

Social Assistance, Policy Feedback, and Electoral Behavior in Developing Democracies: A Literature Review

Solahudin¹, Astri Kusmianti², Siti Khalimatus Sa'diyah³

¹ Head of the Knowledge Management Department, Arkom Indonesia Foundation, Yogyakarta

² Universitas Gadjah Mada

³ Universitas Gadjah Mada

Correspondence: salsaladin@gmail.com

Article Info

Article history:

Received May 12th, 2026

Revised Apr 20th, 2026

Accepted Apr 26th, 2026

Keyword:

social assistance; policy feedback; electoral behavior; developing democracies

ABSTRACT

Social assistance has become more than a technocratic instrument of poverty reduction in developing democracies, as it increasingly shapes electoral behaviour, political trust, state legitimacy, and democratic representation. This literature review examines how social assistance programmes, particularly cash transfers and targeted welfare schemes, influence political outcomes and how programme design and institutional context condition those effects. Drawing on 12 reviewed journal articles, the study synthesises scholarship at the intersection of policy feedback, distributive politics, clientelism, and electoral behaviour. The review finds that social assistance can affect vote choice, turnout, incumbent support, and broader state-citizen relations, but these effects are neither uniform nor automatically pro-government. In some settings, rule-bound and centralised programmes support political incorporation, strengthen perceptions of responsiveness, and reduce reliance on brokers. In others, discretionary and personalised distribution reinforces clientelistic exchange, political dependence, and incumbency advantage. The review also shows that the literature remains uneven: electoral outcomes receive much greater attention than trust, legitimacy, accountability, and representation. Overall, the article argues that social assistance should be understood as a politically consequential policy domain whose democratic effects depend on the interaction between programme design and institutional setting. It concludes by calling for stronger comparative and conceptually integrated research on welfare politics in developing democracies.



© 2026 The Authors. Published by PT Akademi Pemilu dan Demokrasi (APD).

This is an open access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

INTRODUCTION

Within developing democracies, social assistance has decisively transcended its conventional function as a purely technocratic instrument for poverty alleviation. It has evolved into a highly consequential political arena that fundamentally configures state-citizen relations, notions of citizenship, and broader democratic governance. Recent scholarship indicates that the proliferation of social assistance is frequently propelled by strategic political calculations rather than mere socio-economic necessity. For instance, in Mexico, the strategic targeting of social assistance toward Indigenous populations correlated with a measurable reduction in anti-government protests, implying that welfare distribution actively functions as a mechanism of political pacification (Yörük et al., 2019). Similarly, in South Africa, the Child Support Grant has been explicitly linked to both electoral preferences and contentious political mobilization, while World Bank policy directives have routinely framed social assistance as a strategic apparatus for containing social unrest and consolidating regime support (Van Gils & Yörük, 2017; Yörük & Gençer, 2020). Concurrently, while social assistance possesses the potential to integrate marginalized demographic groups into the state as rights-bearing citizens, highly targeted and donor-driven frameworks frequently precipitate fragmented social protection,

entrenched patronage, and highly conditional modalities of citizenship (Assal, 2025; Barrientos, 2011; Hujo, 2021).

This profound political significance has amplified in tandem with the massive quantitative expansion of social assistance architectures across the Global South. Developing nations currently allocate approximately 1 to 2 percent of their gross domestic product toward cash transfer programs. Large-scale programmatic interventions in Mexico and Brazil have successfully incorporated roughly 12 million and 5 million low-income households, respectively (Ghosh et al., 2024). Within Indonesia, the Program Keluarga Harapan was initially deployed across 438 of 736 subdistricts, targeting an estimated 700,000 households, thereby underscoring the immense scale and political visibility inherent to such initiatives (Cahyadi et al., 2018). Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic in India, emergency fiscal transfers reached between 89 and 94 percent of impoverished agrarian households within sampled geographies, vividly demonstrating the unprecedented reach of cash-based welfare interventions (Varshney et al., 2021). As programmatic coverage, fiscal budgets, and beneficiary populations expand exponentially, social assistance solidifies into a potent electoral resource. These programs possess the capacity to cultivate massive recipient constituencies, structurally dictate incumbent support, and intensify elite contestation regarding targeting metrics, resource allocation, and the political monopolization of credit-claiming (Corrêa & Cheibub, 2016; Della Guardia et al., 2022).

The theoretical framework of policy feedback provides an exceptionally robust analytical lens for explicating these dynamics, as it conceptualizes public policy not merely as an end product of political contestation, but as an active structural force that fundamentally recalibrates civic attitudes and mass political behavior. Through compounding resource and interpretive effects, social assistance profoundly alters both the material capacity of citizens to engage politically and their subjective perceptions regarding whether the state genuinely values, hears, and equitably treats them (Bussi et al., 2022; Campbell, 2012; Mettler, 2002; Shore, 2020). From this theoretical vantage point, programmatic design assumes central analytical importance. Specifically, targeting mechanisms may inadvertently entrench social stigma and rigid deservingness hierarchies. Simultaneously, policy visibility and traceability dictate whether beneficiaries accurately attribute welfare provisions to the state apparatus, while stringent conditionality determines whether assistance is subjectively experienced as an empowering support mechanism or a punitive disciplinary tool. Ultimately, the timing and precise modality of distribution critically influence long-term political learning and institutional trust formation (Hirvonen et al., 2024; Mettler, 2019; Shore, 2020).

Nevertheless, the extant literature remains profoundly bifurcated regarding whether social assistance genuinely deepens democratic inclusion or merely reproduces entrenched clientelism, coercive persuasion, incumbency advantages, and structural political dependency. A subset of scholarship associates expansive, highly institutionalized programs with robust civic incorporation, elevated institutional trust, and fortified democratic legitimacy. Conversely, alternative studies demonstrate that discretionary, hyper-targeted schemes are

intrinsically more susceptible to patronage networks and systemic electoral manipulation (Berenschot, 2018; Berman et al., 2025; Keefer, 2007; Wang & Zhang, 2024).

Consequently, the primary research gap is not an absence of relevant empirical studies, but rather the glaring lack of an integrated theoretical synthesis. Current scholarship remains problematically fragmented across the disparate subfields of policy feedback, electoral behavior, clientelism, and comparative social policy. Moreover, the literature disproportionately fixates on myopic metrics of vote choice, rarely linking the nuances of program design and macro-institutional contexts to broader democratic outcomes, such as systemic trust, institutional legitimacy, horizontal accountability, and substantive representation within developing democracies (Béland & Schlager, 2019; Burgoon et al., 2022; Devine, 2024; Larsen, 2018). Against the structural transformation of social assistance into a highly consequential political domain, the primary unresolved inquiry concerns how these programs fundamentally shape political behavior and democratic outcomes within developing democracies. Although scholarly interest regarding the political ramifications of welfare provision has proliferated, the extant literature remains acutely fragmented. Specifically, electoral behavior studies disproportionately emphasize vote choice, social policy research focuses on delivery metrics, and literature on distributive politics frequently isolates patronage mechanisms from broader policy feedback perspectives. Consequently, the field lacks a cohesive explanatory framework detailing how specific programmatic design features, namely targeting, traceability, visibility, conditionality, timing, and distribution modalities, generate divergent political effects. This theoretical deficit is particularly severe concerning developing democracies, where variances in state capacity, institutional quality, and entrenched patronage networks ultimately dictate whether social assistance fosters democratic inclusion or merely reinforces incumbent advantage and civic dependency. Addressing these systemic limitations, this study systematically synthesizes the intersectional literature to elucidate how social assistance programs, particularly cash transfers and targeted schemes, influence electoral behavior, institutional trust, state legitimacy, and democratic representation. Specifically, this review explicitly positions social assistance at the nexus of policy feedback, distributive politics, and democratic governance. By abandoning the reductive conceptualization of welfare as a purely technical intervention, the research explicates the precise mechanisms through which program design and macro-institutional contexts actively configure political outcomes. Operationalizing this systematic review necessitates the following research questions:

1. How does the literature explain the influence of social assistance programmes on electoral behaviour, political trust, state legitimacy, and democratic representation in developing democracies?
2. How do programme design features and institutional contexts shape variation in the political effects of social assistance, particularly between programmatic inclusion and clientelistic distribution?

The novelty of this review lies in its effort to bring together strands of scholarship that are usually discussed separately, namely policy feedback, distributive politics, clientelism, and

electoral behaviour, within a single analytical framework focused on developing democracies. It moves beyond the dominant emphasis on vote choice by incorporating broader democratic outcomes such as turnout, trust, legitimacy, accountability, and representation. In addition, this review highlights how design features of social assistance programmes are not politically neutral, but instead help shape whether such programmes deepen democratic citizenship or become vulnerable to politicisation and patronage. By positioning Indonesia as a relevant entry point through debates surrounding bansos, BLT, PKH, and BPNT, this review also connects a nationally salient case to wider comparative questions about whether social assistance strengthens democratic inclusion or functions as an instrument of electoral persuasion and incumbency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Reviewed Studies

Before turning to the thematic discussion, it is important to first map the empirical scope, analytical focus, and general characteristics of the 12 articles reviewed in this study, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Study Characteristics of the Reviewed Articles

No	Study	Context & Method	Main Findings
1	Jonathan Fox (2015)	Cross-national meta-analysis of 25 evaluations	Information alone has limited impact; stronger accountability occurs when citizen participation is combined with collective action and responsive government.
2	Mauricio Morales & Alejandro Belmar (2022)	Chile local elections; quantitative study	Clientelist meetings increase voter turnout and strengthen incumbent performance, especially in rural areas.
3	Aparna Swamy (2016)	Philippines; qualitative case study on CCT program	Rule-based social protection may reduce clientelism, but weak coverage and implementation problems limit its effect.
4	Soli Özel & Zeynep Yıldırım (2019)	Turkey; survey study	Social assistance recipients were more likely to support presidentialism, especially when fearing loss of benefits.
5	Teresa Swartz et al. (2009)	United States; longitudinal mixed-method study	Welfare assistance reduced voting participation, while non-stigmatizing aid did not significantly reduce civic engagement.
6	Jennifer Shore (2020)	Comparative conceptual review	Welfare design, stigma, and bureaucracy influence political efficacy and citizen integration.
7	Michael Dawson et al. (2023)	South Africa; survey and electoral data analysis	Stronger electoral competition increases exposure to clientelism.

No	Study	Context & Method	Main Findings
8	Thomas Devine (2024)	Global meta-analysis of 61 studies	Political trust moderately affects turnout and policy attitudes but has little effect on informal participation.
9	Nara Pavão (2016)	Latin America; cross-national quantitative study	CCT beneficiaries generally still evaluate incumbents based on performance and corruption.
10	Marine Bussi et al. (2022)	European policy feedback review	Welfare policies shape trust, participation, and political attitudes through resource and interpretive effects.
11	John Jost et al. (2022)	Conceptual review on polarization	Polarization is driven by ideological and group-based psychological mechanisms linked to trust and legitimacy.
12	López García (2018)	Mexico; quantitative electoral study	Remittances reduce turnout, while cash transfers do not significantly affect voter participation.

Table 1 presents an overview of the 12 articles included in this review and provides the empirical foundation for the subsequent thematic discussion. As shown in Table 1, the reviewed studies cover a diverse set of national and comparative contexts, including Latin America, Turkey, the Philippines, South Africa, the United States, and broader cross-national settings. In methodological terms, the evidence base includes quantitative analyses, survey-based studies, meta-analyses, conceptual reviews, and qualitative or mixed-method contributions. Substantively, the studies address a wide range of issues, from electoral behaviour, turnout, and incumbent support to political trust, political efficacy, welfare design, and clientelistic linkages. This variation indicates that the literature does not approach social assistance solely as a welfare instrument, but increasingly treats it as a politically consequential policy domain. At the same time, Table 1 also suggests that the existing evidence remains uneven, with stronger attention to vote choice, turnout, and clientelism than to broader outcomes such as democratic representation, accountability, and state legitimacy. This mapping is important because it clarifies the scope and composition of the review before moving to the thematic synthesis of findings in the following subsections.

3.2. Political Effects of Social Assistance on Electoral Behaviour, Trust, Legitimacy, and Democratic Representation

The literature reviewed here suggests that social assistance programmes in developing democracies are politically consequential not only because they affect electoral behaviour, but also because they reshape how citizens relate to incumbents, institutions, and the state more broadly. The most recurrent finding is that distributive policies can produce electorally relevant effects through support for incumbents, voter mobilisation, and attitudinal convergence toward ruling authorities, although these effects are neither uniform nor mechanically pro-government. In Chile, personalised non-programmatic linkages increased both turnout and incumbent

performance in local elections (Morales and Belmar, 2022), while in South Africa clientelist inducements were more prevalent in competitive local settings and functioned as instruments to sway vote choice, mobilise turnout, or even induce abstention (Dawson et al., 2023). In Turkey, social assistance shaped broader political attitudes by increasing support for presidentialism among some beneficiaries, especially opposition voters who feared losing benefits, indicating that redistribution can extend beyond electoral reward into support for wider regime transformation (Özel and Yıldırım, 2019). At the same time, the Latin American evidence does not support a simple claim that cash transfers automatically undermine democratic judgement, since beneficiaries generally continued to evaluate incumbents in light of corruption and economic performance (Pavão, 2016).

Across the reviewed studies, vote choice and turnout remain the most visible political outcomes. Social assistance appears capable of reinforcing pro-incumbent orientations, but this often occurs through specific mechanisms rather than through unconditional loyalty. In Turkey, the key mechanism was not simple gratitude but perceived vulnerability to policy discontinuity, which made welfare dependence politically salient and encouraged attitudinal convergence toward the incumbent project (Özel and Yıldırım, 2019). In the Philippines, Pantawid recipients credited the president rather than local officials, suggesting that centralized transfers can redirect political attachment upward and bypass local patronage brokers, even if the programme falls short of fully dismantling clientelism (Swamy, 2016). Yet the literature also contains important counterevidence. In Mexico, conditional cash transfer assistance did not offset the turnout-reducing association of remittances, indicating that the receipt of state assistance does not necessarily generate electoral activation or loyalty in every setting (López García, 2018). Complementary evidence from outside the developing democracy core of the review also helps clarify the mechanism: stigmatizing forms of welfare can depress voting without reducing volunteering, implying that policy feedback is especially powerful in state-oriented forms of participation tied to citizenship and political incorporation (Swartz et al., 2009).

The broader contribution of this literature lies in showing that social assistance should be understood as a domain of state-citizen relation formation. Several studies imply that programmes communicate messages about inclusion, deservingness, responsiveness, and political standing. Shore (2020) shows, through the political efficacy literature, that social policy can either politically integrate or alienate recipients depending on whether it conveys recognition or stigma. Bussi, Dupuy, and Van Ingelgom (2022) similarly frame policy feedback through resource, interpretive, and normative mechanisms, showing how policies shape participation, trust, and attribution of responsibility. Fox (2015) adds an accountability perspective by emphasizing that citizen voice has more durable political effects when it is linked to institutional responsiveness, suggesting that representation and trust depend not only on benefits delivered but also on whether the state is experienced as answerable. In this sense, social assistance is not merely distributive. It can expand recipients' sense of membership and responsiveness, or conversely foster dependence, exclusion, and low-accountability relations. Devine's broader meta-analysis of political trust is useful here because it shows that trust

matters for turnout, vote choice, and policy support, reinforcing why welfare-induced changes in perceived responsiveness and legitimacy matter politically even when they are not directly measured in programme studies (Devine, 2024).

At the same time, the review also reveals an important imbalance in the literature. Electoral support, turnout, and incumbent advantage are examined far more often than political trust, democratic legitimacy, or democratic representation in a broader sense. Even when studies clearly point toward these wider outcomes, they often do so indirectly through concepts such as accountability, efficacy, risk perception, or clientelist dependence rather than by measuring legitimacy and representation directly (Pavão, 2016; Özel and Yıldırım, 2019; Swamy, 2016). The result is a literature that convincingly establishes social assistance as a politically consequential policy arena, but still only partially captures its deeper democratic implications. This gap makes the next question unavoidable: if political effects vary so markedly across cases, they must depend not only on benefit receipt itself, but on how programmes are designed, administered, targeted, and embedded in broader institutional contexts.

3.3. Programme Design, Policy Feedback, and Institutional Contexts Shaping Political Effects

The literature explains variation in the political effects of social assistance by showing that these effects are mediated by programme design and institutional context rather than produced automatically by benefit receipt itself. Across the reviewed studies, the same broad policy domain can generate sharply different outcomes depending on who is targeted, how benefits are delivered, whether recipients can trace benefits to particular actors, and whether assistance is experienced as a rule-based entitlement or as a discretionary favour. In this sense, the central distinction is between programmatic inclusion and clientelistic distribution. Programmatic inclusion refers to more impersonal, rule-bound, and administratively standardised forms of welfare provision that can weaken personalised dependence, whereas clientelistic distribution operates through selective, politically mediated, and often discretionary exchanges that reinforce asymmetrical political obligations (Swamy, 2016; Pavão, 2016; Morales and Belmar, 2022; Dawson et al., 2023).

Targeting, visibility, and traceability are especially important in shaping these differences. The reviewed literature suggests that targeted programmes can produce strong political effects when beneficiaries clearly associate receipt with incumbents or specific political actors, but the meaning of that attribution varies across institutional settings. In the Philippines, the Pantawid programme partially displaced local patronage because beneficiaries credited national leadership rather than local brokers, indicating that centralised delivery can redirect political attribution away from personalised machines and toward programmatic authority (Swamy, 2016). In Latin America, however, Pavão (2016) shows that conditional cash transfers do not necessarily erode electoral accountability, especially where operational rules are stricter and less discretionary. This suggests that visibility alone is insufficient to produce clientelist loyalty. Political effects become more conditional on whether the programme is understood as

a lawful entitlement or as a contingent political benefit. By contrast, the Chilean and South African studies show that when distributive contacts are more personalised and non-programmatic, they are more readily converted into turnout effects and incumbent advantage, particularly in local settings where citizens encounter politicians directly rather than through bureaucratically insulated welfare systems (Morales and Belmar, 2022; Dawson et al., 2023).

Policy feedback operates in the reviewed literature through both resource effects and interpretive effects. Resource effects refer to the material capacity that programmes provide, which can reduce dependence on brokers or enable participation, but they can also generate political vulnerability when benefits are insecure. Interpretive effects are equally important because programmes convey messages about deservingness, recognition, obligation, and state responsiveness. Shore (2020) and Bussi, Dupuy, and Van Ingelgom (2022) are especially useful here, as they show that welfare policies shape political efficacy, trust, and participation not only through resources but through how citizens interpret their treatment by the state. Swartz et al. (2009) similarly show that stigmatizing and means-tested assistance can depress voting by narrowing recipients' sense of citizenship. Özel and Yıldırım (2019) further demonstrate that political effects may arise less from gratitude than from perceived risk. In their Turkish case, support for presidentialism was strongest where recipients feared losing assistance, indicating that the political meaning of social assistance depends on whether it is experienced as secure inclusion or precarious dependence.

Institutional contexts further condition these effects. State capacity and bureaucratic quality matter because rule-bound systems are better able to sustain programmatic delivery and reduce room for discretionary manipulation, whereas weakly institutionalised settings leave more space for patronage and politicised attribution (Fox, 2015; Pavão, 2016; Swamy, 2016). Local political competition also shapes how assistance is mobilised. In South Africa, more competitive municipalities exhibited higher exposure to clientelism, suggesting that electoral rivalry can intensify targeted inducements rather than discipline them (Dawson et al., 2023). In Chile, rural and localised environments amplified the electoral return of non-programmatic meetings, showing that context affects how easily distributive contact is translated into political support (Morales and Belmar, 2022). Donor influence also appears indirectly relevant in the Philippines case, where externally promoted programmatic reforms pushed social protection toward formalisation, even though local political realities limited the full anti-clientelist effect of that design (Swamy, 2016).

Overall, the reviewed literature shows that the political consequences of social assistance are not singular in direction. The same programme may foster accountability, efficacy, and broader inclusion when delivered through visible but rule-bound institutions, yet generate dependence, incumbent advantage, or clientelist exchange when embedded in discretionary and competitive patronage environments. What matters most is the interaction between programme design and institutional context, a pattern that sets up the need for a final comparative synthesis of convergences, tensions, and unresolved gaps in the literature.

3.4. Comparative Synthesis, Research Gaps, and Future Directions

Taken together, the reviewed literature shows a consistent but uneven picture: social assistance is politically consequential, yet the field remains fragmented in how it explains that consequence across electoral behaviour, policy feedback, clientelism, and democratic governance. The strongest pattern is that social assistance is repeatedly treated as a mechanism that can shape voter mobilisation, incumbent support, and political incorporation, whether through rule-based welfare provision, perceived dependence on benefits, or more personalised distributive exchanges (Morales and Belmar, 2022; Özel and Yıldırım, 2019; Pavão, 2016; López García, 2018). At the same time, the literature does not support a single directional effect. Some studies associate social assistance with incumbent advantage or attitudinal convergence toward ruling authorities, while others show that beneficiaries may still retain evaluative autonomy or that welfare receipt does not necessarily translate into stronger turnout or unconditional support (Pavão, 2016; López García, 2018). This variation is one of the review's central comparative findings.

A second clear pattern is that the literature is much more developed in explaining electoral behaviour than in explaining broader democratic outcomes. Vote choice, turnout, and incumbent support are the most frequently examined outcomes, especially in studies of Latin America, Chile, Mexico, Turkey, and South Africa (Morales and Belmar, 2022; Dawson et al., 2023; Pavão, 2016; Özel and Yıldırım, 2019; López García, 2018). By contrast, political trust, legitimacy, accountability, and democratic representation are addressed more unevenly and often indirectly, usually through adjacent concepts such as political efficacy, stigma, attribution of responsibility, or responsiveness (Fox, 2015; Shore, 2020; Bussi et al., 2022; Devine, 2024). This imbalance matters because it narrows the political meaning of social assistance to electoral payoff, even though several studies imply that welfare programmes also shape citizens' sense of membership, recognition, and standing in relation to the state (Swartz et al., 2009; Shore, 2020; Swamy, 2016).

The literature also reveals a sharp conceptual divide between programmatic and clientelistic approaches, but it rarely integrates these traditions into a shared analytical framework. Studies rooted in policy feedback emphasize how welfare institutions shape attitudes and participation through resource and interpretive effects, particularly through stigma, efficacy, and perceptions of state responsiveness (Shore, 2020; Bussi et al., 2022; Swartz et al., 2009). Studies closer to clientelism and distributive politics instead focus on personalised exchanges, electoral competition, and local political brokerage (Morales and Belmar, 2022; Dawson et al., 2023; Swamy, 2016). Although both literatures are concerned with how public benefits structure political relations, they often proceed separately. As a result, the field still lacks a stronger bridge between programme design and broader democratic consequences such as accountability, legitimacy, and representation.

These weaknesses point to a clear research agenda. Future work should move beyond treating vote choice as the default political outcome and examine more explicitly how targeting, visibility, traceability, conditionality, and delivery mode shape trust, legitimacy, efficacy, and

democratic inclusion across different welfare settings (Pavão, 2016; Swamy, 2016; Shore, 2020). Stronger comparative research across developing democracies is also needed, since the reviewed scholarship often relies on single-country studies or draws conceptual support from broader literatures centred outside the core contexts of welfare politics in the Global South (Devine, 2024; Bussi et al., 2022). More importantly, future scholarship should integrate policy feedback with clientelism and distributive politics rather than treating them as separate domains. Such a framework would allow researchers to analyse how social assistance operates simultaneously as a welfare instrument, a political signal, and a site of democratic negotiation.

Overall, this review contributes to the literature by showing that the politics of social assistance cannot be reduced either to electoral exchange or to abstract welfare feedback alone. Instead, social assistance emerges as a policy domain through which democratic incorporation, political dependence, accountability, and representation are continuously shaped, making future research on welfare politics essential to understanding democratic governance in developing democracies.

4. Conclusion

This review has shown that social assistance in developing democracies cannot be understood solely as a welfare intervention aimed at poverty reduction. Across the reviewed literature, it emerges as a political variable that shapes electoral behaviour, incumbent support, political incorporation, and the wider relationship between citizens and the state. The findings indicate that social assistance may strengthen democratic inclusion when it is delivered through more rule-based, visible, and institutionally grounded arrangements, yet it may also foster dependence, patronage, and clientelistic exchange when embedded in discretionary and competitive political environments. In that sense, the political effects of social assistance are not fixed, but contingent on how programmes are designed, attributed, and experienced by recipients.

At the same time, this review identifies several important limitations in the current literature. Existing studies remain fragmented across policy feedback, clientelism, electoral behaviour, and social policy, and they continue to privilege vote choice and turnout over broader democratic outcomes such as trust, legitimacy, accountability, and representation. Future research therefore needs to move beyond narrow electoral metrics and develop stronger comparative frameworks that link targeting, visibility, traceability, conditionality, and delivery mode to a wider range of political consequences. A more integrated research agenda would make it possible to understand more clearly when social assistance deepens democratic citizenship and when it becomes vulnerable to politicisation and patronage.

REFERENCES

Assal, A. El. (2025). Citizens' Claims-Making and Navigating the Politics of Accountability in Social Cash Transfers in Uganda. *Politics and Governance*.

- <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.11237>
- Barrientos, A. (2011). Social protection and poverty. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 20, 240–249. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2397.2011.00783.x>
- Béland, D., & Schlager, E. (2019). Varieties of Policy Feedback Research: Looking Backward, Moving Forward. *Policy Studies Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12340>
- Berenschot, W. (2018). The Political Economy of Clientelism: A Comparative Study of Indonesia's Patronage Democracy. *Comparative Political Studies*, 51, 1563–1593. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018758756>
- Berman, E., Grin, E., Lotta, G., Abrucio, F., Gonzalez, L., De Souza, M. G. S., De Melo, Y. M., & Santos, J. G. Dos. (2025). Brazil's Public Administration and the Challenge of New Democracies: Promoting Social Inclusion. *Public Administration Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.70045>
- Burgoon, B., Lupu, N., Pontusson, J., & Schakel, W. (2022). Understanding unequal representation. *European Journal of Political Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12521>
- Bussi, M., Dupuy, C., & Van Ingelgom, V. (2022). Does social policy change impact on politics? A review of policy feedbacks on citizens' political participation and attitudes towards politics. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 32, 607–618. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09589287221089478>
- Cahyadi, N., Hanna, R., Olken, B., Prima, R. A., Satriawan, E., & Syamsulhakim, E. (2018). Cumulative Impacts of Conditional Cash Transfer Programs: Experimental Evidence from Indonesia. *Randomized Social Experiments EJournal*. <https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.20190245>
- Campbell, A. (2012). Policy Makes Mass Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15, 333–351. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-012610-135202>
- Corrêa, D., & Cheibub, J. (2016). The Anti-Incumbent Effects of Conditional Cash Transfer Programs. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 58, 49–71. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-2456.2016.00296.x>
- Dawson, S., Charron, N., & Justesen, M. (2023). Electoral competition, political parties and clientelism: evidence from local elections in South Africa. *Democratization*, 30, 479–500. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2022.2155143>
- Della Guardia, A., Lake, M., & Schnitzer, P. (2022). Selective inclusion in cash transfer programs: Unintended consequences for social cohesion. *World Development*, 157, 105922. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.105922>
- Devine, D. (2024). Does Political Trust Matter? A Meta-analysis on the Consequences of Trust. *Political Behavior*, 46, 2241–2262. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-024-09916-y>
- Fox, J. A. (2015). Social Accountability: What Does the Evidence Really Say? *World Development*, 72, 346–361. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.03.011>
- Ghosh, B., Burman, R., Padaria, R., Paul, S., Mahra, G., Kumar, P., Bhowmik, A., Mallick, S., Saini, S., Gorai, S. K., Mukherjee, S., & Quader, S. (2024). Performance of cash transfer program on farmers' livelihood: evidence from PM-KISAN scheme of India. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2024.1478795>
- Hirvonen, S., Schafer, J., & Tukiainen, J. (2024). Policy feedback and voter turnout: Evidence from the Finnish basic income experiment. *American Journal of Political Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12915>
- Hujo, K. (2021). Social protection and inequality in the global South: Politics, actors and

- institutions. *Critical Social Policy*, 41(3), 343–363.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183211009899>
- Jost, J. T., Baldassarri, D. S., & Druckman, J. N. (2022). Cognitive–motivational mechanisms of political polarization in social-communicative contexts. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 1(10), 560–576. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-022-00093-5>
- Keefer, P. (2007). Clientelism, Credibility, and the Policy Choices of Young Democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51, 804–821. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00282.x>
- Larsen, E. (2018). Policy Feedback Effects on Mass Publics: A Quantitative Review. *Policy Studies Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12280>
- López García, A. I., & García, A. I. L. (2018). International remittances, cash transfer assistance and voter turnout in Mexico. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-017-0065-z>
- Mettler, S. (2002). Bringing the State Back In to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the G.I. Bill for World War II Veterans. *American Political Science Review*, 96, 351–365. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055402000217>
- Mettler, S. (2019). Making What Government Does Apparent to Citizens: Policy Feedback Effects, Their Limitations, and How They Might Be Facilitated. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 685, 30–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716219860108>
- Morales, M., & Belmar, F. (2022). Clientelism, Turnout and Incumbents' Performance in Chilean Local Government Elections. *Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11080361>
- Ozel, I., Yildirim, K., Özel, I., & Yildirim, K. (2019). Political Consequences of Welfare Regimes: Social Assistance and Support for Presidentialism in Turkey. *South European Society and Politics*, 24, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2019.1589155>
- Pavão, N. (2016). Conditional Cash Transfer Programs and Electoral Accountability: Evidence from Latin America. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 58, 74–99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-2456.2016.00311.x>
- Shore, J. (2020). How social policy impacts inequalities in political efficacy. *Sociology Compass*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12784>
- Swamy, A. (2016). Can Social Protection Weaken Clientelism? Considering Conditional Cash Transfers as Political Reform in the Philippines. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 35, 59–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341603500103>
- Swartz, T. T., Blackstone, A., Uggen, C., & McLaughlin, H. (2009). Welfare and Citizenship: The Effects of Government Assistance on Young Adults' Civic Participation. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 50, 633–665. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2009.01154.x>
- Van Gils, E., & Yörük, E. (2017). The World Bank's social assistance recommendations for developing and transition countries: Containment of political unrest and mobilization of political support. *Current Sociology*, 65, 113–132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392115617310>
- Varshney, D., Kumar, A., Mishra, A., Rashid, S., & Joshi, P. (2021). India's COVID-19 social assistance package and its impact on the agriculture sector. *Agricultural Systems*, 189, 103049. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agsy.2021.103049>
- Wang, C., & Zhang, X. (2024). Governance capacity, social justice, social security, and institutionalized political participation in China: A moderated mediation model. *Chinese*

- Public Administration Review*, 15, 194–206.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/15396754241252978>
- Yörük, E., & Gençer, A. (2020). The politics of social assistance in South Africa: How protests and electoral politics shape the Child Support Grant. *Governance*.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12464>
- Yörük, E., Öker, İ., & Şarlak, L. (2019). Indigenous unrest and the contentious politics of social assistance in Mexico. *World Development*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104618>