

**Role of Social Remittances on Voting Behavior among the families left behind**

(Evidence from village Haria, Tehsil Malakwal of Dist. Mandi Baha ud Din)

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**Abstract:-**

The aim of the present research was to identify the possible relationship between social remittances and voting behavior. Researchers measured voting behavior with pre-voting day activities, Election Day activities and post election activities. Different qualitative tools of data collection were administered by the researchers in order to collect the relevant information from the respondents. Non probability sampling technique was also used in the sampling phase. The locale of the present research was village Haria, Tehsil Malakwal of Dist. M.B.Din. Furthermore secondary data was also analyzed in order to make data analysis more insightful. In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the significant influence of social remittances on voting behavior, emphasizing their role in fostering a more engaged and participatory electorate.

**Key words:** social remittances      voting behavior      Haria      Election Day

**Introduction:**

Migration has become a transformative force in global politics, with social remittances transfers of ideas, values, and behaviors from migrants to their communities of origin emerging as crucial in shaping political participation, especially voting behavior. These social remittances, which include norms about democracy, civic duty, and political participation, profoundly affect how individuals in migrants' home countries engage with electoral processes. Migrants exposed to different political environments abroad often introduce new ideas and practices that influence political discussions, voter turnout, and post-election activities in their home communities (Levitt, 1998; Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow, 2010).

Research suggests that migrants familiar with participatory democratic systems transmit these values back home, leading to changes in pre-election activities. Political discussions, campaigning, and activism often increase in migrant-sending communities, as migrants

encourage their families and friends to engage with political processes (Escobar, 2015; Waldinger & Duquette-Rury, 2016). Studies on Latin American migrants, particularly Mexicans and Salvadorans in the U.S., show that social networks linked to migration facilitate the spread of political norms, which boost voter education and pre-election mobilization (Fox & Bada, 2008; Kessler & Rother, 2016).

On Election Day, social remittances influence voter turnout and civic engagement. Migrants returning from democratic contexts are more likely to promote the importance of voting, leading to increased electoral participation in their countries of origin (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow, 2010). Salvadoran and Dominican migrants, for instance, have played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of civic responsibility and encouraging voting in home country elections (Goodman & Hiskey, 2008; Burgess et al., 2010). This influence is especially significant in regions with high migration rates, where migrant communities maintain strong ties to their countries of origin, often acting as intermediaries between political systems (Levitt & LambaNieves, 2011; Itzigsohn & Villacrés, 2008).

Post-election, the impact of social remittances continues through migrants' efforts to foster political accountability and democratic governance. Social remittances promote greater political participation beyond just voting, encouraging engagement in local governance, transparency, and advocacy for political reforms (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Careja & Emmenegger, 2012). In countries like Mexico and Turkey, migrants have contributed to democratic deepening by transmitting norms of transparency and participatory governance (Smith, 2003; Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004). These post-election activities show how migration can sustain democratic practices by reinforcing political engagement at multiple stages of the electoral cycle.

While financial remittances have been a major focus of migration studies, social remittances are increasingly recognized for their role in shaping political behavior. Migrants act as conduits of democratic ideas and practices, fostering higher levels of political participation in their home countries (Levitt, 1998; Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004).

### **Research Aim**

This research aims to examine the various ways social remittances shape voting behavior before, during, and after elections offering a comprehensive understanding of migration's influence on democratic processes.

**Material & Methods**

A qualitative technique was principally used to gather and interpret the obtained data and findings of the study are mainly based on empirical results. The researchers used individual in depth interviews, content analysis method. The respondents of the study were household head of the research locale. In the phase of data collection 15 respondents were selected in the phase of sampling. Purposive sampling techniques were used in the phase of sampling. A semi structured interview guide was used. The interview guide consisted of different parts: respondent profile, socio-economic status, Social remittances and voting behavior of respondents of present locale. All interviews were conducted in Urdu language and interpreted into English for the purposes of analysis. Similar techniques were used by us (Iqbal, S., Idrees, B., & Mohyuddin, A., 2014).

**Data analysis**

The analysis of social remittances and voting behaviour reveals nuanced insights into how migrants' experiences abroad influence political activities in their home communities. The data was gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions from individuals with direct migrant connections, illuminating three key phases: pre-voting activities, Election Day involvement, and post-election behaviour.

**Socio-Economic status of the respondents**

The respondents represented a diverse population, characterized by various socio-economic backgrounds that significantly influenced their engagement with voting behaviour and social remittances. The majority were young adults aged between 25 to 40 years, with a substantial portion holding at least a bachelor's degree. Many respondents from affluent backgrounds reported having access to resources that facilitated their political engagement, while those from lower-income households often expressed economic constraints that overshadowed their political interests. However, the latter group found motivation through social remittances, sharing stories and encouragement from family members abroad, which spurred them to become more active in local politics. For instance, participants highlighted the impact of relatives encouraging them to vote or engage in community issues, illustrating how social remittances can transcend economic barriers and foster political participation. Overall, this diverse socio-economic landscape underscores the complex interplay between education, age, and economic status in shaping the political behaviours of the respondents.

**The Level of Social Remittances among Respondents:**

The qualitative data revealed varying levels of social remittances among respondents, depending on the frequency of contact with migrants, duration of time spent abroad, and the socio-political context of the host country. Social remittances, in this context, refer to the ideas, behaviours, and practices brought back or transmitted by migrants from their host countries to their communities of origin. These remittances often vary in depth and impact, influencing different respondents in diverse ways.

Some respondents demonstrated a high level of engagement with social remittances, particularly those who had direct migrant family members abroad or had themselves lived in democratic countries for an extended period. One participant from a focus group in Pakistan shared:

*"My brother has lived in Canada for ten years, and every time we talk, he tells me about the importance of civic rights and standing up for your community. Because of him, I now take part in local political meetings and try to hold leaders accountable."*

For these individuals, social remittances introduced a strong sense of civic duty and democratic participation, influencing their political behaviour significantly. Their engagement was not limited to voting but extended to organizing political discussions, questioning local authorities, and promoting accountability among community leaders.

On the other hand, respondents who had only sporadic contact with migrants or whose migrant relatives lived in less democratic contexts showed lower levels of engagement with social remittances. One interviewee mentioned that while they occasionally received updates from a cousin in the Gulf region, these discussions rarely centred on political engagement. Instead, they focused more on economic opportunities, showing that social remittances in such cases might emphasize different aspects, like financial success, rather than political behaviour.

This variability in the level of social remittances reflects how the political environment of the host country and the strength of transnational ties can shape the nature and impact of these exchanges. In communities where migrants live in highly democratic societies, social remittances tend to strengthen democratic engagement and political awareness. In contrast, in

regions where migration is oriented towards less politically engaged host countries, the political impact of social remittances is less pronounced.

In conclusion, the level of social remittances among respondents varied widely, with direct contact and the democratic nature of the host country playing pivotal roles in determining the extent of political engagement and influence. These findings emphasize the complex ways in which migration influences not only economic but also social and political dynamics in home communities.

### **Pre-Voting Activities and Social Remittances:**

Social remittances play a critical role in shaping pre-voting behaviour by fostering political awareness and engagement. Many interviewees shared how discussions with family members abroad or return migrants significantly influenced their involvement in local political campaigns, political discourse, and voter mobilization efforts. One participant from a small village in expressed:

*"Before my uncle came back from the U.S., we never thought much about local politics. But after he returned, he made us see how important it was to get involved early, talk about the issues, and support candidates who promised real change."*

This reflection aligns with the concept of social remittances described by Levitt (1998), where migrants introduce democratic norms such as active political participation and civic responsibility. In regions with high migration, pre-election campaigning often becomes more organized, with return migrants helping to coordinate voter registration drives, community meetings, and political discussions. These pre-voting activities are not limited to individual efforts but often result in a broader culture of civic participation within the community.

### **Election Day and Social Remittances:**

Social remittances also manifest in the form of increased involvement during Election Day. Interviews highlighted how migrants' exposure to more transparent and participatory election processes abroad fostered a greater sense of responsibility toward voting. A respondent noted:

*"My cousins in the U.S. always tell me how people there take voting seriously. They say it's a duty, not a choice. So when Election Day comes here, I make sure to vote and encourage my neighbours to do the same."*

This sentiment reflects the idea that migrants serve as agents of political change by instilling a sense of civic duty in their home communities. Return migrants or those in regular contact with relatives abroad often influence their peers to participate actively, seeing voting as not just an act but as part of a larger process of democratic engagement. On Election Day, many interviewees reported higher voter turnout and more organized efforts to ensure that community members made it to the polls, often reflecting strategies seen in more established democracies abroad.

### **Post-Election Activities and Social Remittances:**

The influence of social remittances extends beyond Election Day, shaping how communities engage with the political system after the election. Migrants contribute to fostering a culture of accountability and political engagement that persists even after the votes are counted. One focus group participant shared:

*"When my brother came back from Germany, he always talked about how people there don't just vote and forget. They demand results. Now, after elections, we meet and discuss what the politicians are doing and whether they are delivering on their promises."*

This post-election behaviour, driven by social remittances, suggests that migrants help cultivate a deeper form of political engagement. Communities influenced by migration are more likely to follow up on electoral promises, organize meetings with local politicians, and engage in political discussions long after the election process. These findings align with studies by Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow (2010), which suggest that migrants help to promote democratic values that extend beyond the electoral cycle.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion of this research highlights the significant influence of social remittances on voting behaviour, emphasizing how these remittances shape political engagement and civic participation. The study revealed that pre-voting activities, such as discussions about electoral issues and candidate preferences, were heavily impacted by the guidance and information

provided through social remittances. On Election Day, the presence of social remittances manifested in increased turnout and mobilization efforts, showcasing a collective commitment to participating in the democratic process. Post-election, the influence of social remittances continued to foster civic responsibility, encouraging discussions about governance and accountability among respondents. Ultimately, the findings underscore the vital role social remittances play in enhancing democratic engagement, suggesting that fostering these connections could lead to a more informed and participatory electorate.

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