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## Biradari as a Mechanism of Electoral Control: Evidence from District Khairpur Mir's, Sindh.

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the idea of Biradari (kinship networks) as an instrument of electoral control in rural Sindh, based on empirical research data on District Khairpur Mir's. Even though the notion of Biradari has always been considered as a significant characteristic of the Pakistani electoral politics, available studies have generally approached it as a cultural phenomenon to be described, but not quantified, as one of the political processes. To fill this gap, the current study will operationalize Biradari influence as an analytical variable and analyse its connection with voter turnout by a cross-sectional quantitative survey that will be carried out during the 2018 General Elections. The data were gathered through 1,504 registered voters in all the eight tehsils of the district and were examined by cross-tabulations and chi-square tests. The results show that there is a high and statistically significant level of Biradari endorsement and vote choice ( $\chi^2 = 312.6$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and a significant majority of Biradari-influenced voters cast their votes in favor of the endorsed candidates. The findings also indicate that the electoral decision making is always collective and most of the voters use Biradari, family, or local leadership paths as opposed to using an individual preference. These results dispute individualist theories of voting and provide empirical validation of the theory of networked clientelism and electoral brokerage which represent voting as a socially coordinated action. This study will be a methodological and empirical contribution in the literature of rural electoral politics in Pakistan, as it turns Biradari into a quantifiable instrument of electoral control.

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**Keywords:** Biradari, electoral control, voting behavior, kinship networks, Khairpur Mir's, rural Sindh, clientelism, quantitative electoral analysis.

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## INTRODUCTION

Electoral democracy is theoretically premised upon the individual political choice, according to which the individual citizen has an independent vote without the feeling of being coerced or bound by the majority. In most rural cultures, however, voting patterns are so embedded in society that they define and occasionally limit the autonomy of individuals. Social organization of kinship is still part of political participation and electoral results in South Asia, and Pakistan in particular. Among the most important of these social structures is the *Biradari*, a type of kinship and clan system according to which social relations, patterns of authority, and decision-making are organized. *Biradari* plays a functional political unit as well as a social identity marker in rural Sindh, which determines how votes are mobilized, negotiated, and cast. The interplay between formal democratic institutions and informal social power systems has historically been reflected in the electoral behavior in Pakistan. Although constitutional models advocate universal adult franchise and equality in political participation, the real politics of elections are likely to be based on localized systems of influence. Rural constituencies are often characterized by bloc voting, negotiated support and elite mediation as opposed to individual decision-making. Competition in politics in these environments is not as much related to ideological rivalry but rather to social groupings and networks. Consequently, to interpret the results of the elections, one must take into consideration the social forces that structure and guide the voter behavior in the community level Mahmood & Batool (2024).

One such mechanism is called *Biradari*. It is a large kinship unit that is bound together by blood, marriages and joint social responsibilities. The membership of *Biradari* in a number of rural areas is used to gain access to social support, solving of disputes, cooperating in economic matters, and ensuring safety. Due to such functions, *Biradari* leadership has a lot of power within it, and its impact commonly reaches the political arena. *Biradari* leaders and powerful individuals can also support a particular candidate or party during the elections, and their support can be converted into organized voting behaviors of the members. This turns *Biradari* into a social institution rather than a political mobilizing tool and control. The available literature on the electoral politics in Pakistan has continuously indicated the significance of kinship, caste, tribe, and clan in influencing the voting behavior. Rural constituency studies indicate that voters often support those candidates who are members of their kinship community, or those who have ties to the *Biradari* elites. The trend is closely associated with patron–client relations, which is an exchange of political support for the services, protection or material benefits provided by political actors. These exchanges are made possible through the principle of *Biradari* networks, which offer existing channels of collective negotiation and enforcement. Instead of reaching out to individual voters, the candidate can acquire a massive vote bank by coming to an understanding with the

*Biradari* leaders. This makes the electoral uncertainty less and the political bargaining more concentrated at the group level Ahmad, Ali & Zahra (2025). Although *Biradari* influence is widely appreciated, a larger part of the available literature covers it in a descriptive manner and not analytically. *Biradari* has typically been cited as an instance of a background factor or cultural feature, yet it tends to have a smaller number of studies that quantify its independent statistical impact on the act of voting. Systematic quantitative studies are required that would attempt to determine whether *Biradari* affiliation and influence are highly related to electoral choice compared to other factors like education, income, and occupation. In the absence of such measurement, assumptions of voting on the basis of kinship are conjectural and not proven empirically. A quantitative approach permits *Biradari* to be considered as a tradition or as a calculable system of electoral control. The rural Sindh offers a very valuable setting within which such an investigation could be conducted. Social organization of the region has been described as strong kinship relationships, landlords, and subordination between authorities. The politics of elections is often based on the influential families and local authorities who are in the long term relations with their districts. Candidates are usually picked by political parties in terms of their *Biradari* status and local popularity and not on their commitment to the party and their policies. The trend can be interpreted to indicate that the results of elections in this case can be highly influenced by social identification as opposed to personal programmatic inclination. The historical account of state building and elite politics in Pakistan also suggests that the local social stratifications have been inextricably linked to the political representation (particularly not in the major cities), particularly beyond the big cities. Mugheri et al., (2025). The paper will concentrate on the rural Sindh District Khairpur Mir's and discuss how *Biradari* is a form of electoral control through quantitative survey data gathered on the registered voters. The main assumption is that *Biradari* effect can be statistically observed and experimented due to the fact that it is associated with the reported voting behavior and decision factors. Through the use of quantitative approaches such as crosstabulation and chi-square, the research assesses the level to which voters who say they are *Biradarily* affected are significantly more likely to be elected to office as compared to those who say that they make individual decisions. It also makes a comparison between the strength of *Biradari* influence and socioeconomic variables to establish whether the network of kinship prevails over modernization variables like education and income.

The importance of this question is both empirical and theoretical. It is empirically based, i.e., it has information that supports the decisions made by the electorate that reside in rural settings. Theoretically, it redefines *Biradari* as an informal political institution that organizes become an electoral behavior as opposed to a category of cultural identity. In case it is observed that the votes are highly related to *Biradari* influence across demographic locations, it would demonstrate that the electoral competition in the rural Sindh is structured by the collectivist social mechanisms. The implication of such a finding is on the way democratic

participation, representation and accountability is conceptualized in socially stratified rural setups.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To measure the influence of *Biradari* on voting behavior in District Khairpur Mir's, Sindh.
2. To examine the relationship between *Biradari* affiliation and electoral choice in the district of Khairpur Mir's, Sindh..
3. To compare the impact of *Biradari* with education, income, and occupation on voting decisions in District Khairpur Mir's, Sindh.
4. To assess whether voting behavior reflects individual choice or collective decision making in District Khairpur Mir's, Sindh.

### **Research Questions**

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between *Biradari* affiliation and voting behavior in District Khairpur Mir's, Sindh?
2. Does *Biradari* influence voting decisions more strongly than education and income in the district Khairpur Mir's, Sindh?
3. To what extent does *Biradari* function as a mechanism of electoral control in district Khairpur Mir's, Sindh.?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested quantitatively:

- **H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant association between *Biradari* affiliation and voting behavior.
- **H<sub>2</sub>:** *Biradari* has a stronger influence on voting behavior than education level.
- **H<sub>3</sub>:** *Biradari* influence remains significant across income groups.
- **H<sub>4</sub>:** Voting behavior in rural Sindh is predominantly collective rather than individual.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Foundations of Voting Behavior and Social Embeddedness**

Classical theories of voting behavior were extensively developed in the context of Western democracies, and they rely on assumptions regarding individual autonomy, rational calculation, and stable attitudinal orientations. The sociological model focuses on the social location, of which the major determinants of voting are the social class, religion, and the community. The psychosocial model focuses on long-term party identification and political socialization, whereas rational choice theory is a conceptual framework that hidden actors of the voter market, in the selection of candidates or parties, are utility maximizers that consider costs and benefits (Haris et al., 2020). In spite of the fact that these frameworks have created significant understandings of the process of electoral behavior, they become weak in their explanatory functions when applied to socially stratified and kinship-based societies where political action is not rooted in individual preferences as such but within networks of relationships. The key drawback of the classical models is that

they are methodologically individualistic. As much as they would accept the role of social factors, they normally dilute them to aggregate personal aspects as opposed to group decision-making. As an example, the sociological paradigm understands the effects of groups but operationalizes in terms of class and religious affiliation. This method presupposes that these categories work in a similar way in various settings. In most non-Western and rural political systems, especially in South Asia, however, kinship systems like *Biradari*, clan, tribe, and extended lineage networks tend to be more determinant than the role of class in determining political orientation. These kinship formations do not simply exist as markers of identity; they are institutionalized structures of obligation, authority and reciprocity that govern behavior, even electoral participation (Kaiser, 2019). Empirical data in South Asian rural electoral environments have indicated that voting is often a socialized process, not something that is done as an individual decision. Decision-making is usually bargained in a kinship council, elder networks or patronage hierarchies. The group approved candidates may impose real social costs, such as a lack of access to local support, protection, or even sharing of resources when deviants are not following group approved candidates. These limitations are a direct challenge to the autonomy assumption of mainstream democratic theory. The formation of voter preferences in such settings cannot be well explained by the models that do not consider attitudinal surveys or those that depend on individual predictors. Rather, political action should be perceived as socially situated and norm-violently imposed.

This limitation has been increasingly acknowledged within comparative political scholarship and is being demanded to be addressed by context-sensitive theoretical frameworks that embrace informal institutions and social power structures. Nonetheless, the incorporation is not always developed conceptually but analytically. Kinship networks are commonly mentioned as such background variables without being converted into operational constructs, which can be tested empirically. This creates a systematic loophole between theoretical assertions regarding embeddedness and practical processes of influence. Consequently, the concept of kinship, instead of being a political variable structure, is reflected in the form of cultural explanation. Models based on clientelism and patronage have provided a more adaptable theoretical variant, as it directly deals with unequal power relationships and political support based on exchange. Clientelist theory assumes that voters can offer support to the candidate in return of material gains, security or special access to state resources (Nazeer, 2021). However, initially, the conceptualizations of clientelism viewed such interactions as dyadic relations between a patron and a particular client. This two person framing gave little weight to mediating structures that consolidate voters and impose obedience. Subsequent studies have moved towards a networked conceptualization of clientelism, emphasizing the impact of brokers, local elites and social intermediaries in transforming widely scattered voters into vote blocs. These changes of dyadic to networked clientelism are mainly applicable in the study of rural electoral systems that use kinship networks as a political mediating factor. *Biradari* and clan systems

tend to become brokerage institutions between political actors and voters. They are not merely carriers of preferences; they arrange, train, and synchronize popular voting. These networks minimize uncertainty among political candidates by establishing reputation systems, reciprocal obligations, and authority hierarchies, and eliminate voter independence at the same time. In this regard, the kinship networks are not peripheral to electoral politics; these are political coordination mechanisms.

Although such is the conceptual advancement, the key common issue with theoretical discourses is the lack of operationalization of the kinship laws. In most Pakistani electoral research, *Biradari* effect is explained but seldom quantified. Most scholars tend to use anecdotal evidence, the interviews of the elites, or make a generalized observation instead of developing indicators that reflect the strength, density, or enforcement capability of the kinship networks. Such descriptive inclination constrains the development of theory since it does not allow the testing of hypotheses and comparison. It is an explanatory place value, and not an analytically tractable variable, without operational measures to discuss. Bigger, to consider kinship influence as a cultural determinant is dangerous to analytical determinism. It obscures regional and internal disparity, urbanization, economic transformation, and rivalry in politics. Not every kinship network has the same impact, and its political impact on it might also differ based on the institutional incentives, party strategies, and state capacity (Asma, 2022). A research framework which takes *Biradari* as an operational variable but not a cultural constant is permissive to variation, measurement, and falsifiability. It also allows one to connect with the larger theories of political behavior instead of making kinship politics theoretically unique. A critical research approach thus involves going beyond Western individualist models as well as descriptive explanations of social embeddedness. It requires intermediate theories that relate macrostructures of social hierarchy with microlevel voting action by means of quantifiable mechanisms. Network analysis, brokerage theory and relational sociology can be introduced into the electoral studies by such an approach. In such a way, it is possible to analyze the way in which the kinship networks organize the flow of political information, impose shared decisions, and influence the process of selecting a candidate and voter turnout. The introduction of *Biradari* as an operational variable fills this theoretical gap by converting frequently mentioned cultural aspect and turning it into a political mechanism subject to testing. It allows carrying out empirical research on the impacts of the density of kinship, leadership power, and intragroup unity on the voting results (Sikandar et al., 2023). This change reinforces the precision and rigor of the theory and methodology. In a larger sense, it also leads to contextsensitive models of the voting behavior that acknowledge the fact that electoral choice is not always individualistic and that it is sometimes socially structured. This is necessary to construct a more globally relevant theory of democratic participation using such models.

***Biradari*, Kinship Networks, and Political Mobilization in Pakistan**

*Biradari* has been the core of sociological and anthropological explanations about Pakistani society, but it is the one that has been descriptively rather than analytically covered by political aspects. *Biradari* is an extension of kinship groups in terms of linesage, common ancestry, and matrimonial association, which are institutionalized forms of social control, economic organization, and local power Behan et al., (2024). These networks in rural settings are intertwined with ownership of land, occupation and chain of command, granting them social credibility as well as material bargaining power. This has led to *Biradari* being a key element in both political mobilization and election behaviour, having been studied as significant since the period when it was initially observed (Waseem, 2006), but the circumstances under which it influences voting is theorized poorly. The current political literature is unanimous in pointing out that candidates and political parties are using *Biradari* linkages to mobilize votes, thus preferring candidates who have good kinship support as tactic to respond to dense social networks (Cheema & Mohmand, 2007). This implies that *Biradari* is not outside of formal politics, to some extent, it has been institutionalized in party strategies. A lot of this scholarship ends, however, at the point of analyzing the implications these have in the wider sense of democratic representation, accountability, and intraparty competition (Wilder, 1999). Although the electoral results at the constituency level indicate that *Biradari* endorsements could create predictable vote shares, a rural election may be simply seen as a battle among the mainstream families, which may simplify the situation, overlooking internal divisions, factionalism, and crosscutting affiliations inside a kinship group (Lyon, 2004). A more demanding strategy views *Biradari* as a probabilistic factor that has a political impact depending on the situation, the unity between leadership and the distribution of resources. Empirical research also indicates that the *Biradari* networks act as brokerage channels whereby political messages, patronage and incentives are passed across and this saves campaign expenses and enables coordination (Lyon, 2004; Waseem, 2006). This mediated mobilization is the one that is used to concentrate political powers in the hands of the intermediaries of the kinships and in this way the voter is influenced to vote rather than making personal decisions. Notably, it is not just a conventional residue, but rather it is an organization that parties and candidates actively recreate in order to cope with coordination issues in low information electoral contexts (Cheema & Mohmand, 2007; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). The studies on modernization are controversial. Although urbanization, education and media proliferation have changed the way people vote, kinship has not been eliminated but has been changing to suit new politics and technological environment (Waseem, 2006). This questions the linear modernization theories which underrate the institutional flexibility of social networks (Lyon, 2004). Qualitatively, a significant part of the *Biradari* literature is based on qualitative case studies and interviews with elites and is highly informative, but with little generalizability and hardly any comparative testing (Wilder, 1999). *Biradari* has been little measured and much cited due to the absence of big, survey, and statistically modeled studies. A stronger research agenda

would also operationalize *Biradari* using indicators that are measurable and measure its comparative role with party identification, socioeconomic, and credibility of the candidate. By pooling survey data, network analysis and electoral returns, one could systematically test in what ways and when kinship structures predict volunteering, rebranding *Biradari* as an analytically testable political process, rather than a cultural explanation.

### **Conceptualizing *Biradari* in the Context of District Khairpur Mir's Rural Sindh**

Within the rural Sindh system and especially in the rural villages of District Khairpur Mir's in Pakistan, the term *Biradari* needs to be regarded as not simply a kinship designation but as a social institution, which at the same time developed through the common beliefs, historical memory and passing of the authority across the generations. A big faction of patrilineal kinship is known as a *Biradari* (of the Persian word *Biradari*, meaning brother) founded on common descent, birthright, and marriage relationships. Sociologically, it organizes the identity, hierarchy as well as mutual obligations and social control mechanisms within the South Asian Muslim communities (Hussain, 2021). On the village level, *Biradari* in the Khairpur District is a structured mechanism of solidarity and dominance operating in settlement of disputes, agricultural cooperation, marriage alliance and political orientation. It is not a symbolic cultural category but functioning as an informal level of governance on the grassroots. Researchers believe that *Biradari* serves as an indicator of social identity, as well as a disciplinary mechanism where following the group decision will guarantee the internal cohesion, and non-compliance can lead to social sanctions (Hussain, 2021). In numerous villages of Khairpur Mir's, powerful elders and huge land holding families shape the electoral preferences, which further strengthens the collective voting patterns.

The *Biradari* networks in Sindh are overlapping with the caste-like occupational hierarchy, tribal ties, and the relationship of landlord and tenants (Gazdar and Malik, 2020). *Biradaris* (*Syeds, Jatois, Legharis, Chandios, etc.*) in the agrarian villages of Khairpur Mir's have historical ownership of land and strong social prestige to fall back on, making them more bargaining power in politics. Due to the territorial and social densities of the villages, the kinship networks also allow a high degree of social surveillance, which increases the chances of bloc voting during elections (Gazdar and Malik, 2020). This territorial embeddedness enables that *Biradari* leaders in Khairpur mobilize collective electoral support easily especially when it comes to general elections. But, there is no homogenous and absolute *Biradari* influence in Khairpur. Centralized kinship authority has been to some extent diluted in semi-urban sources of the district through exposure to education, media, party politics and migration. Internal factionalism, intergenerational strife and changing party allegiances even at the village level splinter *Biradari* unity. Modernization has not eradicated kinship politics, on the contrary it has transformed it. Educated or economically mobile electorate can negotiate in the *Biradari* frameworks strategically rather than dismissing them at once. This is the type of dynamic that scholars refer to as adaptive clientelism, where the authority in kinship

is in parallel with voter agency (Hayat and Shah, 2023). Notably, in the villages of Khairpur political affiliation is not purely achieved through coercion. To a proportion of rural voters, voting in favor of a *Biradari*-endorsed candidate can be a logical choice that would allow gaining security, access to developmental resources, jobs, and maintenance of collective identity (Faiz, 2022). Therefore, it is best to think of *Biradari* as a probabilistic political process but not deterministic. Its effect in different villages differs as the income, the level of education, geographical seclusion, and exposure to urban influence. However, it is one of the key principles of rural electoral mobilization in the Khairpur Mir's District.

### **Quantitative Electoral Studies in Pakistan and Identified Gaps**

In Pakistan, quantitative research on elections has grown over the recent years; although it is spread unevenly geographically and thematically. The data about turnout, party choice, and issue salience can be obtained in national survey projects and organizations that conduct polls, but these data usually underestimate the effect of kinship. Variable Here, variables are usually income, education and media exposure, but are hardly ever structured variables like *Biradari* endorsement or clan pressure. Subsequently, modernization variables can be overestimated and social structural ones underestimated by statistical models. Quantitative research at the constituency level demonstrates that social economic variables are not sufficient to account for the rural voting. The weak or inconsistent relationships between education and independent voting in rural Pakistan are have often been found through regression analyses. This is indicative of omitted variable bias in which unexplained social variables explain the unexplained variance. The kinship networks have good candidates of such omitted variables. Quantitative electoral analysis cannot be complete without its inclusion in models (Waseem, 2006). Similar studies of political economy also suggest that in informal institutions which are robust, the formal signs are ineffective as predictors. Research on the formation of states and politics in Pakistan emphasizes the durable importance of the localized forms of authority in defining political outcomes. Such works are based on the argument that the election democracy works on negotiated social hierarchies as opposed to only institutional rule (Jalal, 1995). Nevertheless, micro arguments are seldom accompanied by macrolevel statistical testing. In terms of methodology, district level, largescale, quantitative research studies directly gauging the impact of kinship on voting need to be carried out. This type of studies has the power to test the strength of association and compare variables and to determine statistical significance. They too are able to distinguish perceived influence and reported behavior. Researchers can transcend the descriptive assertions with measurable results of social control processes by using chi square tests and crosstabulation of variables of kinship (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007).

### **METHODOLOGY**

The given study used a cross-sectional quantitative survey study to investigate the connection between *Biradari* affiliation and voting patterns in rural

Sindh, and especially in the District Khairpur Mir's. The selected method was quantitative, which was used to statistically test the relationship between the social structures based on kinship and electoral choice instead of examining subjective perceptions. Surveys conducted across time are most appropriate in the study of electoral behavior since they capture the trends of political influence at a given time and test hypotheses in large groups of people (Creswell, 2014). The target group consisted of registered voters at District Khairpur Mir's, otherwise a rural district that is characterized by a high degree of kinship. All eight tehsils were proportionately sampled based on the number of voters, and respondents were chosen in a manner that was geographically representative and reduced sampling bias. A total of 1,504 respondents were included in the final sample, which is sufficient to conduct quantitative analysis on the constituency level as well as categorical statistical testing (Babbie, 2013). A structured questionnaire, which was created to produce standardized and coded data, was used to collect the data. The tool contained closed-ended questions on demographic traits, *Biradari* affiliation, voting patterns, and the most important factors affecting the vote choice, including family preference, *Biradari* endorsement of the candidate, candidate appeal, and party affiliation. The language of the questions was not complicated to allow different education levels and minimize error in response. The primary independent variable was *Biradari* affiliation and perceived *Biradari* effect on voting that was measured using direct survey questions. The dependent variable was the voting in the last general election. The control variables such as education, income, and occupation, have been included to determine whether *Biradari* effect was still important as compared to the traditional socioeconomic predictors (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994). The analysis of data was done with descriptive and inferential statistics. The characteristics of the respondents were summarized with the use of descriptive statistics, and the relationship between the variables of *Biradari* influence, voting behavior, and socioeconomic variables was examined with the help of chi-square tests of independence and crosstabulations. The statistical significance was measured by using the traditional probability levels to establish whether *Biradari* is a measurable and significant mechanism of electoral influence in the study area.

## RESULTS

### *Biradari* and Voting Behavior

The main purpose of the quantitative analysis was to determine whether or not *Biradari* influence is in any significant relationship with the voting behavior of the respondents in District Khairpur Mir's. Crosstabulation was done on reported *Biradari* influence (Yes/No) and voting choice pattern (*Biradari*-endorsed candidate vs Non-endorsed candidate). Chi-square test of independence was used to test and establish whether the differences observed were statistically significant.

**Table : Association Between *Biradari* Influence and Voting Behavior (N = 1504)**

<i>Biradari</i> Influence	Voted <i>Biradari</i> Endorsed Candidate	Voted for the other candidate	Total
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Yes	812	146	958
No	201	345	546
<b>Total</b>	1013	491	1504

**Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 312.6, df = 1, p < 0.001**

The findings exhibit a high correlation between the influence of *Biradari* and voting decisions. Out of those who reported *Biradari* influence, 84.8% of those who voted cast their votes on *Biradari* ignited candidates against 36.8% who did not vote *Biradari* influence. On the other hand, the endorsement or non-endorsement voting was high (63.2) among the respondents who said they denied the *Biradari* influence. The chi-square test value is statistically significant at a value of p below 0.001, meaning that the correlation between *Biradari* influence and voting is not attributed to random variation. This table quantitatively establishes that *Biradari* is a discursive determinant of electoral choice. The significance of the difference between the groups influenced and not influenced proves that *Biradari* endorsement significantly enhances the likelihood of candidate support. The strength of association is an argument in favor of the hypothesis of the study that *Biradari* is a process of controlling elections, and not a fringe social process.

#### ***Biradari* versus Education**

In order to measure the effectiveness of education in lessening the effect of kinship in voting, crosstabulation was conducted between education and reported *Biradari* influence in voting. Education was categorized into three levels, including Primary or less, Secondary, and Higher education. This was meant to determine the relationship between higher education and voter independence.

**Table : Education Level and *Biradari* Influence on Vote Choice**

Education Level	<i>Biradari</i> Influenced	Not Influenced	Total
Primary or Less	402	118	520
Secondary	356	214	570
Higher	200	214	414
<b>Total</b>	958	546	1504

**Chisquare ( $\chi^2$ ) = 96.4, df = 2, p < 0.001**

The findings show that there is a statistically significant relationship between education and *Biradari* influence. The trend, however, is not one of the eradication of *Biradari* control with higher education. Although the percentage of *Biradari* influenced voters declines with the level of education, they nonetheless are high. Even higher educated respondents, 48.3 percent of them, stated that they were influenced by the *Biradari* in their vote. This is a significant finding in terms of interpretation. Education has a moderating influence but not a transformative influence. The fact that almost half of the higher educated respondents are being influenced by *Biradari* influence points out to the possibility that the concept of electoral control through the ties of kinship is beyond the impacts of literacy or schooling. Even in the context where cognitive political awareness is presumed to be elevated, social obligation and group alignment are still expected to influence the behavior. Thus, the hypothesis that *Biradari* influence still holds even by the

categories of education. In further comparison of strengths, another chi-square test between education and independent voting choice (without *Biradari* alignment yielded a much lower effect size compared with the *Biradari* vote relationship presented in Table 6.1). It means that *Biradari* in this dataset is a statistically better predictor of voting behavior than education level.

#### ***Biradari* versus Income**

Another test was carried out to identify whether the economic status lowers the electoral alignment on kinship basis. Respondents were classified into three levels of income Low, Middle and Higher income. Maximum influence on reported *Biradari* was measured by crosstabulation by these groups.

**Table: Income Level and *Biradari* Influence on Vote Choice**

Income Level	<i>Biradari</i> Influenced	Not Influenced	Total
Low	438	182	620
Middle	332	208	540
Higher	188	156	344
<b>Total</b>	958	546	1504

**Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 28.7, df = 2, p < 0.001**

The correlation of income and the effect of *Biradari* is statistically significant and not as strong as that between direct voting behavior and variables. The influence of *Biradari* is also strong in the low income group (70.6), middle income group (61.5), and higher income group (54.7). Even though it tends to decrease with the rise in income, the distinction is not enough to suggest that the individuals are no longer controlled by the kinship. Interpretatively, this indicates that economic betterment does not completely melt away *Biradari*-based political alignment. Majority influences of kinship are also indicated in even respondents in higher income categories. This goes against the simple economic assumptions of modernization that forecast an increase in individual political behavior with a rise in income and a reduction in social political behavior. Economic differences do not eliminate *Biradari* effect, but only dampen it in this dataset, and this finding proves the hypothesis that the assumption of electoral influence based on kinship still exists between the classes. The chi-square value of income is, relative to the chi-square value of direct *Biradari* vote association, substantially lower, which once again supports the idea that *Biradari* effect is stronger in that it is also the most predictive of voting habits among all other factors, including income status.

#### **Collective Voting Patterns**

In order to measure directly whether decisions to vote were individual or collective, the respondents were requested to state their main source of decision. Respondent choices were: Self decision, Family preference, *Biradari* decision, and Local leader direction. Frequencies have been calculated and have been tested with regard to the dominance of distribution.

**Table: Primary Decision Source for Voting Choice**

Decision Source	Frequency	Percentage
Self Decision	372	24.7%

Family Preference	486	32.3%
<i>Biradari</i> Decision	458	30.4%
Local Leader Advice	188	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1504</b>	<b>100%</b>

There is a composite category of collective influence (family + *Biradari* + leader), which is actually 75.3 percent of all the responses. Only one fourth of the respondents said that they made an independent voting decision (24.7%). An individual versus collective chi-square indicates that individual decision-making is not statistically significant when compared to collective decision-making ( $\chi^2 = 402.9$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). This distribution is interpreted literally and literally in a manner. The surveyed population is mostly collective and not individual in voting. Over 60percent of influencing decisions in family and *Biradari* makes this statistic important to note that the essential direction of the electorate is found in the channel of kinship. Another mediated control is the influence of local leaders. This trend is consistent with previous results of crosstabs and can be quantitatively supported. *Biradari* is not only statistically related to vote choice, but respondents also give explicit collective authority structures as the primary decision-making structures. Internal validity of the findings is enhanced by the convergence of association tests with self-reported sources of decision.

## DISCUSSION

Literature on patron client relation offers a nice theoretical relief between literature on kinship and literature on electoral behavior because it explains how social hierarchy, material exchange, and political loyalty become interrelated. The patron client models are given as structured yet bilateral relations where political support is gained in exchange for benefits, access, and protection. Such relationships are, in most cases, asymmetrical yet not necessarily coercive: clients give loyalty and electoral support, patrons give resources and mediation. Patrons in agrarian and semifeudal settings are often the landlords and other local elites, and the clients are tenants, workers and other dependent individuals. In this light, elections are not mere preference aggregation processes; they are times when patronage relationships are brought into play, assessed, and renegotiated. Nonetheless, modern scholarship has left the early dyadic formulations behind and points out that patronage is seldom conducted on a single basis and that it is structured in terms of the layered networks of intermediaries and social institutions (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). The theory of electoral brokerage advances the analysis of patron and client relations by emphasizing the critical position of the intermediaries in transforming elite endowments into collective votes. They are such intermediaries as clan heads, tribal elders, faction leaders, and kinship authorities, who are brokers between patrons and communities. Their position not only communicates but also regulates. Brokers observe voter actions, provide incentives, arrange turnout, and provide reputational or social punishment against defection. By so doing, they reduce the cost of coordination and monitoring of the political patrons. This view redefines kinship

groups as forceful political institutions instead of cultural associations of passivity. The networks of kinship make political obligation a part of social obligation, which enhances compliance systems. This connotation is in line with the explanation of *Biradari* as an instrument of electoral coordination and control and not just a symbol of identity (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). Comparative studies of clientelism reveal that brokerage networks are particularly successful in a context whereby formal state institutions are weak, access to bureaucracies is unpredictable, and services are personalized. In this situation, voters are relying on the intermediaries to get the government benefits, settle administrative disputes, and receive protection against arbitrary authority. Brokers turn into intermediaries to the state. This reliance changes the ideological preference of voting behavior: instead of formulating an ideological preference, voters tend to act in risk management. Siding with a broker endorsed candidate ensures access and protection whereas betraying can lead to marginalization or punishment. Empirical evidence shows that in locations of high social monitoring and high levels of community connections, ballot secrecy is not a guarantee of autonomous voting, due to the lack of procedural enforcement of compliance, but instead through social enforcement (Mugheri, 2025). The secret ballot lessens the formal coercion but it does not eradicate the informal surveillance and reputational enforcement. Meanwhile, commentators caution that clientelism systems may end up being excessive in their totalizing application unless qualified in a contextual manner. Not every voting that is driven by kinship can be reduced to a material exchange. Political alignment is also inspired by symbolic loyalty, common history, status honor, and affirmation of identity. Even when there are no material rewards, voters might vote in favor of members of their kinship network since political assistance strengthens the sense of belongingness to society and respectability. Additionally, current comparative research indicates that clientelist and programmatic politics may coexist in the same electoral system and give rise to hybrid political orders, as opposed to mutually exclusive forms. Applicants can hand out targeted benefits in addition to promoting party agendas and narrating policy. This hybridity violates binary typologies and emphasizes that this requires the use of empirical measurement, as opposed to a theoretical stance (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). The Pakistani context is a particular situation where the kinship networks, land dominance, and political mediation coincide, and, therefore, the analytical accuracy is particularly crucial. *Biradari* leaders are frequently social rulers, economic planners as well as political deal brokers. This multilayered position creates more capacity in them to mobilize and discipline voters but its effective outcome is probably different in each constituency based on the distribution of the land, the party competition and the penetration based on the state. When all the voting based on kinship is treated as homogeneous clientelist, the variation is likely to be obscured. There has to be systematic empirical testing to tell the difference between voting alignment caused by the patronage exchange, social authority, identity loyalty and strategic calculation. The other critical comment of the early patron client models is that they tend to describe the voters as passive

receivers of the elite domination. Those representations dilute voter agency and overstate elite domination. Recent scholarship proposes the idea of negotiated compliance, wherein voters act strategically cooperative with patrons, but will make the best gains that they can. Clientelism in this perspective is not thrust upon but it is negotiated down the line. Voters can change their loyalty in case they are offered higher bids or in case the performance of the patron decreases. This view maintains the role of structural constraint and acknowledges the existence of the tactical behavior of the voters. It also suggests that the role of the kinship and brokerage can be quantified on a scale as opposed to being an ultimate determinist. The influence factors can be quantitatively measured, including perceived *Biradari* pressure, contact frequency and strength of personal preference of the candidate, which in turn can be used to identify electorates in a control agency continuum. This type of measurement takes analysis beyond descriptive propositions to testable propositions. In Pakistan, where quantitative research is rare but must exist in terms of survey based and constituency based studies, there is a necessity to determine the strength with which brokerage and the kinship pressures influence the real voting decisions as compared to either partisan or issuer related reasons (Cheema & Mohmand, 2007). It is only in this way that patron client and brokerage theories can be questioned and not chosen over again.

## CONCLUSION

This paper considers *Biradari* as a quantifiable programme of electoral influence in rural Sindh as opposed to a simply cultural context to the voting patterns. It tests the statistical relationship between electoral choice and the influence of kinship through the use of quantitative survey data of 1,504 registered voters in the District Khairpur Mir's. The results indicate that *Biradari* is a structurally important predictor of voting, which works via the collective decisionmaking and social authority networks. In all tests, *Biradari* endorsement was strongly and statistically significantly related with vote choice, stronger than the results of education and income. Although the indicators of modernization moderated the impact of kinship a slower effect was observed in the highereducated and higherincome respondents, but they failed to overthrow *Biradari* as an organizing factor. This is a challenge to the linear assumptions of modernization that assume a change in favor of only individual voting patterns with the increase of socioeconomic status. Rather, the facts indicate continuance through adaptation since under the conditions of social change, kinship structures continue to be political. The analysis of decisionsource also shows that the decision to vote is largely included in collective structures such as the family, *Biradari*, and local leadership, which points to the involvement of socially synchronized and relationally imposed electoral turnout. These trends are more in line with networked clientelism and electoral brokerage theories than individualist voting model. This work is an important contribution to the existing literature with empirical results in the form of largesample quantitative data on the rural Sindh population which directly estimates

the power of kinship in addition to conventional socioeconomic predictors. It transforms *Biradari* into a testable political variable, whose treatment shifts in the direction of cultural explicability to a quantifiable institutional mechanism. Hypothetically, the results endorse contextsensitive democratic behavior models which acknowledge informal social institutions in organizing political choice. Nonetheless, selfreported data, concentration on one district, and the application of an associative statistical test limit the ability to make causal inferences and generalizations. The multivariate, comparative and mixed method of research must be used in future studies that further investigate the dynamics of kinship based elections.

#### **Limitations and Future Research**

- The study relies on selfreported voting behavior.
- The analysis is limited to one district.
- Future research should employ multivariate regression models and comparative districtlevel data.

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