

Impact of Participation in Social Activities on Moral Development: A Study on the Perceptions of Mizo Under-Graduate Students

Francis L.R. Puia Tlau*
B.B. Mishra**

Abstract

It is an established fact that both formal and informal agencies play important role in the socialization process of human beings. Society, as an informal agency of socialization, has strong impact on moral and character development of its members from their early stages of development. Every society has its own code of ethics which differ, in some degree, from that of other societies, and this difference is reflected in the behavior of its citizens. Even the most backward societies have some primitive moral code and try to instill these moral ideas into the younger generation. Thus, it is the society which provides the environment for the moral development of every child. The present article is a report of a study undertaken to find out the perceptions of Mizo Undergraduate students on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development. The article presents findings of the study conducted with 800 Mizo Undergraduate students from 4 streams viz. Arts, Science, Commerce and Professional out of which 400 were males and 400 were females. The study revealed that majority of Mizo Undergraduate students, irrespective of their stream of study; recognize their participation in social activities having positive impact on their moral development.

Keywords: Perception, Social activities, Moral development, Mizo Undergraduate students

Introduction

Society is like an organic whole and is composed of the individuals as its parts. The process of socialization begins in early infancy and extends throughout the life cycle. The personality of the individual is shaped through socialization which is a process of change in individuality. Through the process of socialization; people come to know about what to do, what not to do and what they must do. The society develops, retains and perpetuates patterns traditions and norms that persist overtime. It is an ongoing process of change through the social institutions like family, community, neighborhood, school etc. Through socialization an individual can operate harmoniously in the society.

*Dr. Francis L.R. Puia Tlau, Guest Faculty,-Department of Education, Government Aizawl College, Aizawl, Mizoram-796001 Email: francistlauvantawl@gmail.com

**Prof. B.B. Mishra, Professor Emeritus, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences- Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751021 Email: bana.mishra55@gmail.com

Man is a social animal. It is said that man without society is a figment of imagination. He is born in the society and breathe last in the society. During his lifespan he used to be influenced by the society and he influences the society as well. The home, school, media, society etc. are the agencies which socialize the individual. John Dewey (1897) in his famous declaration concerning education in his article 'My Pedagogical Creed' writes "all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race".

The role of social organizations in socializing the individual can never be undermined. In every society there are various social organizations which differ in their constitution and role. During the lifespan, one not only becomes the member of such organizations by birth or through voluntary participation, but also his/her personality characteristics are shaped. In the Mizo society, there are many social organizations that play vital role in shaping and molding the behavior of its citizens from childhood till death. However, in the process of the activities of the societies, one has to spare his/ her time which, at times, affects his/her personal interests, activities, and responsibilities. The Mizo youths as the active members of these social organizations are expected to render their services. The present study primarily aims to reveal the feelings of college youths about the impact of their participation in the social organizations on their moral development.

Social activity means the activity that involves association with other people. It is an activity considered appropriate on social occasions, action taken by a group of people, the act of consorting with or joining with others and the action of people mingling and coming into contact. Thus, social activity involves the various activities carried on by the social organizations for the sake of common good. The social activities have many positive impacts besides socialization for which every community has certain provisions in shape of traditions and rituals which every member is supposed to imbibe.

Social Organizations in Mizoram and their Activities

The culture of the Mizo tribe and its social structure has undergone tremendous change over the years since the arrival of Christianity in late 1890s. Contemporary people of Mizoram celebrate Christmas, Easter and other Christian celebrations replacing many of the old tribal customs and practices. The growth of Christianity was shaped from a foundation of cultural, religious and socio-political structure. One such foundation is the cultural element of Mizo people known as 'Hnatlang', which literally means social work, united labour or community labour. A consequence of 'Hnatlang' was the culture of 'Tlawmngaihna', which does not have a direct English translation. 'Tlawmngaihna' as cultural concept incorporates behaviour that is self-sacrificing, self-denying, doing what an occasion demands unselfishly and without concern for inconvenience caused, persevering, stoical, stout hearted, plucky, brave, firm, independent, loathe to lose one's good reputation. Thus, after a fire or landslide or flood damage, the Mizo culture is one of spontaneous humble social work without demands or expectations.

In Mizoram, there are many social organizations that are taking active parts in community works and lead the people for the concerns of the society. Of them organisations like Young

Mizo Association (Y.M.A), Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), Mizo Students Union (MSU) etc. and the church organizations like Kristian Thalai Pawl (KTP), Thalai Kristian Pawl (TKP), Salvation Army Youth (SAY), Pentecostal Youth Department (PYD), etc. are the important church-based youth organizations which play active role in building the character of the people starting from the early stages of life which ultimately benefits the society and the nation.

Church Organisations in Mizoram:

The church organisations play an important part in Mizo society by rendering services to its members through various activities going within it. In Mizoram, there are different Christian denominations like Presbyterian Church of India (PCI), Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM), Salvation Army (SA), United Pentecostal Church (UPC), etc. In these church groups, the members play different roles and take part in various activities organized by their respective groups so as to serve their respective churches. Most of the activities in these groups are usually meant for the administration and functioning of the church and even they also used to do some community work. The most common and popular social activities of the churches in Mizoram include cleaning of streets, street preaching, organizing sports and entertainment programs, publishing books, donating blood, making public urinals, helping the needy and poor members of society, organizing leadership training programs and meetings etc.

In the activities of all the above social organizations, the youths take active part with guidance rendered by senior members. Youngsters include both males and females who are above 14 years of age.

Rationale of the Study:

As compared to other societies of the world the Mizo society is a unique society because it has a lot of social activities which cannot be found in other parts of our country as well as other parts of the world. In almost all of these activities, the most active participants are the youths above 14 years of age. Thus, it can be seen that the students, above class- VIII or so, are the active participants. The main reason behind the active participation of the students is that in Mizo society when an individual becomes socially mature person i.e. attaining the age of 14 (according to the age norm given by Y.M.A), he/she is supposed to perform his/her duties as a member of the society. The society expects him/her to conform to the ongoing practices and to take part in those activities that are going on within the society. Since the students are also included in the age group of the youths, they have to take active part in social activities as far as possible otherwise they may not be regarded as useful members of the society. Therefore, they have to perform such duties so as to become socially acceptable persons. In Mizo society it is customary that on occasion like deaths, accidents, calamities, cleaning of streets and some other activities that are used to be looked after by the social organizations, the youths have to render their services. In the Mizo society, it is the tradition that when someone dies during daytime, their corpse would not be buried on the same day and the neighbours and relatives would stay with the bereaved family throughout the night.

In such cases, it is mainly the youths of the locality who would stay with the bereaved family throughout the night.

Due to the process of modernization and acculturation, all societies including Mizo society have undergone changes. As one needs to spare lots of time for involvement in social activities, for the students, it may adversely affect their performance in academic life. On the other hand, involvement in social activities can help in gaining skills, knowledge, experiences, qualities, etc. that are important for leading happy and successful life. Moreover, participation in these social activities inculcates values such as service to mankind, sincerity, punctuality, honesty, hospitality etc.

Today, it is being observed that due to tough competition for jobs, in business and in other activities for earning livelihood people have less time for such social activities and there might have been change in the attitude of the people, particularly among youths and students, to spend their time for social activities.

The reason for selecting Undergraduate students is that they all have passed through the various stages of education, except Postgraduate education, and they are also one of the active members of these social organizations and they have long time participation in social activities and are mature to critically analyze their experiences and to express their views freely.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To assess the perceptions of Mizo Undergraduate students on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development.
2. To compare the perceptions of Mizo Undergraduate students on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development with reference to their gender.
3. To compare the perceptions of Mizo Undergraduate students on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development with reference to their stream of study.

Hypotheses of the Study:

1. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of Mizo Undergraduate students on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development with reference to their gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of Mizo Undergraduate students on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development with reference to their stream of study.

Methodology:

Research Approach: Descriptive survey approach has been followed for the present study.

Population and Sample: The population of the study included all the Mizo Undergraduate students of different colleges affiliated to Mizoram University offering arts, science, commerce and professional courses and the students of five departments of School of Engineering and Technology of Mizoram University. The sample of the study comprised of 800 Mizo Undergraduate students, 100 males and 100 females selected from each of the four streams viz. Arts, Science, Commerce and Professional. Multi-stage random sampling technique was followed for selection of the sample.

Tool used: For the study, the investigators developed a questionnaire for assessment of the perceptions of Mizo Undergraduate students relating to the impact of their participation in social activities upon their academic achievement.

Data Analysis: The data collected were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. For the analysis of data, descriptive statistics like percentage, mean etc. were used and further, 't' test was used for the purpose of comparison of various groups.

Results and Findings:

Objective-wise analysis of data and findings are presented below:

1- Perceptions of Mizo Under-Graduate Students relating to the Impact of their Participation in Social Activities upon their Moral Development

The perceptions of Mizo Undergraduate students of various groups based on their gender and stream of study in Mizoram relating to the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development on the three choices along with the percentages put in parentheses are presented in Table- 1 followed by interpretation.

Table- 1

Perceptions of Undergraduate Students in Mizoram Relating to the Impact of their Participation in Social Activities upon their Moral Development

Groups	N	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Arts Male	100	53 (53)	14 (14)	33 (33)
Arts Female	100	53 (53)	15 (15)	32 (32)
Arts Total	200	106 (53)	29 (14.5)	65 (32.5)
Science Male	100	45 (45)	13 (13)	42 (42)
Science Female	100	44 (44)	13 (13)	43 (43)
Science Total	200	89 (44.5)	26 (13)	85 (42.5)
Commerce Male	100	54 (54)	14 (14)	32 (32)
Commerce Female	100	50 (50)	10 (10)	40 (40)
Commerce Total	200	104 (52)	24 (12)	72 (36)
Professional Male	100	52 (52)	12 (12)	36 (36)

Professional Female	100	37 (37)	17 (17)	46 (46)
Professional Total	200	89 (44.5)	29 (14.5)	82 (41)
Male Total	400	204 (51)	53 (13.25)	143 (35.75)
Female Total	400	184 (46)	55 (13.75)	161 (40.25)
Total (Overall)	800	388 (48.5)	108 (13.5)	304 (38)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage)

i) Perception of Undergraduate Students

The above table shows that, irrespective of stream of study, majority of male undergraduate students i.e., 51% perceived that their participation in social activities have positive impact upon their moral development, 13.25% were neutral and 35.75% viewed their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development. It is also found from the above table that, irrespective of stream of study, 46% of female undergraduate students opined their participation in social activities having positive impact upon their moral development, 13.75% were neutral and 40.25% expressed their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development. At the same time, irrespective of gender, 48.5% of the students taken as sample perceived positive impact of their participation in social activities on their moral development while 13.5% had neutral perception and 38% had negative perception.

ii) Perception of Arts Students

As shown in Table-1, among arts male undergraduate students, majority i.e., 53% perceived their participation in social activities having positive impact upon their moral development, 14% were neutral and 33% opined their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development. It is also found from the above table that, among arts female undergraduate students, majority i.e., 53% viewed their participation in social activities having positive impact upon their moral development, 15% were neutral and 32% expressed their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development. Irrespective of gender, majority of arts undergraduate students i.e., 53% were of the opinion that their participation in social activities had positive impact upon their moral development, 14.5% of them were neutral and 32.5% perceived their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development.

Thus, though the study revealed that majority of the arts male, arts female and arts (irrespective of gender) undergraduate students viewed their participation in social activities having positive impacts upon their moral development, there are good number of students who perceived about its negative impact.

iii) Perception of Science Students

From the above table it is found that, among science male undergraduate students, 45% were of the opinion that their participation in social activities had positive impact upon their moral development, 13% were neutral and 42% of them viewed their participation in social

activities having negative impact on their moral development. It is also found that 44% of science female undergraduate students viewed their participation in social activities having positive impact upon their moral development, 13% were neutral and 43% of them expressed that their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development. Irrespective of gender, it is also found that among science undergraduate students, 44.5% opined their participation in social activities having positive impact upon their moral development, 13% were neutral and 42.5% were of the opinion that their participation in social activities had negative impact on their moral development.

Thus, though the study revealed that more respondents of science male, science female and science (irrespective of gender) undergraduate students viewed their participation in social activities having positive impacts upon their moral development, there are good number of students who perceived about its negative impact.

iv) Perception of Commerce Students

The above table shows that, among commerce male undergraduate students, majority i.e., 54% opined their participation in social activities having positive impact upon their moral development, 14% were neutral and 32% expressed their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development. It is also found from the above table that, among commerce female undergraduate students, majority i.e., 50% perceived their participation in social activities having positive impact upon their moral development, 10% were neutral and 40% viewed their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development. Irrespective of gender, majority of commerce undergraduate students i.e., 52% were of the opinion that their participation in social activities had positive impact upon their moral development, 12% of them were neutral and 36% expressed their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development.

Thus, though the study revealed that majority of the commerce male, commerce female and commerce (irrespective of gender) undergraduate students perceived their participation in social activities having positive impacts upon their moral development, there are also good number of students who perceived about its negative impact.

v) Perception of Professional Students

As shown in Table-1, among professional male undergraduate students, majority i.e., 52% opined their participation in social activities having positive impact upon their moral development, 12% were neutral and 36% viewed their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development. It is also found from the above table that, among professional female undergraduate students, 46% perceived their participation in social activities having negative impact upon their moral development, 17% were neutral and 37% expressed their participation in social activities having positive impact on their moral development. Irrespective of gender, it is also found that among professional undergraduate students, 44.5% were of the opinion that their participation in social activities had positive impact upon their moral development, 14.5% of them were neutral and 41% opined their participation in social activities having negative impact on their moral development.

Thus, the study revealed that majority of the professional male undergraduate students perceived their participation in social activities having positive impacts upon their moral development. However, the study revealed that more respondents of professional female undergraduate students perceived their participation in social activities having negative impact upon their moral development. Further, it was found that though more respondents of professional undergraduate students (irrespective of gender) opined that their participation in social activities had positive impact upon their moral development, there are good number of students who perceived about its negative impact.

2. Comparison of the Perceptions of Mizo Under-Graduate Students relating to the Impact of their Participation in Social Activities upon their Moral Development with reference to Gender

Table- 2 shows the comparative analysis of the perceptions of Mizo Under-Graduate students relating to the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development with reference to gender.

Table No. 2

Comparison of the Perceptions of Male and Female Mizo Under-Graduate Students on the Impact of their Participation in Social Activities upon their Moral Development with Reference to their Gender

Groups Compared	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig. level
Male	400	20.63	3.21	1.908	NS
Vs. Female	400	20.21	3.012		

(NS- Not Significant)

Table - 2 shows that the t value relating to the comparison of perceptions of male and female Mizo Under-Graduate students on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development is not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis- *'There is no significant difference in the perceptions of Mizo Under-Graduate students on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development with reference to their gender'* is not rejected. It implies that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female Mizo Under-Graduate students on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development and both the groups have similar perceptions.

3. Comparison of the Perceptions of Mizo Under-Graduate Students relating to the Impact of their Participation in Social Activities upon their Moral Development with reference to Stream of Study

Table- 3 shows the comparative analysis of the perceptions of Mizo Under-Graduate students relating to the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development with reference to their stream of study.

Table No. 3

Comparison of the Perceptions of Arts, Science, Commerce and Professional Mizo Under-Graduate Students on the Impact of their Participation in Social Activities upon their Moral Development

Groups Compared	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig. level
Arts Vs. Science	200	20.65	2.995	1.239	NS
	200	20.26	3.368		
Arts Vs. Commerce	200	20.65	2.995	0.313	NS
	200	20.56	3.07		
Arts Vs. Professional	200	20.65	2.995	1.396	NS
	200	20.23	3.024		
Science Vs. Commerce	200	20.26	3.368	0.931	NS
	200	20.56	3.07		
Science Vs. Professional	200	20.26	3.368	0.078	NS
	200	20.23	3.024		
Commerce Vs. Professional	200	20.56	3.07	1.067	NS
	200	20.23	3.024		

(NS=Not Significant)

The above table shows that the t values relating to the comparison of perceptions of undergraduate students of arts and science streams, arts and commerce streams, arts and professional streams, science and professional streams and commerce and professional streams are not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis- *'There is no significant difference in the perceptions of Mizo Undergraduate students on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development with reference to their stream of study'* is not rejected. It implies that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of undergraduate students of arts and science streams, arts and commerce streams, arts and professional streams, science and professional streams and commerce and professional streams on the impact of their participation in social activities upon their moral development.

Conclusion

It is popularly believed that students who are active participants in social activities are more likely to be morally matured and developed than those who do not take active part in different social activities. The findings of this study seem to confirm this belief as more respondents of undergraduate students in Mizoram perceived their participation in social activities having positive impact upon their moral development. However, it should not be overlooked that there are good number of students, both male and female, in all the four streams of study who perceived negatively. This finding led the researcher to conclude that Mizo Undergraduate students are aware of the importance of their participation in social activities i.e., gaining skills, knowledge, experiences, qualities, etc. that are required for leading happy and successful life as participation in these social activities inculcates among them the values such as service to mankind, sincerity, punctuality, honesty, hospitality etc. But, over time, the nature of society and means of earning livelihood have changed. To face the challenges of the changing scenario, they require building their career through serious studies for which to sacrifice their time for social work is becoming increasingly difficult. As such, the social organizations are required to think and plan judiciously to achieve both the ends i.e., socialization of its young members and their career.

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