

Political Cynicism and Political Participation of Voters in Negros Oriental, Philippines

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Abstract. This study was designed to examine political cynicism, political participation, and their interrelationship among voters in Negros Oriental, Philippines. An overall population of 400 registered voters participated in this study. The respondents' skepticism or belief was that politicians were motivated or characterized purely by self-interest, dishonesty, untrustworthiness, being out-of-touch, incompetence, and immorality. There were two indicators of political participation: the first indicator of political participation was electoral, and the second was political voice. The first, electoral activity, "voting during elections" was highly prioritized by the respondents, having a 1.79 weighted mean. The second indicator of political participation was political voice. This indicator had a low priority to voters, with an aggregate mean of only 0.46, whose verbal description was 'not applicable.' There was an inverse relationship between the two factors investigated in this study. With elevated perceptions of political cynicism, marked by beliefs in dishonesty, incompetence, and detachment from the public, political engagement declined, especially in non-electoral activities. High political cynicism hurts participation and constitutes an important area of relationship with implications for political theory and practice. Measures like transparency and accountability will promote the people's involvement in more extensive issues since such policies will help restore confidence and reduce cynicism. Therefore, Policies are important, promoting ethical behavior amongst politicians to rebuild trust and evoke a more participating citizenry.

Keywords: Election; Negros Oriental; Political cynicism; Political participation; Voting

1.0 Introduction

Political cynicism is an important study area due to its significant implications for political participation, a vital component of democratic governance. Political cynicism, characterized by skepticism and distrust toward political institutions and leaders, directly impacts the willingness of citizens to engage in activities like voting, campaigning, and influencing policy. This engagement is essential for legitimizing democratic systems, fostering accountability, and ensuring effective representation. Understanding how cynicism shapes these behaviors is critical for assessing the health of democratic institutions and addressing barriers to citizen involvement. Scholarly works have emphasized the negative consequences of political cynicism on participation. Dahl (1971, 1998), Pateman (1970), and Easton (1965) argue that broad participation is a cornerstone of democratic governance, and a lack of citizen involvement can threaten the legitimacy of governments. Uhlaner (2015) highlights the socioeconomic dimensions of participation, showing that wealthier and more educated individuals are more likely to engage in political activities. This raises questions about whether political cynicism disproportionately affects certain demographics, further exacerbating participation disparities.

Political cynicism has been a subject of academic inquiry in the Philippines since the 1960s. Hollnsteiner (1962) and Lande (1968) observed that Filipino electoral behavior often centered on personal loyalty to politicians rather than ideological alignment. During the Marcos regime, researchers such as Sicat (1970, 1976) and Youngblood (1972) documented youth cynicism, which framed politics as self-serving yet still acknowledged the government's capacity to address national problems. These studies laid a foundation for understanding the cultural and historical dimensions of political cynicism in the Philippines. However, existing literature often overlooks the nuanced effects of political cynicism on specific forms of participation and its potential to foster critical engagement rather than disengagement. Pederson (2012) suggests that cynicism might reflect an engaged and questioning public, challenging the assumption that it is inherently detrimental. This research seeks to fill this gap by examining the relationship between political cynicism and participation in Negros Oriental, where localized factors such as socioeconomic disparities and historical political trends may shape this dynamic uniquely.

This study provides an empirical investigation into the interplay between political cynicism and participation in a specific regional context, offering insights that can inform broader discussions on democratic governance. With the Philippines set to hold a national election in May 2025, understanding the dynamics of political cynicism is especially urgent. Elections are a critical avenue for citizen participation, and high levels of cynicism could suppress voter turnout, skew electoral outcomes, or undermine public trust in democratic institutions. By addressing the complexities of this relationship, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how political cynicism influences democratic processes and identifies strategies for fostering meaningful engagement among citizens, ensuring their active and informed participation in the upcoming electoral exercise.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This research used a descriptive-correlational design to examine the relationship between political cynicism and political participation among voters. It assessed political cynicism, defined as distrust toward political systems, as a factor influencing participation in activities like voting and campaigning. By analyzing the strength and direction of this relationship, the study provided insights into whether cynicism hinders participation, drives alternative engagement, or reflects broader societal attitudes.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in the cities and municipalities of Negros Oriental, a province located in the Central Visayas region (Region VII) of the Philippines. Negros Oriental is geographically situated in the southeastern part of the island of Negros, bordered by the province of Cebu to the north and the Sulu Sea to the south. The province comprises six cities and nineteen municipalities, each with its unique demographic and political landscape.

2.3 Research Participants

The respondents of the study were registered voters from the province of Negros Oriental, aged 18 years and above. According to the Commission on Elections (Comelec), as of the October 25, 2018, Election Registration Board (ERB) hearing for the May 13, 2019, National and Local Elections, Negros Oriental had a total of 1,036,112 registered voters. Slovin's formula was applied to determine the appropriate sample size for the study, ensuring that the sample accurately represented the larger population of voters in the province. A total of 400 voters were selected as the sample for this study. These respondents were proportionately distributed and randomly identified across the six cities—Bais City, Bayawan City, Canlaon City, Dumaguete City, Guihulngan City, and Tanjay City—and the 19 municipalities—Amlan, Ayungon, Bacong, Basay, Bindoy, Dauin, Jimalalud, La Libertad, Mabinay, Manjuyod, Pamplona, San Jose, Siaton, Sibulan, Sta. Catalina, Tayasan, Valencia, Vallehermoso, and Zamboanguita.

To ensure the sample accurately reflected the province's diversity and avoid bias, respondents were selected from various barangays within each city and municipality. This random and proportionate selection process aimed to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives, ensuring that the study results would be representative of the entire province without favoring any particular geographic area. By including a wide range of respondents from both urban and rural areas, the study minimized potential inconsistencies. It ensured that the findings would provide a comprehensive understanding of political cynicism and participation across different regions of Negros Oriental.

2.4 Research Instrument

The data-gathering instrument was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of three parts. Part I deals with the respondents' demographic profile. Part II delves into the respondents' extent of Political Cynicism composed of 30 item statements equally distributed across six dimensions: self-interest, dishonesty, untrustworthiness, out-of-touch, incompetence, and immorality. Each statement had corresponding descriptive levels like 1 referring to I do not know, 2 disagree, and 3 agree. Moreover, Part III contained items pertaining to the respondents' extent of participation relating to past elections with corresponding scaling descriptors like: 1 not applicable, 2 low priority and 3 high priority. The Cebuano translation of the questionnaire was checked and translated by Ms. Myrna S. Yape of the Foreign and Filipino Department of Silliman University. Considering that it was a researcher-made questionnaire, it was subjected to reliability testing by using a group of respondents similarly situated as the final set of respondents who will not be included in the final data collection and by applying Cronbach Alpha. To ensure reliability, the instrument was reviewed and pretested with 40 registered voters from Guihulngan City to ensure the questions could measure what it intended to measure and whether words and directions were clear and easy to understand. After revising the questionnaire based on the experts' suggestions, it was shown to the adviser for approval. The instrument was found highly reliable, with a reliability of .90. Upon the go signal of the adviser, statistician, and the ethics committee, the final copy of the questionnaire was reproduced and distributed to the target respondents.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher wrote a letter to the provincial director of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) requesting a list of registered voters in Negros Oriental and a letter asking for the permission of the City/Municipal Mayor and of the Barangay Captain for the conduct of the study. Then, the letters with the questionnaires were distributed to various registered voters. The data gathering was personally administered by the researcher with the help of her sister, colleagues, and students in the different cities and municipalities of Negros Oriental. The researcher gave the instructions, and the respondents answered on their respective copies of the questionnaire, which was collected afterward. The data was checked to ensure the correctness of their answers. The data from the questionnaires were tabulated, computed, and analyzed.

2.6 Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using percentage distribution, Pearson Product Moment r , Chi-square test of independence, and Spearman rho. Percentage distribution was used to present the distribution of the respondents across categories. Pearson Product Moment r was employed to determine the extent of the relationship between age and the extent of political cynicism and participation. The same instrument was used in determining whether or not a significant relationship existed between income and political cynicism, and political participation. The chi-square test of independence was used to ascertain the degree of relationship between sex, marital status, religion, educational attainment, political cynicism, and political participation. Moreover, Spearman Rho was employed to ascertain if a significant relationship existed between the extent of political cynicism and participation. In all the correlational analyses, the level of significance was at 0.05.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Letters were presented to the respondents regarding the study and its purpose. Respondents' responses were treated with the utmost confidentiality, and their identity was kept anonymous during the processing and interpretation of the data. The processed questionnaires were shredded and burned after the data had been processed and interpreted in the report. The researcher applied for an ethics review to the Silliman University Research Ethics Committee and submitted a copy of the proposal to the UREC Chair or Secretary for review. The Commission on Elections (Comelec) also provided the researcher with a data privacy certification for the respondents. Additionally, respondents were well-acquainted with the study's objectives and purposes and had the prerogative of free choice, enabling them to consent or decline participation voluntarily.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Political Cynicism of the Respondents

The respondents' political cynicism is categorized into six dimensions: self-interest, dishonesty, untrustworthiness, being out-of-touch, incompetence, and immorality. The data in Table 1 indicate a general

feeling of political cynicism among respondents, particularly with regard to self-interest in political actors. With an overall mean of 1.45, each item in the table has a mean rating above the agreement level (1.34), suggesting that respondents largely concur with the claims that politicians' self-serving intentions are reflected in them.

Table 1. *Political cynicism of the respondents according to self-interest*

Self-Interest	Mean	Description
Politicians are mainly involved in politics for the personal benefit of themselves and their families, not the community's benefit (Marsh, 1990).	1.53	Agree
Politicians are interested only in getting the people's votes, not in their suggestions for improving government functioning (Pinkleton & Austin, 2002).	1.46	Agree
The politicians are concerned with winning and enriching themselves. (Cappella & Jamieson (1997).	1.45	Agree
Politicians only care about themselves or special interests and not the condition or welfare of the people. (Pinkleton & Austin, 2002).	1.44	Agree
Government officials tend to be somewhat crooked or corrupt (Erber & Lau, 1991).	1.38	Agree
Aggregate	1.45	Agree

Legend: I Do not Know (0.00 - 0.66), Disagree (0.67 - 1.33), and Agree (1.34 - 2.00)

The belief that politicians put their own or their families' interests ahead of the good of the community is consistent with the opinions of Marsh (1990) and Cappella and Jamieson (1997), who contend that political participation is frequently motivated by self-interest rather than the general welfare. According to Pinkleton and Austin (2002), this perception also includes the idea that politicians only care about winning votes rather than appreciating the public's suggestions for better government. Additionally, respondents believe that politicians are susceptible to corruption or questionable ethics, reinforcing the narrative of distrust in political figures. This trend implies a broader disenchantment with political actors, reflecting skepticism about their integrity and intentions.

The data presented in Table 2 reveals a strong consensus among respondents regarding political dishonesty. Each item has a mean rating above the threshold for agreement (1.34). The aggregate mean of 1.58 further reinforces the respondents' agreement that politicians engage in dishonest practices.

Table 2. *Political cynicism of the respondents according to dishonesty*

Dishonesty	Mean	Description
Politicians will say anything to please the public (Austin & Pinkleton, 1995).	1.69	Agree
Politicians usually abuse authority to get what they want, regardless of how the people are affected (Foley, 2015).	1.58	Agree
Our political leaders are prone to make promises they do not intend to fulfill (Rijkhoff, 2015).	1.57	Agree
Politicians will lie about their opponents to get ahead (Foley, 2015).	1.55	Agree
Politicians lie about their goals and aspirations (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).	1.50	Agree
Aggregate	1.58	Agree

The highest-rated item, "Politicians will say anything to please the public" (Austin & Pinkleton, 1995), reflects a particularly strong belief among the respondents that politicians are willing to deceive the public for personal or political gain. The responses suggest that the respondents perceive politicians as prone to dishonesty, including abusing their authority to get what they want, making empty promises (Rijkhoff, 2015), and lying about their goals or opponents (Cappella & Jamieson, 2023). This pattern of dishonesty indicates a broader disillusionment with the integrity of political leaders.

The findings align with psychological studies, such as those by Shu and Gino (2012), who noted that individuals who lie tend to blur the lines of honesty, often forgetting the rules about deception while remembering other details. Additionally, the concept of moral compensation, as described by Jordan (2011), suggests that politicians may justify their dishonesty by promoting themselves as virtuous or engaging in prosocial actions to offset their deceptive behaviors. This reflects a deep-seated mistrust of political figures, as respondents strongly associate politicians with dishonesty and manipulation.

The data in Table 3 shows that the respondents overwhelmingly perceive politicians as untrustworthy, as reflected in the consistently high ratings across all the indicators. With an aggregate mean of 1.60, which falls within the "agree" category, the respondents demonstrate a strong belief in the untrustworthiness of political figures.

Table 3. *Political cynicism of the respondents according to untrustworthiness*

Untrustworthiness	Mean	Description
Politicians consciously promise more than they can deliver (Adriaansen, van Pragg & de Vreese, 2010).	1.68	Agree
Politicians will sing, dance, or entertain voters to hide their incompetence or lack of qualifications.	1.61	Agree
Politicians lie to the media and the public to deceive voters to vote for them and are not sincere (Craig, Niemi & Silver, 1990).	1.58	Agree
Politicians emphasize their fame or celebrity status but are, in reality, unqualified and incompetent or lack the needed knowledge.	1.56	Agree
People running the government waste much money on fanciful or grandiose projects, making the country indebted.	1.55	Agree
Aggregate	1.60	Agree

The most highly rated item, "Politicians consciously promise more than what they can deliver" (Adriaansen, van Pragg & de Vreese, 2010), indicates that respondents perceive politicians as making unrealistic promises to gain votes or support, which they are unable or unwilling to fulfill. This sentiment is reinforced by the other indicators, highlighting politicians' tendency to use superficial tactics, such as entertaining voters or emphasizing their celebrity status, to cover up their lack of qualifications or competence. Additionally, respondents believe politicians frequently deceive the public and media to manipulate voter behavior and waste public funds on unnecessary projects, exacerbating the national debt. These findings align with political theories suggesting that citizens often choose leaders based on trust – believing those they vote for will act according to their interests and values (Miller & Stokes, 1963). However, the responses reflect a breach of that trust, with politicians perceived as manipulative and dishonest. The idea of "two facades" in politics, where public figures say one thing and do another, captures the respondents' general cynicism toward political figures who fail to live up to the trust placed in them.

The data in Table 4 show a clear pattern of agreement among respondents that politicians are out of touch with the people's needs and realities. With an aggregate mean of 1.58, which falls within the "agree" category, respondents strongly believe that politicians are disconnected from the public after they assume office.

Table 4. *Political cynicism of the respondents according to out-of-touch*

Out-of-Touch	Mean	Description
Politics can be a battle of rival clans and self-interests that puts it out of touch with the people's needs.	1.63	Agree
Politicians pretend to care very much for the people during the campaign but will not care anymore after they are elected.	1.61	Agree
Politicians lose touch with the people once elected (Pinkleton, Um & Austin, 2002).	1.57	Agree
Politicians generally have no idea what they are talking about when they promise to improve the welfare of the people.	1.55	Agree
Politicians are out of touch with citizens, especially if they are rich and do not know the real condition of poverty of the people.	1.54	Agree
Aggregate	1.58	Agree

The highest-rated item, "Politics can be a battle of rival clans and self-interests that makes it out of touch with the felt needs of the people," reflects a widespread perception that political competition is more about personal gain and power struggles than addressing the genuine needs of the population. This belief is consistent with Pinkleton, Um, and Austin's (2002) view that politicians often lose touch with the people once elected. The respondents also indicate that politicians prioritize their personal interests or political power over the welfare of citizens, particularly after election campaigns. Moreover, the perception that politicians, especially those from wealthy backgrounds, are disconnected from the everyday struggles of the population, including issues like poverty, highlights a growing sense of alienation between elected officials and their constituents. This reinforces the view that politicians often appear insincere, pretending to care during campaigns but failing to follow through after they are in power. Overall, the data suggests a significant level of political cynicism, where respondents feel that politicians are more concerned with maintaining power and personal interests than with genuinely improving the lives of the people they serve.

The data presented in Table 5 demonstrates a significant level of political cynicism regarding politicians' competence. Respondents expressed agreement across all five indicators related to perceived political incompetence. The aggregate mean of 1.64, which falls within the "agree" category, indicates that respondents

strongly believe politicians are often unqualified and lack the necessary skills or experience to perform effectively in office.

Table 5. *Political cynicism of the respondents according to incompetence*

Incompetence	Mean	Description
Politicians may have famous surnames, but this does not mean they are qualified.	1.68	Agree
Politicians may campaign to attract the masses but usually are unattractive to knowledgeable and educated voters.	1.68	Agree
Many politicians are not qualified to be elected into office.	1.66	Agree
Many reelectionist candidates do not have a record of good performance.	1.61	Agree
Some candidates who are favored to win may lack educational and intellectual qualifications.	1.58	Agree
Aggregate	1.64	Agree

The highest-rated items – “Politicians may have famous surnames, but this does not mean they are qualified” and “Politicians may campaign to attract the masses but usually are unattractive to knowledgeable and educated voters” – suggest that voters perceive political campaigns as more about popularity or family name than qualifications or merit. This sentiment is further reflected in the belief that many re-elections lack a solid performance record and that some favored candidates may lack basic educational or intellectual qualifications. The responses imply a broader concern about the quality of candidates running for office, with many viewed as incompetent or unfit for leadership positions. The data highlights the need for better voter education, not just in how to vote but also in fostering critical thinking about the qualifications and abilities of candidates. Schaffer (2002) noted that politicians often address their perceived incompetence by targeting the poorer segments of the population and offering community projects or direct payoffs to secure votes. This tactic may mask their lack of qualifications while perpetuating a cycle of superficial political engagement rather than addressing the deeper issues of competence and governance.

The data in Table 6 reveals that the respondents strongly agree with politicians' immorality, as reflected in the high mean scores for most of the indicators. With an aggregate mean of 1.52, which falls within the "agree" category, the respondents strongly believe that politicians engage in immoral practices.

Table 6. *Political cynicism of the respondents according to immorality*

Immorality	Mean	Description
Politicians buy votes and will compete on who can offer more money to the voters.	1.70	Agree
Politicians spend much money because they plan to recover it or gain more after they are elected through corruption.	1.60	Agree
Politicians violate election laws to ensure their election.	1.55	Agree
Politicians will engage in “dagdag-bawas” of election results to win over their opponents.	1.44	Agree
Many politicians engage in extra-marital relationships or unwanted sexual advances.	1.29	Disagree
Aggregate	1.52	Agree

The highest-rated statement, “Politicians buy votes and will compete on who can offer more money to the voters” (1.70), highlights a pervasive view that vote-buying is a common and accepted practice in the political landscape. This is further supported by the belief that politicians spend large amounts of money during their campaigns to recoup those expenses through corrupt practices once they are in office, as indicated by the 1.60 mean score for the statement, “Politicians spend much money because they plan to recover it or gain more after they are elected, through corruption.”

The respondents also agree that politicians violate election laws and engage in fraudulent practices like “dagdag-bawas” (vote manipulation) to secure electoral victories, with scores of 1.55 and 1.44, respectively. This suggests a strong perception of dishonesty and corruption within the political system, reinforcing the view that politicians often bend or break the rules to maintain power. Interestingly, the lowest-rated item in this dimension, “Many politicians engage in extra-marital relationships or unwanted sexual advances” (1.29), indicates that respondents do not strongly associate politicians with sexual immorality. While there have been instances of such behaviors among political figures, the general perception among respondents is that this is not as pervasive as other forms of immorality, such as vote-buying and corruption. Overall, the data reflects a deep-seated cynicism about the moral integrity of politicians, particularly regarding their involvement in corrupt practices like vote-buying and

election manipulation. This aligns with Schaffer's (2002) observation that electoral reforms to curb such practices have historically been driven by middle- and upper-class movements, underscoring the challenge of addressing entrenched political immorality.

3.2 Political Participation

In Table 7, the political participation of the respondents is broken down into two components: electoral and political voice. Many studies in political science on citizen's political participation focus on electoral involvement. However, more recently, the focus has become broader, including different types of participation and civic engagement (Brady, 1999). Most scholars focus on active participation, which can be classified by frequency, regularity, and range, such as voting, contributing money, and attending meetings. The first indicator of political participation is electoral, which consists of nine (9) statements. The respondents rated each statement or electoral activity according to their priority level (high priority, low priority, or not applicable).

The data in Table 7 reveals the varying levels of political participation among respondents, with a clear distinction between the prioritization of voting and other forms of political engagement. The statement "Voting during elections" received the highest score of 1.79, categorizing it as a high priority for the respondents.

Table 7. Political participation of the respondents

Electoral	Mean	Description
Voting during elections.	1.79	High Priority
Participating in a meeting organized by the government to initiate citizens' involvement and participation.	0.78	Low Priority
Participating in a political caravan to support a particular candidate.	0.62	Low Priority
Going to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, fundraising, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate.	0.59	Low Priority
Talking to people and showing them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates.	0.58	Low Priority
Placing a poster at a window or in front of the house.	0.51	Low Priority
Doing any work for one of the parties or candidates.	0.50	Low Priority
Wearing a campaign pin.	0.48	Not Applicable
Putting a campaign sticker on your car and another vehicle.	0.48	Not Applicable
Aggregate	0.70	Low Priority

This result is consistent with the high voter turnout of 86.01% in Negros Oriental during the 2019 elections, reflecting the widespread practice of voting as an important civic duty in the region. Voting is viewed not only as a right but also as an obligation under the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines, which mandates that qualified citizens must participate in elections. This activity is fundamental to the democratic process, and the respondents strongly prioritize it, aligning with the broader national emphasis on suffrage as both a privilege and civic responsibility. The respondents rated most forms of political participation, such as attending political meetings, participating in caravans, or engaging in campaign-related tasks, as low priority. The weighted means for these activities range from 0.48 to 0.78, indicating a low level of involvement or interest in these forms of political engagement. These activities include attending rallies or political speeches, placing campaign posters, volunteering for candidates, and discussing politics with others. This suggests that while these activities are recognized as part of political engagement, they are not widely practiced or prioritized by the respondents. Some activities, such as wearing campaign pins and putting campaign stickers on vehicles, were rated as not applicable by the respondents, with scores of 0.48. This indicates that these forms of political participation are either not practiced by the respondents or are considered irrelevant to their understanding of political participation.

The results reflect a general trend of low political participation in non-electoral activities. Voting remains the most prioritized activity, while more active forms of engagement, such as campaigning or attending political events, receive little attention. This could suggest a preference for more passive forms of political participation (e.g., voting) rather than active engagement in the political process. The respondents may see voting as the most effective or legitimate means of influencing political outcomes, while other activities may seem less impactful or more time-consuming. This trend is consistent with the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) findings, which indicated that Filipinos tend to expect greater government services and see voting as the primary way to hold politicians accountable. However, it also underscores the gap between formal electoral participation and

other forms of active political involvement, which could be linked to political apathy, lack of trust in the political system, or limited opportunities for meaningful engagement outside of elections.

The data in Table 8 generally indicate low levels of engagement with forms of political participation dependent on "political voice." There is very slight involvement in such activities as demonstrations, contacting media or political figures, online political discussion forums, and joining pressure groups. Activities that are perceived as low priority, perhaps where respondents lack interest, confidence, or belief in the action being effective in bringing about meaningful change, are noted to have an aggregate mean of 0.54.

Table 8. *Political participation of the respondents*

Political Voice	Mean	Description
Participating in lawful demonstrations.	0.61	Low Priority
Contacting a radio station, the TV, or a newspaper through text.	0.60	Low Priority
Contacting a politician or a civil servant to express support.	0.56	Low Priority
Contacting a political party or organization.	0.54	Low Priority
Participating in a political discussion or action via the internet, email, or text messages.	0.50	Low Priority
Write a letter or send an email to public officials, giving them your opinion about something that should be done.	0.50	Low Priority
Participating in an action or pressure group.	0.48	Not Applicable
Aggregate	0.54	Low Priority

It could be related to ineffectiveness perceived in any mechanism of political voice added to mistrust in the political system. The "not applicable" score on participation in pressure groups also signifies limited practice or relevancy perceived in this form of engagement. It may also result from structural barriers, such as a lack of accessible platforms or avenues for political communication that are genuine, interactive, and impactful. The result, however, underlines more on the dominion of more traditional electoral participation, as respondents tend to think voting during elections is more important than engaging in a continuous political exercise. Maybe depending solely on elections would partially explain why this civic culture does not precipitate more vibrant dialogue and accountability. Most of all, enriching civic education and institutional trust and building spaces where citizens will meaningfully interact with political entities can address this gap in participation.

3.3 Relationship between Political Cynicism and Political Participation

The data from Table 9 demonstrates a significant inverse relationship between various forms of political cynicism and political participation.

Table 9. *Relationship between political cynicism and political participation*

Variables	Spearman rho (rs)	P value
Self-Interest and Political Participation	-0.146	0.003*
Dishonesty and Political Participation	-0.216	0.000*
Untrustworthiness and Political Participation	-0.199	0.000*
Out-of-Touch and Political Participation	-0.259	0.000*
Incompetence and Political Participation	-0.176	0.000*
Immorality and Political Participation	-0.219	0.000*

As voters' perceptions of self-interest, dishonesty, untrustworthiness, out-of-touch, incompetence, and immorality in politicians increase, their level of political participation decreases. This relationship is confirmed by the negative Spearman's rho values for each variable, indicating that higher political cynicism correlates with lower engagement in political activities, such as voting and political voice. For example, when voters believe politicians are motivated by self-interest, they are less likely to participate in politics. This finding aligns with Huntington and Nelson's (1976) perspective, which suggests that individuals who view politicians as self-serving may not feel obligated to participate in the political process, seeing it as futile or unimportant. Similarly, when voters perceive dishonesty in politicians, their political participation declines, supporting Citrin's (1974) view that politically cynical individuals are more likely to withdraw from political activity altogether or engage in non-traditional forms of protest, such as riots or sit-ins.

Furthermore, perceptions of untrustworthiness in politicians also lead to lower political participation, reflecting the idea that people may not feel motivated to participate when they do not trust elected officials to act in the public's best interest, as suggested by Bowler, Donovan, and Karp (2007). The belief that politicians become "out-

of-touch" after being elected similarly diminishes political engagement, aligning with Pinkleton, Um, and Austin's (2002) observations that politicians often lose connection with voters once they are in office.

The relationship between political cynicism and political participation also extends to perceptions of incompetence and immorality. Voters who view politicians as incompetent or immoral tend to participate less in political activities, consistent with Thorpe's (2017) perspective on the erosion of effective governance caused by incompetent leadership and Hubbard's (2017) emphasis on the importance of moral leadership. Overall, the data underscores political cynicism—the belief that politicians are self-interested, dishonest, untrustworthy, out-of-touch, incompetent, or immoral—discourages political participation. This inverse relationship reflects the broader view that politically cynical citizens are less likely to engage in traditional political behaviors, as they perceive the political process as corrupt or ineffective. These findings resonate with the work of Rijkhoff (2015), who suggested that politically cynical individuals are less inclined to participate in demonstrations or political activities. In this sense, political cynicism leads not only to withdrawal from politics but also to a rejection of the political system as a whole, as noted by Milbrath (1981), who described cynical citizens as believing the political system is fundamentally flawed and corrupt.

4.0 Conclusion

Major inferences from the analysis found that the perception of political cynicism among respondents is strongly held alongside the view that politicians tend to be primarily selfish. Such findings coincide with the postulations of Marsh (1990) and Cappella and Jamieson (1997), citing that political actors are often moved by self-interest instead of public service. Responses of respondents in this study were that politicians are more concerned about personal and family benefits compared to the community's benefit, which means that most have no trust or little in political integrity. Consequences from these findings in terms of theories are that self-interest behavior politically can inherently lead to the breakdown of public trust and non-accountability.

There was an inverse relationship between the two factors investigated in this study. With elevated perceptions of political cynicism, marked by beliefs in dishonesty, incompetence, and detachment from the public, political engagement declined, especially in non-electoral activities. The finding thus agrees with the Huntington and Nelson (1976) theory that, for the most part, cynical citizens envision a perception that involvement in established forms of participation is useless. The theoretical implications thus underscore that elevated cynicism produces political disengagement, reduces civic participation, and perpetuates disenfranchisement. Overall, high political cynicism hurts participation and constitutes an important area of relationship with implications for political theory and practice. Measures like transparency and accountability will promote the involvement of the people in more extensive issues since such policies will help restore confidence and reduce cynicism. Therefore, Policies are important, promoting ethical behavior amongst politicians to rebuild trust and evoke a more participating citizenry.

However, future studies should include objective measures such as longitudinal studies on political trust and analyze experiences and reactions from different demographic groups concerning political cynicism. Future research directions may involve exploring how targeted interventions—political education programs, reform of institutions, or others—would change political cynicism and engagement levels. Comparative studies of political cynicism across political systems or cultural contexts also hold some promise for shedding light on broader global relevance and variability.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The author contributes to the conceptualization, formal analysis, original draft, supervision, data curation, validation, writing-review and editing, visualization, funding acquisition, investigation, methodology, and project administration of this study.

6.0 Funding

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

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