Political Interest	Graduation	198	125.682	11.72	.832
	Post -Graduation	366	127.727	12.61	.659

From the **Table 5** it was observed that levels of education variation wise, there was difference in the mean scores and standard deviation of the categorical variable. Therefore, the independent sample test was adopted to find out the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances and ‘t’ test for equality of means.

Table 6: Independent Samples Test of Political Interest of Students-Graduation vs Post Graduation

Political Interest	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Levels of Education Variation (Graduation vs. Post Graduation)	Equal Variances Assumed	1.106	.293	1.884*	562	.060

(*Not Significant at 0.05 level)

Table 6 shows that in case of Levene’s Test for equality of variances of graduate and post graduate calculated F value is 1.106 and p value is 0.293 ($p > 0.05$), so equal variances can be assumed between the groups. For testing the significance of difference between the mean score of political interest of graduate and post graduate students, the calculated $t_{(562)} = 1.884$ and $p = 0.060$ ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, ‘t’ was not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the **Ho.3** could not be rejected. So it can be safely said that the graduation students (mean = 125.682) were not significantly different from the post- graduation students (mean = 127.727) with respect to the political interest.

(iv) Testing of Hypothesis 4:

Ho.4: There is no significant difference in the mean score of political interest among students’ of higher education in relation to Stream (Arts and Science) variation.

Table 7: Group Statistics of Political Interest of Students due to Stream variation

Group Statistics	Variation		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Political Interest	Stream	Arts	426	126.944	12.39	.600
		Science	138	127.210	12.18	1.037

From the **Table 7** it was observed that stream variation wise there was difference in the mean scores and standard deviation of the categorical variable. Therefore, the independent sample test was adopted to find out the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances and ‘t’ test for equality of means.

Table 8: Independent Samples Test of Political Interest of Students-Arts vs Science

Political Interest	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Stream Variation (Arts vs. Science)	Equal Variances Assumed	0.002	.961	0.220*	562	0.826

(*Not Significant at 0.05 level)

Table 8 shows that in case of Levene’s Test for equality of variances of arts and science calculated F value is 0.002 and p value is 0.961 ($p > 0.05$), so equal variances can be assumed between the groups. For testing the significance of difference between the mean score of political interest of arts and science students, the calculated $t_{(562)} = 0.220$ and $p = 0.826$ ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, ‘t’ was not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the **Ho.4** could not be rejected. So it can be safely said that the arts students (mean = 126.944) were not significantly different from the science students (mean = 127.210) with respect to the political interest.

(v) Testing of Hypothesis 5:

Ho.5: There is no significant difference in the mean score of political interest among students’ of higher education in relation to Types of Institutions (Government and Self Financed) variation.

Table 9: Group Statistics of Political Interest of Students due to types of institution variation

Group Statistics	Variation		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Political Interest	Type of	Government	414	127.543	12.52	.6153

	Institutio n	Self- financed	150	125.533	11.70	.9559
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From the **Table 4.9** it was observed that type of institution variation wise there was difference in the mean scores and standard deviation of the categorical variable. Therefore, the independent sample test was adopted to find out the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances and ‘t’ test for equality of means.

Table 10: Independent Samples Test of Political Interest of Students-Government vs Self-Financed

Political Interest	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Type of Institution Variation (Government vs Self-financed)	Equal Variances Assumed	2.118	0.146	1.713*	562	0.087

(*Not Significant at 0.05 level)

Table 10 shows that in case of Levene’s Test for equality of variances of government and self-financed calculated F value is 2.118 and p value is 0.146 ($p > 0.05$), so equal variances can be assumed between the groups. For testing the significance of difference between the mean score of political interest of government and self-financed institution’s students, the calculated $t_{(562)} = 1.713$ and $p = 0.087$ ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, ‘t’ was not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the **Ho.5** could not be rejected. So it can be safely said that the government students (mean = 127.543) were not significantly different from the self-financed students (mean = 125.533) with respect to the political interest.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the level of political interest among students of higher education with respect to several demographic and academic variables such as gender, location, level of education, stream of study, and type of institution. The findings of the study provide useful insights into the nature of political awareness and engagement among students.

The analysis revealed that gender plays a significant role in determining political interest among students. The results indicated a statistically significant difference between male and female students, where male students demonstrated a comparatively higher level of political interest than female students. This difference may be influenced by social, cultural, and environmental factors that often encourage greater political exposure and participation among male students.

However, the findings showed no significant difference in political interest with respect to other variables such as location (urban and rural), level of education (graduation and post-graduation), stream of study (arts and science), and type of institution (government and self-financed). This suggests that students, irrespective of their residential background, academic level, discipline, or institutional setting, tend to exhibit relatively similar levels of political interest. The absence of significant differences across these categories indicates that political awareness and interest among students are becoming more widespread and less dependent on traditional social or educational divisions.

Overall, the study highlights that while gender differences still exist in shaping political interest, other structural factors appear to have limited influence on students' political engagement. This reflects the growing accessibility of political information through education, media, and digital platforms, which contribute to a more uniform political awareness among students.

The findings emphasize the importance of encouraging inclusive political education and participation among all students, particularly female students, to ensure balanced democratic involvement. Educational institutions can play a vital role in promoting political awareness through discussions, debates, civic education, and student participation in democratic processes, thereby strengthening the foundation of democratic citizenship in society.

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