

ANALYSIS OF THE LEVELS OF POLITICAL DISAFFECTION IN A DISTRICT OF THE PROVINCE OF LAMBAYEQUE, PERU

ANÁLISE DOS NÍVEIS DE DESAFIO POLÍTICO EM UM DISTRITO DA PROVÍNCIA DE LAMBAYEQUE, PERU

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Abstract

Within the political and social landscape of Peru, political disaffection is becoming an increasing habit, especially in rural districts where the dynamics of citizen participation are limited. In this context, the study aimed to measure the levels of political disaffection in a district of the Lambayeque province, Peru, and analyze influencing factors such as the perception of local politics, trust in institutions, and participation in electoral events. This study was quantitative, nonexperimental, and cross-sectional in design. The target population was a total of 19,342 inhabitants. From this, 506 individuals were selected through nonprobability sampling. Information was collected using a Likert-type survey. Regarding the processing of the databases, it was conducted through SPSS, where descriptive statistical techniques were employed. The results indicate that 61.7% of those surveyed demonstrated a moderate degree of political disaffection; additionally, 23.3% perceive corruption, 44.9% do not trust the judicial system, and 31.8% trust the political system. 23.5% of respondents show active electoral participation, 68.8% have political interest, and 7.7% consider the electoral process relevant. Within this hopeless and negative tone regarding the management of public affairs, a political disaffection is observed in the province of Lambayeque influenced by a negative attitude toward politics that is cultivated, and at the same time, a disconnection between rulers.

Resumo

No cenário político e social do Peru, a insatisfação política está se tornando um hábito crescente, especialmente em distritos rurais onde a dinâmica de participação cidadã é limitada. Nesse contexto, o estudo teve como objetivo mensurar os níveis de insatisfação política em um distrito da província de Lambayeque, Peru, e analisar fatores de influência, como a percepção da política local, a confiança nas instituições e a participação em eventos eleitorais. Este estudo foi quantitativo, não experimental e transversal. A população-alvo foi de 19.342 habitantes. Desse total, 506 indivíduos foram selecionados por meio de amostragem não probabilística. As informações foram coletadas por meio de uma pesquisa do tipo Likert. Quanto ao processamento dos bancos de dados, foi realizado por meio do SPSS, onde foram empregadas técnicas estatísticas descritivas. Os resultados indicam que 61,7% dos entrevistados demonstraram um grau moderado de insatisfação política; além disso, 23,3% percebem corrupção, 44,9% não confiam no sistema judicial e 31,8% confiam no sistema político. 23,5% dos entrevistados demonstram participação eleitoral ativa, 68,8% têm interesse político e 7,7% consideram o processo eleitoral relevante. Dentro desse tom desesperançoso e negativo em relação à gestão dos assuntos públicos, observa-se um descontentamento político na província de Lambayeque, influenciado por uma atitude negativa em relação à política que é cultivada e, ao mesmo tempo, por uma desconexão entre os governantes.



Keywords: Political Disaffection. Citizen Participation. Social Trust. Political Perception. Political Attitude.

Palavras-chave: Descontentamento Político. Participação Cidadã. Confiança Social. Percepção Política. Atitude Política.

1 INTRODUCTION

The disengagement from politics by a citizen is a significant issue for political science, as it has become a crucial topic for the proper functioning of democracy. In Spain, Megía and Moreno (2022) reported that 80% of people criticize the politician representing them; in response, the majority withdraw from electoral events and social control, leading to a lack of effective oversight over the actions of rulers, resulting in large-scale corruption.

The electoral system in countries such as the United States and France has been in crisis in recent years. In some recent elections, the participation rate has dropped to less than 60% (Berlanga *et al.*, 2023). This phenomenon has reflected a trend of apathy among the citizen masses, who are increasingly distancing themselves from the political process. Additionally, there is a growing disconnection and indifference regarding local matters, ultimately resulting in a decrease in trust in democratic institutions (Díaz, 2022).

In Latin America, especially in Chile, there are various reasons that have led to citizens uprising against the decisions of their political representatives. Among these is the mismanagement of state resources, which has increased distrust in institutions (Moyano and Solís, 2021).

In 2021, a study conducted by Proética in Peru revealed that 84% of citizens view corruption as one of the most serious problems faced socially and politically. Furthermore, the study indicated that 53% of the population expresses deep distrust toward traditional political institutions, marking a significant distance between citizens and the formal structures of the state (Canaza, 2024).

The erosion of trust in institutions has resulted in a significant decrease in conventional political participation, particularly concerning voting and party affiliation, given the generalization of skepticism as a predominantly negative attitude. Consequently, citizens seem increasingly inclined to act in the absence of formal political mechanisms, resulting in a loss of legitimacy in our democratic processes and the governance of the country itself (Dúarez, 2022).

Throughout the recent subnational elections of 2022 in a provincial district of Lambayeque, Peru, a detachment from their political representatives by the inhabitants has also become evident. This translates into high numbers of electoral abstention and null votes recorded (ONPE, 2012). This detachment also follows the global trend toward exclusive systems for citizens; furthermore, there has been a certain level of distrust among citizens toward their political leaders, representing 30% of the entire electorate (ONPE, 2022).

This research is important because it allows for an understanding of traditional political participation, specifically evaluating how it can mitigate political disinterest in many communities, supported by contributions from Robert Dahl and Giovanni Sartori, who are prominent in the field of political science. It is essential to find ways to revive such democratic ties, as they will not only contribute to academia but also have applications in daily life moving forward in Lambayeque, Peru. This makes residents feel more secure when dealing with local authorities and leads to more stable governance.

In light of the above, the following research questions are addressed: (1) What is the level of political disaffection in a district of the Province of Lambayeque, Peru? (2) What is the level of distrust in institutions in a district of the Province of Lambayeque, Peru? (3) What is the level of political–social disengagement in a district of the Province of Lambayeque, Peru? The main objective was to determine the level of political disaffection in a district of the Province of Lambayeque, Peru, and to test the main hypothesis: Political disaffection in the district of Lambayeque, Peru, is negatively correlated with trust in institutions and electoral participation.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Political disaffection

The theoretical basis of the variable political disaffection is associated with the theory of the good citizen, which was manifested in one of the most predominant ways through conventional activities, such as voting or accepting the decisions of political institutions (Dalton, 2008). The theory holds that a transformation has occurred over time, shifting toward a type of civic engagement that is more individualized and guided by specific objectives. Instead of shaping their political behavior through conventional

political avenues, citizens show a growing disinterest in being part of the majority of governments (Rodríguez, 2024). Dalton states that this change is especially visible in new generations, who have chosen to detach themselves from formal political structures in favor of direct action and focused activism, particularly in digital media, framing them within a passive society.

Although it may seem that there is a decline in traditional political participation, such as a decrease in voter turnout, the author argues that this does not indicate a decrease in civic engagement; rather, it is an evolution in how people relate to politics when political power shifts toward private interests derived from businesses (Michalski, 2021).

Conceptually, political disaffection refers to the process by which individuals and groups have no real contact and are incompetent in addressing the political and administrative institutions that exist alongside a democratic system (Witteveen *et al.*, 2022). In a democracy, this type of participation is characterized by following the procedures and forms established by the political and legal framework of that society; in other words, it involves citizens through the formal structures and systems created by the government and public institutions, such as elections, surveys, hearings, and civic committees (Angarita *et al.*, 2021).

Political disaffection is also understood as the distance or apathy that citizens experience toward political institutions, parties, and democratic processes. This is reflected in lower electoral participation, less trust in institutions, and a widespread perception that the political system does not optimally meet social demands (Jara *et al.*, 2021). According to Dalton, political disaffection means that citizens distance themselves or lose trust in traditional political actors and mechanisms due to perceptions of ineffectiveness, corruption, or lack of representativeness (González and Salvatierra, 2021). However, this phenomenon does not necessarily indicate total disinterest in politics but rather a deviation toward unconventional forms of participation, such as activism and social protests (Freire, 2023).

Some argue that political institutions are corrupt and likely do nothing to solve poverty; this perception focuses mainly on institutions such as the national Congress, political parties, and other governmental organizations, which are seen as entities that filter certain groups on the basis of their own interests (Freire, 2023). Owing to this perception, citizens begin to distance themselves from traditional forms of political participation, such as elections and democratic processes, given the feeling that

participating leads to nothing and does not have any real impact on the potential rehabilitation of the system (Martínez *et al.*, 2022).

The second point is the distancing from the political system, which implies the gradual disconnection of the population from their conventional means of political participation, such as elections or joining a political party (Witteveen *et al.*, 2022). This may be due to consensual distrust of the structures of political power (Michalski, 2021).

3 METHODOLOGY

On the basis of the analysis conducted by Hernández and Mendoza (2018), a basic type of research will be carried out, employing strategic means to attempt to modify a specific problematic reality. A quantitative approach was used, as the results were examined through numerical, statistical, or percentage data (Bernal, 2016). The design will be nonexperimental, as there will be no attempt to manipulate or modify the characteristics of the variables under study (Hernández and Mendoza, 2018). Additionally, it has a descriptive scope, as it aims to produce solutions in the particular analysis of a variable so that its results can be projected into the future.

3.1 Population and sample

According to Ñaupas *et al.* (2018), the population refers to a group of people or events that share specific characteristics and are essential for collecting the necessary data. In this case, the study population consists of 19,342 eligible voters who participated in the last process according to ONPE (2022) in a district of the province of Lambayeque. With respect to the inclusion criteria, the decision was made to work with individuals aged 18--65, as well as both sexes, who have characteristics similar to those in urban areas.

The sample consisted of 506 citizens, of which 327 were male (65.4%) and 173 were female (34.6%). The data were divided into four age subintervals: 17.3% for ages 18--35; 30% for ages 36--45; 41.7% for ages 46--55; and 11% for ages 56--65. The average age of the citizens is 45.2 years, and the mode is 50 years, on the basis of the survey. With respect to education, 59% of the sample had completed higher education, 35% had a bachelor's degree, and 6% were illiterate. In terms of the living context, 82.6%

reside in rural areas, and 17.4% reside in urban areas. The samples were obtained through convenience sampling. The unit of study was a qualified voter.

3.2 Techniques and instruments

The technique used was a survey, and the instrument used was a questionnaire. Data were collected through a survey that employed a specially designed questionnaire with 15 Likert scale items. This questionnaire focused on recording citizens' opinions regarding significant social issues, both current and future, such as trust, participation, intervention, and political preferences

3.3 Procedure

The responses were classified into five positions: never, rarely, sometimes, almost always, and always. The internal consistency of the instrument was evaluated, and it was found that the reliability was acceptable, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.920 according to the test conducted with a sample of 50 cases processed in SPSS version 26, while its validity was assessed by five specialist doctors in the field.

The study was conducted with care for ethical reasons. The use of data was privileged solely for academic purposes, taking responsible measures. The participation of the affected individuals was completely voluntary, following basic ethical principles: do no harm, respect equity to avoid all forms of discrimination, and beneficence aimed at ensuring the well-being of all participants. In full solidarity with the rights and dignity of individuals, humane and fair treatment to prevent any harm was a constant priority.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Results

The results and discussions of an article must be presented in a clear and organized manner, based on the data collected and the analyzes carried out during the study. Initially, the results must be presented in an objective and concise way, using tables, graphs and statistics, if applicable, to highlight the main findings. Then, in the discussion

section, the results are interpreted in light of existing literature, highlighting similarities, differences and implications for theory and practice.

Table 1

Levels of Political Disaffection

Niveles	F	%
Low Level	50	9,9%
Medium Level	312	61,7%
High Level	144	28,5%
Total	506	100,0%

Source: Own elaboration

The table reflects the level of distrust in various institutions through three key indicators. A total of 506 individuals were surveyed, and the figures indicate that the factor causing the most distrust among people is corruption, with 23.3% adopting a negative stance on this issue. The presidential administration and other entities also fall within this framework of complaints; considering trust in the judicial system, 44.9% criticize this institution. Conversely, confidence in the political system stands at 31.8%, indicating that a substantial portion of the sample also feels skepticism about the political sphere.

A more detailed reading of these results reveals not only a complex phenomenon but also a spectrum of distrust in institutions. The deepest distrust is directed toward the judicial system, which could indicate administrative inefficacy or corruption; this could affect the general perception of safety and equality in society. A 31.8% level of trust, while still considerable, is situated at an intermediate level. The perception of corruption, which affects 23.3%, may be linked to previous experiences or information about public scandals, reinforcing the relationship between corruption and the absence of institutional trust. In summary, these indicators point to insufficient trust in institutions as a significant challenge that could disrupt the democratic system and its functioning. (Table 2)

Table 2*Level of Distrust in Institutions*

Indicadores	F	%
Perception of Corruption	118	23,3%
Trust in the Judicial System	227	44,9%
Trust in the Political System	161	31,8%
Total	506	100,0%

Source: Own elaboration

The statistical table on the level of political–social distancing provides an idea of how much individuals participate in political issues. A total of 14.6% of the respondents stated that they had no interest in political matters. With a total of 506 respondents surveyed, political interest is the indicator with the highest percentage, representing 68.8%. This finding indicates that although the majority of the population shows interest in political matters, such interest does not necessarily express itself through actions. Electoral participation is also low, with 23.5% of respondents. Electoral relevance is the value with the lowest percentage of the total, at only 7.7%, indicating that elections are clearly not deemed relevant.

The analysis represents a high degree of political–social distancing, which also points to the low percentage of importance that voters attribute to elections. This could reflect trust in electoral processes, the options available to them, or how voting is conducted, leading to a generalized sense of distrust regarding political processes in general. In summary, these results seem to indicate that while there is widespread interest in political matters, there is a notable gap between citizens and direct political action, which could have implications for democratic health and the legitimacy of political institutions.

Table 3*Political-Social Distancing Levels*

Indicadores	F	%
Electoral Participation	119	23,5%
Political Interest	348	68,8%
Electoral Relevance	39	7,7%
Total	506	100,0%

Source: Own elaboration

4.2 Discussion

The results of this research reflect a landscape of political disaffection among the population of the Lambayeque district. The predominant level of medium political detachment affects 61.7% of the respondents. This trend shows that citizens are disconnected from the political situation; however, there is also a strong presence of high disaffection (28.5%). These conclusions align with previous studies that determined that political disaffection was at high levels in various regions, such as the results of Neves (2024), who reported that democratic discontent affects youth participation in democracy in Europe. It is likely that this occurs similarly in Peru, albeit with particular characteristics in the provinces.

The analysis of distrust in institutions reveals that corruption is perceived as the main factor undermining citizens' trust, affecting 23.3% of respondents. This aligns with the findings of Cárdenas (2021), who reported that misinformation and distrust in political representatives play crucial roles in political disaffection. The presidential administration and the judicial system are also viewed with skepticism, with 44.9% expressing distrust toward the judicial system. These data confirm the widespread perception that political institutions do not meet citizens' expectations, a factor closely related to political disaffection, as noted by Vojvodich (2020) and Alaminos *et al.* (2024), who identified the disconnection between politics and citizens as a direct result of institutional distrust.

A low voting index (23.5%) seems to demonstrate that the vast majority of residents are unmotivated or skeptical about whether their vote has any real influence on political decisions. Murakami and Pozsgai (2024) reported similar findings, indicating that there is growing indifference toward politics in various regions of Peru, despite interest in political matters. It can be inferred that this variable is characterized not only by a lack of interest or knowledge but also heavily influenced by the perception of corruption and the ineffectiveness of political and judicial institutions. In this sense, the studies by Cazorla *et al.* (2022) on disaffection in Latin America provide a useful background for understanding how media can exacerbate or, conversely, moderate these feelings of political disconnection.

Notably, although overall political interest remains high, the effectiveness of that interest in actual participation is limited. This suggests that while there is information about politics, citizens do not feel that their participation has a concrete impact. This

phenomenon is also evident in other cases, as seen in Jiménez's (2022) study on the influence of social participation on a decrease in political disaffection, which revealed that increasing turnout does not always reduce the gap between citizens and politics.

In summary, these results demonstrate that not only in Lambayeque does political disaffection stem from a lack of interest, but it is also strongly linked to distrust in political institutions, as well as feelings about the justice system and corruption. This landscape poses a crucial dilemma for local democracy, as a population disconnected from politics can not only reduce voting levels but also undermine the democratic legitimacy of the systems themselves.

5 CONCLUSION

The results show that a significant part of the population is no longer actively involved in politics. This reflects widespread distancing, where many simply follow political events without real interest or a sense of responsibility in the decisions being made. This phenomenon of disengagement seems to indicate that traditional mechanisms of participation, such as voting or engaging in debates, have lost strength.

A key factor fuelling this political distancing is distrust toward institutions, especially the judiciary and the perception of corruption. When people feel that the institutions responsible for administering justice and maintaining order are corrupt or ineffective, that distrust translates into a general rejection of the political system. Corruption, in particular, creates a sense that institutions are not serving the citizenry but rather particular interests.

Although many people are interested in what is happening in the political sphere, that concern does not always translate into action. The difference between interest and actual participation in elections reflects a worrying disconnection; it is as if people are aware of what is happening but do not believe their participation in elections can change anything. This gap can make many feel frustrated, as they believe that their vote has no "real effect" on politics or on important decisions in the country.

The results also suggest that this distancing from politics could undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions in Lambayeque. Disconnection between people and institutions generates a negative cycle; as people distance themselves from political processes, their trust in institutions decreases, which further fuels disengagement. In this

context, if this trend is not addressed, it could become a serious obstacle to strengthening democracy.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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