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The dual impact of corruption: how perceptions and experiences shape political participation in Somalia – an empirical study

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ABSTRACT

Corruption, a pervasive issue in most countries, is a significant obstacle that demands immediate and urgent resolution. Its detrimental effects on various societal aspects, including democracy, trust, investments, stability, and education, underscore the gravity of the problem. Moreover, corruption and dishonesty in government make citizens skeptical about politics and less willing to participate in democratic governance. Through a broad representative survey, this study empirically investigates how perceived or experienced corruption influences citizen participation in political actions. The data were analyzed using a quantitative structural equation modeling approach with SmartPLS 4 after 388 Somalis in Mogadishu completed a structured questionnaire. Our analysis of the study findings revealed that Somali citizens' perceptions of corruption among public officials are strongly and negatively related to their political participation; in contrast, citizens' report of having experienced corruption has a positive and statistically significant correlation with their involvement in political processes.

Introduction

Most countries are plagued with corruption, which is often regarded as one of the most detrimental issues that still need to be resolved. Corrupt governments have a harmful influence on a wide variety of different aspects of society. Some examples of these factors include the growth of the economy, the level of trust between residents, and the rates of infant mortality. In addition to this, it makes economic inequality and poverty worse, leads to a reduction in the amount of money spent on health and education, stability, and investment, and leads to a decrease in the degree to which individuals are content with democracy and trust in it (Salahuddin et al., 2020; Stockemer et al., 2013; Sundström & Stockemer, 2015).

Corruption harms more than bribe-takers and givers (Neshkova & Kalesnikaite, 2019). Extensive scholars (Bobonis et al., 2016; Caillier, 2010; Clausen et al., 2011) have widely confirmed these harms. Marchini et al. (2020) conducted a study using financial data and tax rates in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK. They found that corruption leads to instability and influences managerial decision-making within parent company groupings. Justesen and Bjørnskov (2014) used Afrobarometer survey data and multi-level modeling to examine poverty and corruption in 18 African nations. They observed that low-income people received essential services through bribery, which made them more corrupt. Corruption undermines trust in government, public institutions, and politics, with significant social consequences (Giommoni, 2021).

In discussions concerning corruption worldwide, Somalia, which is situated in the Horn of Africa, is regularly brought up. This is because the latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) study puts Somalia

180th out of 180 nations with the maximum score of 10 out of 100, turning it into the world's most corrupt country (Ahmed et al., 2023). Somalia has widespread petty and grand corruption in the most important economic sectors, including ports, airports, the collection of taxes and customs, immigration and telecommunications networks, and the administration of humanitarian resources. For example, based on a report that the Public Finance Management Unit conducted in May of 2011, it was discovered that there were significant discrepancies between the financial statements of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) for the years 2009 and 2010 and the actual income that was collected from both internal and external platforms. According to the report, more than 72 million dollars in donor aid and 250 million in revenue were stolen between 2009 and 2010 (Chêne, 2012). On the other hand, according to the complete Auditor General's Office report, from 08 March 2018 to 19 April 2023, the Somali government's central treasury embezzled $21 million. This improper usage occurred under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' revenue collection and work permit issuance departments and the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank, and Government Auditor's Office's immigration, accounting, and treasury management departments (Abdiqani, 2023).

Somali corruption stems from civil conflict, terrorism, and a protracted governmental vacuum (Chêne, 2012). More significantly, in politics, the central Bank faced heavy criticism in 2013 and 2014 when it was revealed that 80% of state account withdrawals were taken by individuals rather than used to support government operations or public services. These funds were used for personal gain and to secure political support through corrupt practices and patronage networks. Local anti-corruption activists report that civil servants and government security forces have not received payment since mid-2016 (Ronan, 2017). Somali elections were also tense owing to corruption. Some participants alerted foreign monitors about their vote-buying and offered payments. Prices for electoral college seats ranged from $1,000 to $20,000. Spending so much was to bribe additional candidates. Individual candidates for members of parliament spend over $100,000 to gain their clan's seat, occasionally succeeding (Menkhaus, 2017). Corruption was worsened by inadequate administrative, leadership, and payment systems. The federal government also ignored the problem's rapid pace. This administration is widely considered to be vast and corrupt by Somalis. Subsequently, people lost faith in the government, as noted in Mishra and Abdullahi (2020) study on corruption in Somalia, which also looked at citizen satisfaction, civil society engagement, and democratic trust. They concluded that corruption severely reduced citizens' contentment, faith in democracy, and involvement in civil society.

Under democratic theory, corruption breaches the fiduciary responsibilities that the public places in the hands of government officials and harms those obligations, weakening the credibility of the democratic process (Svolik, 2013). Morris and Klesner (2010) argue that the experience and perception of corruption diminish the public's trust in national institutions. Significantly, corruption reduces spending on health and education while escalating income inequality and poverty (Salahuddin et al., 2020). Due to this inequality, the public's trust in its national institutions tends to decrease, and poor people are less inclined to participate in political activities (Solt, 2008). Although political participation can be understood as the most common aspect of democratic government, its relationship with corrupt practices is a topic that is frequently discussed in the literature. Over the last few decades, several comprehensive studies (Kostadinova & Kmetty, 2019; Stockemer et al., 2013) have demonstrated that voters who believe the political system is corrupt refrain from participating in elections. Additionally, Školník (2020) argues that corruption undermines democratic values like accountability, responsiveness, and transparency, which causes citizens to be excluded from politics. Zheng et al. (2017) used survey and experimental data to evaluate the impact of corruption perception on political participation and life satisfaction. They concluded that corruption perception has a negative connection with political involvement, but life contentment weakens this link. This means citizens are only willing to participate in political actions if they feel their government is honest and committed to corruption. Despite the extensive debate on this phenomenon, more excellent studies are needed to understand fully how corruption affects political participation. Considering that, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, none has ever addressed this phenomenon in Somalia, by addressing this gap, this study aims to examine the effect of corruption on political participation in Somalia by looking into a variety of political activities, such as those conducted through formal and informal institutions.

The remaining parts of the study are arranged as follows: In the second part, the study addresses the literature review, the formation of hypotheses, and the research methodology. Then, the study discusses the findings, implications, and conclusion. The final point demonstrates the study's limitations by suggesting additional future research.

Literature review and hypothesis

Corruption

Corruption is a widespread issue that must be addressed in developing and developed countries. This phenomenon occurs when a person's authority is exploited to acquire private profit, which applies to public and private settings (Neshkova & Kalesnikaite, 2019). There is a wide range of definitions of corruption across different fields and techniques for addressing it. Many attempts have been made to define corruption, even though reaching a consensus on a precise definition is impossible. However, the most frequently recognized definition explains it as the misuse of public office to obtain private profit (Pozsgai Alvarez, 2015). Bribery, conspiracy, theft, misappropriation of public finances, fraud, extortion, abuse of discretion, favoritism, clientelism, nepotism, the sale of government property by public officials, and patronage are all strategies that fall under the category of corrupt strategies (Zheng, 2016). Winters et al. (2012) categorize corruption by actors: politicians and bureaucrats. Politicians commit political corruption, whereas bureaucrats commit bureaucratic corruption. A bureaucrat embezzles and steals public funds or sells government property. It may use hidden networks with several participants or two-party transactions. The two are related because elected authorities may request money from their assigned bureaucrats, who collect bribes from citizens.

Numerous studies (e.g. Avis et al., 2018; Bentzen, 2012) have shed light on the myriad adverse effects of corruption. A country's economy is one of the sectors most likely to be impacted. In addition to causing governments to misallocate resources that could have been used more productively, corruption may also result in the loss of considerable sums of revenue essential to the government's operation. Zheng (2016) viewed corruption as a disease and a destructive force that undermines society's cultural, political, and economic structure. It disrupts the functioning of essential systems and violates the core principles of democracy, such as accountability, equality, and transparency. Corruption can damage public trust and harm civil society partnerships (Seligson, 2006). Gillanders and Neselevska (2018) showed that experiencing private-to-public bribery diminishes trust in large private firms, small businesses, and local traders. Liu et al. (2019) found that high levels of corruption negatively impact entrepreneurial efforts. When corruption is present, it is more likely that citizens will receive ineffective delivery of what they are democratically entitled to, such as various public services. This can undermine citizens' satisfaction with the performance of their political system. Corruption can even affect the very foundations of democracy, decreasing citizens' trust in democratic institutions and their confidence in democracy's capabilities. This process might cause individuals to stop seeing elections as valuable expressions of democracy, making them think it's not worth their time and effort (Stockemer, 2013). For example, a comparative study of electoral systems using data from 26 nations at individual and national levels found that the perception of corruption negatively affects voter participation (Dahlberg & Solevid, 2016). The World Bank has determined that corruption is a global problem and the most significant barrier to economic and social development.

Recent estimates from the World Bank also suggested that bribes in the United States amount to more than one trillion dollars per year. According to the African Union, the annual cost of corruption in Africa is estimated to be 148 billion US dollars, equivalent to 25% of the continent's gross domestic product (Elbahnasawy & Revier, 2012). The 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) shows that most countries struggle to tackle corruption. The global average score has remained at 43 out of 100 for almost a decade. More than two-thirds of nations received a score below 50, with 26 reaching record lows. Despite significant efforts, 155 countries have not substantially reduced corruption since 2012. Somalia ranked as the most corrupt, with a score of 12, while Denmark was the least corrupt, with a score of 90.

Political participation

Participation in political processes is essential to democratic governance. Facilitating the collection of opinions and support assists governments in finding solutions to challenges (Siebers et al., 2019). Many

people find the concept of an isolated government that is entirely independent and lacks any form of citizen engagement quite frightening. When viewed rationally, such forms of government are not something that anyone would respect or believe in Ahmed et al. (2023).

Numerous studies have paid significant attention to this idea (Hooghe & Marien, 2013; Shim & Park, 2016; Sun et al., 2012). The term 'political participation' was defined by Lee and Schachter (2019) as an activity that individuals engage in to exert influence on the government to have it act in a manner that accommodates their desires. According to the argument presented by Wilkinson et al. (2019), citizens' involvement in government is seen as a technique to raise the degree of public trust in government and to educate people about government actions.

In addition, many studies have shown that individuals' satisfaction with government participation is crucial in determining their level of trust in the government. For example, a survey experiment in Buenos Aires, Argentina, showed that providing citizens with accurate information about public engagement in government impacted their perception of political trust and the effectiveness of their administration (Ardanaz et al., 2023). Hu et al. (2015) demonstrated that increasing the number of people participating in local elections and creating a more profound sense of social justice are realistic possibilities for expanding the public's perception of the government's trustworthiness. According to the findings of research by Fennema and Tillie (1999), there is a substantial association between the amount of political trust and the level of involvement of citizens in Amsterdam, who may be classified into various ethnic groups. Lastly, Holum (2023) contends that political participation leads to high-quality services, more excellent ethical conduct, improved performance and accountability, and higher perceived responsiveness.

Theoretical background

The study has considered the prevalence of corrupt practices among officials working for local government administration officials in Mogadishu, Somalia. These practices included the conduct of elections and other services that were provided to citizens. Thus, the principal-agent theory has been employed in our work. The principal-agent theory addresses a type of social relationship called delegation, which involves a resource exchange between two agents (Dietmar & David, 2003). This theory is popular with economists and political scientists (Miller, 2005; Zhang, 1998). Its application to model corruption is acknowledged (Groenendijk, 1997; Srivastava et al., 2016). Several scholars have primarily relied on the principal-agent theory to shed light on the repercussions of corruption; for example, Mishra and Abdullahi (2020) using the principal-agent model of corruption revealed that citizens' contentment, faith in democracy and participation in civil society were all significantly impacted negatively by corruption. By accepting the principal-supervisor-agent model, Brandt and Svendsen (2013) argue that corruption is more common when the client expects more from the agent after the bribe than the principal expects from the supervisor after the truth-telling. Essentially, this theory highlights the work of three parties: the principal, the agent, and the client. The (principal) is the government, and the (agents) are the public officials with self-interests who serve the (clients) who are the citizens (Khan & Krishnan, 2019).

Given the above, the principal-agent theory may lend credence to our conceptual framework. The current study takes the (Principals) as citizens who delegate authority to elected officials and government representatives to act on their behalf and the (Agents) as politicians or government officials entrusted with serving the public interest. Therefore, in the context of the impact of corruption on citizen participation in local government, the authors can apply this theory to analyze how corruption may affect citizens' (Principals) participation in local government (Agents).

Relationship between corruption and political participation

As a problem that affects most countries, corruption is regarded as one of the most detrimental issues that still needs to be remedied (Chang & Chu, 2006). Importantly, it is a pervasive phenomenon with both large and complex ramifications from a political standpoint. Mainly because it causes citizens to be excluded from the political arena by causing damage to essential aspects of democracy, such as transparency, responsibility, and responsiveness. In places with corruption, voters lose the incentive to engage

politically in such an atmosphere. The incumbents are less likely to gain re-election (Costas-Pérez et al., 2012).

Regarding the influence that corruption has on political involvement, several in-depth studies (e.g. Giommoni, 2021; Stockemer, 2013) have been carried out over the last several decades. Sundström and Stockemer (2015) argue that people who see corruption as evidence that their leaders are untrustworthy may be less likely to engage in government activities. This is because corruption sends the message to these individuals that the government will not address their problems. Similarly, Kostadinova (2009) contends that corruption in the democratic process is 'sticky' and difficult to remove from the system. This notion damages voters' trust in the democratic process. As a result, they are less inclined to engage in the democratic process. Similarly, a study utilizing three distinct measures of corruption – the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG), the World Bank, and Transparency International – across a broad sample of presidential regimes found that only the ICRG measure of corruption has the predicted detrimental effect on voter turnout (Stockemer, 2013).

Through his demonstration, Kostadinova (2009) illustrated that corruption fosters mistrust and cynicism toward the incumbent and democracy, diminishing the motivation to vote. A multilevel model alongside Afrobarometer survey data was used by Tambe and Monyake (2023) to analyze the impact of corruption and clientelism on voter turnout in 34 African states. Furthermore, Simpser (2013), in analyzing Mexican states, presented evidence of the detrimental impact that election tampering has on voter participation. Jha (2023) attempted to examine the factors leading to voter apathy. His research revealed that corruption weakens democracy by discouraging political participation among marginalized groups, particularly the poor and women, thereby worsening economic and gender disparities. In the same vein, Birch (2010) argues that corruption or suspicion of election fraud leads to a decline in voter participation. Giommoni (2021) analyzed primary Italian press agency reports to measure daily and local corruption exposure in Italian municipalities from 1999 to 2014, focusing on local elections. He found that increased corruption exposure correlates with decreased voter turnout. Krawczyk et al. found data supporting this idea in African countries. Data from the fourth round of the Afrobarometer survey conducted in Liberia shows that residents who perceive their local government as more transparent are more likely to participate in political activities at the regional level.

The measurement of corruption has been explained by several academics (Liu & Mikesell, 2014; Morris, 2008). However, the metrics most often used to measure corruption have always been subjective, based on respondents' perceptions of the prevalence of corruption or their own experiences with it (Mocan, 2008). According to the findings of a study conducted by AmericasBarometer on the emerging democracies in Latin America, it was discovered that citizens' willingness to engage in local administration has a positive correlation with their personal experience of corruption, but not within the context of their perception of corrupt behavior (Neshkova & Kalesnikaite, 2019). With the help of data from an exclusive measure of perceived corruption in the electoral process, government services, and various control factors, it was proved that a decline in election participation directly results from perceptions of corruption through data (Sundström & Stockemer, 2015). Unsurprisingly, these findings have prompted calls for more research to be conducted in other nations to corroborate the outcomes of these studies. Taking into consideration the theoretical considerations that provide evidence that corruption prevents citizens from participating in the democratic process, this study hypothesizes that:

H_1 : The higher perceived corruption rate significantly negatively affects political participation.

H_2 : The higher experience with corruption rate significantly negatively affects political participation.

Methodology

Data

The study used quantitative cross-sectional surveying to gather the data. The quantitative method allows researchers to measure variables objectively and rigorously, eliminating bias and ensuring reliable and consistent results (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). People in Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia, were

given questionnaires to gather the required data. The survey was disseminated between October and December 2023 in online Google document format through various channels from survey participants. Online surveys are increasingly used in published studies due to their cost-effectiveness, ease of implementation, reduced transcription errors, and more straightforward data processing (Saleh & Bista, 2017). The language spoken most frequently in the region translated each survey question to facilitate comprehension. Participants were informed that their names and other identifying details would never be disclosed. The second author recorded verbal consent using audio devices to ensure that participants understood essential information such as the survey's benefits and risks, their voluntary involvement, their right to refuse to answer any specific question, and their ability to leave at any time. Verbal consent was chosen because it may be more accessible for people who struggle with literacy or language challenges. The survey included 500 volunteers, using the sample size guidelines outlined by Comrey and Lee (2013), which provided a basic grading scale for factor analysis sample sizes: 100 = poor, 200 = fair, 300 = good, 500 = very good, and 1,000 or more = excellent. Three hundred eighty-eight (388) responses were accurately completed after 112 surveys were eliminated due to excessive blank reactions. This study was conducted by the ethical standards set forth by the Centre for Research and Development of Ethics Committee, affiliated with SIMAD University. Ethical approval was obtained before the commencement of the study, ensuring adherence to guidelines for research involving human participants. The ethics committee's approval number for this study is EC000117.

Measurements of variables

The survey instrument consisted of nine items covering three different constructs: three on corruption experience, two on perceptions of corruption, and four on citizen participation in political activities. The instrument also included additional questions regarding the demographics of the respondents. Various literary works were considered when formulating the question items. Three items were used to measure the experience of corruption. The first and second items, adopted from Školník (2020) were: 'According to how people have experienced corruption, police officers have asked citizens for bribes in the past few years' and 'Based on how people have met corruption in recent years, a soldier or military officer asked for a bribe from civilians over the last in recent years'. The third item, 'To process any document (such as a license, for example), Somalia is a country where local citizens pay money above that required by law', was adopted from Neshkova and Kalesnikaite (2019). Two items adopted from Školník (2020) were used to measure the perception of corruption, and these items are: 'According to public perceptions of corruption, many public officials are involved' and 'Based on how people perceive corruption, many Somalian politicians are involved in it'. Four items taken from Školník (2020) were also used to measure public participation in local governance. Items are: 'Citizens participated in voting during the most recent presidential election in Somalia', 'Recent years have seen a rise in the attendance of citizens at town meetings or city council meetings', 'At a community meeting in recent years, citizens have participated in discussions of a committee for a better community' and 'In recent years, citizens' attendance at political meetings held by political parties or organizations has risen'. Based on the Likert scale, all the questions relevant to the constructs were close-ended and ranged from 1 (agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Participants were also asked to provide demographic information, including gender, age, marital status, and educational background.

Analytical method

The authors of this study used structural equation modeling with SmartPLS4 to analyze the hypothesized pathways. Structural equation modeling is a statistical method for investigating relationships between one or more continuous or discrete independent variables and one or more continuous or discrete dependent variables (Lee et al., 2011). This analysis included considering reliabilities, validities, factor loadings, and other variables. Validity and reliability tests were carried out to evaluate the discriminant validity among the constructs. On the other hand, measurement and structural models were evaluated with the help of SmartPLS4 to assess the hypothesized links between the constructs as proposed by Henseler et al. (2015). Numerous academics SmartPLS4 were used to test hypotheses and find

causal relationships (Hartanto et al., 2021; Mansoor & Noor, 2019). The authors of this study used SmartPLS4 for two reasons: first, it is a better exploratory method for this study (Henseler et al., 2009). Second, it has become increasingly popular in business research and other scientific domains (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019).

Results

According to the characteristics of the respondents, 39.9% of the sampled respondents were women, while 60.1% were males. Most respondents, representing 38.9% of the total, were between 30 and 39. This was observed in terms of the age groups. Alternatively, 26.8% of those who participated in the survey were in the 40 to 49 age range. On the other hand, just 12.4% of respondents were older than 50, and 21.9% were between 18 and 29. In terms of marital status, the study sample comprised both married and single respondents, with married respondents accounting for 72.7% of the total and single respondents making up only 27.3% of the sample. Based on their educational backgrounds, most research participants, which accounted for 60.3% of all respondents, held bachelor's degrees. As seen in Table 1, the next biggest category comprised 25% of individuals with a master's degree, 8% of respondents who graduated from secondary school, and 6.7% of respondents who held just a diploma certificate.

Assessment of the measurement model

Using SmartPLS4, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to check the psychometric properties of the instruments. To assess the reliability of the questions across all constructs, the 'composite reliability (CR)' and 'Cronbach's α' values were gathered. Table 2 presents all the reflecting measures based on Cronbach's α and composite reliability (CR) values larger than 0.70. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that factor loadings greater than 0.70 were present in every item employed in the variable evaluation. Likewise, the 'average variance extracted (AVE)' of latent variables was more than 0.50 for all the research variables, as shown in Table 2 and Figure 1.

The authors used the Fornel-Larcker criteria to assess the research's discriminant validity. Each inter-construct correlation is compared to the AVE root square. For a concept to pass the discriminant validity test of the model, its AVE must be greater than its squared correlation with any other construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 3 illustrates why the discriminant reality is preferred in this study since no cross-loadings surpass the corresponding loadings and the Fornel-Larcker requirements are met.

Researchers also asserted that, while using SmartPLS4, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio is the most trustworthy measure of discriminating validity (Henseler et al., 2015). All the numbers for the whole model in this study were less than 0.9, as seen in Table 4, as the HTMT ratio should be less than 0.9.

Table 1. The respondents' demographic characteristics ($N=388$).This table presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, marital status, and education level.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	233	60.1
Female	155	39.9
Age (in years)		
8–29	85.0	21.9
30–39	151	38.9
40–49	104	26.8
50+	48.0	12.4
Marital status		
Single	106	27.3
Married	282	72.7
Education		
Secondary	31.0	8.0
Diploma	26.0	6.7
Bachelor	234	60.3
Master's and above	97.0	25.0

Source: Process done by the author from SPSS20.

Table 2. Factor loadings, reliability, and validity.This table presents the factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha (α) for the constructs measured in the study.

Constructs	Factor loadings	CR	AVE	Cronbach's α
Citizen participation in politics				
CP1	0.960	0.955	0.842	0.937
CP2	0.874			
CP3	0.880			
CP4	0.953			
Perceptions of corruption				
PC1	0.808	0.865	0.763	0.706
PC2	0.935			
Experience of corruption				
EC1	0.904	0.880	0.711	0.798
EC2	0.797			
EC3	0.825			

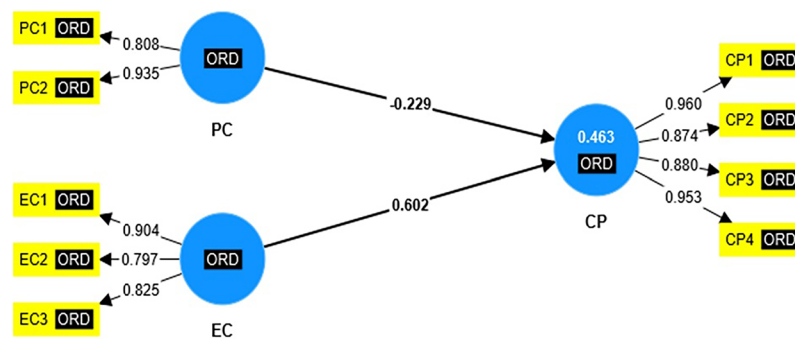CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted.

Figure 1. Measurement model.

Table 3. Inter-construct correlation (Fornell-Larcker criterion).This table shows the inter-construct correlations using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion for the constructs citizen participation in politics (CP), experience of corruption (EC), and perceptions of corruption (PC).

Construct	CP	EC	PC
CP	**0.917**		
EC	0.642	**0.843**	
PC	−0.333	−0.173	**0.87**

Bold refers to the AVE square root.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).This table presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) for the constructs of citizen participation in politics (CP), experience of corruption (EC), and perceptions of corruption (PC).

Construct	CP	EC	PC
CP			
EC	0.823		
PC	0.793	0.717	

Source: process done by the author from PLS-SEM.

Assessment of the structural model

The Bootstrapping method was applied to analyze the structural pathways, and 5,000 sub-samples were used in the study to evaluate the hypothesized links. Several statistical measures, including the ß-coefficient, the *t*-value, and the *p*-value, were considered to verify the hypothesised relationships. The total fitness of the model was determined by employing the coefficient of determination R^2 used throughout the process.
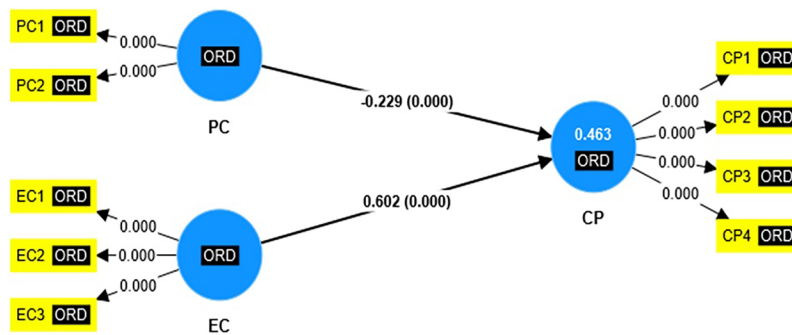
Figure 2. Structural model.

Table 5. Hypothesis testing results.This table presents the results of hypothesis testing for the relationships between perceptions of corruption (PC), experience of corruption (EC), and citizen participation in Politics (CP).

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta (β)	STDEV	t-value	P values	Findings
H_1	PC-> CP	−0.229	0.038	6.027	0.000	Supported.
H_2	EC-> CP	0.602	0.039	15.292	0.000	Not supported.

Source: process done by the author from PLS-SEM.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the R^2. The study's independent variables, which included the respondents' perceptions of the corruption of public officials and their personal experiences of corruption in the form of demands for bribes from civil servants, contributed to a change of 46.3% in the general citizens' participation in political actions. The findings of the study's path hypotheses are shown in Table 5. Overall, citizen participation in political actions is negatively and significantly related to citizens' perceptions of corruption among public officials ($\beta = -0.229$, $p = 0.000$), according to the study's findings. Meanwhile, citizens' participation in political actions is positively and significantly related to their own experiences with corruption in the form of receiving a demand for a bribe from civil servants ($\beta = 0.602$, $p = 0.000$).

Discussion

Even though widespread corruption is widely understood to be the source of public dissatisfaction and the erosion of trust in the government, the question remains: Does it encourage or discourage citizens from participating in political actions? The current study aimed to answer this question by utilizing empirical data collected from residents of Mogadishu, Somalia, to understand how corruption influences citizen participation in politics. Specifically, the authors investigated whether citizens would be more willing to attend open forums, such as town hall meetings, city council meetings, political meetings, presidential elections, and other such events. Within a specific conceptualization of political corruption, our theoretical analysis and empirical investigation into the relationships between corruption and political participation suggest that citizens who are either strongly perceived or experienced in political corruption are not allowed to participate in political activity. More specifically to our fundamental assumption, the study hypothesized that indicators of corruption, including perceived and experienced corruption, hurt political engagement, which may produce unfavorable results.

Our first hypothesis regarding the relation between public perception of corruption and citizen participation in politics is supported by the outcomes of this study, which provide some exciting findings. Furthermore, the study's findings indicate a statistically significant negative association between citizens' perception of corruption and their level of participation in political processes. As a result, this implies that the chance of citizens engaging in political involvement reduces proportionally to the degree to which they perceive corruption as pervasive within the political system (Kostadinova, 2012). For the same reason, citizens' perceptions of corruption lead them to be unsatisfied with the efficiency of the public sector, which in turn influences their credibility in the government (Peerthum & Luckho, 2021). Similarly, Melgar et al. (2010) contended that high perceived corruption may negatively affect society more than corruption itself. Increased perceptions of corruption might lead to 'a culture of distrust' in government

institutions. The empirical result of this study is consistent with the earlier studies (De Vries & Solaz, 2017; McAllister, 2014; Sundström & Stockemer, 2015; Xezonakis et al., 2016), which concluded that the perception of corruption causes citizens to abstain from participation in political actions. To determine the causal relationship between political corruption and voter turnout, Carreras and Vera (2018) employed the AmericasBarometer study in Colombia. They discovered that the possibility of voting lowers when one is confident about the dishonest actions of candidates for public office. Corruption perception, political participation, and life satisfaction were evaluated using survey and experimental data (Zheng et al., 2017). They concluded that corruption perception has a negative connection with political participation, but life contentment weakens this link. This means that individuals are less inclined to participate in political activities if they perceive their government is dishonest and committed to corruption.

This study finds some surprising data concerning the association between citizen participation in political actions and the experience of corruption. A positive correlation was observed between the experience of corruption and citizen participation in political activities, which led to the conclusion that the findings of the empirical analysis of the current study did not support our second hypothesis of the study. This result can be interpreted in the light of Neshkova and Kalesnikaite (2019), which used data from the AmericasBarometer survey on Latin American emerging democracies, showing that citizens' propensity to participate in political activities is positively linked to their experience of corruption. This finding is consistent with the study (Školník, 2020), which concluded that experiencing corruption as a citizen leads to increased participation in political institutions. Several theoretical considerations supported the assumption that the experience of corruption motivates political engagement. For example, De Vries and Solaz (2017) argue that voters who have been the victims of corruption in the past are more likely to participate in the electoral process to punish corrupt politicians and hold them accountable for their embezzlement. Machado et al. (2011) Maintained that personal experience with corruption as motivation is positively and significantly related to participation in protests against government complaints and policies. However, the most interesting argument is suggested by Rundquist et al. (1977), who argued that voters who have previously experienced corruption might prefer a corrupt candidate who takes their views and reflects their policies over a pure candidate who does not. In South Africa, where political corruption is prevalent, a survey experiment studied how voters react to corruption charges against candidates. The findings revealed that when voters receive a promise of jobs in exchange for their votes, they tend to be more lenient toward dishonest leaders (Bøttkjær & Justesen, 2021). Similarly, A Brazilian study of why residents vote for corrupt leaders revealed that high-income voters value competence more than corruption (Winters & Weitz-Shapiro, 2013). This means voters may be willing to overlook corruption if they receive representational benefits.

Conclusions and the implications for public policy

In the context of Somalia, this study aims to explore the relevance of the relationship between corruption and political participation in Somalia. Not only does the purpose of this study consist of evaluating how corruption influences the number of people who vote in elections, but it also investigates the impact that corruption has on various forms of political involvement, such as standardized and non-institutionalized forms of political engagement. The SmartPLS4 model used for the study distinguished the respondents' experiences with corruption – which manifested as being asked for a bribe by civil servants – and their perceptions of corruption among public officials.

Based on our research findings, the study discovered that respondents' perceptions of corruption among public officials are strongly and negatively related to their level of political participation. According to the negative link between corruption perception and political participation, people who believe corruption is widespread are less likely to participate in formal political processes like voting and public forums. This demonstrates how widespread corruption may undermine public participation and trust in the government, harming democracy.

On the other hand, the respondents' report of having experienced corruption has a positive and statistically significant correlation with their involvement in political processes. This demonstrates that those who have personally experienced corruption may be inspired to engage in political processes more actively. This may be due to a desire to bring about systemic change, hold dishonest politicians

accountable, or pursue representation that better serves their interests, even if it means engaging in unethical behaviors.

The present study provides insights into the practical implications. To ensure that the government of Somalia meets the expectations of high citizen involvement and trust in democratic processes, it must emphasize the following themes. First, Anti-Corruption Measures: The government should strengthen anti-corruption laws and enforcement. Reducing corruption can boost political involvement and government trust. Second, Public Education: Since corruption is detrimental to democratic processes, public education must be implemented to combat it. Education initiatives may demonstrate how citizen engagement can be revolutionary. Third, Strengthening the Civil Society: Strengthening the Civil Society is crucial for maintaining transparency and accountability in government. Supporting civil society organizations that monitor government activities and expose corruption is essential. These organizations are vital in raising awareness of issues and holding those in power accountable for their actions. Fourth, Responsive Governance: Promoting a more responsive approach to governance that aligns with public needs can facilitate restoring public trust in the system. This entails regular interactions with members of the public and government representatives in settings that encourage open communication and input. Finally, Improving Mechanisms of Participation: Adding polling stations, expediting the voting process, and using technology can promote political engagement, especially among individuals who have lost trust in politics due to corruption.

Limitations and future research initiatives

Several limitations, including the following, are present in this study: First, before doing this empirical study, the authors relied solely on citizens in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, to perform an empirical investigation. Because of this, it is limited by geography. Further studies on Somalia's rural areas and other cities might be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of political participation in the country. Second, a few research parameters in this study may affect political participation. Perhaps in the future, researchers will include more pertinent parameters, such as demographic factors (e.g. age, gender, marital status, education, etc.), economic factors (family income), and some social factors (regional affiliation) that may affect political participation. Third, the current study relied solely on the quantitative research method. Still, in the future, researchers may apply a mixed-method approach to find other factors that stimulate political participation. Finally, the study's small sample size limits its generalisability. Due to cost and time constraints, only 388 respondents participated in the survey. Future research should raise response rates to represent Somalia's diverse demographics better.

Ethical approval

The second author read the form's contents to ensure that participants understood essential details like their voluntary involvement, their right to refuse to answer any specific question, and their ability to leave at any time. The Centre for Research and Development Ethics Committee approved the study with approval number EC000117.

Author contribution statement

Mohamed Yusuf Ahmed contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, writing of the original draft, and formal analysis. Abdulkadir Mohamed Abdullahi was responsible for data curation, review writing, and editing. Hassan Abdikadir Hussein also participated in writing and editing the review. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Consent for publication

No personal details – such as names or photos – are included in this article, requiring publication permission.

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Data availability statement

The data are kept on the computer belonging to the corresponding author and will be made available upon reasonable request.

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