Policy Research Journal
ISSN (E): 3006-7030 ISSN (P) : 3006-7022 Volume 3, Issue 12, 2025

ASSESSING THE NEED FOR NATIONAL SOCIAL POLICY: AN APPRAISAL

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17918697

Keywords

National social policy, community services, social welfare, social capital, NGOs

Article History
Received: 15 October 2025
Accepted: 27 November 2025
Published: 13 December 2025

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Abstract

This research analyses the need for conceptualising a National Social Policy (NSP) in Pakistan through the lens of community service delivery by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Despite constitutional commitments to social welfare, Pakistan's fragmented institutional framework and weak policy coordination have resulted in inequitable and inefficient service delivery. NGOs have emerged as critical actors in bridging these gaps, providing essential services in healthcare, education, poverty alleviation, and disaster relief. However, their contributions often occur in isolation from state mechanisms, leading to duplication, limited sustainability, and uneven coverage. Drawing upon Social Capital Theory, the study analyses how trust, networks, and reciprocity enable NGOs to mobilize communities, enhance participation, and extend welfare reach in contexts of limited state capacity. Using a qualitative methodology, semi-structured interviews were conducted with government officials, policymakers, and NGO leaders to explore existing challenges, coordination deficits, and opportunities for policy integration. Thematic analysis revealed four core issues: fragmented welfare systems, community trust as a driver of service delivery, weak data and accountability mechanisms, and the urgent need for a unified policy framework. Findings underscore that a National Social Policy could institutionalize NGO–state collaboration, harmonize welfare schemes, and promote inclusive, sustainable development. The study concludes that integrating NGO-led initiatives within a coherent NSP would not only strengthen social governance and accountability but also transform Pakistan's welfare landscape from fragmented relief measures to coordinated, rights-based social protection. By embedding social capital into policy design, the research offers a framework for equitable and resilient social development in Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief Overview

Social policy demonstrates a nation's dedication to social welfare, social equity, and social justice. Social policy reflects the state's protective arrangements and civil actions concerning the socio-economic welfare and inequities of its citizens in the spheres of health, education, employment, and social protection (Titmuss, 1974; Alcock et al., 2012).

Within social policy, the challenges faced by developing countries like Pakistan are greater because, for a long time, the countries have been unable to achieve balanced development due to poverty, lack of governance, and institutional weaknesses. Pakistan has constitutional provisions requiring the state to ensure social justice, provide basic humanitarian needs, and protect the disadvantaged (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, Articles 37–38). On the

contrary, Pakistan's welfare policy is still fragmented, underfunded, and lacking a mechanism for coherent partnership of state and non-state welfare actors.

The absence of a single framework of social development has resulted in the absence of coordination in social welfare efforts. There are several ministries and agencies and a major network of NGOs that are the stakeholders in the management of welfare programs like BISP, Ehsaas Program, and Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal and in the management of health and education and poverty alleviation services (World Bank, 2018; PIDE, 2020). Conversely, these actors operate in isolation, having minimal interorganizational coordination and integration. This absence of cooperation brings about a lack of cohesion and results in fragmentation, which causes inefficiencies and duplications in the provision of social services and inequitable distribution of these services, especially to the rural areas and to the marginalized groups. The patchwork of policies around the social development of the people has led to a disjointed framework of social development.

The contributions of NGOs while providing healthcare, education, poverty alleviation, and disaster relief are of great value and importance (Lewis, 2009; Mujtaba & Khwaja, 2010). The Edhi Foundation, Alkhidmat Foundation, Indus Hospital & Health Network, and the Citizens Foundation (TCF) are examples of civil society and its value in addressing critical humanitarian needs and the gaps that civil states often ignore. These NGOs can solve problems that are faced by neglected focus populations because of their operational latitude. But in the absence of state synergy and uniform policy coordination, the efforts of these NGOs, unfortunately, are often isolated, short-term, and unmanageable in any sustainable manner.

This fragmentation of the welfare system under review requires the NSP, the policy that will integrate state and non-state actors to ensure efficient resource distribution and establish social control and inter-institutional collaboration. This policy will address overlapping welfare systems, harmonize the governance of NGOs, and provide a comprehensive framework for social development. Most importantly, this policy will transform the welfare system of Pakistan from a system that offers aid in a defensive posture to one that proactively embraces principles of human rights to aid resilience and equity across all levels of society (Hall, 1993; Rossi et al., 2004).

While there are multiple reasons for implementing a national social policy, the primary concern involves the need to change the responsibilities of governance to include welfare delivery collaboratively with the state, the civil society, and the community, which, among other things, demands a rethink and redesign of current governance structures. According to the Social Capital Theory, for the purposes of this study, we consider NGOs to be more than service delivery organizations, as they can also function as units of durable social capital, which, because of their social networks, can be integrated into a large social development system (Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 2001).

As a result, the study is designed to address the gaps in social welfare to support the governance of social welfare in Pakistan and the roles of international NGOs and local NGOs in the delivery of community services and social welfare, contributing to the social purpose of the state and the state's civic social investments in a welfare system. The study aims to demonstrate how social capital can be utilized to systematize the disparate social welfare into a seamless governance structure that is just, functional, and enduring.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Role of NGOs in Community Services

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become pivotal in Pakistan's social welfare Given the limited state capacity in Pakistan, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become integral actors in the social welfare arena (Mujtaba & Khwaja, 2010; Lewis, 2009). NGOs can address and provide immediate responses to healthcare, education, alleviation of poverty, disaster relief, and gender empowerment (Mujtaba & Khwaja, 2010). NGOs can mobilize resources quickly and provide localized, tailored responses in areas where state institutions are absent or ineffective because of their operational flexibility, grassroots access, and external funding.

In healthcare, the IHHN Indus Hospital, Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital,

and Saylani Welfare Trust have treated thousands of underprivileged families at no cost or at subsidized costs (PIDE, 2020; World Bank, 2018). In education, the successful establishment of schools and the reform of public education systems by TCF and the CARE Foundation has resulted in improved literacy and a decline in dropout rates (Sadiq, 2014; Haque, 2016). In addition to their humanitarian relief and emergency response actions, the Edhi Foundation, Alkhidmat Foundation, and many other NGOs have distinguished themselves in social protection. The provision of interest-free loans and business training to economically marginalized groups by microfinance institutions such as Akhuwat and Kashf Foundation is a tremendous contribution to improving their economic livelihood (World Bank, 2018).

Recognition of the accomplishments of scholarship does not indicate weakness of the discipline; however, it does highlight the numerous shortcomings within the field, to include poor organization, inefficient overlapping of services for sustainability, and limited integration of policies, along with fickle donor finances and poor sustainability (Schwella, 2009; PIDE, 2020). With the reputation of trust and being the most effective at the community level, many of the activities of the NGOs are conducted in complete absence of the overall governing frameworks. Thus, literature highlights the lack of inter-institutional coordination of the state and civil society as one of the most fundamental gaps in the welfare framework of Pakistan.

1.2.2 Existing Laws and Policies Regarding NGOs and Social Services

The legal and policy frameworks governing the social welfare system in Pakistan are based on the Constitution as well as the statutory framework. The Constitution of Pakistan (1973), Articles 37 and 38, impose a responsibility on the state to advocate for the attainment of social justice, combat illiteracy, and provide the fundamental rights of food, health, and education. However, the effective governance of these provisions has been overshadowed due to fiscal constraints and inept bureaucracy (Haque, 2016).

The earliest forms of specific regulations of NGOs under the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance 1961 offered practically no oversight and have mostly gone the way of the dinosaur (Sadiq 2014). More contemporary provincial tools like the Punjab Charity Act 2018 aim to achieve some transparency on finances but have yet to be implemented in a consistent manner (World Bank 2018). While the National Social Protection Policy 2017 introduced a tactical approach toward the alleviation of poverty by way of the BISP and the Ehsaas programs, it has, to this point, not been able to incorporate NGOs in the design or implementation of the policy (Schwella 2009).

Reviews of the regulatory framework reveal a fundamental lack of cohesion in the design of welfare regulations: a lack of coordination spanning ministries and provincial governments, failure to exercise consistent measures of accountability, and severe fragmentation in the regulations that govern the activities of NGOs. This has resulted in NGOs facing multiple instances of registration and has placed them in a scenario where they are compelled to work under overlapping jurisdictions, further complicating the prospects of collaboration and sustainable engagement (PIDE, 2020). This raises the need for a more unified policy that provides a solid framework to address the active regulatory fragmentation by offering a mechanism for a more equitable distribution of resources, while also capturing the contribution of NGOs to the formal welfare system.

1.2.3 The Need for a National Social Policy

Scholars consistently argue for the formulation of a National Social Policy (NSP) to unify Pakistan's disjointed welfare landscape (Titmuss, 1974; Hall, 1993; Haque, 2016). Fragmentation across programs such as BISP, Ehsaas, and Zakat/Bait-ul-Mal leads to duplication, inefficiency, and unequal coverage (World Bank, 2018). An NSP would consolidate welfare initiatives, promote data-driven targeting, and harmonize collaboration between federal, provincial, and local actors (Rossi et al., 2004).

The NSP would also institutionalize the networks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social` welfare` programs (Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 2001). This is possible because the NGOs have more soft social power than the

state. The NSP local soft power would focus more on systemic problems of the welfare system rather than on relief distribution. This focus on systemic relief would allow for the more marginalized social groups of Pakistan, like women, minorities, and the disabled, to have soft social power. NSP would also realign Pakistan's social protection policy with global equity and social justice social welfare obligations. Collapsing the NGOs' social soft power with the capital of the NGOs' social welfare systems would allow for the equitable and inclusive social development of the Pakistan welfare system to be more socially resilient. The previous has explained the NSP and the governance reforms that would allow Pakistan to be more socially resilient with the NGOs' social welfare systems.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This research applies Social Capital Theory as one of the main frameworks to analyze the scope and the possible collaboration of state and non-state actors in social policy and welfare integration. Welfare theories, particularly Welfare State Theory and Institutional Theory, focus on the state and the design of the institutions on the formal means of welfare provision (Titmuss, 1974; Hall, 1993). Though these theories have been developed, the informal social ties, the trust networks, and the service delivery for low-capacity governance, in this case, Pakistan, have been sidelined. Social Capital Theory, on the other hand, focuses on the social aspect of welfare, how social service delivery and governance, trust, cooperation, and social networks are created for the purposes of community action and community sustainability (Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 2001).

Social Capital Theory, especially, is attributed to Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (1993). Social capital is the potentialities of resources to individuals within a network, and for Bourdieu, it is the network ties people have. Putnam's focus is the resource of collective action, the trust within a community, and the reciprocity of members to bring about effective democratic governance and improved functioning of institutions. Social capital becomes the main substitute for these relational resources for bureaucratic inefficiency in the context of a weak formal institution. Social capital is also a relational resource for NGOs to build trust within communities, mobilize a volunteer base, and bridge collaboration of citizens and institutions. Social capital enables these NGOs to continue providing services in the absence of state mechanisms.

Woolcock (2001) enhances the study of social capital by classifying it into three dimensions: bonding, bridging, and linking. Within social and civic networks, bonding capital is the trust and solidarity among members of relatively small social units, such as communities commonly organized by NGOs; bridging capital is the tie among members of disparate social units, while linking capital is the connection of communities to higher-order power structures (e.g., government and funders). In the case of Pakistan, bonding capital can be seen in community-initiated volunteer units in the Edhi Foundation and microcredit programs in the Akhuwat Foundation, while bridging and linking capital is seen in the partnership of NGOs, the private sector, and the government. However, without a formalized national scheme, these forms of social capital remain siloed and underreported.

Social Capital Theory provides this study an opportunity to go beyond considering the structures of policies as fractured and focus on the social architecture of policies as interrelated to promote welfare integration. Within a national social policy, the trust, reciprocity, and cooperative networks that characterize NGOs can be institutionalized, promoting socially accountable, inclusive, and sustained practices. Hence, the theory assists in establishing community-initiated participation and differentiated policies. This suggests that social capital must be integrated into the policy architecture to promote social equity and resilience in Pakistan.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to address the rationalization of a National Social Policy (NSP) in Pakistan involving the community service delivery of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The study seeks to gain insight into the complexity of the phenomena participants involved in social welfare policy governance. The qualitative inquiry also aims to

understand the value of the policy absence and explore the issues of inter-institutional linkage and coordination and the issues of collaboration between the state and NGOs, which distinguishes it from the usual number-crunching exercises (Creswell, 2014; Mason, 2002).

This study also relates to one of the factors of Social Capital Theory, which also recognizes the absence of the quantitative elements of trust and reciprocity in the networks and the social phenomena of which the networks are made. Such an approach will facilitate the investigation of the networks in relation to the complicated policy context of welfare services in Pakistan.

2.2 Data Collection

The principal data was collected from both governmental and non-governmental actors via semi-structured interviews. The sample consisted of four civil servants from the Social Welfare Department and Social Protection Authority, three politicians with social welfare-related portfolios, and four senior members of the major NGOs, Alkhidmat Foundation, Akhuwat Foundation, and The Citizens Foundation. These participants were selected based on their knowledge and direct participation in the provision of welfare and policy advocacy (Patton, 2002).

The semi structured interviews granted the desired flexibility whereby participants were able to explain their unique challenges, experiences, and perspectives, if the central issues of fragmentation, trust-building, and interorganizational coordination were fully explored. Each interview was conducted for about 45 to 90 minutes, and the interviews were either in-person or online based on the participants' preferences. Reported in the interviews and secondary data were policy documents, official reports, publications from NGOs, and development partners, which in turn informed the context and allowed triangulation.

2.3 Data Analysis

According to Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive approach, data was analyzed thematically. The researcher transcribed interviews in full before implementing coding at each line to discern re-emerging concepts and patterns in the data. The primary data were organized and cataloged under thematic titles including, but not limited to, "integration via a national framework," "policy fragmentation," "trust in the community as a form of social capital," and "the data and accountability challenges." The researcher used social capital theory to explain the themes by connecting empirical evidence to the theory of the research and analyzed the documentary evidence in the same manner to validate the policy frameworks and the accounts of the stakeholders. The findings achieved credibility as well as internal consistency because of triangulation of diverse data sources (Flick, 2018).

2.4 Limitations

Despite the overwhelming abundance of insight from the qualitative design of the study, as well as the completion of the preliminary templates for understanding the nexus of welfare governance, the state, and the NGOs, there are some challenges. The results of the study are not generalizable to the entire social welfare community of Pakistan, due to the small purposive sample of only a handful of policymakers and NGO leaders. Other participants from the target community, and especially the grassroots beneficiaries, ought to have been included in the study. Their community-level impacts would have provided additional depth to the understanding being sought in the study and of the complex relationships between the state and NGOs. Furthermore, the interpretive nature of thematic analysis tends to rely to some degree on the subjectivity of the researcher, but steps like reflexivity and triangulation were taken to mitigate this kind of bias. And the final study limitation has to do with the self-reported data from the participants. Their data in some cases might reflect the strategic, institutional viewpoints of the participants and not be grounded in empirical reality. These limitations do not decrease the analytical worth of the study, but instead, they characterize the study's contributions to the understanding of the ongoing debate on the creation of a National Social Policy in Pakistan.

3. Findings and Discussion

This research has identified the existence of a 'welfare patchwork' within Pakistan. This pertains to the existence of overlapping institutional duties and responsibilities and weak coordination and collaboration mechanisms between the public and private sector institutions. Having all of this in place has culminated in the effective and equitable delivery of services to citizens. It is possible to say that there is agreement among the respondents who were interviewed regarding the social protection silos in Pakistan. Duplication of efforts and the resultant inefficiency is a clear sign of social protection gaps. Examples of social protection gaps include the systems and processes of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), the Ehsaas Program, and Zakat and Baitul Mal. These programs have a long history of non-coordination on a federal and provincial basis and have led to social protection aggravation in Pakistan. Overall, the social welfare programs being offered in Pakistan are the growing provision of social welfare programs without the social welfare coordination of these programs, resulting in further social welfare incoordination within the program-providing institutions.

Several respondents explained this fragmentation by pointing to the lack of an overarching policy frame and the continuing sectoral turf wars of government divisions. Welfare initiatives are typically designed as political measures with a short time span and political interest, as opposed to being part of a comprehensive long-term plan. One senior policymaker explained this as being "a patchwork of relief efforts that ends with the political interest." "A system that reacts to crises but does not avert them" was how another respondent from the NGO sector explained it. These sentiments are congruent with the theory suggesting that the welfare system of Pakistan is non-proactive, relief-based, and lacks the constructive elements of continuity and sustainability (Haque, 2016; PIDE, 2020). The enduring pattern of emergency exploitation and the subsequent operational inertia of the institutions reflect a serious structural weakness. This weakness in the system directly undermines the capacity to sustain resilience and human development over the long term.

Institutional theory helps to identify the possible reasons as to why fragmentation continues to be a problem within the sector. Institutions tend to 'optimize' within their own bureaucratic compartments, as opposed to working together for the collective social benefit (Hall, 1993). An example is Pakistan, where, along with the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance 1961, provincial welfare acts, and the Punjab Charity Act of 2018, there are paradoxical legal frameworks that hinder collaboration both interdepartmentally and between NGOs (World Bank, 2018; Sadiq, 2014). Based on the results of the research, there is a survey of regulatory pluriverses, wherein there is a paradox of duplication of services in some regions, while in others, there are service deserts. Also, the lack of system interoperability between databases of different welfare programs is an added problem. One respondent said, "We cannot even verify if one beneficiary is being supported by multiple schemes or none at all."

Even in the face of such systemic challenges, the study corroborated the pervasive views that regard NGOs as key players in addressing welfare service and sustaining community services. They are relatively more agile, are more accessible at grassroots levels, and have garnered social capital. It is within civil society that the Edhi, Alkhidmat, and Akhuwat foundations continue to be sustainable service delivery organizations acknowledged by both NGO and government respondents for their community service in areas where state services are not available. The ability of organizations to quickly acquire resources, get community members to volunteer, and continue to operate even in and through conflicts and disasters has been documented. Cooperating to operate in crises has been documented and allows for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to serve as intermediaries to governments and to 'hard-to-reach' communities in contexts and situations where governments are unable to effectively serve their functions (Lewis, 2009; Mujtaba and Khwaja, 2010).

The evidence presented in this study indicates that social capital is a key social component to the effectiveness of NGOs. It is and has been the lack of social trust in communities that created a need for NGOs. Respondents of this study pointed out the fact that NGOs' trust is

community-based and is a result of the NGOs' community social networking. It is this community-embedded social capital structure that makes NGOs' activities and objectives socially acceptable and trusted within the communities. The social capital theory of Putnam (1993) is well illustrated and described in this study. Puttnam includes trust and social cooperation as key components of social capital. For example, Akhuwat's interest-free microfinance community peer-guaranteed initiatives demonstrate trust and social capital. Likewise, the volunteer network of the Edhi Foundation exemplifies social capital and community accountability.

The analysis shows that, despite the strong bonding capital that these NGOs have, they do not have bridging and linking capital regarding collaboration with other organizations or the state. These limitations constrain the ability of these NGOs to sustain their initiatives and impact policy. NGO leaders expressed concerns about the irregularity of government policies and the lack of formal partnerships. One of them claim that collaboration is "disaster-driven" and "they are gone after the event—floods and earthquakes." This is consistent with Woolcock (2001), who states that 'linking capital' is the weakest form of social capital, and here it is true with civil society and the state not trusting each other. To obtain formal policy recognition for these NGOs, we will need to acquire these linking capitals.

The data indicates major gaps in information management, targeting, and accountability. Social protection programs in Pakistan have poor data management systems, and policymakers admit there is exclusion and duplication of beneficiaries. Without integrated data systems and minimal effort toward standardized data collection and monitoring, government entities are incapable of ascertaining the scope of welfare programs and the extent of their effectiveness. NGO representatives also expressed these concerns, stressing that without reliable data, they cannot engage with government programs and cannot identify even the most fundamental elements of a social welfare problem. The lack of a cohesive accountability structure, along with these other issues, has resulted in a loss of confidence from potential funders in the state welfare programs and has added to the general public's lack of trust in the state's social welfare programs. As one of the staff members from a provincial welfare department put it, "Every organization defines success in its own terms, but no one defines success in the system as a whole." Hence the demand for a cohesive cross-sector data sharing and accountability system as part of a national social plan to ensure the reasonable, open, and equitable management of a nation's scarce resources (Rossi et al., 2004).

The need to transition from a relief-oriented to a resilience-based welfare model is yet another recurring element throughout the interviews. Participants noted how, throughout history, relief welfare systems in Pakistan have been designed to address only immediate needs and have not been concerned with the structural poverty and the longer human development needs. The results indicate that welfare systems need to do more than implement cash transfers. There is a need for welfare systems to integrate and include education, healthcare, and skills training. NGO leaders explained how the holistic approaches their organizations implement at the micro level are effective, but due to large gaps at the macro level, they require the formal state partnership and policy alignment. This is in line with Titmuss (1974), who saw social policy not just as charity but as an instrument of social integration.

Therefore, there is the potential for a National Social Policy (NSP) to remedy fragmentation and institutionalize collaborations between state and civil society actors. NSP could provide a structure for integration within social protection frameworks. This would include the incorporation of NGOs into policy advocacy and implementation, the integration of accountability frameworks, and the advocacy of equitable welfare service distribution. Survey respondents from the public and private domains do agree on the potential of such a policy to address program overlaps, though there are more possibilities of such a policy to promote evidence-based decisions. Furthermore, the social policy capital (i.e., trust, participatory governance, and partnerships) in policy design would promote accountability and ownership of welfare programs at the community level (Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 2001).

Building on the social capital findings, the NSP is designed to promote social policy inclusiveness. Most policymakers and network NGOs advocate for the NSP to focus on the most marginalized: women, persons with disabilities, minorities, and internally displaced persons, along with others. Current welfare programs continue to perpetuate intersectional inequalities and a rigid framework that does not provide adequate support. Integrative national policy would not only address uneven program integration but also provide justice and socio-economic equity with the constitution and social justice (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973; Haque, 2016).

Trust must be built between government and NGOs if unified policy incorporation is to be achieved. Dissecting the formal and informal barriers to partnership tensions must be addressed at the onset. Partnership tensions must be turned into functional barriers to form structural collaboration. NGO leaders view public sector officials as bureaucratic and obstructive, while public officials view NGOs as peripheral and unregulated, acting within the boundaries of their donors. Reconciling these views begs the framework of Social Capital Theory and considering the phenomenon of trust and reciprocity as barriers to be consolidated in the form of governance. Dissecting functional barriers will allow for trust to be formalized through the establishment of intersectoral collaboration, enabling informal strategic partnerships.

In summary, the findings indicate that while the welfare system in Pakistan is severely fragmented and shallow with respect to data, the potential to leverage the NGO sector to bridge community trust at the grassroots level is not utilized. The relational assets derived from the community trust and NGO sector fused under a coherent national social framework provide the welfare system governance with efficiency and equity that is sustainable. Pakistan needs to focus on the welfare system's social capital to transfer from fragmented, unified, and relational social system governance to welfare and social protection governance.

4. Conclusion

The study aimed to explain the importance of conceptualizing a National Social Policy (NSP) in Pakistan by examining the role of NGOs in community service delivered and the gaps in the welfare landscape in the country in the folds of the NSP. Using Social Capital Theory, the research aimed to determine the positive role that trust, reciprocity, and collaboration in networks could bring to the integration of welfare relations between the state and civil society. Findings of the research suggest that welfare in Pakistan is, unfortunately, dysfunctional. There are many unconnected programs at the federal and provincial levels and in the private sector. Many programs, including the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), the Ehsaas Programme, and Zakat and Bait-ul-Mal, have been introduced. However, the absence of a policy framework has resulted in resource allocation to the same social programs while access to social service programs is inequitable.

Interviews conducted with policymakers and leaders of NGOs reveal that NGOs are instrumental in offering service delivery in healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation. The Edhi Foundation, Alkhidmat Foundation, Indus Hospital & Health Network, and Akhuwat Foundation are examples of how civil society actors have been able to gain trust and utilize social networks to provide services beyond and reach communities outside the state's administrative capacity. They motivate community resource mobilization and integrate active participation of community members. However, the community actors with whom they partner exercise their resources in the absence of formal control systems, ineffective collaboration with government bodies, and the actors constrained by the informal policy environment. Such structural gaps suggest that there are essential regulatory frameworks to interrelate the functions of both state and non-state entities.

The findings continue to illustrate the applicability of Social Capital Theory in relation to welfare delivery in the Global South. Bonding, bridging, and linking capital (Woolcock, 2001) explain how NGOs engage community trust (bonding), connect new social groups (bridging), and try to interface with the state (linking). In Pakistan, NGOs have developed with communities bonding capital, although the lack of linking capital restricts their policymaking influence. A structured NSP ought

to act as a bridge among these social capital resources, empowering communities and their trust to engage in policymaking. This would result in a more cohesive, accountable, and inclusive welfare system that positions itself on the rights of the communities, instead of the current relief-oriented welfare delivery that is disjointed and systemic.

The systems will improve transparency, accountability, and evidence within policy frameworks. Currently, Pakistan's welfare system is a net data loser. Lack of collaborative frameworks is rudimentary data vacuuming, which leads to waste. An NSP should establish collaborative frameworks of data where shared beneficiary registries and accountability to performance are the norm to achieve equality in services rendered. Such frameworks, if integrated into the policy itself to provide accountability, would enhance the system's efficiency and social accountability systems within the policy and inspire more confidence than presently.

The study, in addition to having institutional improvements, speaks to the ethical and constitutional obligations that make inclusivity a necessity. There must be national social policies that cover the missing marginalized groups of females, disabled, minority, and internally displaced persons. Such policies more than any will constitutionalize social justice within Articles 37 and 38 of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), as they will assure equal opportunity to the fundamental rights of health, education, and employment.

By taking a participatory, integrated, and rights-based approach to social policy, Pakistan's fragmented welfare landscape will be transformed. The establishment of a national social policy with social capital and integrated advanced surveillance systems will strengthen the framework of collaboration between NGOs and the state, optimize resource allocation, and improve accountability of state institutions. This will assist Pakistan to shift from the strategically episodic provision of social relief to the continuous provision of social development and improve the welfare of its citizens with social protection, social development, and a welfare state that is progressive, equitable, and resilient. The impact of this research could be significantly increased by collecting and analyzing the perspectives of social policy beneficiaries. The use of digital welfare systems and welfare technologies to improve social policy welfare coordination systems would help contribute to information-based and ordered social policy development. This explains the need for social development policies to be governed with the social capital of trust, collaboration, and community participation, and for integrated frameworks to be governed with administrative reform. This study captures the essence of social policy reform and development.

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