

*Assessing Social Apathy Among Filipino Young Adults:
Construction and Validation of the Social Apathy Test (SOCAP)*

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Abstract

Filipino young adults are often observed to lack social consciousness or interest of their socio-political environment, thus, being regarded as socially apathetic. Social apathy refers to the disorientation of the processes of society. It is a cause of insecurity and powerlessness that lead to the incapacity to build and value social life. To date, there are many tools in the literature used to measure apathy in general, but not taking into account other specific aspects of it such as social apathy. Therefore, our objective is the construction and validation of a tool for assessing the social apathy of Filipino young adults. We carried out a content validation of the originally 40-item Likert scale with a panel of licensed psychologists and psychometrician and proceeded to a pilot testing to 320 respondents aged 17 to 26 years old. The tool was reduced into 38 items within two subscales (Political Apathy and Moral Apathy) and were further analyzed through exploratory factor analysis to test its construct validity, which was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, all six components (Interest, Voter, Bystander, Influence, Moral Indifference and Moral Callousness) were found to have good to excellent reliability. Correlational analysis determined that all the components were found to have a significant relationship with the main construct which is Social Apathy. Social Apathy Test (SOCAP) has overall good psychometric qualities and can be used to devise a statistical data about the levels of social apathy.

Keywords: Social Apathy, Construction, Validation

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Introduction

In the present time when social issues are everywhere, it is quite interesting to observe how people, especially young adults, respond and react to such events. Young adults are often regarded as uninterested in political activities, are less likely to vote than older adults, and are pessimistic when it comes to important societal issues (Milan, 2005; Ojala, 2012). However, there are also several pieces of evidence to show that young people are not apathetic and that they just have a different way of viewing and engaging in social matters (Sloam, J., 2014). With these, the authors would like to come up with an instrument to test the Social Apathy of young adults.

Social apathy pertains to the lack of desire and eagerness to any social forms or events (Newman, 2017). A socially apathetic person may feel that they cannot do anything to make a change because they feel that they are not influential enough, and when things go wrong the person tends to look away from the responsibility or go blind to what is happening to the surroundings, instead, they focus more on themselves or their self-interest (Chang, 2017).

Researches conducted by Yamamoto, Kushin, & Dalisay (2017) and Milan (2005) showed that young adults' personal motivation and the relevance of the social issue to them are factors that intervene in the direction of their apathy. Young adults who are less aware that a politician's decisions affect them directly may not see the relevance of an election to their personal lives.

On a different note, young adults are seen to be active users of social media. In the last decade, the young adult internet population has been consistently growing, starting from 2008, in which 93% of young adults ages 18-29 years old go online. The percentage of adults who use online social networks varies dramatically by age, so has the percentage of social networking site users who maintain a profile on multiple sites. Aside from using social media as a communications hub, it was also found that teens and adults use it for vital information necessary for life management, health, and civic engagement (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). While 71% of adult internet users reported getting news online, only 35% of online adults were getting political news online. Opposite to the said study, Bode, Zuniga and Skoric (2014) stated that social media use for political information seems to intervene in the process of disaffection whereby cynical citizens may become either more or less apathetic. Consequently, the media are often blamed for the political disengagement of young persons (Capella & Jamieson, 1997), but other literature says that news media use for political purposes is an important source of political participation (Gil de Zuniga, et.al., 2012).

In connection to this, a recent survey reveals that Generation Z or those ages 17 to 24 years old are "politically apathetic" despite having wide access to information (Malasig, 2019). Given that young adults are caught spending more time on social media than any other generation, they have greater opportunities to access sufficient data and updates about social happenings. However, as the literature has presented, it may either decrease or increase ones' willingness to react and respond to these events. Thus, the authors would like to construct an instrument to test the level of social apathy of young adults.

Test Design and Construction

The Social Apathy (SOCAP) Test was originally composed of a 40-item scale that the three authors determined following the definitions of the subscales. Positive syntax was employed when writing the original items. These were designed to be self-rated using the 4-point Likert scale (Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) depending on how it best describes the target respondents. After duplicating items were removed, the test was then reviewed for content and clarity of item construction by a panel of three consisting of educational psychologists and a psychometrician. Based on their responses, items were revised accordingly.

After the pilot testing to 320 respondents who completed the test online, items were analyzed and reduced using Factor Analysis to calculate the correlations among the set of components and look for patterns which suggests that the items “go together.”

The items were reduced to 38 items and are grouped based on the variances created. Below is the table of specification for the test items:

Area	Sub Scales	Components	No. of Items	Placement	Percentage
Social Apathy	Political Apathy	Interest Apathy	12	1 - 12	32%
		Voter Apathy	7	13 - 19	18%
	Moral Apathy	Bystander Apathy	5	21 – 24	13%
		Influence Apathy	5	25 – 29	13%
		Moral Indifference	4	30 – 33	11%
		Moral Callousness	5	34 – 38	13%

The table of specifications of the Social Apathy Test (SOCAP Test) shows that there are 38 questions regarding some situations that are happening to society. There are two subscales chosen by the test developers. The subscales are Political Apathy and Moral Apathy, in the first subscale there are two components which is Interest Apathy with twelve (12) questions having a percentage of 32%, and Voter Apathy having seven (7) questions with a percentage of 18%.

On the other hand, the second subscale of the test is Moral Apathy which is composed of four components, which are Bystander Apathy, Influence Apathy, Moral Indifference and Moral Callousness having five (5) questions for each component with a percentage of 13%, except for Moral Indifference which has four (4) questions with a percentage of 11%. The distribution of every question is in order by components.

Validity and Reliability Testing

Validity is an important psychometric characteristic of a test which mainly asks whether the test actually measures what it is intended to be measured. A pilot testing was done to gather sufficient data to be used in the statistical analysis of the test itself.

ma2			.564	
ma3			.694	
ma4			.675	
ma5			.661	
ma6	.401	.592		
ma7		.553		
ma8		.693		
ma9		.712		
ma10		.534	.440	
ma11			.696	
ma12			.498	
ma13			.702	
ma14			.640	
ma15				-.638
ma16		.667		
ma17		.608		
ma18	.412	.542		
ma19		.746		
ma20	.415	.514		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Table 2 presents the items with a minimum of .40 factor magnitude. The table consisted of 7 components with 40 items, but due to item ma15 not meeting the >0.350 factor loading cut-off, Component 7 was excluded, so there are only 38 which are included in the final inventory. PA8 was removed later on because it was not subsequent to the theme of the item loading. Components 1,2,3,4,5, and 6 are consisted of items which are included in the final 38-item inventory.

The final 38 items after factor analysis of the 40 item Social Apathy (SOCAP) Test are illustrated in the following Table 3. Together with the statements from the test, the table also presents the factor loading, mean, and standard deviation of each item. There was a total of six factors for the final 38-item Social Apathy Test – (1) Interest Apathy, (2) Voter Apathy,

(3) Bystander Apathy, (4) Influence Apathy, (5) Moral Indifference, and (6) Moral Callousness.

Table 2: *Factor Loadings, Eigenvalues, Percentages of Variance, Mean and Standard Deviations of the 38-item Social Apathy Test*

Social Apathy Test	FL	M	SD
Factor 1: Interest Apathy			
Eigenvalues: 13.114; Percentage of Variance: 32.76%			
1. It is important for me to participate in the next/coming elections.	.859	1.23	0.597
10. I am vigilant in the counting process of election.	.413	1.58	0.634
11. I am interested in having conversation with other people when it comes to politics.	.753	1.64	0.684
12. I share reliable political sources to spread knowledge so that people will learn more about the current issues.	.647	1.57	0.620
13. I read and watch news to be aware of the current social and political issues.	.510	1.51	0.560
14. I voice out my opinions in terms of political issues.	.788	1.71	0.698
15. It makes me excited and motivated to talk about politics, law, and governance.	.771	1.91	0.760
16. I participate in any social programs that talk about current affairs.	.746	2.08	0.792
17. I attend some gatherings or seminars that talks about social issues.	.688	2.13	0.786
18. It is easy for me to share my political views to other people.	.651	2.07	0.793
19. I am fully aware of different kinds of political matters that are happening right now in our country.	.527	1.67	0.627
20. I am highly interested to learn about political, governance, and law.	.597	1.62	0.656

The first factor, Interest Apathy, consisted of 12 items, all similarly describe an individual's perspective on electoral processes and their participation on political discourse. As this has the same definition as that of Yakubu (2012), that it can be measured by either having or lacking of concern and interest in both processes, the factor label was therefore retained.

Table 2: (continuation)

Social Apathy Test	FL	M	SD
Factor 2: Voter Apathy			
Eigenvalues: 3.599; Percentage of Variance: 9%			
2. I believe that voting is important for societal change	.873	1.23	0.580
3. I make sure that I vote wisely in the coming election.	.859	1.16	0.499
4. I am interested in the political platforms that will be presented by the candidate during the upcoming election.	.586	1.37	0.615
5. It is my right to vote in every election.	.699	1.13	0.390
6. I believe that when I participate in voting change is possible	.799	1.42	0.676
7. I educate other people about proper voting.	.434	1.59	0.651
9. I encourage other people to choose a proper candidate and vote wisely.	.537	1.41	0.626

The same factor label Voter Apathy was retained for the second iteration. There are seven factor loadings with 11.10% cumulative variance. These items focus on an individual's action and attitude towards voting of participating in the actual election.

Table 2: (continuation)

Social Apathy Test	FL	M	SD
Factor 3: Bystander Apathy			
Eigenvalues: 1.662; Percentage of Variance: 4.15%			
26. I engage in community programs in order to help other people.	.592	1.73	0.661
27. I take risks for others' welfare.	.553	1.95	0.675
28. I always make initiative in helping other people.	.693	1.67	0.631
29. I assert myself in new things for my daily activities.	.712	1.89	0.676
30. I always motivate and encourage other people that they can also reach their goals.	.534	1.48	0.582

A new factor label Bystander Apathy was created for five factor loadings. All items converge a situation in which their helping behavior is affected by the social situation that they observe

from other people, which is parallel to the definition of Hortensius and de Gelder (2018) for the said component.

Table 2: (continuation)

Social Apathy Test	FL	M	SD
Factor 4: Influence Apathy			
Eigenvalues: 1.476; Percentage of Variance: 3.70%			
36. I try to correct people who do wrong doings.	.667	1.82	0.582
37. I try to be a good influence and a role model to other people.	.608	1.60	0.589
38. I make sure to make a change or solution whenever I see something wrong with our society.	.542	1.81	0.605
39. I teach other people what is right and wrong.	.746	1.76	0.643
40. I always share my sentiments in any matters towards other people.	.514	1.96	0.744

Another new factor is Influence Apathy where five items were loaded. Thematically, the items assess an individual's effort, initiative or preference to influence other people and/or create a change in them for the better. Since all items are reversely scored, these items were also written on a positive syntax opposing Dean's (1956) definition of Influence Apathy which means the lack of interest in influencing others.

Table 2: (continuation)

Social Apathy Test	FL	M	SD
Factor 5: Moral Indifference			
Eigenvalues: .812; Percentage of Variance: 2.03%			
31. I care about what is happening to our world.	.696	1.31	0.496
32. I have an interest in listening to the sentiments or ideas of other people.	.498	1.40	0.551
33. I am bothered when things get worse in society.	.702	1.32	0.510
34. I do care if the world is falling apart.	.640	1.33	0.569
Factor 6: Moral Callousness			
Eigenvalues: .627; Percentage of Variance: 1.57%			
21. It is important to me to reach my own goals in life as well as to those people who are close to me.	.628	1.29	0.499
22. I think of future plans for the improvement of the society.	.564	1.51	0.587
23. I think about my decisions in life more than once so it would benefit not only myself but other people as well.	.694	1.38	0.563
24. I always show interest unto what others may feel or say about what I am doing.	.675	1.65	0.679
25. The well-being of others and my own is always important for me.	.661	1.37	0.533

The fifth and sixth factors retained the factor labels as majority of the statements were grouped according to their original component, which is Moral Callousness and Moral Indifference. The five items under Moral Callousness focuses to an individual's concern to the well-being of others, which is the positive syntax of O'Connor's (2014) definition of the construct.

Moral Indifference four-item factor loadings, on the other hand, present statements about a person's perspective towards a wider scope of things such as his/her society or the world, where he/she may choose to see or not see a certain event or circumstance.

The final 38 items show that there were more items concerning Voter's apathy to Social Apathy. Approximately half (50%) of the final items were about Political apathy and the other half (50%) is for Moral Apathy. Table 3 summarizes the items comprising the six factors. The total variance accounted by the six factors was 53.21%. the first factor (Voter Apathy) constitutes 32.79%, second factor (Interest Apathy) makes up 9%, third factor (Bystander Apathy) comprises 4.15%, fourth factor (Influence Apathy) is 3.70%, fifth factor (Moral Indifference) is 2.03% and the last factor (Moral Callousness) is 1.57%.

The second part of the analysis is the reliability testing. The reliability of a test is often defined as the extent to which the scores on the test are free from error. The final 38 items were tested for internal consistency reliability.

All components are found to have a good to excellent reliability. Voter Apathy has the highest reliability (N=320; $\alpha=.90$) while Moral Indifference has the lowest reliability (N=320; $\alpha=0.76$) among the six components. The reliability of the whole instrument was also tested and found with excellent reliability (N=320; $\alpha=0.947$). This implies that the individual differences in the test scores are attributable to “true” differences in the characteristics under consideration and the extent to which they are attributable to chance errors (Fogarty, ND).

The third stage of analysis in this paper is the Correlation testing between the components. The statistical result is shown at the table below:

Table 3: *Correlation of social apathy, interest apathy, voter apathy, bystander apathy, influence apathy, moral indifference and moral callousness*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Social Apathy	1	0.689	0.892	0.782	0.800	0.684	0.755
2 Interest Apathy	0.689	1	0.469	0.390	0.428	0.436	0.507
3 Voter Apathy	0.892	0.469	1		0.652	0.559	0.547
4 Bystander Apathy	0.782	0.390	0.615	1	0.698	0.430	0.577
5 Influence Apathy	0.800	0.428	0.652	0.698	1	0.444	0.529
6 Moral Indifference	0.684	0.436	0.559	0.430	0.444	1	0.544
7 Moral Callousness	0.755	0.507	0.547	0.577	0.529	0.544	1
N	320						

Note: N = sample size, ** $p < 0.001$

The relationship between the components was investigated through correlational analysis. All the components are found to have a significant relationship with the main construct which is Social Apathy. The Voter Apathy was found to be most strongly correlated with Social Apathy ($r=0.892$, $p<0.001$), while the Moral Indifference component is the least correlated ($r=0.684$, $p<0.001$). All component total scores from the 320 respondents held a moderate to high correlations with Social Apathy.

Conclusion

A socio-psychological phenomenon called social apathy illustrates the social self-feeling and social behavior of one person, it shows the emotional color of oneself that characterized the mental life of a person. Moreover, social action and behavior show the emotional state, and self-feeling is the characteristic of human assistance with society (Viaznikova, et al., 2019). It is manifested as a lack of initiative and effort to perform everyday-life activities.

Furthermore, there is a lack of intellectual interest and initiative regarding personal or social issues and indifference or flattening of affect (Marin, 1991).

In this test, it is operationally defined as the disorientation of one person to process the society, which causes insecurity, powerlessness, the unwillingness to participate in social life or even building a life, and having difficulty valuing the system of an individual or the society. It is divided into two subscales namely: Political Apathy and Moral Apathy.

Political apathy is the absence of political activity and participation in public affairs and civic obligations (Agaigbe, 2015). It was generally defined by Dean (1956) as simply as voting or non-voting. It is operationally used here in this test as the passivity towards political involvement, engagement, and attachment. This subscale is distributed into two components.

The first one is the Interest apathy. According to Dean (1956), it is the lack of personal involvement. Meanwhile, the authors refer to it as the absence of personal participation or interest in political matters or concerns. Another is Voter apathy, which is the lack of concern and interest in the process of electoral and voting (Yakubu, 2012). Here, it is defined as the passivity towards public elections.

Another subscale of Social Apathy is Moral Apathy. It is generally defined as the lack of motivation to realize certain goals. It manifests as being apathetic about one set of goals or circumstances while being quite dedicated to others. It tends to be localized and confined but it can also affect other areas of life (O'Connor, 2014). The author defines it as the selective form of social apathy. It manifests in specific situations such as being apathetic to things that are not acceptable for them or do not reflect their standard of behavior or belief. There are four components of Moral Apathy in this test—Bystander Apathy, Influence Apathy, Moral Indifference and Moral Callousness.

Bystander Apathy, which according to Hortensius and de Gelder (2018), it manifests when a social situation influences the decision making of a person in terms of helping other people who are in need of help, as well as it is the decrease of helping behavior of a person. The authors defined it as a decrease helping behavior or being passive of a person when people ask them for help, also it is a person's tendency to avoid other people in terms of helping them especially on social situations.

The second component is Influence Apathy which is the lack of interest in influencing others (Dean, 1956). Operationally, it is the passivity towards influencing others regarding political matters or concerns.

This is followed by the Moral Indifference. It is the potent and devastating combination of the worst forms of moral apathy and moral callousness, which belongs in its own category because unlike the others, it does not admit of degrees (O'Connor, P., 2014). In this test, it refers to the absence of interest or enthusiasm towards a situation. This is apparent when an individual is on the neutral side of things; there is no positive or negative response to an occurring event or circumstance.

The last component is Moral Callousness refers to an individual's insensitivity to the care, concern, needs, or wellbeing of others. It often manifests in a strong sense of selfishness; one puts his/her self-interest ahead of the interests of others (O'Connor, P., 2014). This is being used in this test as the absence of regard for things or situation that does not concern

themselves. It may be observable when an individual is insensitive to the difficulties of others, especially when they are not experiencing that difficulty themselves.

The present test will measure the social apathy of a person differently from all other existing Apathy Test. It has a 40-items scale regarding social apathy, and two subscales, political apathy, and moral apathy. It contains a four-point Likert scale which ranges from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

The Social Apathy (SOCAP) Test might help in giving reliable observations on how young adults would respond to certain social situations or events. It may also give awareness to individuals that there are factors related to social apathy. Furthermore, this envisions young adults to have a better understanding and in assessing themselves on how they are contributing to their communities in terms of their responses and actions when it comes to societal concerns.

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