

# **Sceptical, Apathetic or Just Plain Cynical? The Mediating Role of Political Disaffection on the Relationship between Online Political Engagement and Political Efficacy**

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**Background statement:** Previous studies suggested that online political engagement (OPE) is related to political disaffection, which consist of political apathy, cynicism and scepticism. Political disaffection is also found to predict political efficacy. No study, however, tests the variables in a single model. We propose that political disaffection explains how viewing, sharing and discussing political news online can increase political efficacy. We hypothesized that: (1) Political apathy will mediate the relationship between OPE and political efficacy. (2) Political cynicism will mediate the relationship between OPE and political efficacy. (3) Political scepticism will mediate the relationship between OPE and political efficacy.

**Method:** A non-experimental correlational design via an online survey was employed with 216 Malaysian respondents recruited. They were given measures of OPE, Political Apathy, Cynicism, Scepticism and Efficacy.

**Findings:** Results provided support for two of three of the hypotheses where political apathy and scepticism fully mediated the relationship between OPE and political efficacy, controlling for demographic factors. Supplementary analysis showed that only discussing predicted political scepticism; neither viewing nor sharing did. The effect of discussing on political efficacy was indirect through political scepticism and apathy. Political apathy fully mediated the relationship between viewing and sharing with political efficacy.

**Discussion:** Findings of this present study highlight the significance of understanding how the internet can be used to raise political efficacy as well as explore the mechanics behind it. Such findings have potential implications for developing intervention programs to raise political efficacy in countries with falling voter turnout and the role of the internet in modern day politics.

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