When Trust Runs Low: Self-Reliance, Benevolence, and Political Cynicism in Social Entrepreneurial Intention

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Abstract

Citizens of many developing democracies have grown weary of the officials meant to represent them, and Indonesia is no exception: survey evidence documents a public that doubts politicians' honesty yet still looks to civil society, rather than the state, to solve social problems. Social entrepreneurship is often framed as civic empowerment, the conviction that ordinary people, not government programs, must build and financially sustain solutions. We contend that this framing understates a subtler precondition: aspiring social entrepreneurs do not need to believe government will help them, but they plausibly need to believe government will allow them to proceed. Using survey data from 569 Indonesian respondents (Jakpat online panel), we test whether self-reliance and benevolence are associated with social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) and whether political cynicism, the belief that officials are self-interested and dishonest, moderates these relationships. A confirmatory factor analysis supported the convergent and discriminant validity of all four measures (all AVE > .59, all HTMT < .85) before hypothesis testing. Hierarchical moderated regression showed benevolence positively associated with SEI in the full model ($b = .259$, $p < .001$) and self-reliance positively associated with SEI in an additive model ($b = .155$, $p = .011$), though the self-reliance coefficient attenuated to nonsignificance once interaction terms were entered ($b = .093$, $p = .125$). Political cynicism significantly and robustly weakened the benevolence-SEI relationship ($b = -.201$, $p < .001$), while leaving the self-reliance-SEI relationship unaffected, consistent with an asymmetry in which other-oriented motivation, more than agentic self-reliance, depends on expecting the state to leave well-intentioned actors alone. Political cynicism was also, unexpectedly, positively and directly associated with SEI ($b = .137$, $p = .002$), and an exploratory analysis found self-reliance's association with SEI to be stronger among women than men ($b = .270$, $p = .022$), a pattern not observed for benevolence. Theoretical, practical, and policy implications are discussed.

Keywords: social entrepreneurial intention; political cynicism; self-reliance; benevolence; institutional voids.

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INTRODUCTION

Trust in political institutions has eroded across much of the democratic world over recent decades, with limited evidence of a sustained reversal. Longitudinal analyses of cross-national survey data indicate that citizens increasingly perceive politicians as self-interested actors rather than public servants, a development that Van Hiel et al. (2021) characterize as a genuine "trust crisis" rather than a temporary decline in confidence. This pattern extends beyond established democracies. In Brazil, a developing country shaped by recurrent corruption scandals, Paredes and Derpic (2025) found that perceptions of higher civil-service corruption are associated with lower trust in political institutions, even after accounting for potential reverse causality. In Southeast Asia, Skulchokchai (2025) documented widespread disillusionment with the electoral process among younger Thai citizens following the 2023 general election, accompanied by concerns about institutional interference and the persistence of authoritarian legacies. Similarly, Kim and Voorhees (2011) showed that government performance in areas such as corruption, human rights, and economic management influences whether citizens extend or withhold institutional trust in Japan, South Korea, and China. Using World Values Survey data from India, Nath and Verma (2025) further demonstrated that trust in government is positively associated with civic participation, highlighting its importance for democratic and associational life. Collectively, these studies indicate that declining political trust and growing skepticism toward officials' motives are not exclusively Western phenomena but reflect a broader challenge in contemporary governance. In developing economies, such conditions may shape how citizens perceive the role of government in addressing social problems and, consequently, whether they become motivated to pursue alternative forms of social problem-solving through individual initiative.

One visible response to this erosion of institutional trust has been the growth of social entrepreneurship—the conviction that ordinary people, not government programmes, must both solve social problems and keep the solutions financially alive—ventures that pursue a social mission through a self-sustaining commercial model rather than through donations or state provision. Kadyan and Jaiswal's (2026) systematic review of 114 empirical studies on social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) notes that developing economies in particular have come to lean on such ventures precisely because their formal institutions are unreliable. This tendency has a name in the strategy and entrepreneurship literature: institutional voids, a concept first articulated by Khanna and Palepu (1997) and since elaborated to describe gaps in regulatory, market, and enforcement infrastructure that leave citizens of low- and middle-income countries to fend for themselves (Li et al., 2021; Mahasuar, 2026). Entrepreneurs navigating such voids do not simply wait for institutions to catch up; they engage in bricolage, recombining whatever resources are at hand into workable solutions (Derks et al., 2024; Liedong et al., 2026), and in doing so, they often position themselves not alongside government but in its stead. Social entrepreneurship, in other words, has become one of the clearest behavioural expressions of a broader civic mood: government cannot be counted on, so citizens count on themselves.

Indonesia illustrates this mood with particular clarity. The country's social entrepreneurship movement traces back more than four decades to grassroots efforts such as Bina Swadaya, whose Indonesian name translates literally as the "Self-Reliance Development Foundation", a lineage that makes self-reliance, not government partnership, the founding ethos of Indonesian social enterprise. More recent evidence points to the same pattern: Wahyuningtyas, Hanoteau, and Vial (2018)

documented how Jakarta's #StartupLokal ecosystem relied heavily on peer networks, informal mentorship, and corporate sponsorship – self-organised social infrastructure that startups built among themselves rather than institutional support supplied by the state. If Indonesian social entrepreneurs have historically built without government help, an important question follows. Does this situation mean they are indifferent to the government, or does the state's conduct still matter to them in a more limited but consequential way, namely, whether it interferes with what they are already doing on their own? Existing research on the antecedents of SEI has answered adjacent but different questions. Studies have identified empathy, moral obligation, self-efficacy, and perceived social support as consistent predictors of SEI across contexts (Ip et al., 2020), and a recent review confirms that altruistic and self-transcendent values reliably predict intention as well (Kadyan & Jaiswal, 2026). Yet where the government enters this literature at all, it typically appears as a resource to be received, gained, or lost, as in Latif and Ali's (2021) finding that political ties are negatively associated with SEI, and more strongly so for women than for men. Comparatively little attention has been paid to a different and, we argue, more fundamental construct: citizens' generalised cynicism about whether officials act in good faith at all, independent of any specific ties or transactions. This is a meaningful gap, because a citizen's belief about whether the state will actively obstruct a civic project, rather than merely fail to support it, plausibly shapes whether that citizen attempts the project.

We contend that the popular framing of social entrepreneurship as an expression of civil-society empowerment—specifically, the belief that ordinary people, rather than government programmes, must solve social problems and ensure the financial sustainability of those solutions—overlooks a quieter precondition. Social entrepreneurs should not expect government support. A self-reliant, commercially disciplined venture, by definition, operates independently of state support. What they plausibly do need, however, is a baseline confidence that the government will not actively work against them and that incompetent or self-interested officials will not extort, co-opt, or obstruct a civic-minded project once it exists. Political cynicism is theorised here as a generalised negative political appraisal that may reduce the willingness of benevolent individuals, in particular, to translate prosocial values into social entrepreneurial intention, because it is other-orientated civic motivation, more than purely self-directed initiative, that depends on a favourable reading of the surrounding institutional environment (Pattyn et al., 2012).

Building on this reasoning, the present study examines whether two individual dispositions—self-reliance and benevolence—are associated with social entrepreneurial intention among a sample of Indonesian respondents and whether political cynicism moderates these relationships as we have theorised. We hypothesise that self-reliance and benevolence are each positively associated with SEI and that political cynicism weakens, rather than strengthens, the translation of these dispositions into intention, a pattern that would be consistent with a "leave us alone" account of civic action rather than with a purely resource-dependent model of it. We further explore, as a research question rather than a directional hypothesis, whether gender conditions these relationships, given prior evidence that political variables affect men's and women's entrepreneurial intentions differently (Latif & Ali, 2021). This study contributes a government-conducted-orientated boundary condition to the SEI literature, one that speaks directly to policymakers in developing democracies who assume that supporting social entrepreneurs necessarily requires funding them, when in some cases it may simply require allowing them to operate.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-Reliance and Social Entrepreneurial Intention

Self-reliance, as operationalized in the present study, is conceptually aligned with Rotter's (1966) formulation of an internal locus of control, which refers to a generalized expectancy that outcomes are primarily contingent upon one's own actions and efforts rather than on chance, fate, or the influence of powerful others. Individuals with a stronger internal locus of control are more likely to perceive outcomes as responsive to their behavior and to interpret adverse events as potentially manageable through personal action. This orientation is particularly relevant to entrepreneurship, where individuals must make decisions under conditions of uncertainty, assume personal responsibility for outcomes, and persist despite the absence of guaranteed external support. Consistent with this perspective, Sánchez (2013) found that entrepreneurship education was associated with the development of psychological attributes, including internal locus of control, self-efficacy, and proactiveness, which are relevant to the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. In the context of career motivation, Delanoë-Gueguen and Liñán (2018) further demonstrated that autonomy—defined in terms of the desire to exercise control over one's work rather than remain dependent on an employer or institution—was a consistent predictor of entrepreneurial intention over a five-year longitudinal period. These findings suggest that a perceived capacity to act independently and exercise control over one's career may constitute an important psychological foundation for entrepreneurial intention. This consideration may be particularly pertinent to social entrepreneurship, in which individuals must not only initiate and sustain an entrepreneurial venture but also preserve a social mission while developing financially viable mechanisms to support its continuity. In this regard, Kruse et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of developing a more mature and deliberate income strategy for sustaining social ventures beyond reliance on continued external funding. Accordingly, self-reliance may represent a relevant individual-level resource for understanding social entrepreneurial intention, insofar as it reflects an orientation toward personal agency, autonomy, and the capacity to sustain purposeful action under conditions of uncertainty and resource constraints.

In the present study, self-reliance was operationalized using a four-item scale adapted from the internal locus of control literature (Nießen et al., 2022). Importantly, self-reliance was not conceptualized as a direct or interchangeable proxy for internal locus of control. Although the two constructs are conceptually related, they are theoretically distinct. Internal locus of control encompasses a broader belief that outcomes across various domains of life are primarily contingent upon one's own actions and capabilities, whereas self-reliance, as conceptualized in the present study, places greater emphasis on individual initiative, autonomy, and reliance on one's own capabilities, particularly in work-related contexts. Accordingly, the adapted scale was intended to capture the specific dimensions of self-reliance relevant to the research context rather than the broader construct of internal locus of control. The construct validity of this operationalization is examined in the Measures and Measurement Validation sections through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and assessments of convergent and discriminant validity.

H1: Self-reliance is positively associated with social entrepreneurial intention.

Benevolence and Social Entrepreneurial Intention

While self-reliance provides the confidence and agency needed to initiate action,

benevolence determines the social purpose toward which such action is directed. In Schwartz's (1992) theory of basic human values, benevolence represents a self-transcendence value emphasizing the welfare of close others, whereas universalism extends this concern to broader humanity and nature. Stern et al. (1998) operationalized this self-transcendent orientation through the Brief Inventory of Values and showed that such values can influence prosocial and pro-environmental intentions through a value-belief-norm mechanism, whereby personal values shape beliefs about consequences and subsequently activate moral obligations to act. In the context of social entrepreneurship, this perspective suggests that individuals who strongly value concern for others and social justice are more likely to perceive establishing a mission-driven venture as personally meaningful. Empirical evidence supports this proposition, with Kadyan and Jaiswal (2026) identifying altruism and self-transcendence as consistent positive predictors of social entrepreneurial intention (SEI), while Ip and Liang (2023) found that expectations of social rather than personal benefits constitute a central psychological pathway toward SEI among individuals exposed to social enterprises. Given that the SEI-6 scale assesses intentions to establish ventures addressing unresolved social problems while pursuing both social and financial objectives (Kruse et al., 2023), benevolent values appear particularly relevant to this entrepreneurial intention.

H2: Benevolence is positively associated with social entrepreneurial intention.

Political Cynicism as a Boundary Condition: The "Leave Us Alone" Logic

Political cynicism refers to a stable belief that politicians are motivated chiefly by the pursuit and retention of power rather than by genuine concern for the public they serve (Pattyn et al., 2012). Pattyn and colleagues demonstrated that political cynicism is empirically distinct from the closely related constructs of generalized social cynicism and political trust and that it independently predicts political normlessness, political estrangement, and voting behavior, providing evidence that cynicism captures something more specific than a diffuse pessimism about human nature. The construct appears to be more prevalent outside the world's wealthiest democracies. Del Pino and colleagues (2016) documented a related attitude they term "bureauphobia," a persistent negative image of public administration that survives even positive personal encounters with civil servants. Van Hiel and colleagues (2021) go further, suggesting that political cynicism, rather than incremental ideological polarization, is what now distinguishes politically radicalized citizens from moderates, a finding that underscores how consequential this specific belief has become for civic behavior more broadly.

Institutional void theory offers a useful bridge between this belief and social entrepreneurial behavior. Khanna and Palepu (1997) originally used the term to describe the absence of the specialized intermediaries, contract-enforcement mechanisms, and regulatory infrastructure that firms in advanced economies take for granted; subsequent work has extended the concept to include not merely absent institutions but actively obstructive ones, in which weak or self-interested officials raise transaction costs, extract informal payments, or otherwise threaten ventures that depend on official cooperation (Li et al., 2021; Mahasuar, 2026). Entrepreneurs navigating such environments frequently respond with bricolage and nonmarket strategies, including lobbying, community coalition-building, and reputation management, based on the belief that they must verify this minimal condition of restraint, as they cannot assume that formal institutions will behave neutrally toward them (Derks et al., 2024; Liedong et al., 2026). We treat political cynicism as the individual-level psychological analogue of this institutional condition: a citizen who believes officials are

dishonest and self-interested is, in effect, forecasting that any social venture she starts will encounter, at best, indifference and, at worst, interference from the state. Because social entrepreneurship already requires its founders to fund and sustain a social mission largely on their own initiative (Kruse et al., 2023), the only expectation is that the government refrains from actively hindering their efforts, rather than providing active support—a standard that self-reliant, benevolently motivated citizens are unlikely to expect or hold in the first place. We suggest that political cynicism is the belief that this minimal condition of restraint must be verified rather than assumed.

This reasoning yields an asymmetric prediction rather than a uniform one. Self-reliance, as an agentic and internally focused disposition, should translate into entrepreneurial intention largely independent of external appraisal; a highly self-reliant individual proceeds because she trusts her own capacity, not because she has evaluated whether surrounding institutions are benign. Benevolence, by contrast, is an other-oriented motivation whose behavioral expression depends more heavily on a favorable read of the social and institutional environment in which the caring act will unfold; an individual moved by concern for the vulnerable has more to lose, in both material and psychological terms, if a well-intentioned initiative is exploited, obstructed, or discredited by self-interested officials once it becomes visible. Consistent with this reasoning, prior work on ambivalence toward government suggests that citizens' mixed or negative appraisals of the state's motives shape their willingness to support collective, other-directed action even when those appraisals leave individual initiative untouched (Gainous et al., 2008). If this logic holds, political cynicism should weaken the positive relationship between benevolence and SEI more than it weakens the positive relationship between self-reliance and SEI, because cynicism specifically threatens the environmental precondition, government restraint, that other-oriented civic motivation implicitly relies upon.

H3: Political cynicism negatively moderates the relationship between benevolence and social entrepreneurial intention, such that the relationship is weaker when political cynicism is high.

H4: Political cynicism negatively moderates the relationship between self-reliance and social entrepreneurial intention, such that the relationship is weaker when political cynicism is high.

Gender as an Exploratory Research Question

Beyond political cynicism, gender represents another theoretically plausible boundary condition that warrants examination, particularly given the mixed evidence in the broader social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) literature. Latif and Ali (2021) reported that political ties were negatively associated with SEI and that this association was substantially stronger among women than among men in samples from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. Their findings suggest that the relationship between the sociopolitical environment and civic-oriented entrepreneurial motivation may vary across gender groups. Similarly, Gomes et al. (2022) found that women's entrepreneurial intentions in Portugal were influenced not only by individual attitudes but also by environmental conditions, social valuation, and external assessments concerning the legitimacy and safety of entrepreneurship as a career pathway. Taken together, these findings raise the possibility that gender may condition how individual-level motivations are translated into entrepreneurial intentions, particularly when external contextual conditions are salient. From this perspective, the relationships between self-reliance and SEI and between benevolence and SEI may also vary across gender groups, independently of the moderating role of political cynicism. However, the existing literature fails to provide consistent evidence about which relationships gender moderates and the direction and magnitude of such moderation. Accordingly, rather than advancing a directional hypothesis that

would imply a theoretically established gender difference, the present study treats gender moderation as an exploratory research question. The corresponding analysis is therefore positioned as supplementary and exploratory rather than as a confirmatory test of a preregistered or theoretically directional hypothesis.

RQ1: Does gender moderate the relationships between self-reliance, benevolence, and social entrepreneurial intention?

Research Model

Figure 1 summarizes the hypothesized relationships. Self-reliance and benevolence are modeled as direct, positive predictors of social entrepreneurial intention (H1, H2), political cynicism is modeled as a moderator of both relationships (H3, H4), and gender is examined as an additional, exploratory moderator (RQ1), net of respondents' age, prior volunteering experience, and family exposure to social business, which are entered as statistical controls.

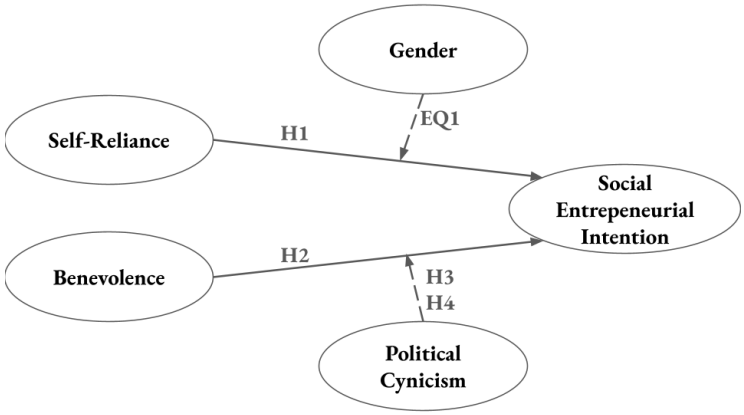


Figure 1. Research Model

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Sampling

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design appropriate for testing a set of a priori, theory-derived hypotheses about the direct and moderated relationships among self-reliance, benevolence, political cynicism, and social entrepreneurial intention. Data were collected through the Jakpat online survey panel, a commercial platform widely used for consumer and social-science polling in Indonesia, across two consecutive fielding waves in 2026, undertaken to secure a sample of sufficient size for stable interaction-effect estimation and confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model. Respondents were recruited using the panel's standard purposive, opt-in sampling procedure and were retained in the analytic sample only if they affirmed, via an initial consent item, that they were participating voluntarily and reported an age of 17 years or older. Of 621 total submissions across both waves, 3 were excluded for withheld consent, 4 for identical responses across all 18 substantive scale items (straight-lining), 3 for reporting an age below the study's 17-year floor, and 42 for exact duplicate response patterns consistent with automated or repeat submissions, yielding a final analytic sample of 569 respondents (61.2% female, 38.8% male; M age = 30.65 years, SD = 10.46, range = 17–80 years), of whom 66.1% reported prior volunteering or active involvement in a social community and 46.0% reported having a family member who had run a business with a social or community mission.

A general working-adult panel, rather than a sample of confirmed entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship students, was used deliberately. Social entrepreneurial intention is, by construction, a pre-behavioural attitudinal state that can meaningfully be assessed in any adult who has not yet founded a venture, and prior SEI research has commonly sampled the general working population or university students for the same reason (Kadyan & Jaiswal, 2026). Because our theoretical argument concerns the psychological threshold at which political appraisal begins to condition civic intention, restricting the sample to those already self-selected into entrepreneurship would risk truncating exactly the variance in self-reliance, benevolence, and political cynicism the study is designed to examine. We nonetheless treat the panel's demographic breadth, including its wide age range, as a limitation requiring caution in generalisation, which is discussed further below.

Measures

Self-reliance was measured with a four-item measure adapted for this study from the internal subscale of the Internal–External Locus of Control Short Scale–4 (IE-4; Nießen et al., 2022), rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (does not apply at all) to 5 (applies completely). Benevolence was measured with four items adapted from the altruistic-values subscale of the Brief Inventory of Values (Stern et al., 1998), rated on a 7-point importance scale from 1 (opposed to my values) to 7 (extremely important), consistent with Schwartz's (1992) conceptualization of benevolence as a guiding life principle rather than a situational attitude. Political cynicism was measured with the four highest-loading items from Pattyn and colleagues' (2012) validated eight-item political cynicism scale, rated on a 5-point agreement scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); all four retained items concern perceived dishonesty and self-interest among politicians specifically, rather than incompetence. The complete six-item SEI-6 scale (Kruse et al., 2023), translated into Bahasa Indonesia, was used to measure social entrepreneurial intention. The scale was rated on a 7-point agreement scale. Two binary control items captured prior volunteering experience and family exposure to social business, and gender and age were recorded as demographic controls. All instruments demonstrated strong internal consistency in the present sample (self-reliance $\alpha = .849$; benevolence $\alpha = .917$; political cynicism $\alpha = .927$; SEI $\alpha = .931$).

Measurement Validation

Because self-reliance was adapted rather than adopted verbatim from an established measure, and because reliability coefficients alone are insufficient to establish construct validity, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the complete four-factor measurement model prior to hypothesis testing. The model specified all 18 substantive items as indicators of their respective latent constructs: self-reliance, benevolence, political cynicism, and social entrepreneurial intention (SEI). The measurement model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(129) = 384.79$, $p < .001$, CFI = .966, TLI = .960, RMSEA = .059, and GFI = .950. The standardized factor loadings ranged from .676 to .874 for self-reliance, .791 to .902 for benevolence, .826 to .910 for political cynicism, and .734 to .897 for SEI, with all loadings statistically significant at $p < .001$. These results indicate that the observed indicators loaded significantly and substantively on their intended latent constructs.

Evidence of convergent validity was obtained for all four constructs. The average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded the conventional .50 criterion for self-reliance (AVE = .591), benevolence (AVE = .738), political cynicism (AVE = .762), and SEI (AVE = .701). Similarly, composite

reliability (CR) exceeded the .70 threshold across all constructs, with values of .851 for self-reliance, .918 for benevolence, .927 for political cynicism, and .933 for SEI (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Collectively, these results indicate that the indicators share sufficient variance with their respective latent constructs and provide satisfactory evidence of convergent validity and construct reliability.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using two complementary procedures. First, the Fornell–Larcker criterion was examined by comparing the square root of the AVE for each construct with its correlations with the remaining constructs. The square roots of AVE were .769 for self-reliance, .859 for benevolence, .873 for political cynicism, and .837 for SEI. In each case, the square root of AVE exceeded the corresponding inter-construct correlations, with the largest observed correlation being .459 between self-reliance and benevolence. Thus, the Fornell–Larcker criterion was satisfied for all four constructs. Second, given evidence that the Fornell–Larcker criterion may have limited sensitivity in detecting discriminant validity concerns under certain conditions, the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was additionally assessed (Henseler et al., 2015). All six pairwise HTMT ratios were below the conservative .85 threshold, ranging from .182 to .464 (Hair et al., 2019). The consistent results obtained from both discriminant validity assessments provide evidence that self-reliance, benevolence, political cynicism, and SEI are empirically distinguishable constructs within the present sample. In particular, the findings provide empirical support for the distinctiveness of the adapted self-reliance measure from the other constructs examined in the model, while remaining consistent with its conceptual grounding in the broader internal-locus-of-control tradition from which the measure was adapted.

Analytical Technique

The hypotheses were tested using hierarchical moderated regression analysis (MRA), which is appropriate for examining the incremental contribution of theoretically specified predictors and interaction effects in a model involving continuous independent and dependent variables. This approach also enables the incremental variance explained by each block of predictors to be assessed transparently. Prior to constructing the interaction terms, the continuous predictor and moderator variables—self-reliance, benevolence, and political cynicism—were grand-mean centered. Gender was effect-coded to facilitate the estimation and interpretation of gender-based interaction effects while reducing nonessential multicollinearity between lower-order and interaction terms.

Three nested regression models were estimated sequentially. Model 1 included the control variables (age, volunteering experience, family exposure, and gender). Model 2 added the centered main effects of self-reliance, benevolence, and political cynicism to assess their incremental explanatory contribution beyond the controls. Model 3 subsequently introduced the two theoretically focal interaction terms, self-reliance × political cynicism and benevolence × political cynicism, to examine whether political cynicism conditionally influenced the relationships between the two focal predictors and SEI. To address Research Question 1 (RQ1), a supplementary model was estimated by additionally incorporating the relevant gender interaction terms. This analysis was treated as exploratory rather than confirmatory given the absence of sufficiently consistent theoretical and empirical evidence regarding the direction and magnitude of gender-based moderation.

Where a statistically significant interaction effect was identified, the conditional effect of the focal predictor was examined using simple-slopes analysis at one standard deviation above and below the moderator mean (±1 SD), following established procedures for interpreting interaction effects

in moderated regression models (Preacher et al., 2007). Prior to estimating the substantive regression models, diagnostic analyses were conducted to assess potential common method bias and multicollinearity. Common method bias was examined using Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003), while multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIFs). The results of these diagnostic assessments are reported alongside the substantive regression findings to provide transparency regarding the adequacy of the data for regression-based inference, consistent with established reporting practices for survey-based research (American Psychological Association, 2020).

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the respondents. The sample comprised slightly more female respondents and covered a broad adult age range, with relatively balanced proportions across the decade-based age groups and participants reaching 80 years of age. This distribution reflects the general-population composition of the Jakpat panel described above. Most respondents had previous experience in volunteering or social community activities, whereas exposure to social businesses through family members was relatively evenly distributed between those with and without such experience.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (N = 569)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	348	61.2
	Male	221	38.8
Age (years)	17–20	104	18.3
	21–25	133	23.4
	26–30	82	14.4
	31–40	137	24.1
	41–80	113	19.9
Prior volunteering / social involvement	Yes	376	66.1
	No	193	33.9
Family social-business exposure	Yes	262	46.0
	No	307	54.0

M age = 30.65, SD = 10.46.

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, internal consistency coefficients, and bivariate correlations among the continuous variables included in the study. All four measures demonstrated satisfactory to strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .85 or higher. Self-reliance had a mean of 4.10 (SD = 0.82) on a five-point scale, while benevolence had a mean of 6.11 (SD = 1.18) on a seven-point scale, indicating relatively high levels of endorsement of both constructs within the respective response ranges. Political cynicism had a mean of 3.93 (SD = 1.01) on a five-point scale, suggesting a comparatively high level of agreement with the political-cynicism items in the present sample. This pattern is broadly consistent with evidence of elevated political distrust reported in previous samples from developing-country contexts (Paredes & Derpic, 2025).

Self-reliance, benevolence, and political cynicism were each positively and significantly associated with social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) at the bivariate level. Self-reliance and benevolence were also moderately correlated (r = .40), indicating a meaningful degree of shared variance while remaining empirically distinguishable constructs. This association is theoretically plausible given that the two constructs capture complementary dimensions of individual orientation—self-directed agency and concern for others, respectively. Importantly, the magnitude of their correlation remains consistent with the discriminant validity evidence reported in the measurement model, which indicates that the constructs are sufficiently distinct for subsequent multivariate analysis.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Bivariate Correlations (N = 569)

Variable	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4
1. Self-reliance	4.10	0.82	.85	—			
2. Benevolence	6.11	1.18	.92	.40**	—		
3. Political cynicism	3.93	1.01	.93	.16**	.22**	—	
4. SEI	5.68	1.20	.93	.26**	.43**	.21**	—

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Measurement Validation Results

As reported in the Measures section above, the confirmatory factor analysis indicated acceptable model fit (CFI = .966, TLI = .960, RMSEA = .059) and supported both convergent validity (AVE = .59–.76 across constructs) and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria both satisfied) for all four measures, including the adapted self-reliance scale. Table 3 reports the standardized factor loadings and construct-level validity indices in full.

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Standardized Loadings and Validity Indices

Construct / Item	Loading	AVE	CR	√AVE
Self-Reliance (SR)		.591	.851	.769
SR1	.729			
SR2	.874			
SR3	.782			
SR4	.676			
Benevolence (BE)		.738	.918	.859
BE1	.842			
BE2	.897			
BE3	.902			
BE4	.791			
Political Cynicism (PC)		.762	.927	.873
PC1	.826			
PC2	.875			
PC3	.910			
PC4	.878			
Social Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI)		.701	.933	.837
SEI1	.734			
SEI2	.830			
SEI3	.876			

SEI4	.897
SEI5	.871
SEI6	.804

All loadings significant at $p < .001$. AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability; √AVE = square root of AVE, reported once per construct for comparison against the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Hypothesis Testing: Hierarchical Moderated Regression

Table 4 presents results of the hierarchical moderated regression. Model 1, containing only the control variables, explained a small but statistically significant share of variance in SEI ($R^2 = .017$, $p = .049$). Model 2 added the centered main effects of self-reliance, benevolence, and political cynicism and produced a substantial and significant increase in explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .202$, $F(3, 561) = 48.42$, $p < .001$. In this model, self-reliance was a significant positive predictor of SEI ($b = 0.155$, $SE = 0.061$, $p = .011$), as was benevolence ($b = 0.361$, $SE = 0.042$, $p < .001$), and political cynicism itself, though not directly hypothesized, was also a significant positive predictor ($b = 0.141$, $SE = 0.046$, $p = .002$).

Model 3 added the two interaction terms and yielded a significant increase in explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .051$, $F(2, 559) = 19.44$, $p < .001$. Within this full model, benevolence remained a significant positive predictor of SEI ($b = 0.259$, $SE = 0.044$, $p < .001$), and the direct, positive association of political cynicism with SEI persisted ($b = 0.137$, $SE = 0.045$, $p = .002$). Self-reliance's coefficient, by contrast, attenuated from significance in Model 2 to nonsignificance in the full model ($b = 0.093$, $SE = 0.060$, $p = .125$); we discuss this attenuation, which coincided with the introduction of a highly significant benevolence × cynicism interaction term correlated with self-reliance's own main effect, in the Discussion below, and treat H1 as receiving partial rather than unqualified support. The interaction between self-reliance and political cynicism remained small and nonsignificant ($b = 0.054$, $SE = 0.052$, $p = .297$), providing no support for H4. The interaction between benevolence and political cynicism was negative and clearly significant at conventional thresholds ($b = -0.201$, $SE = 0.034$, $p < .001$), providing clear support for H3. A supplementary model adding gender interaction terms yielded a marginally significant increase in explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .007$, $F(2, 557) = 2.66$, $p = .071$; within this model, the self-reliance × gender interaction was significant ($b = 0.270$, $SE = 0.118$, $p = .022$), while the benevolence × gender interaction was not ($b = -0.086$, $SE = 0.082$, $p = .295$). We treat this exploratory pattern, discussed further below, as suggestive rather than confirmatory, consistent with RQ1's status as a research question rather than a directional hypothesis.

Table 4. Hierarchical Moderated Regression Predicting Social Entrepreneurial Intention (Unstandardized Coefficients, N = 569)

Predictor	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	.004	.002	-.001
Volunteering experience	.226*	.153	.177†
Family social-business exposure	.134	.177†	.214*
Gender (female-centered)	.111	.051	.043
Self-reliance (SR)		.155*	.093
Benevolence (BV)		.361***	.259***
Political cynicism (PC)		.141**	.137**

SR × PC			.054
BV × PC			-.201***
R^2	.017*	.219***	.270***
ΔR^2	—	.202***	.051***

*† p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001. Coefficients for Model 1 controls are drawn from the control-only specification; small numerical differences from Models 2–3 reflect the addition of focal predictors.*

Probing the Interaction: Simple Slopes

To further examine the significant benevolence × political cynicism interaction, simple-slope analyses were conducted to estimate the conditional association between benevolence and SEI at low (−1 SD) and high (+1 SD) levels of political cynicism. At a low level of political cynicism, the association between benevolence and SEI was positive and statistically significant (b = 0.463, SE = 0.048, t = 9.75, p < .001). In contrast, at a high level of political cynicism, the conditional association was substantially weaker and did not reach statistical significance (b = 0.056, SE = 0.064, t = 0.88, p = .380). As political cynicism increased, the positive association between benevolence and SEI significantly weakened, as indicated by the difference between these conditional slopes. More specifically, the estimated slope declined by approximately 88% from the low-to-the-high-cynicism condition, suggesting that the association between benevolent orientation and SEI was most evident among respondents reporting comparatively lower levels of political cynicism.

For comparison, the conditional association between self-reliance and SEI was also examined at the same two levels of political cynicism. The association was not statistically significant at either low political cynicism (b = 0.038, p = .618) or high political cynicism (b = 0.148, p = .080). This pattern is consistent with the nonsignificant self-reliance × political cynicism interaction reported above and does not provide sufficient evidence that the association between self-reliance and SEI varies systematically as a function of political cynicism. Although the estimated slope at high political cynicism was comparatively larger and approached conventional levels of statistical significance, it should not be interpreted as evidence of a statistically significant conditional effect. Taken together, the simple-slope results indicate an asymmetric moderation pattern in which political cynicism significantly conditions the benevolence–SEI association but does not provide comparable evidence of moderation for the self-reliance–SEI association.

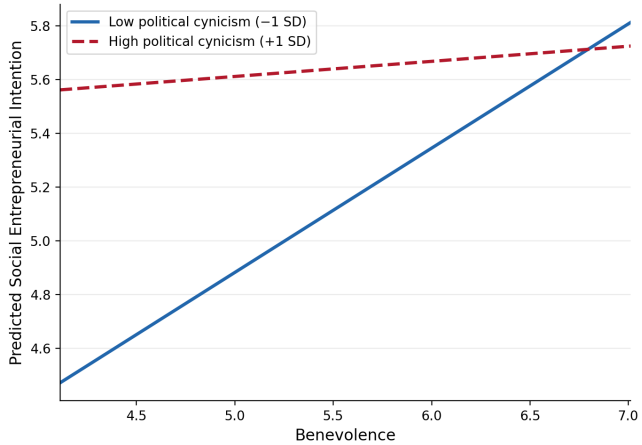


Figure 2. Simple Slopes of Benevolence Predicting SEI at Low and High Political Cynicism Robustness Checks

Common method bias did not appear to threaten the validity of the reported associations. Harman's single-factor test, conducted on all 18 substantive scale items entered simultaneously into an unrotated principal component analysis, showed that the first unrotated factor accounted for 36.9% of total variance, well below the conventional 50% threshold used to flag a dominant common-method factor (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Variance inflation factors for all predictors in the full moderated model, including the interaction terms, remained below 2.0, well under the conventional threshold of 10, indicating that multicollinearity did not distort the regression estimates.

Table 5. Summary of Hypothesis-Testing and Research-Question Results

Hypothesis / RQ	Relationship	Result
H1	Self-reliance → SEI (+)	Partially supported (significant in Model 2, b = .155, p = .011; nonsignificant in full Model 3, b = .093, p = .125)
H2	Benevolence → SEI (+)	Supported (b = .259, p < .001)
H3	PC × Benevolence → SEI (−)	Supported (b = -.201, p < .001)
H4	PC × Self-reliance → SEI (−)	Not supported (b = .054, p = .297)
RQ1 (exploratory)	Gender × (SR, BV) → SEI	SR × gender significant (b = .270, p = .022); BV × gender not significant (p = .295)

DISCUSSION

This study examined whether self-reliance and benevolence are associated with social entrepreneurial intention among Indonesian respondents and whether political cynicism moderates these relationships in a manner consistent with a "leave us alone" account of civic action. The results are broadly, though not uniformly, consistent with this account, and the pattern that emerged is more nuanced than a simple confirmation of all hypotheses would suggest; we discuss each finding in turn before addressing what we regard as the study's central contribution.

Benevolence emerged as a robust, independent predictor of social entrepreneurial intention across every model specification, consistent with the broader literature linking self-transcendent values to prosocial and civic intention (Kadyan & Jaiswal, 2026). Self-reliance's association with SEI was less stable: it was significant in the additive model (Model 2) but attenuated to nonsignificance once the interaction terms were entered (Model 3). Because self-reliance and benevolence are moderately correlated (r = .40) and because the benevolence × cynicism interaction accounts for a large, significant share of variance in the full model, this attenuation is plausibly a shared-variance artefact of the fuller specification rather than evidence that self-reliance is unrelated to SEI; nonetheless, we report it exactly as observed rather than selecting whichever model specification yields the more convenient result, and we treat H1 as receiving partial, model-dependent support that future research with a fully specified structural model should probe further.

The study's key contribution lies in the asymmetric moderating role of political cynicism. Political cynicism significantly weakened the benevolence–SEI relationship (b = −0.201, p < .001), but did not significantly affect the self-reliance–SEI relationship. This asymmetry supports the

"leave us alone" perspective: self-reliant individuals may pursue social ventures based primarily on internal agency, whereas benevolently motivated individuals may be more sensitive to whether institutions are trustworthy enough to support their prosocial initiatives. This finding is consistent with institutional-void perspectives, which suggest that weak or self-interested institutions increase the perceived risks of prosocial action (Li et al., 2021; Mahasuar, 2026). Thus, while benevolent individuals may translate their values into SEI when political cynicism is low, distrust of government may weaken this translation when cynicism is high.

We were surprised to discover that political cynicism was directly and positively associated with SEI (b = .137–.141, p = .002 across Models 2 and 3), independent of its moderating role. This is worth flagging explicitly as an unanticipated, exploratory result rather than folding it silently into the confirmed hypotheses. One plausible, though speculative, interpretation is that political cynicism may carry a direct motivational charge of its own, consistent with bricolage accounts in which politically cynical citizens respond to institutional distrust not merely by discounting the usefulness of government but by actively substituting their initiative for it (Derks et al., 2024; Liedong et al., 2026). If this is the case, cynicism may simultaneously encourage a general "do-it-myself" attitude towards SEI while specifically undermining the benevolence-to-SEI pathway. We regard the finding as a hypothesis for future, purpose-designed research rather than a conclusion this study is positioned to establish.

The exploratory gender analysis (RQ1) similarly surfaced a pattern worth reporting cautiously rather than over-interpreting. Self-reliance's association with SEI was significantly stronger among women than among men (b = .270, p = .022), while benevolence's association with SEI did not differ meaningfully by gender. This finding is broadly consistent with prior evidence that political and environmental variables condition women's entrepreneurial intention more than men's (Gomes et al., 2022; Latif & Ali, 2021), though the specific pattern observed here, gender moderating the self-reliance pathway rather than the political-cynicism-sensitive benevolence pathway, was not anticipated by our theorising and should be treated as a candidate for confirmatory replication rather than an established feature of the model. Simple slopes analysis, following the same procedure used for the benevolence × cynicism interaction above, indicates that self-reliance predicted SEI significantly among women (b = .211, SE = .079, p = .008) but not among men (b = -.060, SE = .089, p = .504), a pattern illustrated in Figure 3.

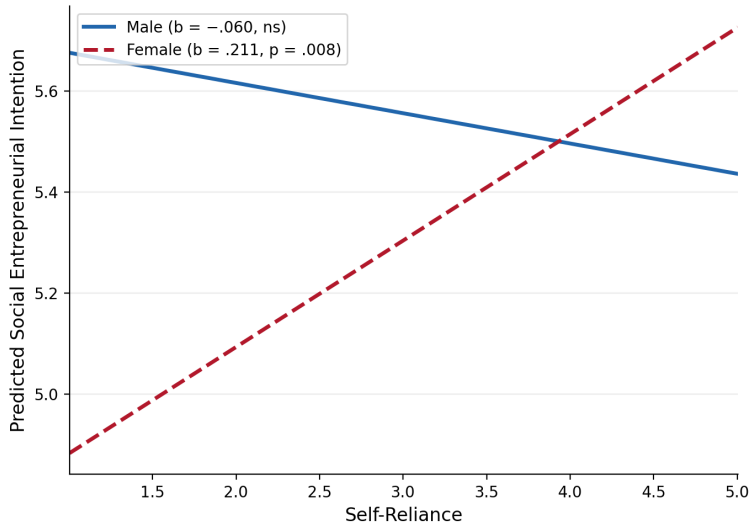


Figure 3. Simple Slopes of Self-Reliance Predicting SEI by Gender (RQ1, Exploratory)

These findings extend institutional void theory by positioning political cynicism as a theoretically relevant, asymmetric boundary condition in social entrepreneurial intention. Political cynicism selectively weakens other-oriented rather than self-oriented motivations, suggesting that anticipated institutional interference may discourage civic initiative even when individuals possess strong prosocial motivation. Thus, the study extends institutional void theory beyond firm-level strategy and resource access to the individual-level decision to pursue social entrepreneurship (Khanna & Palepu, 1997).

For practitioners and industry stakeholders, particularly incubators, accelerators, and impact investors operating in Indonesia and comparable developing markets, these findings suggest that recruitment and training pipelines for social entrepreneurs might productively distinguish between agentic and altruistic profiles, since the two appear to respond differently to the surrounding political climate; benevolently motivated aspirants in politically cynical environments may benefit from additional reassurance, mentorship, or protective structuring, such as legal safeguards or third-party intermediaries that limit direct exposure to discretionary official action. We frame this finding as a plausible implication warranting direct investigation rather than an established practice recommendation, since the present study measured intention and political cynicism, not actual instances of official interference or the effectiveness of any protective structure.

For policymakers, the most significant implication challenges the conventional approach to entrepreneurship promotion, which typically prioritizes positive support like subsidies, training programs, and preferential financing. Our results suggest that, for many potential social entrepreneurs, especially those motivated primarily by concern for others, the more binding constraint may be a credible fear of active interference rather than a lack of active support. We wish to be explicit that this study did not measure actual governmental obstruction, extortion, or bureaucratic interference, only respondents' generalized political cynicism and their stated entrepreneurial intention; we therefore present the following as possible implications requiring dedicated future investigation rather than direct policy prescriptions grounded in observed behavior. Policy instruments that credibly commit the government to restraint, such as transparent licensing procedures, independent grievance mechanisms, and public accountability for officials who obstruct registered social ventures, should be tested directly as interventions, as they may be more effective in unlocking benevolence-driven civic entrepreneurship than additional funding programs alone. This possibility aligns with broader findings that ambivalence toward government, rather than just a lack of support, influences citizens' willingness to engage collectively (Gainous et al., 2008).

CONCLUSION

This study examined whether self-reliance and benevolence are associated with social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) among Indonesian respondents and whether political cynicism moderates these relationships. Using survey data from 569 respondents, hierarchical moderated regression, and a measurement model validated through confirmatory factor analysis, the findings indicate that benevolence was positively and consistently associated with SEI across model specifications. The association between self-reliance and SEI was significant in the additive model but became nonsignificant after interaction terms were introduced, and this specification-dependent pattern is reported without privileging either result. Most notably, political cynicism

significantly attenuated the positive association between benevolence and SEI but did not significantly moderate the self-reliance–SEI relationship, suggesting an asymmetric pattern in which other-oriented entrepreneurial motivation may be more sensitive to perceptions of government conduct than self-directed motivation. An additional direct association between political cynicism and SEI and an exploratory gender difference in the self-reliance pathway were also identified; these findings are treated as exploratory and warrant further investigation using purpose-designed confirmatory studies. Overall, the findings suggest that the self-reliance orientation underlying Indonesia's social entrepreneurship tradition does not necessarily imply disengagement from the state. Rather, social entrepreneurial motivation may coexist with a more specific expectation that government institutions provide a sufficiently enabling environment and avoid conduct that constrains prosocial entrepreneurial activity.

LIMITATION

Several limitations should be considered. First, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inference; longitudinal or experimental studies are needed to examine whether political cynicism influences the transition from entrepreneurial intention to actual venture creation. Second, reliance on a single online panel limits generalizability, particularly to populations with limited internet or panel access. Third, the exclusive use of self-reported measures may introduce common-method bias despite diagnostic tests indicating no major concerns. Fourth, changes in the self-reliance effect and the unexpected direct relationship between political cynicism and SEI suggest that future research should test the model using full structural equation modeling. Fifth, replication across other developing-country contexts is needed to assess the generalizability of the asymmetric moderation effect. Finally, the exploratory gender effect and direct cynicism–SEI relationship should be treated as avenues for future research, alongside potential mechanisms such as perceived venture risk and different levels of perceived corruption.

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