

## Article

# Political Ideology and Support for Tax-Funded UBI: Political Trust as a Moderation Mechanism

Kuk-Kyoung Moon <sup>1</sup> and Jae Young Lim <sup>2,\*</sup><sup>1</sup> Department of Public Administration, Inha University, Incheon 22212, Republic of Korea; kkmooon@inha.ac.kr<sup>2</sup> Department of Public Administration and Social Welfare, Chosun University, Gwangju 61452, Republic of Korea

\* Correspondence: jaeyounglim@chosun.ac.kr

## Abstract

This study aims to investigate the systemic interplay between political ideology and political trust in shaping support for tax-funded universal basic income (UBI). Using the 2021 Korean General Social Survey (KGSS), we analyze whether individuals' left–right ideological leanings predict their support for a tax-funded UBI, which is an important redistributive welfare system, and whether political trust moderates this relationship. The results indicate that citizens with left-leaning ideologies are more supportive of a tax-funded UBI, while those with conservative ideologies are less supportive. Additionally, conservatives become more supportive of a tax-funded UBI when they have greater political trust. These findings suggest that political trust plays a systemic role in moderating ideological divides over welfare systems like a tax-funded UBI. Finally, the article discusses the implications of the findings and their limitations.

**Keywords:** political ideology; political trust; tax-funded UBI



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## 1. Introduction

The debate over adopting a universal basic income (UBI) has intensified in recent years and in South Korea as well [1,2]. South Korea is viewed as a limited welfare state, historically prioritizing economic growth over extensive welfare programs [3]. Government social spending in South Korea ranks among the lowest in OECD countries, raising concerns about the sustainability of welfare support for citizens [4]. Against this backdrop, there has been a growing demand for new approaches to ensuring a social safety net, and the concept of UBI—a policy providing uniform cash support to all citizens—has gained traction in public discourse on social welfare [3,5].

Discussions surrounding UBI have emerged in mainstream politics; for example, a political party dedicated to UBI, called the Basic Income Party, was formed [1]. Prominent political figures, including the current president of South Korea, Lee Jae-myung, have begun to champion the idea. Although President Lee did not pledge to UBI during the 2025 presidential campaign, he promoted it during the 2022 election and helped implement a Youth Basic Income program at the provincial level when he was the Governor of Gyeonggi Province [1]. Public concern about UBI rose sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many Koreans saw firsthand the shortcomings of existing safety nets [1,3,6]. The Korean government distributed disaster relief funds multiple times, providing a glimpse of UBI, albeit temporarily [3]. A majority of South Koreans expressed strong support for these government cash grants [3]. These experiences have reminded

the public that government measures like UBI can alleviate economic hardships. However, they also raise questions about the fiscal sustainability of UBI and public willingness to fund it through taxation. These developments indicate that UBI is not merely an obscure idea promoted by social activists or scholars, but a real policy objective for mainstream political actors in South Korea. Additionally, the contrast between initial enthusiasm and subsequent muted support underscores a critical point: support for UBI is likely conditional on various factors, several of which this study aims to explore—specifically, political ideology and political trust.

This study examines how individuals' political ideology influences their perception of UBI, particularly tax-funded UBI. Political ideology is particularly relevant in discussions of welfare policies [7–9]. Public opinion often divides along the left-right spectrum, with liberals favoring expanded social welfare programs and conservatives expressing skepticism about perceived government handouts [3,7–12]. As a redistributive policy, one's ideological orientation is expected to strongly predict support for UBI and tax-funded UBI in our model.

Moreover, the level of trust citizens have in political institutions may also influence their views on UBI. Political trust serves as a heuristic through which individuals offer their support to government policies [7,9,13,14]. It is built upon perceptions of government competence, procedures, and integrity [7,9]. Thus, individuals with high political trust may be more willing to support a government policy, even if they lack detailed knowledge about it [7,9,13,14]. Consequently, it can be conjectured that those who trust the government more may endorse an ambitious policy like UBI [15].

Lastly, this study focuses on whether political trust moderates the relationship between political ideology and support for tax-funded UBI. We aim to understand whether political ideology and political trust interact to meaningfully shape individuals' support for tax-funded UBI. While previous studies have explored the direct relationships between political ideology and support for social welfare programs, as well as between political trust and similar welfare measures, few have examined the combined effects of both political ideology and political trust on tax-funded UBI [8,13,14,16]. South Korea provides an intriguing case due to its increasingly polarized political landscape and emerging debates on UBI, offering an opportunity to examine how, within this context, political ideology and varying levels of political trust affect perceptions of tax-funded UBI.

While various studies have explored the relationship between political ideology and Universal Basic Income (UBI) separately, our study is the first to systematically integrate political trust as a moderating variable by examining the interplay between political ideology and political trust. Additionally, it is the first to assess the impact of this interplay on the funding mechanisms associated with UBI. Furthermore, our study's novelty lies in investigating the asymmetric effects of political trust: while political trust helps mitigate conservatives' negative attitudes toward tax-funded UBI, it does not serve as a positive amplifier for liberals' attitudes toward the same. By exploring this asymmetric effect, our research offers valuable insights for policymakers concerned about implementing a substantial redistributive policy. In doing so, the study identifies a non-ideological pathway for policymakers to build consensus around complex redistributive policies such as tax-funded UBI. Moreover, our study enhances the existing understanding of political ideology, political trust, and UBI in East Asian contexts, using South Korea as an example where political trust may function differently than in Western countries [17].

This study frames public support for tax-funded UBI through a systems perspective, emphasizing that policy attitudes do not emerge in isolation but from interconnected political and institutional dynamics. Systems thinking indicates that outcomes are the product of relationships, feedback, and context rather than one-way causal arrows [18,19].

In this light, we view political ideology as a foundational orientation, but one that is conditioned by political trust as part of a larger institutional system. Support for tax-funded UBI, therefore, should be understood not simply as an individual preference but as the result of interacting subsystems—ideological commitments and institutional confidence—embedded within a broader political environment.

By analyzing survey data from the 2021 Korean General Social Survey (KGSS), we specifically explore three main questions: (1) To what extent does political ideology influence support for tax-funded UBI? (2) Does political trust influence support for tax-funded UBI? (3) Does political trust condition the influence of political ideology on support for tax-funded UBI? Addressing these questions will enrich our understanding of the conditions under which broad public support for tax-funded UBI might develop.

In the following sections, we first discuss the theoretical background and relevant literature on political ideology, political trust, and UBI. We then derive specific hypotheses regarding their effects on tax-funded UBI. Next, we describe the data and methodology for our analysis. We present empirical results, followed by a discussion of their implications for policy and theory. This study concludes with limitations and avenues for future research.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Political Ideology and UBI

Decades of research show that people's ideological leanings are closely tied to how they view welfare policy [7–11,14,20]. Individuals who identify with the political left—liberals or progressives—generally emphasize social equity and reducing economic disparities, leading them to favor government-led redistributive programs [9–11,13,14]. In contrast, those on the political right—conservatives—prioritize self-reliance and market-based solutions to economic disparities, often resisting government-led social welfare schemes [9–11,13,14]. These ideological orientations manifest in support for government policies such as UBI. By providing every member of society with a baseline income, UBI is a quintessential redistributive program requiring substantial state intervention, aligning it with core liberal beliefs [10–12]. Conversely, conservatives may view UBI as contrary to the market-based allocation of resources, expressing concerns about potential fiscal waste and dependency among beneficiaries [3,10–12].

Previous studies have consistently shown that liberals are more likely to support UBI than conservatives [3,10–12]. For instance, individuals with more progressive ideological self-identification are more likely to endorse a UBI, while those identifying with conservatism are more likely to oppose it [3,10–12]. South Korea has witnessed increasing ideological divides over social welfare, with liberals advocating for an expanded social safety net while conservatives express caution due to concerns about fiscal soundness [3]. A recent analysis of Korean survey data found that the more conservative a respondent's ideology, the more negative their attitudes toward implementing Universal Basic Income (UBI) [3]. This finding aligns with previous Korean studies linking conservatism to lower support for social welfare programs [3,14].

We base our mechanism linking political ideology to support for tax-funded Universal Basic Income (UBI) on ideological consistency theory. This theory posits that people's policy preferences are shaped by a broader set of values, which lend coherence to their political views [21]. Attitudes toward a redistributive policy like tax-funded UBI are thus connected to underlying ideology rather than being formed in isolation. For liberals, who tend to value equality, fairness, and social justice, UBI aligns with their broader commitment to reducing inequality and enhancing social protection. In contrast, conservatives typically emphasize self-reliance, limited government, and respect for existing hierarchies. From this perspective, tax-funded programs can be perceived as government overreach, conflicting

with the principle that individuals should provide for themselves. Consequently, ideology offers a consistent framework for understanding why liberals are generally more supportive of tax-funded UBI, while conservatives are more skeptical. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed for empirical testing:

**Hypothesis 1:** *Liberals will be positively associated with support for a tax-funded UBI.*

**Hypothesis 2:** *Conservatives will be negatively associated with support for a tax-funded UBI.*

## 2.2. Political Trust and UBI

Political trust refers to people's confidence that government institutions will act fairly and manage public affairs responsibly [7,9,13,22]. A high level of political trust indicates that individuals believe the government is acting in the public interest, while a low level reflects skepticism about the government and its measures [7,9]. Since individuals often lack the time, resources, and information to thoroughly analyze government policies, political trust serves as a crucial heuristic that influences their support for such measures [7,9,13,14]. UBI represents a large-scale social policy that requires taxpayer funding and effective implementation by the state [3,10,11]. Individuals with higher levels of political trust are more likely to support the state's responsibilities and resources necessary for administering UBI [15]. Conversely, a lack of political trust may lead individuals to perceive a large redistributive policy like UBI as likely to result in fiscal waste and mismanagement of government resources, causing hesitation or resistance toward UBI [15].

In South Korea, political trust has been a significant issue in recent years, fluctuating with political events and administrations. Scandals and crises—such as the Sewol Ferry incident in 2014, the 2016 impeachment of President Park Geun-hye, the housing-related government corruptions in 2021, the Itaewon incident in 2022, and the 2025 impeachment of Yun Suk-yeol—have at times undermined public trust in government institutions [23–31]. Conversely, effective governance, such as the successful management of the COVID-19 pandemic through timely infection tracing, face mask distribution, and vaccine rollout, has helped bolster public trust [32,33]. Therefore, exploring the role of political trust in shaping individuals' views on UBI, which has significant redistributive implications, is highly relevant in the South Korean context. Implementing and funding UBI would represent a bold expansion of the relatively subdued welfare state in South Korea.

We identify the mechanism connecting political trust to support for a tax-funded Universal Basic Income (UBI) through heuristic theory. Due to time and resource constraints, citizens often rely on simple cues rather than detailed policy knowledge when forming opinions on complex issues [7,16]. When people trust the government, they are more likely to believe that public funds will be used fairly and efficiently, making them more receptive to policies like a tax-funded UBI, even if they lack a full understanding of what the policy entails [7,16,34]. Conversely, when trust is low, citizens may suspect that such programs will be wasteful or mismanaged, leading them to resist support [7,16,34]. In this way, political trust serves as a shortcut, helping individuals decide whether to support redistributive policies like a tax-funded UBI without needing detailed information about their design. The following hypotheses may also be tested empirically:

**Hypothesis 3:** *Political trust will be positively associated with support for a tax-funded UBI.*

We argue that political ideology and political trust do not operate independently [7–9,13]. Instead, they may interact to reshape individuals' policy preferences, particularly regarding a substantial policy like UBI. We propose that political trust may moderate the effect of political ideology on support for tax-funded UBI. Theoretical expectations for this moderation can be outlined as follows: if an individual identifies as ideologically liberal or progressive, they are predisposed to favor UBI [3,10–12,15]. A higher level of political trust may further

strengthen the positive relationship between liberals and support for tax-funded UBI. Conversely, a high level of political trust may lead conservatives to view government action as trustworthy, even if they generally oppose the ideological or material implications of a large welfare provision like UBI. In other words, strong trust in government could reduce conservatives' resistance to tax-funded UBI.

Prior studies support the notion of such an interaction [9,13,16]. Political trust has influenced the relationship between political ideology and support for government spending, helping to mitigate conservatives' hostility toward government expenditure [9,13,16]. We expect a similar pattern in South Korea, where the interplay between political ideology and political trust reshapes individuals' preferences regarding tax-funded UBI. For liberals, political trust may act as an amplifying force, strengthening positive attitudes toward tax-funded UBI. Those on the right may object to tax-funded UBI based on their ideological stance, but a high level of political trust may cushion the negative effect of conservative ideology on support for tax-funded UBI.

Hetherington and Rudolph's concept of ideological sacrifice offers a valuable framework for understanding how political trust influences the relationship between ideology and support for tax-funded universal basic income (UBI) [7–9]. They argue that when citizens trust the government, they are more likely to accept policies that contradict their usual ideological beliefs, as they believe the state will act fairly and effectively [7,16]. In this context, trust mitigates the perceived risks associated with supporting government action, even among those who typically oppose redistribution. For instance, conservatives, who generally prioritize limited government and self-reliance, may still endorse redistributive policies like UBI if they have confidence in political institutions to implement them competently. Conversely, when trust is low, individuals become less willing to make such trade-offs, and ideological divisions become more pronounced. Therefore, political trust can blur ideological boundaries, allowing support for tax-funded UBI to be less rigidly tied to whether one identifies as liberal or conservative. Based on this discussion, we formulate the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 4:** *Political trust will moderate the positive relationship between liberals and support for a tax-funded UBI, such that the relationship strengthens as the level of political trust increases.*

**Hypothesis 5:** *Political trust will moderate the negative relationship between conservatives and support for a tax-funded UBI, such that the relationship weakens as the level of political trust increases.*

### 3. Model Specification

#### 3.1. Data

To test these hypotheses, we utilized the 2021 Korean General Social Survey (KGSS) [35]. The KGSS is a nationally representative survey of adults in South Korea, conducted annually through face-to-face interviews and stratified random sampling methods since 2003 [35]. The sample captures a broad cross-section of the Korean public across regions, ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds, enabling us to generalize the findings to the broader adult population [35]. The 2021 KGSS was particularly well-suited for our empirical analysis because it is the only iteration that includes a specific question about a tax-funded UBI, which is the central focus of our analytical framework. After excluding respondents with missing data on key variables, our analytic sample consists of 679 individuals [35].

### 3.2. Measures

#### 3.2.1. Dependent Variable

We focused on tax-funded UBI rather than a generic UBI measure because explicitly highlighting the funding mechanism introduces the fiscal trade-offs that any serious UBI implementation would entail. Tax-funded UBI is a more demanding and politically consequential policy mechanism, as it directly engages citizens' willingness to accept tax-funded redistribution. By specifying tax-funded UBI as the dependent variable, the analysis aims to provide a clearer picture of how political ideology and political trust interact when resource commitments are at stake. Support for a tax-funded UBI was measured by asking respondents the extent to which they agree or disagree with its implementation [35]. In the survey, respondents were provided with a definition of UBI ("a policy that provides all citizens, regardless of their background and employment status, a regular, livable sum of money") and then asked: "If universal basic income is implemented through taxes, do you agree with its implementation?" Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = "Strongly disagree," 2 = "Disagree," 3 = "Neither agree nor disagree," 4 = "Agree," and 5 = "Strongly agree" [35]. Thus, the variable is ordinal, ranging from 1 to 5, with higher values indicating greater support for implementing a tax-funded UBI and lower values indicating the opposite. This item explicitly mentioned funding through taxes, allowing respondents to consider the fiscal implications of implementing UBI. The mean level of support for tax-funded UBI was 2.77, slightly lower than 3, which is the midpoint of the scale, indicating that individuals, on average, were somewhat less supportive of tax-funded UBI.

#### 3.2.2. Independent Variables

For political ideology, the model included two variables: liberal and conservative [35]. These were derived from a question asking respondents to indicate their political leanings on a 7-point scale, where 1 indicates 'extremely liberal' and 7 indicates 'extremely conservative' [35]. The variables were operationalized such that values—1 (extremely liberal), 2 (liberal), and 3 (slightly liberal)—were combined into the indicator variable liberal; similarly, values of 5 (slightly conservative), 6 (conservative), and 7 (extremely conservative) were combined into the indicator variable conservative. The value of 4 (moderate) was omitted from the model, serving as the reference category. The mean of liberal was 0.35, indicating that approximately 35% of respondents identified as liberals; the mean of conservative was 0.26, with approximately 26% identifying as conservatives. Liberals are expected to be positively associated with support for a tax-funded UBI, while conservatives are expected to be negatively associated with it.

Political trust is measured as the combined average of two items: (1) confidence in the executive branch and (2) confidence in the legislative branch [35]. Respondents were asked to indicate their confidence level on a 3-point Likert scale: 1 = "hardly any confidence," 2 = "some confidence," and 3 = "a great deal of confidence" [35]. The mean political trust score was 1.55, suggesting that individuals were generally more distrustful of government institutions than trusting. As previously hypothesized, we expect that the more political trust individuals possess, the more support they will exhibit for a tax-funded UBI. More importantly, we argue that political trust serves as a moderator that reshapes the relationship between liberals and tax-funded UBI, as well as between conservatives and tax-funded UBI. For liberals, political trust amplifies the positive relationship, whereas for conservatives, it dampens the negative relationship.

Our methodological strategy reflects a systems approach by modeling how ideology, political trust, and welfare attitudes interact as interdependent components of a broader attitudinal system. Rather than treating variables as independent and linear, the inclusion

of interaction terms (e.g., Conservative  $\times$  Political Trust) allows us to capture the feedback-like role of trust in shaping ideological effects. In doing so, our model provides a structured way of examining these contingent relationships, highlighting how shifts in political trust can alter ideological resistance or openness to redistributive policies. This orientation mirrors systems analysis, which prioritizes linkages and interdependencies over isolated causal factors [36]. Thus, our methodology moves beyond a narrow test of coefficients to a systems-informed exploration of how attitudes toward tax-funded UBI take shape within a network of relationships.

### 3.2.3. Controls

Several variables were included in the empirical model to account for factors influencing support for implementing UBI. First, social trust was included. Defined as trust among individuals without an interpersonal relationship, social trust fosters positive attitudes toward government and its policies [37]. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that social trust may be positively associated with individuals' support for a tax-funded UBI.

We also incorporated additional control variables commonly emphasized in studies of redistribution and UBI: subjective class position, economic insecurity, and anti-welfare sentiment. In terms of subjective class position, people's place in the social hierarchy strongly shapes their views on redistribution. Those on the lower rungs often see redistributive policies as a way to level the playing field, while those higher up tend to resist financing broad transfers [38,39]. Feelings of economic insecurity also matter: households struggling to make ends meet are drawn to the safety of a guaranteed income like UBI, whereas secure households see less need [40,41]. Finally, in terms of anti-welfare sentiment, attitudes toward welfare retrenchment can influence support. People opposed to cutting aid for the poor are more likely to embrace universal programs, while those favoring retrenchment tend to resist them [42,43]. Finally, demographic and socioeconomic variables were also included, as these factors closely relate to individuals' attitudes toward social welfare policies, such as the tax-funded UBI explored in this study [3]. Age is expected to be positively associated with support for a tax-funded UBI; as individuals grow older, they may be more susceptible to poverty and more receptive to government policies that help alleviate it [44]. Regarding gender (with females coded as 1 and males coded as 0), women are generally seen as more supportive than men of government policies that aid the disadvantaged [45]. Individuals' income levels are also predicted to have a positive association with support for a tax-funded UBI; as individuals become poorer, they are more likely support government policies like UBI to assist them [37]. Finally, studies show that as individuals become more educated, they tend to display greater compassion toward those in need, particularly in today's challenging labor market [46].

## 4. Results

As shown in Table 1, support for a tax-funded UBI averaged 2.77—just under 3—suggesting that respondents leaned slightly toward skepticism about the policy. Ideologically, about one-third of the sample identified as liberal (35%) and about one-quarter as conservative (26%). Political trust averaged 1.55, pointing to a prevailing tendency to distrust rather than trust political institutions.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics.

| Variable                 | N   | Mean | SD   | Min. | Max. |
|--------------------------|-----|------|------|------|------|
| Taxation on basic income | 679 | 2.77 | 1.15 | 1    | 5    |
| Liberal                  | 679 | 0.35 | 0.48 | 0    | 1    |
| Conservative             | 679 | 0.26 | 0.44 | 0    | 1    |

Table 1. Cont.

| Variable               | N   | Mean  | SD    | Min. | Max. |
|------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|------|
| Political trust        | 679 | 1.55  | 0.48  | 1    | 3    |
| Social trust           | 679 | 2.49  | 0.60  | 1    | 4    |
| Subjective class       | 679 | 5.33  | 1.46  | 1    | 10   |
| Economic insecurity    | 679 | 3.02  | 0.86  | 1    | 5    |
| Anti-welfare sentiment | 679 | 2.96  | 0.92  | 1    | 5    |
| Age                    | 679 | 50.58 | 13.46 | 21   | 87   |
| Female                 | 679 | 0.50  | 0.50  | 0    | 1    |
| Income level           | 679 | 6.64  | 3.62  | 0    | 21   |
| Education level        | 679 | 3.47  | 1.41  | 0    | 7    |

Table 2 presents the correlations among the variables included in the analysis. Liberal identification is positively correlated with support for a tax-funded UBI ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), while conservative identification is negatively correlated ( $r = -0.14$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Economic insecurity shows a positive association with UBI support ( $r = 0.07$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ). By contrast, anti-welfare sentiment is negatively related to UBI support ( $r = -0.12$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Female respondents are more supportive of UBI ( $r = 0.07$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ), whereas higher income levels are associated with lower support ( $r = -0.08$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 2. Correlations between variables.

|      | (1)       | (2)      | (3)      | (4)       | (5)      | (6)       | (7)       | (8)  | (9)       | (10)      | (11)     | (12) |
|------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|-----------|----------|------|
| (1)  | 1.00      |          |          |           |          |           |           |      |           |           |          |      |
| (2)  | 0.15 ***  | 1.00     |          |           |          |           |           |      |           |           |          |      |
| (3)  | −0.14 *** | 0.44 *** | 1.00     |           |          |           |           |      |           |           |          |      |
| (4)  | 0.04      | 0.05     | −0.05    | 1.00      |          |           |           |      |           |           |          |      |
| (5)  | 0.04      | 0.01     | −0.06    | 0.09 **   | 1.00     |           |           |      |           |           |          |      |
| (6)  | −0.06     | 0.02     | 0.04     | 0.13 ***  | 0.12 *** | 1.00      |           |      |           |           |          |      |
| (7)  | 0.07 *    | 0.00     | 0.01     | −0.12 *** | −0.09 ** | −0.40 *** | 1.00      |      |           |           |          |      |
| (8)  | −0.12 *** | 0.02     | 0.05     | 0.09 **   | 0.03     | 0.09 **   | −0.12 *** | 1.00 |           |           |          |      |
| (9)  | 0.03      | −0.09 ** | 0.18 *** | 0.02      | 0.07 **  | −0.09 **  | −0.01     | 0.00 | 1.00      |           |          |      |
| (10) | 0.07 *    | 0.01     | −0.04    | 0.05      | 0.02     | 0.02      | 0.01      | 0.04 | −0.01     | 1.00      |          |      |
| (11) | −0.08 **  | 0.01     | −0.02    | −0.02     | 0.08 **  | 0.23 ***  | −0.21 *** | 0.02 | −0.16 *** | −0.34 *** | 1.00     |      |
| (12) | −0.05     | 0.10 *** | −0.05    | −0.05     | 0.05     | 0.23 ***  | −0.11 *** | 0.00 | −0.54 *** | −0.11 *** | 0.37 *** | 1.00 |

Note: \*  $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; (1) taxation for basic income; (2) liberal; (3) conservative; (4) political trust; (5) social trust; (6) subjective class; (7) economic insecurity; (8) anti-welfare sentiment; (9) age; (10) female; (11) income level (12) educational level.

Given the ordinal nature of the dependent variable—tax-funded UBI—we relied on an ordered logit regression [47]. Employing ordinary least squares (OLS) yields biased estimates when dependent variables are not continuous [47]. Conversely, using logistic regression reduces information by constraining respondents' choices [48]. We also accounted for the KGSS-provided weight and addressed heteroskedasticity using the Huber–White sandwich estimator.

Since the dependent variable is ordinal, we conducted the likelihood-ratio test assessing the proportional odds assumption. The test yielded a  $\chi^2$  (33) value of 40.80 ( $p = 0.165$ ). Because the test is not statistically significant, the results provide no indication that the proportional odds assumption has been violated. Taken together, the ordered logit model offers an appropriate and defensible specification for analyzing the relationship between ideology, political trust, and support for a tax-funded UBI. Additionally, we also assessed multicollinearity by examining variance inflation factors (VIFs). Following a stricter conventional practice, we considered values above 5 as indicative of political multicollinearity concerns [49]. The mean VIF across predictors was 1.26, well below 5, indicating that multicollinearity is not a major concern.

The results are shown in Table 3. The analysis consists of two steps. Model 1 examines direct relationships between tax-funded UBI and the independent variables; Model 2 focuses on political trust as the moderating variable by exploring two interaction

terms—Conservatives x Political Trust and Liberals x Political Trust. The Wald  $\chi^2$  test statistics are 32.99 and 38.41 for Model 1 and Model 2, respectively, indicating that the models are significantly different from zero.

**Table 3.** Regression results.

|                                | Taxation for Basic Income |          |          |          |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
|                                | Model 1                   |          | Model 2  |          |
|                                | Coef.                     | (S.E.)   | Coef.    | (S.E.)   |
| Liberal                        | 0.41                      | 0.18 **  | 0.60     | 0.62     |
| Conservative                   | −0.33                     | 0.20 *   | −1.53    | 0.67 **  |
| Political trust                | 0.27                      | 0.16 *   | 0.13     | 0.25     |
| Liberal x Political trust      |                           |          | −0.12    | 0.37     |
| Conservative x Political trust |                           |          | 0.80     | 0.41 **  |
| Social trust                   | 0.09                      | 0.13     | 0.08     | 0.13     |
| Subjective class               | 0.02                      | 0.07     | 0.02     | 0.07     |
| Economic insecurity            | 0.17                      | 0.11     | 0.15     | 0.11     |
| Anti-welfare sentiment         | −0.26                     | 0.10 *** | −0.26    | 0.11 *** |
| Age                            | 0.01                      | 0.01     | 0.01     | 0.01     |
| Female                         | 0.22                      | 0.16     | 0.22     | 0.16     |
| Income level                   | −0.03                     | 0.03     | −0.03    | 0.03     |
| Education level                | −0.03                     | 0.07     | −0.03    | 0.08     |
| Cut point 1                    | −1.04                     |          | −1.35    |          |
| Cut point 2                    | 0.34                      |          | 0.05     |          |
| Cut point 3                    | 1.72                      |          | 1.43     |          |
| Cut point 4                    | 3.57                      |          | 3.29     |          |
| Log likelihood                 | −1035.39                  |          | −1032.15 |          |
| Wald $\chi^2$                  | 32.99                     |          | 38.41    |          |

Note: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

First, Model 1 results confirmed the two hypotheses (Hypotheses 1 and 2). Liberals were positively associated with tax-funded UBI ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Compared to moderates, liberals support the idea of solving social ills through government-led efforts. Providing basic income for all requires a significant financial wherewithal for which imposing heavy taxation on citizens may become paramount. As such, liberals would be more inclined toward such a measure and would support it. On the other hand, conservatives were negatively associated with tax-funded UBI ( $\beta = -0.33$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ). They are ideologically predisposed toward less government intervention in addressing social problems [3,7–9,13,14]. Naturally, conservatives would be antagonistic to supporting taxation required to implement a tax-funded UBI. These results reconfirm that political ideology is a vital part of forming individuals' social welfare attitudes.

Model 1 also supports Hypothesis 3, showing that political trust is positively associated with backing for tax-funded UBI. Trust appears to serve as a shortcut, leading individuals who cannot fully assess the policy details to support it when they feel greater confidence in the government. More importantly, our exploration of political trust as a moderating variable in the relationship between political ideology and tax-funded UBI is warranted. Supporting Hypothesis 5, higher political trust helped conservatives ease their opposition to tax-funded UBI. As confirmed by Hypothesis 2, individuals identifying as conservatives were initially hostile to tax-funded UBI. However, in our model, greater political trust enabled those conservatives to support a social welfare policy like tax-funded UBI ( $\beta = 0.80$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Here, conservatives are willing to sacrifice their ideological interest because political trust provides a psychological buffer through which they now see a government-led policy differently and can be transformed into a willing supporter of a government cause. UBI and its funding through taxation is a quintessential liberal cause; for conservatives, supporting such a cause would certainly subject them to material as well as ideological sacrifices. The finding at least shows that conservatives may have lower hostility toward a liberal cause such as tax-funded UBI given that they possess a high

level of political trust, illustrating potency of political trust in reshaping individuals' social welfare attitudes. For liberals, our results indicate that political trust may not serve as a moderating variable. It is possible that supporting tax-funded UBI is a liberal cause and, regardless of their political trust levels, liberals are ideologically inclined toward supporting it. Thus, political trust does not play a critical role in how liberals view tax-funded UBI. In sum, political trust is directly related to the dependent variable, and it also exerts a powerful impact on the linkage between conservatives and support for tax-funded UBI.

Finally, anti-welfare sentiment shows a negative relationship with support for a tax-funded UBI. Individuals who express hostility toward assisting the poor are significantly less inclined to endorse such a policy [42,43].

Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the moderating effects of political trust on the relationship between political ideology and strong support for tax-funded UBI when political trust is high. The solid line illustrates the relationship between conservatives and strong support for tax-funded UBI at high levels of political trust, while the dotted line indicates the corresponding relationship for liberals. Both lines exhibit a positive slope, indicating that support for tax-funded UBI increases for both liberals and conservatives when political trust is high. However, the slope for conservatives is much steeper than that for liberals, suggesting that high levels of political trust have a more pronounced impact on conservatives. Thus, our investigation of political trust as a moderating variable is strongly justified in explaining and reshaping individuals' attitudes toward social welfare measures such as tax-funded UBI.

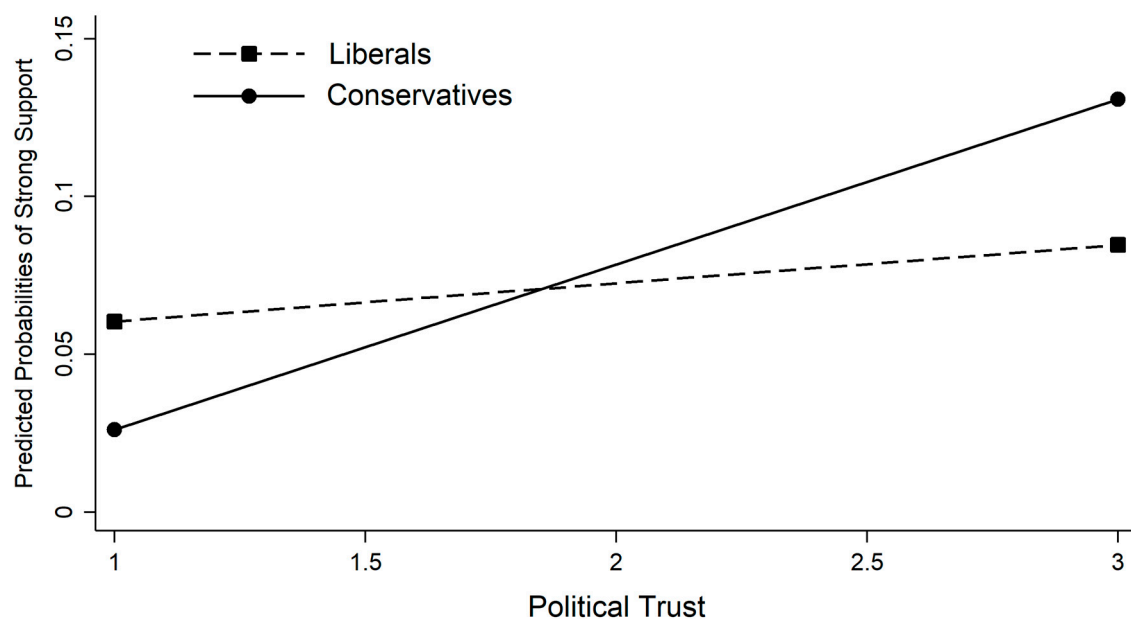


**Figure 1.** Predicted probabilities of strong support for tax-funded UBI.

Table 4 highlights the asymmetrical role of political trust in shaping strong UBI support. Conservatives gain about 3.6 percentage points in support for every unit increase in political trust ( $p < 0.05$ ), while the effects for moderates (0.6) and liberals (0.1) are negligible. Predicted probabilities in Table 5 echo this pattern: conservatives' support rises from just 2.2% at low trust to 12.7% at high trust, a ten-point gain, while moderates and liberals remain relatively stable. In short, political trust matters most for conservatives, easing their opposition to UBI.

**Table 4.** Average Marginal Effects of Political Trust on Strong Support of Tax-Funded UBI.

|               | Average Marginal Effects | S.E.  | p-Value |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------|---------|
| Moderates     | 0.006                    | 0.012 | 0.598   |
| Liberals      | 0.001                    | 0.019 | 0.954   |
| Conservatives | 0.036 **                 | 0.015 | 0.016   |

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 5.** Predicted Probabilities of Strong Support of Tax-Funded UBI at Lowest vs. Highest Trust.

|               | Political Trust = 1 | S.E.  | Political Trust = 3 | S.E.  | Differences |
|---------------|---------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|-------------|
| Moderates     | 0.046 ***           | 0.011 | 0.059 ***           | 0.023 | +0.013      |
| Liberals      | 0.072 ***           | 0.018 | 0.074 **            | 0.029 | +0.002      |
| Conservatives | 0.022 ***           | 0.007 | 0.127 **            | 0.053 | +0.105      |

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

Our results shed light on several dimensions of welfare attitudes that extend what has been established in earlier scholarship. To begin with, the analysis confirms that ideology remains a powerful organizing principle even in South Korea's relatively underdeveloped welfare state. Liberals consistently express support for redistribution, while conservatives display hesitation or outright resistance. This finding echoes classic accounts of redistributive conflict [38] and more recent comparative studies of welfare attitudes [10], suggesting that ideological divides continue to travel well across very different institutional contexts [20].

Yet the more striking implication lies in how political trust interacts with ideology. Contrary to a long-standing expectation that trust operates as a general heuristic, our findings reveal an asymmetry. For liberals, confidence in political institutions does little to alter already high levels of support for UBI. Conservatives, however, respond quite differently: when they trust government institutions, their resistance softens dramatically. Indeed, the probability of strong support among conservatives grows more than fivefold as trust increases. This pattern complicates prior claims that trust functions simply as an amplifier of support [7,16,22]. A more accurate interpretation is that trust serves as a boundary condition that changes how ideology translates into attitudes.

Seen from a systems perspective, support for UBI reflects more than individual predispositions—it emerges from the interaction between ideology and confidence in institutions. Trust acts like a feedback loop: it softens conservative resistance but leaves liberal preferences largely unchanged. The asymmetry we observe—trust dramatically shifting conservatives while leaving liberals largely unchanged—resembles what systems theory would describe as non-linear interaction among interconnected subsystems [18,36,50]. Rather than producing proportional shifts across groups, trust acts like a feedback loop that alters the ideological landscape unevenly. For scholars of welfare politics, this suggests that additive models of ideology and trust may obscure deeper contingencies. What matters is not only whether people are liberal or conservative, but whether their ideological predispositions are filtered through a context of confidence or suspicion toward governing institutions.

Finally, the South Korean case provides an important contextual nuance. Unlike many established welfare states, South Korea's political environment is characterized by recurrent governance scandals and volatile trust in institutions. In this setting, the moderating role of trust may be especially pronounced, because confidence is fragile to begin with. Institutional fragility, in other words, is not merely a backdrop against which

preferences unfold; it actively shapes how ideological divisions are expressed in debates over redistribution [15].

The findings also carry lessons for policymakers. Most obviously, they suggest that institutional trust is not only a normative ideal but also a strategic resource for building coalitions around redistributive reform. Conservatives remain skeptical of UBI when trust is low, but their opposition erodes when confidence in government is higher. This means that governments seeking to expand welfare programs should think of trust-building not as ancillary but as central to policy success [9,51]. Transparency in fiscal management, safeguards against corruption, and credible communication of trade-offs may be as critical as the policy design itself.

A second implication concerns how governments and advocates communicate reforms. Liberals require little persuasion; their ideological predispositions already align with universalist policies. Conservatives, by contrast, are conditional supporters. Their willingness to back ambitious reforms hinges on whether they believe government can manage programs competently and fairly. This asymmetry suggests that a blanket communication strategy is unlikely to work. Instead, targeted efforts aimed at addressing conservative concerns—highlighting efficiency, fairness, and fiscal discipline—are likely to yield the greatest dividends.

Finally, these findings are not just relevant for South Korea. Many societies with limited welfare states and fragile institutions face similar dilemmas. In such contexts, ideological divides may appear intractable, but trust can shift the boundaries of what is politically possible. The broader normative lesson is that fiscal resources alone are not sufficient for advancing redistributive policies; governments must also invest in institutional credibility. Trust, in this sense, is both a civic virtue and a practical lever for expanding the political feasibility of universal programs like UBI [2,12,41].

The study's implications extend beyond South Korea to other socio-political systems with similar characteristics—namely, a tradition of limited welfare provision and volatile political trust levels. In such contexts, building trust in political institutions may create conditions where conservatives become more willing to support redistributive measures. The findings challenge the notion that welfare attitudes are fixed by political ideology; rather, trust-building could serve as a mechanism for coalition or consensus-building for transformative social programs. Recognizing that public opinion is not strictly aligned along the left-right political spectrum but can be recalibrated through targeted trust-building offers a powerful lever for policymakers seeking to advance welfare reforms that might initially seem politically infeasible.

Despite these insights, our study has several limitations. First, this study draws on cross-sectional survey data, which necessarily constrains our ability to establish causal claims. The regression findings should thus be viewed as evidence of consistent associations between political ideology, political trust, and support for a tax-funded UBI, rather than as definitive causal effects. As scholars of welfare attitudes have long emphasized, observational data cannot fully disentangle reciprocal dynamics; for example, policy preferences may influence political trust just as political trust may influence policy preferences [7,16]. To address concerns about omitted-variable bias, we incorporated controls for social trust, subjective class position, economic insecurity, and welfare orientations as well as demographic variables, yet we acknowledge that endogeneity risks cannot be fully removed [40]. To move beyond these limitations, future work should rely on panel data or experiments. Panel surveys could track whether rising or falling political trust leads the same individuals to shift their UBI support. Experiments could provide scenarios that boost or weaken political trust and observe whether conservatives, in particular, respond as our findings suggest. Second, our analysis focused on a single country and period. South Korea's unique

political climate and the specific timing of the survey may limit the generalizability of these findings to other cultural or country contexts. Third, our measures of key variables have constraints. Political ideology was categorized into broad groups (liberal, moderate, conservative), which may oversimplify the political spectrum. Likewise, political trust was measured generally, without distinguishing trust in specific political institutions; differentiating these institutions may yield more valuable insights into which types of trust are most relevant in explaining individuals' policy preferences [34]. Finally, there could be other influential factors not captured in our model, such as media exposure or personal economic circumstances. Further research is needed to validate the findings of this study under different conditions.

Building on the findings of this study, future research should further explore the interplay of ideology and trust in shaping policy attitudes. One important step is to use longitudinal or experimental designs to clarify causality. Panel surveys could determine whether changes in an individual's political trust level lead to corresponding shifts in support for a redistributive policy such as tax-funded UBI over time. Likewise, experimental studies could test this relationship by providing information that boosts or diminishes trust in government and then measuring its impact on the relationship between political ideology and support for tax-funded UBI. Another avenue is to investigate the generalizability of the trust-ideology dynamic in other cultural or country contexts. Comparative studies could examine whether a similar moderating role of political trust appears in different cultural or country contexts or with other social policies. This would reveal whether the pattern observed in this study is unique to South Korea's polarized environment or reflects a broader global phenomenon. Finally, future research might also explore specific facets of political trust, distinguishing between trust in various political institutions or levels of government, to identify which aspects of institutional confidence influence public acceptance of redistributive policies.

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