



Rural-Urban Disparities In Enrolment And Dropout Rates In Government Colleges Of Mizoram

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Abstract: Persistent rural-urban disparities in access to higher education and high dropout rates remain critical challenges in Mizoram's government colleges. Students from rural areas often encounter barriers such as limited academic resources, economic constraints, and inadequate institutional support, resulting in lower enrolment and higher dropout rates compared to their urban counterparts. This study investigated enrolment and dropout patterns in government colleges of Mizoram over five academic years, i.e., 2019 to 2024. The objectives were to determine the total student enrolment, analyse the distribution between rural and urban areas, and compare these patterns across the specified years. Additionally, the study examined the overall dropout rate and computed separate dropout rates for rural and urban students, followed by a comparative evaluation. Data were obtained from secondary sources, including the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) and state-level statistical abstracts. Descriptive statistics, trend analysis, and comparative measures were applied to assess enrolment dynamics and dropout patterns. The findings highlighted continuing inequities in access and retention, reinforcing the need for targeted policy measures to bridge rural-urban gaps and reduce dropout rates in Mizoram's government colleges.

Keywords: Higher education, rural enrolment, urban enrolment, dropout rate, enrolment disparity.

I.INTRODUCTION

Higher education is a critical driver of human capital development and social mobility. In India, access to education has expanded significantly, yet rural-urban disparities persist in terms of enrolment and retention. Mizoram, a state with distinct socio-cultural contexts, faces challenges of uneven distribution of resources between rural and urban areas, leading to gaps in participation rates in higher education. Students from rural areas often struggle with limited access to quality schools, economic constraints, and fewer academic opportunities, while their urban peers generally benefit from better institutional infrastructure and learning environments.

Government colleges in Mizoram serve as the backbone of higher education in the state, catering to both rural and urban populations. However, evidence suggests that disparities remain in both enrolment levels and dropout rates, raising concerns about equity and inclusivity in higher education.

The Directorate of Higher and Technical Education supervise higher education in Mizoram, which was established as a complete department in 1989 with its main office located at MacDonald Hill, Zarkawt. The department oversees university education, post-secondary technical training, diploma-level technical courses, and language enhancement. At present, it oversees 20 government colleges, 2 deficit colleges such as Aizawl Law College, two training institutions (B.Ed. and Hindi Training), and two polytechnic colleges.

Education in Mizoram has its origins in Christian missionaries, who began educational initiatives because the indigenous people did not possess a writing system prior to their arrival. Missionaries F.W. Savidge and J.H. Lorain created a Roman script for the Lushai language and inaugurated the first primary school on April 2, 1894. Advancement in education was initially gradual, with minimal governmental emphasis on expanding education past elementary stages. The initial high school appeared in 1944, whereas higher education started with the establishment of Aijal College (currently Pachhunga University College) in 1958 as a private initiative. In 1964, southern Mizoram saw the growth of higher education with a college founded in Lunglei.

Currently, Mizoram hosts 40 colleges that are affiliated with Mizoram University, along with one constituent college, Pachhunga University College, providing undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs across 39 departments within 10 schools of study. In 2021, around 26,748 students were registered in higher education institutions, marking an increase from 25,368 in 2020. Women's participation has increased, with the Gross Enrolment Ratio for females growing from 27.5% in 2020 to 33.2% in 2021.

Even with this advancement, obstacles persist, such as insufficient infrastructure in isolated regions and a shortage of specialized initiatives. Growth opportunities exist by enhancing digital education platforms and bolstering industry-academia collaborations to boost graduate employability and meet regional development demands.

Higher education is the backbone of the knowledge society. By nurturing critical minds, fostering innovation, and promoting equitable access to knowledge, it transforms individuals and societies. As the world continues to evolve, the synergy between higher education and the knowledge society will remain fundamental to building sustainable, inclusive, and resilient futures.

II.REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Agrawal (2014) examined rural and urban differences in educational attainment across India using Gini indices of education inequality. The study demonstrated that, although average attainment levels improved over time, rural populations consistently lagged behind urban populations in terms of access and opportunity. The study further revealed that inequality was not merely a function of aggregate enrolment but also shaped by differences in teacher distribution, institutional quality, and household socio-economic background. It also highlighted how structural disparities in educational opportunities reinforce persistent rural disadvantages despite national progress.

Borooah (2016) investigated inequality of access to higher education in India by analysing micro-data from the National Sample Survey. The study estimated the likelihood of enrolment in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes among individuals aged 18-22, controlling for socio-economic class, gender, marital status, and rural-urban location. Findings indicated that rural residence had a strong negative association with access to higher education, even when other demographic and economic factors were considered. The study emphasized that rural students were doubly disadvantaged by both geography and social background, suggesting that improving access requires multidimensional interventions.

Wells, et al. (2023) studied rural-nonrural disparities in college enrolment using a geography of opportunity framework. The study highlighted the role of socioeconomic status in mediating rural disadvantages, showing that low-income rural students were more likely to face barriers to enrolment than their higher-income rural counterparts. The findings challenged monolithic assumptions about rural students and suggested that disparities are best understood as an interaction of geographic and socio-economic factors. While conducted in a different national context, the study is relevant to Mizoram as it illustrates the necessity of considering both location and socio-economic background in designing policies to reduce dropout rates and bridge rural-urban gaps in higher education.

III.RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The importance of addressing disparities in higher education stems from both social justice and developmental perspectives. Disproportionate access to education reinforces cycles of inequality, particularly for students from rural areas who face economic, geographic, and infrastructural disadvantages. High dropout rates further exacerbate this inequality, limiting opportunities for upward social mobility and reducing the pool of skilled graduates essential for Mizoram's socio-economic development.

Previous research has indicated that states in Northeast India exhibit unique higher education challenges, including cultural diversity, geographical isolation, and infrastructural deficits (Singh and Sharma, 2018). However, empirical studies focusing specifically on Mizoram's government colleges remain limited. This study thus fills a research gap by systematically analysing enrolment and dropout data over a five-year period, highlighting rural-urban disparities and providing evidence-based recommendations.

IV.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To find out the total number of students enrolled in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024.
- 2) To identify the number of students enrolled from rural areas in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024.
- 3) To identify the number of students enrolled from urban areas in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024.
- 4) To compare the number of students enrolled from rural and urban areas in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024.
- 5) To examine the dropout rate of students in government colleges of Mizoram from 2019 to 2024.

V.METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design, using secondary data obtained from official records, including the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) and state-level statistical abstracts, supplemented by institutional data compiled from government colleges in Mizoram (AISHE, 2023).

Data were collected on:

- 1) Total student enrolment across government colleges (2019-2024).
- 2) Rural and urban enrolment distribution by year.
- 3) Dropout rates disaggregated by college and year.

Analytical techniques included descriptive statistics, percentage analysis, and comparative evaluation between rural and urban cohorts. Trends were mapped to identify disparities and shifts over time. The validity of findings was ensured by cross-verification with multiple official data sources.

5.1 Population

The population of the study includes all colleges in Mizoram.

No. of Government Colleges in Mizoram as on 2024	No. of Private Colleges in Mizoram as on 2024
21	14

Source: Statistical Data from Higher & Technical Education Department.

5.2 Sample

The sample of the study includes all 21 Government colleges in Mizoram.

VI. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Total number of students enrolled in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024.

Table 1

Total number of students enrolled in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024

Sl. No	NAME OF COLLEGE	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
		TT	%	TT	%	TT	%	TT	%	TT	%
1	GOVT AIZAWL COLLEGE	1236	9.39	1681	9.84	1961	11.43	2166	12.37	1856	11.94
2	GOVT AIZAWL NORTH COLLEGE	1222	9.29	1305	7.64	1355	7.78	1355	7.74	1245	8.01
3	GOVT AIZAWL WEST COLLEGE	873	6.63	823	4.81	977	5.69	1097	6.26	909	5.85
4	GOVT CHAMPHAI COLLEGE	630	4.79	688	4.02	834	4.86	836	4.77	740	4.76
5	GOVT HNAHTHIAL COLLEGE	120	0.91	135	0.79	182	1.06	178	0.92	143	0.92
6	GOVT HRANGBANA COLLEGE	1810	13.7	1985	11.62	2209	12.88	2229	12.73	1857	11.95
7	GOVT J BUANA COLLEGE	537	4.08	482	2.82	568	3.31	583	3.33	523	3.36
8	GOVT J THANKIMA COLLEGE	565	4.29	794	4.64	1028	5.99	1065	6.08	1083	6.97
9	GOVT JOHNSON COLLEGE	990	7.52	1167	6.83	1330	7.75	1184	6.76	926	5.91
10	GOVT KAMALANAGAR COLLEGE	359	2.73	374	2.18	334	1.94	414	2.36	370	2.83
11	GOVT KHAWZAWL COLLEGE	86	0.65	83	0.48	105	0.61	105	0.6	88	0.56
12	GOVT KOLASIB COLLEGE	594	4.51	653	3.82	753	4.39	738	4.21	662	4.26
13	GOVT LAWNGTLAI COLLEGE	402	3.05	276	1.61	376	2.19	390	2.22	393	2.53
14	GOVT MAMIT COLLEGE	113	0.85	155	0.9	167	0.97	158	0.9	133	0.85
15	GOVT SAIHA COLLEGE	345	2.62	382	2.23	550	3.2	541	3.09	489	3.14
16	GOVT SAITUAL COLLEGE	211	1.6	205	1.2	281	1.63	273	1.56	236	1.51

17	GOVT SERCHHIP COLLEGE	375	2.85	405	2.37	498	2.9	502	2.86	476	3.04
18	GOVT T. ROMANA COLLEGE	1126	8.56	1320	7.72	1396	9.55	1520	8.68	1360	8.76
19	GOVT ZAWLNUAM COLLEGE	53	0.4	60	0.35	90	0.52	91	0.52	82	0.52
20	GOVT ZIRTIRI RES.SC.COLLEGE	640	4.86	746	4.36	914	5.33	822	4.69	861	5.54
21	LUNGLEI GOVT COLLEGE	807	6.13	1029	6.02	1237	7.12	1251	7.14	1100	7.08
	TOTAL	12933		14748		17145		17498		15532	

As shown in Table 1, the total number of students enrolled in government colleges across Mizoram during the 2019-2020 academic session was 14,748. Among these, Government Hrangbana College recorded the highest enrolment with 1,985 students (13.46%), while Government Zawlnuam College reported the lowest with only 60 students (0.40%). In the following year, 2020-2021, enrolment rose to 17,159 students, with Government Hrangbana College again having the highest enrolment of 2,209 students (12.93%), and Government Mamit College registering the lowest with 87 students (0.50%).

In 2021-2022, the total enrolment further increased to 17,498 students. Government Hrangbana College maintained the highest enrolment with 2,229 students (12.74%), while Government Zawlnuam College had the lowest with 91 students (0.52%). During the 2022-2023 academic session, enrolment declined to 15,532 students. Once again, Government Hrangbana College recorded the largest share with 1,857 students (11.96%), whereas Government Zawlnuam College enrolled the smallest number at 82 students (0.52%).

Overall, the data indicate that between 2019 and 2024, the peak enrolment occurred in 2021-2022 with 17,498 students, while the lowest was observed in 2019-2020 with 12,933 students. Government Hrangbana College consistently registered the highest enrolments, reaching a maximum of 2,229 students in 2021–2022, whereas Government Zawlnuam College consistently remained at the lowest end, with the minimum enrolment of 53 students in 2019-2020.

6.2 Number of students enrolled from rural areas in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024.

Table 2

Number of students enrolled from rural areas in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024

YEAR	No. of Students
2019-2020	6247
2020-2021	8140
2021-2022	7262
2022-2023	8793
2023-2024	8503
Total	38945

Table 2 shows that the total number of students from rural areas enrolled to government colleges in Mizoram during the year 2019-2024 is 38945. The number of students enrolled to government colleges from rural areas is highest during 2022-2023 with 8793 students and lowest during 2019-2020 with 6247 students. During the academic year 2019-2020, 6247 students were enrolled to government colleges in Mizoram from rural areas, 8140 students in 2020-2021, 7262 students in 2021-2022, 8796 students in 2022-2023 and 8503 students during the year 2023-2024.

6.3 Number of students enrolled from urban areas in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024.

Table 3

Number of students enrolled from urban areas in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024

YEAR	No. of Students
2019-2020	6505
2020-2021	8939
2021-2022	8172
2022-2023	8691
2023-2024	6979
Total	39286

Table 3 shows that the number of students enrolled to government colleges in Mizoram from urban areas is highest during the year 2020-2021 with 8939 students and lowest during 2019-2020 with 6505 students. The total enrolment of students from urban areas to government colleges in Mizoram is 39286; 6505 students during 2019-2020 academic session, 8939 students during 2020-2021, 8172 number of students in 2021-2022, 8691 number of students during 2022-2023 and 6979 number of students during 2023-2024 academic session.

6.4 Comparison of the number of students enrolled from rural and urban areas in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024.

Table 4

Comparison of number of students enrolled from rural and urban areas in government colleges of Mizoram during 2019-2024

YEAR	RURAL	%	URBAN	%	TOTAL
2019-2020	6247	48.3	6505	50.29	12933
2020-2021	8140	55.19	8939	60.61	14748
2021-2022	7262	42.52	8172	47.85	17076
2022-2023	8793	50.25	8691	49.66	17498
2023-2024	8503	54.74	6979	44.93	15532

Table 4 shows that the total number of students enrolled from rural areas during the last five years 2019-2024 is 39113. 2022-2023 has the highest enrolment of students with 8793 and lowest during 2019-2020 with 6277 number of students. 12933 total number of students enrolled during the year 2019-2020 academic session, 6656 students with the percentage of 51.46 % enrolled from urban areas and 6277 with the percentage of 48.34% enrolled from rural areas. In 2020-2021 academic session 14748 total number of students enrolled to government colleges in Mizoram, 7632 students with the percentage of 51.74% enrolled from urban areas and 7166 students with the percentage of 48.25 % enrolled from rural areas.

During 2019-2024 academic session 38699 students enrolled in government colleges in Mizoram from urban areas. 2021-2022 has the highest enrolment during the last five years with 8741 with the percentage of 51.07 and lowest during 2019-2020 with 6656 with the percentage of 51.46. 12933 total number of students enrolled during the year 2019-2020, 6656 students enrolled from urban areas and 6277. 14748 numbers enrolled during the year 2020-2021, 7632 number of students enrolled from urban areas and 7166 from rural areas. 17115 total numbers of students enrolled during the year 2021-2022, 8741 enrolled from urban areas and 8374 enrolled from rural areas. 2022-2023, 8691 from urban areas and 8793 enrolled from rural areas and 15532 number of students enrolled during 2023-2024, 6974 students enrolled from urban areas and 8503 enrolled from rural areas.

6.5 Dropout rate of students in government colleges of Mizoram from 2019 to 2024.**Table 5****Dropout rate of students in government colleges of Mizoram from 2019 to 2024**

Sl. No.	Name of College	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
		TT	%	TT	%	TT	%	TT	%	TT	%
1	Govt. Aizawl College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Govt. Aizawl North College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	135	10.84
3	Govt. Aizawl West College	6	0.69	7	0.85	14	1.43	0	0	0	0
4	Govt. Champhai College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	3.38
5	Govt. Hnahthial College	4	3.33	5	3.7	4	2.2	12	6.74	5	3.5
6	Govt. Hrangbana College	5	0.28	4	0.2	0	0	3	0.13	1	0.01
7	Govt. J Buana College	14	2.61	16	3.32	15	2.64	0	0	38	7.27
8	Govt. J Thankima College	12	2.12	14	0.02	18	1.75	22	2.07	54	0.05
9	Govt. Johnson college	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	1.84
10	Govt. Kamalanagar College	18	5.01	19	5.08	19	5.69	21	5.07	20	5.41
11	Govt. Khawzawl College	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.95	0	0
12	Govt. Kolasib College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	Govt. Lawngtlai College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	Govt. Mamit College	5	4.42	2	1.29	3	0.02	2	1.27	2	1.5
15	Govt. Saiha College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	Govt. Saitual College	4	1.9	3	1.46	2	0.71	4	1.47	5	2.12
17	Govt. Serchhip College	12	3.2	11	2.72	8	1.61	10	1.99	7	1.47
18	Govt. T. Romana College	11	0.98	10	0.76	9	0.64	10	0.66	6	0.44
19	Govt. Zawlnuam College	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6.6	0	0
20	Govt Zirtiri Res.Sc. College	6	0.94	5	0.67	2	0.22	0	0	12	1.4
21	Lunglei Govt. College	58	7.19	68	6.61	76	6.14	30	2.4	132	12
	Total	154		164		166		121		459	

Table 5 shows that the total number of dropout students is highest during the year 2023-2024 with 459 students and lowest during the 2022-2023 with 121 students. 154 students dropped out during the year 2019-2020, 164 students dropped out during the year 2020-2021, 166 students during the year 2021-2022, 121 students during the year 2022-2023 and 459 students during the year 2023-2024.

Institutional analysis shows distinct contrasts. Government Aizawl College, Government Kolasib College, Government Lawngtlai College, and Government Saiha College reported zero dropouts across all five years.

Lunglei Government College emerged as the institution with the highest dropout figures overall, with numbers ranging from 58 students (7.19%) in 2019–2020 to a striking 132 students (12%) in 2023–2024. Similarly, Government Aizawl North College, which reported no dropouts in earlier years, experienced a sudden spike in 2023–2024 with 135 students (10.84%), representing one of the sharpest increases in attrition across all institutions.

Moderate yet consistent dropout rates were observed in colleges such as Government Kamalanagar College, where annual attrition remained between 18 and 21 students, corresponding to around 5% of enrolments across the years. Government Hnahthial College also recorded a steady dropout pattern, fluctuating between 3.3% in 2019–2020 and 6.7% in 2022–2023.

Smaller institutions, including Government J. Buana College, Government J. Thankima College, and Government Serchhip College, reported varying dropout levels, with figures peaking in 2023-2024. Government J. Buana College jumped to 38 students (7.27%), Government J. Thankima College to 54 students, and Government Serchhip College maintained an average of 10-12 students per year.

By contrast, Government Zawlnuam College recorded no dropouts in most years but spiked to 6 students (6.6%) in 2022-2023. Similarly, Government Zirtiri Residential Science College showed fluctuating figures, from 6 students (0.94%) in 2019-2020 to 12 students (1.4%) in 2023-2024.

VII. MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are:

- 1) Enrolment increased from 12,933 students in 2019-2020 to a peak of 17,498 in 2021-2022, before declining to 15,532 in 2023-2024.
- 2) Govt. Hrangbana College consistently recorded the highest enrolments, while smaller rural colleges such as Govt. Zawlnuam College recorded the lowest.
- 3) Rural enrolment rose from 6,247 (2019-2020) to 8,793 (2022-2023), totalling 38,945 students over five years.
- 4) Urban enrolment rose from 6,505 (2019-2020) to a high of 8,939 (2020-2021), totalling 39,286 students across the period.
- 5) While urban enrolments slightly outnumbered rural ones, rural participation showed sharper fluctuations, suggesting vulnerability to external factors such as economic conditions
- 6) Dropouts remained relatively low until 2023-2024, when they spiked to 459 students, compared to just 121 in 2022-2023.
- 7) The highest dropout was reported at Lunglei Government College (132 students, 12%).

- 8) Rural colleges generally faced higher dropout percentages, particularly in smaller institutions with limited resources.
- 9) Urban students demonstrated relatively stable enrolment but moderate dropout levels.
- 10) Rural students exhibited growing enrolment but faced higher dropout vulnerability, especially in years with economic or infrastructural disruptions.

VIII. DISCUSSION

The analysis of enrolment and dropout rates in government colleges of Mizoram from 2019 to 2024 reveals important insights into the persistent rural-urban disparities that continue to shape higher education outcomes in the state. While overall enrolment increased across the five years, peaking in 2021-2022, fluctuations in rural enrolment indicate structural vulnerabilities that align with earlier findings on regional and socio-economic inequalities in education. As Agrawal (2014) noted, rural populations in India face systemic disadvantages in educational access due to inadequate infrastructure, uneven resource allocation, and lower household incomes. These disadvantages are clearly reflected in Mizoram, where rural enrolments, though growing, remain unstable compared to urban enrolments.

The study also found that dropout rates spiked significantly in 2023-2024, particularly in colleges located in rural or semi-urban areas. This pattern resonates with Borooah's (2016) observation that rural residence, compounded by socio-economic background, negatively affects continuity in higher education. The data suggest that while enrolment initiatives may have expanded opportunities for rural students, the lack of sustained institutional and financial support contributes to their greater likelihood of withdrawing from college before completing their programmes. High dropout rates at institutions such as Lunglei Government College highlight the need for localized interventions that address both academic preparedness and economic barriers.

Furthermore, Wells, Chen, and Bettencourt's (2023) insights into the interaction of geography and socio-economic status provide a valuable perspective for interpreting Mizoram's trends. Their argument that rurality alone does not fully explain educational disparities, but rather interacts with socioeconomic conditions, applies directly to the Mizoram context. Many rural students in the state come from lower-income families, amplifying their risk of dropout due to financial stress, limited access to learning resources, and fewer opportunities for remedial or academic support. Conversely, urban students with similar socioeconomic challenges also face difficulties, suggesting that interventions must be sensitive to both geographic and economic contexts.

The findings emphasize that addressing rural-urban disparities in Mizoram's higher education requires a multifaceted strategy. Beyond expanding enrolment, policymakers must focus on reducing dropout by strengthening financial aid programmes, investing in rural college infrastructure, and implementing academic support mechanisms. Equally important is recognising that socio-economic disadvantage cuts across both rural and urban groups, meaning that equity-focused policies must target vulnerable students regardless of location. By situating Mizoram's case within national and international literature, this study

demonstrates the urgency of holistic approaches to bridging rural-urban gaps and ensuring equitable participation in higher education.

IX. CONCLUSION

This study examined rural-urban disparities in enrolment and dropout rates across government colleges in Mizoram during the period 2019-2024. The findings revealed that while overall enrolment expanded and rural participation improved over the years, significant disparities remain in both access and retention. Urban students consistently maintained stable enrolment trends, whereas rural students experienced sharper fluctuations, highlighting their vulnerability to economic and structural constraints. Dropout rates, particularly the sharp increase in 2023-2024, underscore the fragility of retention efforts and the continuing disadvantages faced by students in rural and resource-limited contexts.

When interpreted in light of existing literature, the results confirm that rural-urban inequalities are deeply embedded in broader socio-economic and institutional factors (Agrawal, 2014; Borooah, 2016; Wells et al., 2023). These disparities suggest that expanding access alone is insufficient; targeted interventions are needed to support continuity and successful completion of higher education. Such measures include strengthening financial assistance schemes, improving the quality of infrastructure in rural colleges, and designing academic support services to meet the needs of disadvantaged students.

In conclusion, the study highlights that bridging rural-urban gaps in Mizoram's higher education system requires a comprehensive approach that integrates equity, quality, and inclusivity. By addressing both geographical and socio-economic dimensions of inequality, policymakers and educational institutions can reduce dropout rates and foster a more balanced and just higher education landscape in the state.

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