

Social Protection Programme and Political Participation in Pakistan

M Zafar Khan Safdar*, Hazir Ullah†, Husnul Amin‡

Abstract

This paper analyzes effects of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) on the voting behavior and political participation of BISP beneficiaries. The data for the study come from eight districts of Pakistan: Rajanpur & Kasur from Punjab; Lasbella & Naseerabad from Balochistan; Kohistan & Lakki Marwat from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; and Thatta & Nawabshah from Sindh. These districts were selected from the poverty profile maintained by the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) with the help of a proportionate random sampling technique. A sample of 396 respondents were included in the study. A well-structured questionnaire was administered to measure the response of the respondents and pre-tested from 30 respondents. The study findings revealed that the socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiaries vary from respondent to respondent across the selected districts. The tested model showed that voting behavior along with political awareness, empowerment, and change in local politics had significant effects on political participation among beneficiaries. The overall conclusion that we reach from the data is that BISP cash transfer has affected the basic form of voting behaviour and political participation of the beneficiaries.

Keywords: Voting Behaviour, Political Awareness, Political Empowerment, BISP Cash Transfer, Political Participation

Introduction

Over the last twenty years, social protection and conditional cash transfer programmes have become the main strategies to alleviate poverty and to politically empower the disadvantaged class. Social protection programs and their effects on electoral behaviors and political participation is an established area of social research in Political Science and Political Sociology (Battiston & Luconi, 2020; Phillips & Lee, 2018; Shoukat & Gomez, 2018). A considerable number of studies have been carried out on the political aspect of these programmes in different socio-cultural contexts (Chang, 2018; Mangi, Soomro, & Larik, 2021; Mushtaq & Mirza, 2021). Studies in this domain have uncovered several explicit and implicit effects of social protection programs, including people's political participation and electoral behaviors in different parts of the world (Krawczyk, 2021; Mangi, Shah, & Ali Soomro, 2019; Vasilopoulos, 2018). The topic, however, has not received due academic attention in the context Pakistan (Hussain, Sajid, & Jullandhry, 2018; Mangi et al., 2019). This study, thus, is an attempt to explore the direct and indirect effects of BISP's cash transfer on voting behavior and political participation of BISP beneficiaries. From the very outset of the BISP, it is argued the programme aims to gain political mileage. Bold assertions have been made by the critics questioning the title of the programme, i.e., 'Benazir Income Support Programme.' It is a political business on the state's expenses. The programme, no doubt, is part of the political economy and need to be studied with academic lens as considerably less research available on comprehension of its effects on voting behaviour and political participation. This study, thus, explores impact of BISP on the voting behavior and political participation among BISP cash beneficiaries in Pakistan.

The Context of Study

This study intends to evaluate voting behavior and political participation among BISP cash beneficiaries in Pakistan. It is pertinent to mention here that BISP is the core Social Protection Programme (SPP) in Pakistan. It is among the largest social safety nets in South Asia serving 5.4 million registered beneficiaries (Mangi et al., 2019; Saud, 2020; Tunio & Nabi, 2021). The program was launched in 2008 to provide a minimum income package to the poorest of the poor segment of society and protect them against chronic and transient poverty (Mangi et al., 2021). BISP provides unconditional cash transfers (UCT) to its registered beneficiaries, purely fixed at a value of PKR ten

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thousand per month, increased to one thousand and two hundred per month in July in the year 2013, and then increased to one thousand and five hundred per month in July 2014, and then increased to above fifteen thousand per month in July 2016. The cash is delivered quarterly and the vast majority of beneficiaries now receive the cash through online transactions. The program is both applauded and criticized by the government, its allies and the opposition. There have been allegations of favoritism. The allegations come both from the opposition as well as the government's allies. It is asserted that the initiators of the Benazir Income Support Programme have recruited supporters and followers of the Pakistan People's Party. Many people from government and civil society accuse the founders of BISP of using the program as a political tool to gain popularity and keep their vote bank intact since its inception in 2008. It is argued that the BISP should have focused on social protection, and not political popularity. These assertions, accusations, and speculations lead to serious questions i.e. do the cash flow to blue-eyed voters? However, this study mainly focuses on and to examine voting behavior and political empowerment among BISP cash beneficiaries in Pakistan.

Review of Literature

Recent scholarship has examined voting behavior and political participation (Chang, 2018; Kitanova, 2020; Saud, 2020). Voting behavior is considered an important component of political participation in democratic countries (Battiston & Luconi, 2020; Daoust & Péloquin-Skulski, 2021; Haokip, 2020; Stadelmann-Steffen & Gerber, 2020). Similarly, these scholars have further mentioned in their studies that in a democratic country, due to political participation people secure their rights (Del Monte, Moccia, & Pennacchio, 2019; Mushtaq & Mirza, 2021). These researchers concluded in their studies that voting behavior plays important role in the political participation of the people. It has been further argued that voting behavior is crucial to political participation (Arkilic, 2021; Peltoniemi, 2018; Shoukat & Gomez, 2018). Scholars define political participation differently and having different meanings from political participation (Krawczyk, 2021; Phillips & Lee, 2018; Vasilopoulos, 2018). Hence, there is no agreement on the definition of political participation. Every scholar defines it differently. For example, it refers to the participation of people in different activities as mentioned here like voting, campaigning, contesting elections, meetings, and so on (Mangi et al., 2019; Shahzad & Omar, 2021; Vestergaard, 2021). Similarly, it also refers to all those actions and responsibilities that are political (Karreth, 2018b; Mangi et al., 2019). On the other hand, according to Kaufman (2019), political participation means active participation of the workers in the activities such as casting votes, contesting elections, and protesting. For example, the participation and easy access to all available activities that are political (Mangi et al., 2021; Schäfer, Roßteutscher, & Abendschön, 2020).

It is important to discuss that both political participation and voting behavior are interlinked concepts and people use these in the same context, but both are different (Asingo, 2018; Omelicheva & Ahmed, 2018; Shineman, 2020). As a matter of fact, an election in a democracy without political participation can hardly be imagined (Brasher, 2020; Yu & Shen, 2021). Hence, political participation explains the willingness and forceful participation of the public in the political environment of a country (Hussain et al., 2018; Pirro & Portos, 2021; Zaslove, Geurkink, Jacobs, & Akkerman, 2021). This signals to an important aspect that political participation actually means willing participation instead of forceful one (Borg & Azzopardi, 2021; Marx & Nguyen, 2018; Tunio & Nabi, 2021). Similarly, Wang, Weng, and Tsai (2019) consider this a body of rights and duties that are carried in an organized way.

In a similar fashion, Ting and Wan Ahmad (2021) considered political participation a process that may affect and influence all spheres of government including both which are directly linked to the public sector as well those linked indirectly. Further, it has been observed that it also has an impact on the decision and policy-making process of the government (Häusermann, Kurer, & Wüest, 2018; Laxer, Reitz, & Simon, 2020; Rudolph & Kuhn, 2018). Political participation and voting are extremely important aspects of political engagement (Grad, Gherghina, & Ivan, 2020; McDonnell, 2020; Oskooii & Dana, 2018). Apart from other aspects, the right to vote is the most important and dominant one (Karakaya & Glazier, 2019; Portos, Bosi, & Zamponi, 2020; Reichert, 2018).

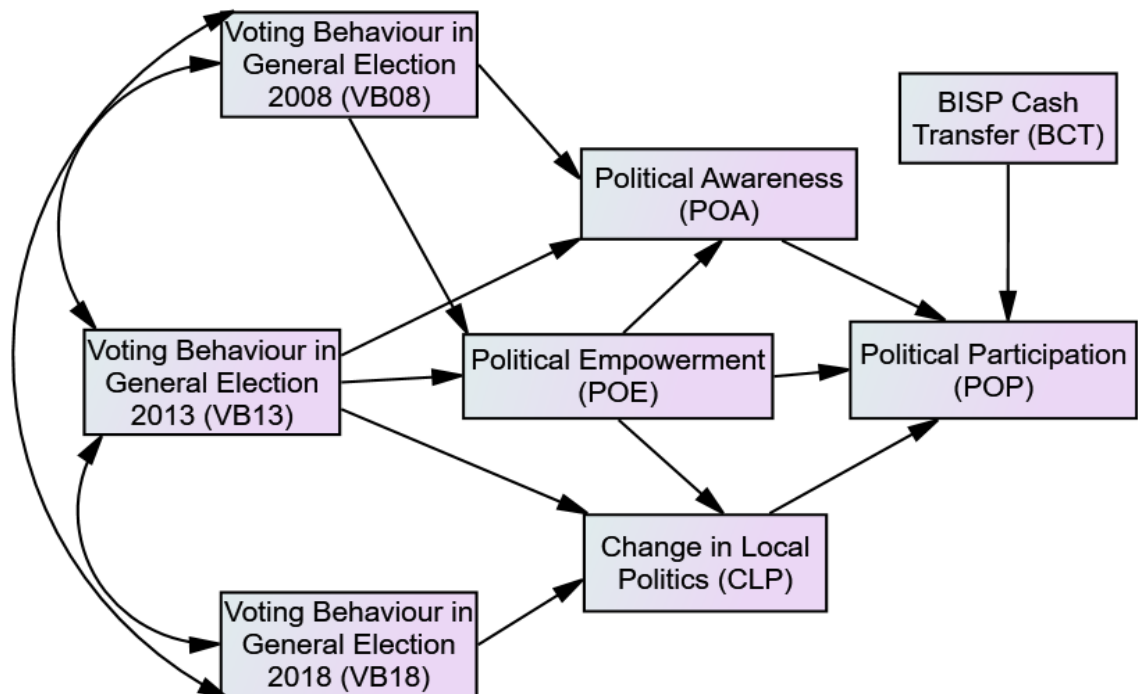
It has also been noted that one's voting preference and choice is influenced by several factors as investigated by various models including sociological, rational choice, and party identification

(Deimel, Hoskins, & Abs, 2020; Kolstad & Wiig, 2019; Reichert, 2021). Voting behavior is thus based on various social factors such as ethnicity, race, class, gender, religious affiliation, educational background, occupation, social status, geography, and regional ties or identities (Chunly, 2019; Fossati & Martinez i Coma, 2020; Karreth, 2018a; Müller, 2018). Similarly, the rational choice model is frequently used model, which offer people to make their choices on purely and originally rational and logical foundations (Jaca & Torneo, 2021; Salvati, 2019; Ting & Wan Ahmad, 2021).

According to rational choice, the voter is always considered an active member who always likes to contest elections in a more calculated way (Azabar & Thijssen, 2021; Bjarnøe, de Vreese, & Albæk, 2020). Those who cast vote are originally customers that look to the benefits and durability of the products before buying these products (Coates, Fahrner, & Pawlowski, 2021; Saud, Ida, & Mashud, 2020; Sheppard & Beauregard, 2018). Thus, in other way preferences of voter's party model of identification is also playing an important role where voters have this idea of self-identification with the affiliated political group and give their faithfulness by backing and supporting it (Belchior, Azevedo, Lisi, & Abrantes, 2018; Gorina & Agadjanian, 2019; Kim & Vang, 2021).

It is yet to be established whether political outcomes are evaluated by the choices of voters or political parties determined these (Halim, Mohamad, Dauda, Azizan, & Akanmu, 2021; Tsai, Tan, & Jung, 2019). The stated uncertainty concerns the proposed indicator in this bond (Dobbs, 2021; Peltoniemi, 2018; Shoukat & Gomez, 2018). It is argued here that a huge body of scholarship is available that explain the mechanism of voting behaviors (Mangi et al., 2021; Vasilopoulos, 2018; Vestergaard, 2021). The simplest model stresses on the interest of voters, which are materialistic in nature (Kaufman, 2019; Stadelmann-Steffen & Gerber, 2020; Vestergaard, 2021). Therefore, voters are determined to advocate all those parties that only represent a little economic interest (Borg & Azzopardi, 2021; Karakaya & Glazier, 2019; Pirro & Portos, 2021). Based on the review of literature, we developed the following conceptual model to employ structural equation model to measure the direct and indirect effects of the model;

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Model 1



The Data and Methods

The current study employed a quantitative study design using a sample from eight Pakistani districts. The selected districts are Rajanpur and Kasur from Punjab; Labella and Naseerabad from Balochistan; Kohistan and Lakki Marwat from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; and Thatta and Nawabshah from

Sindh. These districts were selected from the poverty profile maintained by the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) with the help of a proportionate random sampling technique. A sample of 396 respondents was proportionally allocated to all districts who participated in this study. A well-structured questionnaire was administered to measure the response of the respondents using an attitudinal scale of (dis)agreement. The scale consisted of eight variables. Among these, three were independent variables such as a) voting behaviour in general election 2008, b) voting behaviour in general election 2013, and c) voting behaviour in general election 2018. There was one dependent variable i.e., political participation. Moreover, the model used three path variables named as a) political awareness, b) political empowerment, and c) change in local politics. Whereas, BISP cash transfer was used as an intervening variable in the model. These all variables were measured using an attitudinal scale of (dis)agreement. The confirmed factors from CFA were used to test the model. Furthermore, the direct and indirect effects of the model are depicted in the conceptual framework. Similarly, the scale was pre-tested from 30 respondents and the value of Cronbach's Alpha was ranging from 0.730 to 0.933 and overall was 0.904. The collected data was analyzed in line with the quantitative data analysis technique using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results and Discussion

This section provides the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, direct, and indirect effects of the model along statistical analysis.

Socio-economic Characteristics: Table 1 depicted the geographic location, province, gender, and family type of respondents. It showed that 86.9 percent of the respondents were from rural & 13.1 percent of them belonged to urban geographical locations. Moreover, 72.2 percent of the BISP cash receivers were from Punjab, 11.4 percent were from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and 18.4 percent of them were from Sindh province. It was pertinent to mention here that 98.7 percent of the respondents were female and only 1.3 percent of them were male. This table also described that 59.6 percent of the respondents were residing in a joint family system, 26.8 percent of them had nuclear family and only 13.6 percent of them were living in extended family type. It argued that most of the respondents were from rural geographical backgrounds, from Punjab province, were females, and belonged to joint family type.

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by their area, province, gender, and family type

The residential area of the respondent			Gender of the respondent		
Area	Frequency	Percentage	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	344	86.9	Male	05	01.3
Urban	52	13.1	Female	391	98.7
Total	396	100.0	Total	396	100.0
Province of the respondent			Family type of respondent		
Punjab	278	70.2	Nuclear	106	26.8
KP	45	11.4	Joint	236	59.6
Sindh	73	18.4	Extended	54	13.6
Total	396	100.0	Total	396	100.0

Table 2 revealed the occupation, number of children, monthly income, and marital status of the respondents. It reported that about half (49.5 %) of the respondents were housewives and only 1.8 percent of them were working in the field of handcrafting, and running kiosks for their livelihood. Moreover, a smaller proportion of the respondents were doing agricultural work, private jobs, and labour activities in their respective fields. It was depicted that 87.4 percent of the respondents had up to 10000 (PKR) monthly income. Data in the table also revealed that 59.1 percent of the respondents had three to four children and only a small proportion of the respondents had no child. Similarly, data also showed that 57.6 percent of the respondents were married and only a small proportion of them was single and divorces. However, 26.0 percent of them were widows.

Direct Effects of the Model: The direct effects of the model were presented in table 3. Moreover, the following five hypotheses were tested based on the direct effects of the model.

Hypothesis 1: There was a direct effect of voting behaviour in the general election 2008 and 2013 on political empowerment among BISP cash receivers.

The results supported hypothesis 1 that the voting behaviour in general elections 2008 and 2013 had direct effects on political empowerment among BISP cash receivers. The statistical results

showed in the Table confirmed the hypothesis. The calculated value of voting behaviour in general election 2008 ($\beta = .150$, $p\text{-value} = .005$) and voting behaviour in general election 2013 ($\beta = .170$, $p\text{-value} = .001$) proved the direct effects on political empowerment among BISP cash receivers. This study's findings aligned with the study findings of Battiston and Luconi (2020). Similarly, several studies have also been conducted on social safety networks (Asingo, 2018; Mangi et al., 2021; Vestergaard, 2021). Further, the study findings are similar to the study findings of Shoukat and Gomez (2018).

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents by their occupation, children, monthly income, and marital status

The main occupation of the respondents			No. of children of the respondents		
Type	Frequency	Percentage	Number	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculturist	24	06.1	No child	02	00.5
Private employee	06	01.5	1 - 2	93	23.5
Laborer	93	23.5	3 - 4	234	59.1
Unemployed	70	17.7	5 - 6	54	13.6
Housewife	196	49.5	7 - 8	12	03.0
Hand cart/Kiosk/Thara	07	01.8	8+	01	00.3
Total	396	100.0	Total	396	100.0
Monthly income of the respondents (Rs.)			Marital status of the respondents		
Up to 10000	346	87.4	Single	04	01.0
10001 – 20000	28	07.1	Married	228	57.6
20001 – 30000	05	01.3	Separated	45	11.4
40001 – 50000	01	00.3	Divorced	16	04.0
50001 & Above	16	04.0	Widow	103	26.0
Total	396	100.0	Total	396	100.0

Hypothesis 2: There was a direct effect of voting behaviour in general election 2018, 2013 and political empowerment on change in local politics among BISP cash receivers.

The results in the table asserted that voting behaviour in general election 2018, 2013 and political empowerment had direct effects on change in local politics among BISP cash receivers. The results presented in table 3 illustrated the confirmation of the hypothesis. The values described in the table showed voting behaviour in general election 2018 ($\beta = .175$, $p\text{-value} = .000$), voting behaviour in general election 2013 ($\beta = .394$, $p\text{-value} = .005$) and political empowerment ($\beta = .375$, $p\text{-value} = .000$) had direct effects on change in local politics among BISP cash receivers. The results of this study are similar to the results of Reichert (2018). Similarly, several study findings are aligned with the study findings of several researchers in terms of political awareness including Reichert (2021), Kolstad and Wiig (2019), and Yu and Shen (2021).

Hypothesis 3: There was a direct effect of voting behaviour in general election 2008, 2013 and political empowerment on political awareness among BISP cash receivers.

Statistical data presented in table 3 also revealed that voting behaviour in general elections 2008, 2013, and political empowerment had direct effects on political awareness among BISP cash receivers. The results confirmed the alternate hypothesis and proved that there was direct effect of voting behaviour in general election 2008 ($\beta = -.481$, $p\text{-value} = .000$), voting behaviour in general election 2013 ($\beta = .322$, $p\text{-value} = .000$) and political empowerment ($\beta = .475$, $p\text{-value} = .000$) on political awareness among BISP cash receivers. Moreover, these results had also been supported by the findings of Coates et al. (2021). Further, the study findings of several types of research also supported the argument that BISP cash transfer has favorable effects on the political empowerment of the beneficiaries including the study of Bjarnø et al. (2020), Del Monte et al. (2019), and Chang (2018).

Hypothesis 4: There was a direct effect of political awareness and change in local politics on political participation among BISP cash receivers.

Data presented in table 3 reported that political awareness and change in local politics had direct effects on political participation among BISP cash receivers. The results supported the alternate hypothesis. It is stated that political awareness ($\beta = -.363$, $p\text{-value} = .000$) and change in local politics ($\beta = .199$, $p\text{-value} = .000$) on political participation among BISP cash receivers. Hence, hypothesis 4 was accepted. It has been observed that several studies revealed that local politics has been changing

rapidly (Asingo, 2018; Laxer et al., 2020; Marx & Nguyen, 2018). Several studies have been conducted and are aligned with the study finding including the study of Coates et al. (2021), Gorina and Agadjanian (2019), and Karakaya and Glazier (2019). However, the study findings are dissimilar to the study findings in terms of change in local politics including Vasilopoulos (2018), Battiston and Luconi (2020), and Jaca and Torneo (2021).

Hypothesis 5: There was a direct effect of BISP cash transfer and political empowerment on political participation among BISP cash receivers.

The results in the table favored that hypothesis 5 that BISP cash transfer and political empowerment had direct effects on political participation among BISP cash receivers. Therefore, hypothesis 5 was confirmed. It is stated that BISP cash transfer ($\beta = .112$, $p\text{-value} = .015$) and political empowerment ($\beta = .228$, $p\text{-value} = .000$) on political participation among BISP cash receivers.

Table 3 also described that there were significant covariances between voting behaviour in the general election 2013 and voting behaviour in the general election 2018. Similarly, results also supported that there were significant covariances between voting behaviour in the general election of 2008 and voting behaviour in the general election of 2013. Moreover, the covariance was also confirmed between voting behaviour in general election 2008 and voting behaviour in general election 2018. Likewise, the variances of the variable also confirmed the hypotheses and co-variances in table 3. In addition, the Chi-square value (Chi-square = 194.009, $df = 13$, $p\text{-value} = .000$), GFI (.909), AGFI (.903), CFI (.901), and RMSEA (.068) confirmed the model.

Table 3: Regression Weights, Covariances, and Variances of Model (n = 396)

Variables			Standardized Regression Weights	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
VB08	--->	POE	.150	.187	.066	2.807	.005
VB13	--->	POE	.170	.135	.042	3.196	.001
VB18	--->	CLP	.175	.252	.063	3.978	***
VB13	--->	CLP	.394	.427	.049	8.760	***
VB08	--->	POA	-.481	-.957	.086	-11.115	***
VB13	--->	POA	.322	.406	.055	7.423	***
POE	--->	POA	.473	.755	.064	11.702	***
POE	--->	CLP	.375	.515	.051	10.160	***
POA	--->	POP	-.363	-.262	.037	-7.059	***
CLP	--->	POP	.199	.166	.044	3.757	***
BCT	--->	POP	.112	.067	.027	2.439	.015
POE	--->	POP	.228	.261	.065	4.034	***
Covariances							
VB13	<-->	VB18		23.422	2.348	9.975	***
VB08	<-->	VB13		14.154	1.847	7.662	***
VB08	<-->	VB18		3.194	1.296	2.465	.014
Variances							
VB08				21.445	1.526	14.053	***
VB13				53.513	3.808	14.053	***
VB18				30.447	2.167	14.053	***
e2				30.918	2.200	14.053	***
e4				123.735	8.805	14.053	***
e1				50.807	3.615	14.053	***
e3				31.963	2.274	14.053	***
e5				36.705	2.612	14.053	***
Chi-square = 194.009, $df = 13$, $p\text{-value} = .000$							
Model fit summary = GFI = .909, AGFI = .903, CFI = .901, RMSEA = .068							
Total number of observations = 396							

Indirect Effects of the Model: There were five indirect effects of the model presented in table 4. The indirect effects of the said model were presented as follows.

Hypothesis 6: There was an indirect effect of voting behaviour in the general election 2018 on political participation through the mediation of change in local politics among BISP cash receivers.

The results presented in the Table 4 showed the indirect effects of the model. Data in the table revealed that voting behaviour in the general election of 2018 had an indirect effect on political participation through the mediation of change in local politics among BISP cash receivers. Hence, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (0.042) was significant with a p-value (0.005) confirmed hypothesis 6.

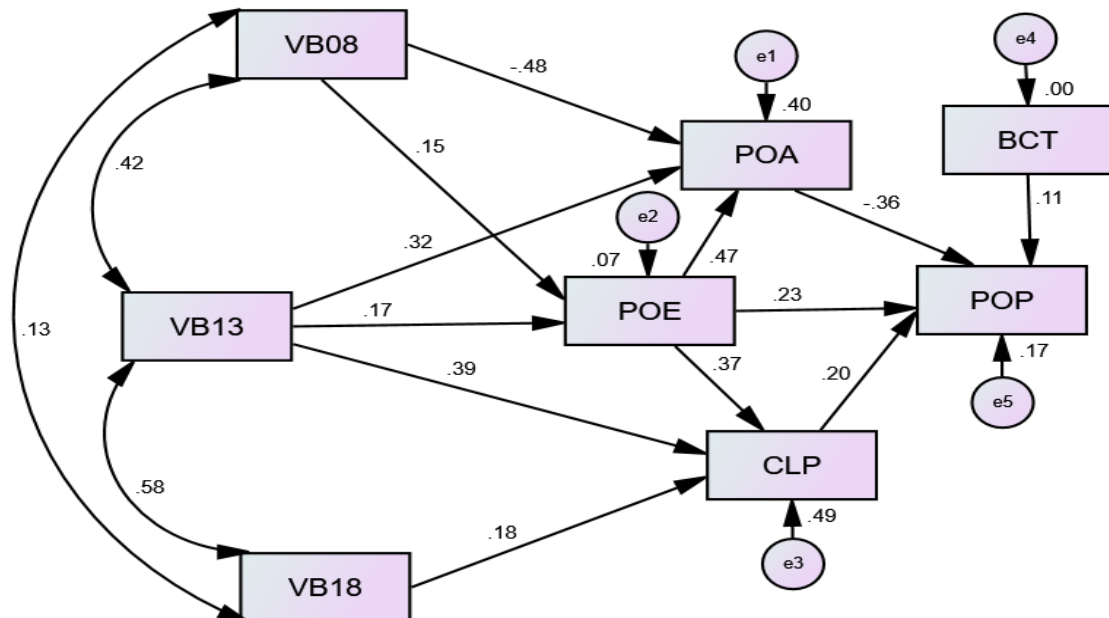
Hypothesis 7: There was an indirect effect of voting behaviour in the general election 2013 on change in local politics through the mediation of political empowerment among BISP cash receivers.

Data in the table 4 showed that voting behaviour in the general election 2013 had an indirect effect on change in local politics through the mediation of political empowerment among BISP cash receivers. Henceforth, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (0.069) was significant with a p-value (0.002) confirmed hypothesis 7.

Hypothesis 8: There was an indirect effect of voting behaviour in the general election 2013 on political awareness through the mediation of political awareness among BISP cash receivers.

Statistical data in the table 4 revealed that voting behaviour in the general election 2013 had an indirect effect on political awareness through the mediation of political awareness among BISP cash receivers. Therefore, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (0.102) was significant with a p-value (0.002) confirmed hypothesis 8.

Figure 2. Model Fit Diagram of Model



Hypothesis 9: There was an indirect effect of voting behaviour in the general election 2013 on political awareness through the mediation of political participation among BISP cash receivers. Analysed data in the table 4 described that voting behaviour in the general election 2013 had an indirect effect on political awareness through the mediation of political participation among BISP cash receivers. Hence, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (0.035) was significant with a p-value (0.001) confirmed hypothesis 9.

Hypothesis 10: There was an indirect effect of voting behaviour in the general election 2013 on political awareness through the mediation of change in local politics among BISP cash receivers.

Data in the table 4 revealed that voting behaviour in general election 2013 on political awareness through the mediation of change in local politics among BISP cash receivers. Hence, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (0.071) was significant with a p-value (0.008) confirmed hypothesis 10.

Hypothesis 11: There was an indirect effect of voting behaviour in the general election 2013 on political awareness through the mediation of political awareness among BISP cash receivers.

Analysed data in the table revealed that voting behaviour in general election 2013 on political awareness through the mediation of change in local politics among BISP cash receivers. Hence, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (-0.106) was significant with a p-value (0.001) confirmed hypothesis 11.

Hypothesis 12: There was an indirect effect of voting behaviour in general election 2008 on change in local politics through the mediation of political empowerment among BISP cash receivers.

Data in the table 4 reported that voting behaviour in general election 2013 on political awareness through the mediation of change in local politics among BISP cash receivers. Hereafter, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (0.096) was significant with a p-value (0.010) confirmed hypothesis 12.

Hypothesis 13: There was an indirect effect of voting behaviour in the general election 2008 on political awareness through the mediation of political empowerment among BISP cash receivers.

Analysed data in the table 4 assert that voting behaviour in the general election 2008 had an indirect effect on political awareness through the mediation of political empowerment among BISP cash receivers. Hence, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (0.141) was significant with a p-value (0.010) confirmed hypothesis 13.

Hypothesis 14: There was an indirect effect of voting behaviour in general election 2008 on political participation through the mediation of political empowerment among BISP cash receivers.

Data in the table revealed that voting behaviour in the general election 2008 had an indirect effect on political participation through the mediation of political empowerment among BISP cash receivers. Henceforth, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (0.049) was significant with a p-value (0.005) confirmed hypothesis 14.

Table 4: Indirect Effects of Model

Indirect Path	Unstandardized Estimate	Lower	Upper	P-Value	Standardized Estimate
VB18 --> CLP --> POP	0.042	0.016	0.081	0.005	0.035**
VB13 --> POE --> CLP	0.069	0.037	0.112	0.002	0.064**
VB13 --> POE --> POA	0.102	0.051	0.167	0.002	0.081**
VB13 --> POE --> POP	0.035	0.016	0.070	0.001	0.039**
VB13 --> CLP --> POP	0.071	0.029	0.116	0.008	0.078**
VB13 --> POA --> POP	-0.106	-0.158	-0.067	0.001	-0.117***
VB08 --> POE --> CLP	0.096	0.031	0.167	0.010	0.056*
VB08 --> POE --> POA	0.141	0.048	0.243	0.010	0.071**
VB08 --> POE --> POP	0.049	0.015	0.109	0.005	0.034**
VB08 --> POA --> POP	0.250	0.158	0.359	0.001	0.175***
POE --> CLP --> POP	0.086	0.035	0.138	0.009	0.075**
POE --> POA --> POP	-0.198	-0.272	-0.137	0.001	-0.172***

Significance of Estimates: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.010$, * $p < 0.050$, † $p < 0.100$

Hypothesis 15: There was an indirect effect of voting behaviour in the general election 2008 on change in local politics through the mediation of political awareness among BISP cash receivers.

Analysed data in the table described that voting behaviour in the general election 2008 had an indirect effect on change in local politics through the mediation of political awareness among BISP cash receivers. Thus, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (0.250) was significant with a p-value (0.001) confirmed hypothesis 15.

Hypothesis 16: There was an indirect effect of political empowerment on political participation through the mediation of change in local politics among BISP cash receivers.

Data in the table revealed that political empowerment had an indirect effect on political participation through the mediation of change in local politics among BISP cash receivers. Henceforth, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (0.086) was significant with a p-value (0.075) confirmed hypothesis 16.

Hypothesis 17: There was an indirect effect of political empowerment on political participation through the mediation of political awareness among BISP cash receivers.

Tabulated data revealed that political empowerment had indirect effects on political participation through the mediation of political awareness among BISP cash receivers. Hence, the calculated value of unstandardized estimates value (-0.198) was significant with a p-value (0.001) confirmed hypothesis 17.

Conclusion

The study carried out an investigation on the effects of BISP on voting behavior and political participation on the BISP beneficiaries in Pakistan. Using survey data from eight selected districts, we have presented a set of preliminary findings about probable direct and indirect effects of voting behaviors and political participation of beneficiaries in the three (2008, 2013, and 2018) general elections in Pakistan. Our overall conclusion from the data analysis is that the programme had significant effects on the voting behaviours and political participation of BISP cash beneficiaries in voting behavior in all three (2008, 2013, and 2018) general elections. Similarly, the analysis of data also revealed that political awareness, empowerment, and change in local politics have contributed towards political participation among cash receiving beneficiaries. In a nutshell, it can be argued that BISP cash transfer has favorable effects on voting behaviours and political participation in Pakistan. The study findings contribute to the existing body of scholarship on the effect of social protection programmes on voting behaviours both in the local and national levels. This study has been limited to quantitative study design and does not include qualitative methodology. Therefore, future research may be conducted using a mixed-method research approach to examine the voting behavior using another set of variables i.e. caste influence, local leader influence, family background etc. Further, Artificial Neural Networks (ANN) may be used as an advanced statistical technique for analysis.

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