

## Factors Influencing Community Participation of Youth Affairs Committee Members in Mon State

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### Abstract

*There are many ways for young people to get involved with their communities, but Community participation is one of the most important ways. As a way of expressing their commitment, young people form political and social action groups, devise educational initiatives tailored to their interests, and serve as community activists. This study was carried out in Myanmar prior to the military takeover in 2021. A military coup protest was organized by CEC (Chief Executive Committees). In addition, the majority of the committee members advocate for democratic values in this era. For the purpose of this study, researchers looked into which factors had the greatest impact on the participation of youth affairs committee members in their communities. Mon State was chosen as the study site because the median age of the population there is 26.7 years old. The 2014 Census revealed a range of median ages that is lower than this one. It shows that the median age of Mon state's youth affairs committee members is lower than the state's overall median age. In addition, the state of Mon was home to three major ethnicities: the Mon, the Kayan, and the Burmese. This situation demonstrates that young people have settled in Mon state with a wide range of viewpoints and ideas. The 131 members of Mon state's youth affairs committee were selected from each of the state's three levels of youth affairs committee. The data collected was analyzed using linear regression and descriptive methods. It was discovered that the community involvement of young leaders is positively influenced by social, political & legal factors.*

**Keywords:** *Political & Legal Factors, Social Factors, Social Media Usage, Community Participation*

### Introduction

With the ferocity of active working groups, youth leaders play an important role in community development. Involvement in community life includes a variety of activities, such as electing local officials, establishing forums for discussion, and voting (Burns et al., 2001). Youth participation in the community is important because it helps fill the gaps in the community. Sixteen percent of the world's population is under the age of thirty. Young people's involvement in local communities is a key factor in finding a solution to the world's problems. Many

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opportunities exist for youth to participate in their communities' political, social, and economic aspects.

On the one hand, youth face numerous obstacles when it comes to participating in community activities, such as a lack of supportive policies and peer pressure. Approximately 175 million children in developing countries cannot participate in their communities because of a lack of literacy and nutrition. As a result, some academics have argued that in some countries, the number of youths engaged in community development activities is lower than that of the elderly. Young people are being tapped into for community development through government policies that are effective. Twenty-eight percent of Myanmar's population is under the age of 30, making it ripe for economic growth. For the sake of the nation's reform, the government should implement a youth affairs policy that is both effective and efficient. A study by Derweanna Bah Simpong et al. (2012) examined the influence of determinant factors on Malaysian youth community participation.

This study examines the factors that influence the participation of youth affairs committee members in Mon State in the community in light of the findings from the previous research. Many youth organizations exist in Myanmar, but the government established non-governmental organizations to handle youth affairs. In addition, there was only one national youth affairs committee in Myanmar, while the rest of the youth organizations were regionally based. For Myanmar's national policies on youth, the members of the youth affairs committee played a critical role. Thus, this study examines the research objectives by focusing on the role of youth affairs committee members.

There are five levels of Myanmar Youth Affair Committees: national, division, and state level, district, and township. Based on a 2017 policy, the youth affairs committee was established. Myanmar's young people should be well-developed in all areas, including their physical and mental well-being, as well as their ability to think critically and collaborate with others. Education, health, sport, job creation, economic, political, gender equity and technology, science, and good citizenship are the primary goals of Myanmar's youth affairs policy. In order to harness the energizing potential of Myanmar's youth for the benefit of the community, the country's youth policy was developed in response to the efforts of elected officials, ministers, and other interested parties.

#### *The rationale of the Study*

After undergoing a series of political reforms in 2010, Myanmar has been working to create a democratic federal state. Government must investigate and consider the implications of the energetic power of youth in order to successfully implement this reform process over the long term. There are numerous ethnic groups in Myanmar, which contribute to a wide range of problems. Consequently, the ethnic region's youth attitude is a significant factor in regional development.

Youth involvement in society can be enriched by implementing community development activities through community participation (Allaman, 2012). Nations around the world have implemented youth affairs policies in order to better understand the potential of youth as a source of national energy and innovation. Since the presidency of U Thein Sein, the government in Myanmar has been encouraged to implement a youth affairs policy by active youth and other civilian service organizations. A national Myanmar youth forum was held in Yangon Division as a result of this enforcement. The statements made at this forum were crucial to the development of a youth policy. Young people's involvement in community leadership can be increased by effective government policies for young people.

There are numerous reasons why this study should be carried out. For this study, the apparent participation of youth in volunteer works and regional community development programs related to Myanmar's political, economic, and social reform process in recent years was the driving force. Young people have the most formal avenues for getting involved in community development when it comes to the political and legal framework. Despite the importance of a young person's attitude in initiating leadership activities, the opinions of their family, friends, and other peers can have a significant impact. In order for young people to effectively participate in regional development, they must have access to accurate and sufficient information about their community. In order to facilitate the exchange of information among young people, the use of social media is extremely beneficial. As a result, the purpose of this paper is to examine how social factors, social media use, and political and legal factors affect the community participation of Mon State youth affairs committee members.

The objectives of this study are:

To examine the community participation of youth affairs committee members in Mon State.

To analyze the effect of social media usage, social factors and political & legal factors on community participation of youth affairs committee members in Mon State.

## **Review of Literature and Conceptual Framework**

### *The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)*

Ajzen developed the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (1991). According to TPB, one of the most important antecedents of a specific behaviour is an individual's intention to perform that behaviour. Human behaviour can be predicted and explained in large part by looking at social factors, according to Ajzen (1991). Numerous behavioural studies have relied on the TPB to support their research on social media and leadership participation in relation to empirical evidence (Aminu, 2012; Gazzar, 2011; Kahne and Middaugh, 2012; Koe and Majid, 2014). Mohamad et al. (2009) and Pandian (2014) were the only studies to

use the concept of political-legal influence; however, in measuring leadership participation, both studies differ from the present because they used the Lewin leadership theory as well as the Ohio and Michigan leadership theories instead of the TPB. As a result, this research aims to examine the impact on the community of social media use, social factors, and political & legal factors. The primary focus of the theory of planned behaviour is on the individual's goals and actions. As a general rule, there are three factors that influence an individual's decision-making process. Behavioural control and attitude are examples of subjective norms. This is a critical point to make to understand how to apply TBP theory in this study. Public participation in politics and law is influenced by political and legal issues, as well as by people's use of social media. In terms of TPB subjective norms, all of these determining factors are considered together. Participation in local affairs is a common trait among today's youth.

### ***Community Participation***

Community participation by youth leaders is defined as actively participating in community development activities (McFarland and Thomas, 2006). On the other hand, a review of the literature uncovered a wide range of views on community participation, with the value of public participation widely acknowledged and the goals of community involvement clearly defined. According to Silong et al. (2008), "community involvement" includes planning and organizing charitable activities, such as volunteering or donating time to a cause, as well as religious or spiritual activities. The following sections describe the links between antecedent factors and community participation.

### ***Social Media Usage and Community Participation***

Internet-based tools and services that promote communication and collaboration among people are collectively known as social media. Increasing public awareness of the importance of civic participation through the use of new information and communication technologies (Ahmad et al., 2012). For young people to improve their leadership skills, it is clear that they can get the information they need by utilizing social media. A study by Chang et al. (2014) found that social media can influence various aspects of young people's decision-making. According to Kafai et al. (2012), work done in teams has a positive effect on social awareness and task performance. Young people's participation in their communities is significantly affected by their use of social media, according to previous research.

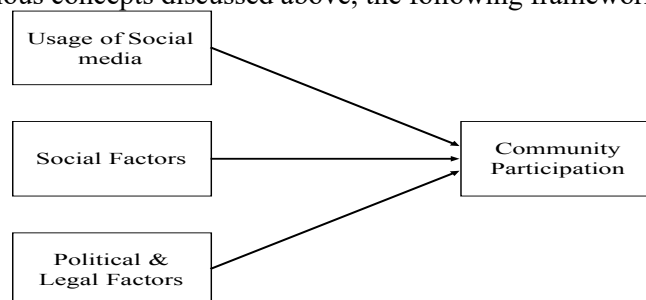
### ***Social Factors and Community Participation***

Various forms of social influence, such as socialization, conformity, peer pressure, leadership, obedience, and persuasion, are examples of social influence. In the presence of resources and opportunities like money, time, expertise, or the

necessary support of others, social attitude and personality traits play an important role in predicting human behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). So that youth can participate in their communities in the future, this promotes the development of social networks that allow people to exchange ideas, information, and inspiration with one another (McFarland and Thomas, 2006). Furthermore, in many developing countries, including Malaysia, social influence is linked to societal voices, such as drug abuse and sexual assault among youths (C.E.C., 2009). Parents and peers could influence a child's behaviour through positive social relationships (Blair et al., 2008; Asikhia, 2009). When it comes to group cohesion and individual strength, Oc and Bashshur (2013) found that followers have a direct impact on the behaviour of leaders. Social factors and youth community participation in Peninsular Malaysia were studied by Derweanna and coworkers (2017). According to the findings of this study, youth community involvement and social factors have a positive relationship.

### ***Political & Legal Factors and Community Participation***

Political-legal influences include public policies in the areas of democratization, freedom of expression, gender equality, and minority rights, which are all influenced by public policies (Kuhn, 2012). Many ethnic groups in Myanmar make it difficult for young people to participate in their communities, which could be affected by environmental factors such as political and legal ones. Youth may be able to practice the leadership activities described in previous studies if the political and legal framework is favourable. Political and legal influence on youth leadership activities is acknowledged by Allaman, 2012 (p. 1). These previous works of literature suggest that a robust political and legal framework is necessary to encourage young people to take on leadership roles in community development. In previous studies, it was found that tolerant racial, and ethnic minorities and a multi-party democracy could give young people the opportunity to work with adults and peers and gain the knowledge and resources they need to participate in leadership roles (Ahmad et al., 2012; Powers and Allaman, 2012). Based on previous research, this study acknowledges the importance of political-legal influence in community involvement. Based on these literature works and the various concepts discussed above, the following framework was developed:



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework (Source: Own Compilation, 2020)

In this study, the precedent factors for youth community participation were the use of social media, social factors, and political and legal factors. According to the previous literature review, there are positive relationships between usage of social media, social factors, political and & legal factors and community participation of youth. The majority of Myanmar's youth rely heavily on social media to gather the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to their community's development. The support of loved ones, friends, and colleagues can go a long way toward increasing an individual's willingness to get involved in their community. The government of Myanmar created a youth affairs policy to harness the power of the next generation for the benefit of the entire country.

### Research Design

Political and legal factors, as well as the use of social media, are all examined in this study to see how they impact access to information and the involvement of young people in leadership in Mon state.

**Population:** This study primarily focused on the members of the Mon state's Youth Affairs Committee. Government representatives and elective youth members make up the majority of the Youth Affairs Committee's membership. Young people were the primary focus of this research. The participants in this study were drawn in equal numbers from each tier of the Mon State Youth Affairs Committee. In the youth affairs committee's constitution, there are three levels: the township, the district, and the state. There are 150 township committee members, 30 district committee members, and 15 state committee members elected at the level of the elective committee. For this study, the sample size was calculated using a formula devised by Yamane (1967). The sample size for this study was determined to be 131 young people based on the calculation results. The data for this study were collected using a simple random sampling method. This study relied on a combination of in-person interviews and online surveys. Mon state's youth affairs committee members were studied using the multiple linear regression method to examine the influence of social media use, social factors, and political and legal factors on their community participation. The descriptive method was also used in this study to investigate the nature of each variable. This study's sampling frame is depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sampling Frame**

Layer of Youth Affairs Committee	No. of Committee Members	Percentage	Selected Sample size
Township level	150	77%	101
District level	30	15%	20
State Level	15	8%	10
Total	195	100%	131

Source: Survey Data (2020)

### *Questionnaire Design*

This study utilized a five-point Likert scale to elicit participants' thoughts and feelings about each of the investigated variables. Many questions were designed to reflect Myanmar's political, legal, and social context. seven-item Likert scales, adapted from Al-Rahmi and Othman, were used to assess the level of community involvement among the youth (2013). Pandian (2014) argues that four questions are included in each variable such as the use of social media, social factors, and political & legal factors. There were self-assessment questions on the survey, and it was offered in both Myanmar and English. For example, questions such as "I'm always involved in planning and organizing charity activities" and "I'm always involved in planning and organizing campaigns for volunteer work" were used to gather data.

### *Data analysis*

Reliability analysis was carried out on the information collected, which included data on social media use as well as social and political factors, information resources, and the involvement of youth in leadership. This study also utilized descriptive analysis to learn more about the participants' thoughts and feelings about the various variables. Another method employed in this study to examine the impact of political, social and media use on youth leadership participation was multiple linear regression. Each table shows the findings of this investigation. Each variable's standard deviation and Cronbach Alpha value are shown in Table 2 of this research.

**Table 2: Mean Value, Standard Deviation & Cronbach Alpha**

Variables	Mean Value	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items
Usage of Social Media	4.1	.757	.752	4
Social Factors	3.1	.904	.784	4
Political & Legal Factors	3.6	.794	.668	4

Source: Survey Data (2020)

Table 2 shows that Cronbach Alpha is greater than 0.7, which is considered a good result for the questionnaire's reliability (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Involvement in volunteerism and other extracurricular activities is at an all-time high on social media, as evidenced by the 4.1 average usage score. Social factors have a mean value of 3.1, which is slightly above the natural scale and indicates that family, friends, and other peer groups provide valuable suggestions and guidance for youth to practice their leadership activities in their respective communities. In terms of political and legal factors, the average is 3.6, which is

higher than the natural scale, indicating that well-established policies can help to increase the youth's ability to practice leadership activities.

**Table 3:** Mean Value of Community Participation

Sr.No.	Statement	Mean Value
1	Involved in planning and organizing charity activities.	3.3
2	Involved in planning and organizing sporting activities.	2.6
3	Involved in planning and organizing religious activities.	3.2
4	Involved in planning and organizing campaigns for volunteer works.	3.5
5	Gave ideas to associations for community development.	2.9
6	Involved in decision making of my club/ associations.	3.7
7	Performed the community development project.	3.5
	<b>Overall Mean Value</b>	<b>3.2</b>

As shown in Table 3, the average value of each statement was used to gauge the level of community involvement among members of Mon State's youth affairs committees. According to the highest mean value (3.7), the youth are actively involved in the decision-making process of their clubs and associations. The lowest mean value is 2.6, which indicates that youth in the community participate in very few sporting events. A total of 3.2 indicates that youth well-practiced leadership works for community volunteerism, political volunteerism, and other forms of community involvement.

The Youth Affair Committee Members' Community Participation Factors are to be examined.

The linear regression was used to examine the influence of preceding factors on the community participation of youth affairs committee members in Mon state. For this study, political and legal aspects, social factors, and social media use are the independent variables, while community participation is the dependent variable.

The linear regression model for the effect of antecedent factors on community participation is

$$Y_i = b_0 + b_1X_{1j} + b_2X_{2j} + b_3X_{3j} + e_i$$

Whereas :  $Y_i$  = mean of community participation  
 $X_{1j}$  = mean of social media usage  
 $X_{2j}$  = mean of social factors  
 $X_{3j}$  = means of political & legal factors

**Table 4:** Regression Analysis

Model 1	B	Std.Error	Sig.
Constant	.943	.343	.007



(Community participation)			
Social Media Usage	-.020	.077	.793
Social Factors	.441***	.065	.000
Political & Legal Factors	.279***	.077	.000
R Square	.422		
Adjusted R Square	.408		
F Value	30.905		

Source: Survey Data (2020)

Table 4 describes the output of regression analysis. The regression analysis method was applied to examine the effect of social media usage, social factors and political and legal factors on community participation of youth affairs committee members in Mon state. According to this analysis, social and political and legal factors positively affect community participation of youth affairs committee members in Mon State. From the statistical point of view, one unit increase in social, political, and legal factors will enhance the 0.441 and 0.279 level of community participation.

### Findings

In this study, there were two main goals. The first was an investigation into the level of community involvement among Mon State youth affairs committee members. Mon State's youth affairs committee members' participation in the community was studied as part of the second objective of this study. Based on these goals, logical conclusions were drawn. The overall average of community participation is 3.2, which is slightly above the natural scale. This shows that young people participate in community service activities, such as charitable work, sports, and volunteer work, on a limited basis. Volunteer campaigns and the decision-making process of their committees and representative organizations were found to be a major part of the work done by the committee members. In Mon State, youth affairs committee members are more likely to participate in community affairs because of the influence of social, political, and legal factors.

In the 99 percent confidence interval, the social factor coefficient (0.441) is statistically significant. At a 95% confidence level, the political and legal factors coefficient (0.279) is also significant. The findings show that respondents are primarily influenced by their family members, friends, and other social groups when it comes to engaging in community development works as volunteerism. Youth are encouraged to get involved in community development projects by their families, friends, teachers, and mentors. This shows that well-designed and formulated policies allow youth to participate in community development activities. The National League for Democracy (NLD) government in Myanmar formulated a youth affairs policy in 2017 that strongly supports valuable opportunities for young people to preserve their rights and engage in community development works.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Academic and practical implications are discussed in this section. Social media, societal factors, and political and legal considerations all play a role in this study's findings of the involvement of Mon State's youth affairs committee in community affairs. The theory of planned behaviour was used to build the conceptual framework for this research. Social media use, social factors, and political & legal factors are identified as the most important determinants of young people's willingness to get involved in their community, according to this study. This study should include additional factors under the assumptions of the theory of planned behaviour as additional antecedent factors.

To better understand how social media, societal factors, and political & legal considerations affect young people's willingness to volunteer in their community, this study examines these issues. For the focal Ministry concerned with youth affairs policies, this paper will provide useful information on how young people perceive policy initiatives aimed at them. After studying this study, the Mon state government should carefully analyze the findings so that they can design and implement effective youth affairs policies and programs to benefit the community. Youth affairs committee members in other states and divisions should conduct similar research to gain a deeper understanding of community participation in the future.

As a result of the research, these conclusions and discussions can be drawn. Social factors and political and legal factors are two of three factors that have a strong influence on community participation. Young people's involvement in their communities was bolstered by their families' support as well as their peers' encouragement and support. There are many ways in which a young person's social group can encourage him or her to participate in community development projects, such as volunteering, giving back to the community, and joining student unions. As a result of these organizations' pessimistic outlook on community participation, young people may be reluctant to get involved.

Effective government policies have long been known to significantly impact society's development by providing high-quality public services, enforcing the law, and so on. The public's interest in government policies is also a positive sign for community development projects. When it comes to political advancement and other social issues, youth are more interested in having fun than actually getting things done. The government of every country should therefore develop effective youth policies in order to extract the young people's power for community development.

Due to time and resource constraints, this study has many limitations. This study focuses primarily on the members of Myanmar's Mon State's youth affairs

committee. Additional studies should broaden the scope of this investigation to include people from other states, such as Rakhine, Shan, Kayan Kayar, and so on, as well as members of youth affairs committees. The conceptual framework should be strengthened by including more precedents factors in future research.

### Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Dr. Tin Win, Rector of the Yangon University of Economics, for acknowledging me to implement this study. My deepest thanks go to Professor Dr. Nu Nu Lwin, Head of Department, Department of Management Studies of the Yangon University of Economics, who gave the permission to complete this research. Finally, my special thanks go to the respondents of this study.

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