The Impact of New Media Use on Youth Political Engagement

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Abstract

During increasing studies and debates on the impact of the use of social media, especially among young people in the context of civil life and political action, some researchers suggest that the category of findings on these two categories is optimistic or pessimistic. Focusing on young Chinese ethnic groups in Singkawang City, this study aims to view the extent to which social media is a driving force for young people's online political engagement. By conducting a multiple correlation regression analysis of 100 respondents data collected using a questionnaire, this study found that the use of social media was not the main driver (contributing on 25.6%) for increased online political engagement by young Chinese Singkawang, but social media provided opportunities for Singkawang Chinese young people to access information and transfer political knowledge.

Keywords: New Media; Media Effect; Political Engagement; Youth

Introduction

The emergence of new media, especially social media, introduces a new approach to political action and it also becomes a topic debated by scholars. DiMaggio et al. (Xenos, dan Moy, 2007) stated that most of the research study concerning the effects of media on civil and political life has two categories; optimistic and pessimistic. From the optimistic side, it is seen that social media are believed to have different qualities from the previous media and it produces new forms of political action. Comparing the new media to the conventional media (such as radio and television), the new media let its users to create content or messages conveying information, news, or even personal opinion, and also provide a room for unlimited social interaction and passing on information directly and widely that significantly cuts down the cost of various information and opinion. The new media are believed to be able to mobilize a wider social network (Visser, and Stolle, 2014), create a new possibility for science, and facilitate various perspectives (Soukop – Littlejohn et al., 2017). Besides, the pessimistic side expresses that the new media does not lead to significant changes of political action, the new media are only tools or models of political action in the offline world (Best, Krueger, 2005 – Visser, & Stolle, 2014).

Youth are enthusiastic internet users, it is used mainly for the aims of communication, information, entertainment, education, and enjoying their ability to make use of the internet (Livingstone, 2007). Indonesia Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) recorded that in 2018, penetration rates

of internet usage in Indonesia placed youth as majority users utilized the technology. From the conducted survey result, it was found that 91% of youth aged 15-19, 88.5% of youth aged 20-24, 82.7% of youth aged 25-29, and 76.5% of youth with the ages ranging from 30-34 were internet users.

The youth closeness to the internet brings up a discourse regarding the impact of social media on current youth political action. Youth who are described as the most enthusiast group to welcome the new media also have a problem in terms of their interest and participation to join actual politics. Henn and Ford (2014) noted that the youth group was an apathetic and apolitical group in which the youth did not have skills or inclination to participate. A group dissatisfied with and alienated from the political process moved increasingly away from democratic institutions and withdrew from formal political process (pp. 360-361). But Pontes et al. (2018) assumes that the disappointment of young groups with political institutions and actors does not mean that they are not involved in politics. Pontes et al. claim that although young people are seen as a group that is skeptical of conventional political values that are electoral-oriented, they are able to articulate new alternative forms of political action today.

Hamburger & Hayat (Rossler, 2017) records the history of research on internet media where, since its launch in 1990, the internet has provided a new channel for connectivity through online communication. The second generation of internet websites launched in 1999, known as Web 2.0, expands static web pages to enable two-way interactive communication, content created by users, collaboration with other media, facilitates social connectivity for all users throughout the world. Web 2.0 (social media) has substantially changed the way people use the internet; interactive online communication, creation, and sharing of online content, and global connections complement or replace other forms of communication (boyd & Ellison-Rossler et al., 2017). Social media has communication capabilities that govern the display on social media: several Web-based tools, applications, and services that facilitate interaction between individuals and with whom they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in communities and virtual networks. Social media enables online conversation, community building, connection, and relationships. Social media emphasizes peer social interaction and community development. Web-based service that allows individuals to create and share individual profiles and list connections made with others on the site and then view, navigate and interact with their online connections as well as connections made by others on the user's network. Social media is designed to enable users to construct and maintain social networks in an online environment (Boyd & Ellison - Rossler et al, 2017).

Focusing on Chinese youth in Singkawang City of West Kalimantan, this article focuses on how much is the influence of social media on online political engagement of Singkawang City youth. That some literature provides the fact that youngest people have included social media as an important part of their social and political life. This tendency can indicate that the use of social media, in general, meets the basic socio-political needs of young people. These needs include dealing with knowledge and construction of political identity on social media. Therefore, this article aims to examine the effect of social media usage towards political engagement, especially in the context of Chinese youth political engagement in Singkawang City.

Literature Review

1. Understanding Political Engagement: A New Typology

In the encyclopedia of political communication vol 1 & 2 compiled by Kaid and Bacha (2008), it is said that political involvement is 'any activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the community'; any political activities carried out either individually or collectively, aimed at influencing the community or the general public (p 580-581). Political engagement (political engagement) is a process

where individuals learn to be engaged in public affairs, allow confidence to the political system to provide solutions to collective problems, and train to participate in political activism (Norris, 2000).

There is a difference in understanding the concept of political engagement on the one hand and political participation on the other hand. Participation is interpreted as behavior in action so that the term is used to refer to actual participatory behavior. Otherwise, engagement is interpreted psychologically rather than behavioral terms and is used to indicate interest in, paying attention to, or having knowledge, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, or feelings about a political or citizenship problem (Barret & Smith, 2014). However, Berger (Ekman & Amna, 2012) argues that the idea of engagement covers a combination of attention and action.

Ekman and Amna (2012) define that there are differences in manifestations between political engagement and political participation. Political engagement on individual level is manifested in the form of personal interest in social issues and paying attention to political problems and activities carried out based on personal interests and attention to political and social problems. While political participation at the individual level is manifested by electoral participation and activities related to it. In a collective form, political engagement is manifested by acts of ownership of groups or collectives with different political profiles or agendas. Political engagement is a political action that is based on voluntary feeling to improve the situation. Whereas political participation is manifested in an organized activity where there is individual membership in conventional political parties, trade unions, or organizations so that all forms of political action are based on individual membership.

The typologies of various forms of involvement, civic engagement, and political participation manifested by Ekman and Amna (2012) (manifestations of legal and illegal extra-parliamentary participation activism were removed) are as follows:

Civil participation (laten political participation)		Political participation (manifest)
Involvement (attentions)	Civic engagement (action)	Formal political participation
Individual forms • Personal interest in politics and societal issues. • Attentiveness to political issues.	• Activities based on personal interest in and attention to politics and societal issues.	• Electoral participation and contact activities
Collective forms • A sense of belonging to a group or a collective with a dinstinct political profile or agenda. • Life-style related politics (e.g.identity clothes, music, food, and values).	• Voluntary work to improve conditions in the local community, for charity, or to help others (outside the own family and circle of friends)	• Organized political participation: membership in conventional political parties, trade unions and organizations

Table 1. Latent and manifest political participation (Ekman and Amnå, 2012)

In the context of young people, Pontes, Henn, and Griffiths (2018) suggest a renewal of the definition of political engagement. They said that political engagement must be defined as having an interest, paying attention, having knowledge or understanding, being aware, proactive, and being kept informed about politics (pp. 13). Political engagement is understood as a psychological process that includes cognitive and emotional dimensions. The cognitive dimension is defined as the investment and

willingness of people to make the effort needed to understand and master complex ideas and abilities related to political matters. Examples of cognitive political engagement actions might include searching political information online, signing petitions online or offline, being interested in the political agenda and watching political debates. The emotional dimension of political engagement reflects positive and negative reactions to the actions and instructions of politicians, other people's opinions about politics, perceptions about party ownership, and beliefs about political values. Examples of emotional political involvement include the act of posting/sharing political thought on the homepage of social media, commenting on social media so that other people read, wearing or displaying symbols that represent support for political goals or evidencing feelings about political and citizenship issues.

2. New Medium Theory

Mark Poster stated in his book, *the second media* age, that a new era was born at this time in which interactive technology and network communication cannot be separated from society. Ideas relating to this kind of change are seen from two aspects. First, the basic concept of old media which tends to be centered in one media institution to 'mass' is now transforming into a decentralized new form of media and it is produced by media users. The second change, the manifest concept of new media usage currently revolves around personal information that individuals have control over their media or information they want to know (acquiring knowledge) so that they can build an interactive communication (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The new media can connect people in a long-distance several times closer to one another at the same time, they have wide consequences and create shifts in modernity (Siapera, 2012).

Levy (Littlejohn et al., 2017) observed that the new media that are connected to internet as an open, flexible, and dynamic environment of information that is giving human a space to develop a new orientation towards science and letting people involve in an interactive, community-based, democratic, shared, and empowering world. The Internet gives people a place for virtual encounters that widen the social world, create a new possibility for science, and facilitate various perspectives around the world.

Martin Lister (Hastasari et al. 2011) described the characteristics of the new media. First, the new media are new forms of new experiences in texts, entertainment, amusement, and patterns of media consumption. Second, the new media are new ways to present the world, likewise interactive media. Third, the new media are new forms of relationships between users and consumers with the use of media technology. Fourth, the new media are new forms of experiences of individual and community identity in interactions in terms of time, space, and place. Fifth, the new media are forms of new conceptions in biological human relationship with media technology. Sixth, the new media are new patterns in organization and production compromising integration in media such as culture, industry, economics, access to information, ownership, control, and constitution.

Rasmussen (McQuail, 2011) argued that new media have different qualitative effects on social integration in the modern community network. Unlike mass media (such as Television), new media can have a direct role in individual life project. They also promote various applications and bigger participation.

As time progressed, Bolter and Grusin (Axford, and Huggins, 2001) saw that every type of technology, whatever the type is, especially technology of information and communication always undergoes remediation. Remediation is an emergence of new media that renews the previous form of media. The aesthetic difference between old media and new media lies in the qualities to show freshness, interactivity, a bigger reflectivity scope, and domination of pictures and texts. Since the internet was published to the Indonesian public in the 1990s, its technology develops significantly from Web 1.0 which has little interaction between users and tends to give one-way information to Web 2.0 (social media) that offers interactivity between users. The quality of interactivity offered by social media can

remove conventional difference between institutions and individuals, outsiders and insiders so that there is a greater equality of available access as users, receivers, viewers, and participants in exchanging information or messages. Livingstone (McQuail, 2011) noted that "what is new about the internet is that probably a combination of interactivity with an innovative characteristic for mass communication – types of content and audience reach that are unlimited to support global communication".

3.   New Media and Political Engagement

New media introduce a new approach for participation and involvement in politics because they have different quality from the previous media and they also produce new forms of political activities, such as the ability to create contents or news about politics, build social interaction, and exchange various information directly and widely that can cut costs significantly and mobilize a wider social network (Vissers, and Stolle, 2014). Several research study concerning correlations between new media and political engagement have been done. Experts emphasized that new media can improve civic engagement by building relationship between affinity groups that lets them to broaden their knowledge of political issues that are specific for society, and increase their ability to compare various point of views. The presence of new media is considered to be an opportunity for realizing an ideal direct democracy (Calderaro – Outhwaite, and Turner, 2018).

Besides, there are some potential created by new media that have been submitted by researchers. Della Porta and Mosca (Outhwaite, and Turner, 2018) for example, saw the new media as instruments that allow individuals to express themselves and facilitate the spread of personal and local claims. The new media are also recommended to give opportunities to create new forms of political engagement, as better instruments to connect society and political institutions. Eventually, the new media are presented to be a new space to discuss about politics. All this new condition is considered helpful to strengthen democracy and enlarge political involvements.

Heywood (2013) argued that the presence of new media has been changing political practice in several ways. First, the new media have been able to modernize politics; the development of technology reflects a desire that never goes out in applying science and innovation to realize a more comfortable political life. For example, the presence of E-voting and virtual referendum virtual allow society to express its ideas and arguments easily and comfortably, without even having to leave home. Second, the new media broaden society's access to possible information for the first time, an exchange of ideology and views that is truly free. The new media have provided for the society specific information that was previously only available to governments. Accessing information through various online sources is not only instant but also presents society that has diverse views, including radical and contradictory views. Third, the new media allow two-way transmission of views, so that they encourage society to be active and participatory. The people do not only participate in politics by giving their votes in particular periods but now they can also express their views and opinions by using the media, such as signing online petitions about legislation draft. Fourth, the new media stimulate decentralized activism where the media contribute to a complete shift in power from the political elite to wider communities. They produce a process of radical democratization. This happens because the new media are implicitly egalitarian (which is relatively inexpensive, easily accessible, and easy to use) and also facilitate a decentralization of spontaneous social actions.

It is generally known that the circulation of information can improve political knowledge promoting political engagement. According to Thomas and Streib (Outhwaite, and Turner, 2018), the use of the internet increases political knowledge through online news sites where knowledge or information can be easily accessed and obtained. The political knowledge obtained from social media generates political discussion due to user interactivities offered by the media. Comparing social media to traditional

media, social media facilitates users to receive information from a wider perspective. This condition results in a bigger political interest. There are three causality lines between the use of the internet and the improvement of civic engagement; the internet is used to consume and share political information that allows citizens to increase their knowledge about political matters. This implies that the society increases its interest in politics that it may generate political debates (pp. 787-788).

From the literature review and research findings that have been proposed, it can be drawn a hypothesis that the use of social media has an influence on the level of online political involvement among Singkawang Chinese youth, the closer and intense young people use social media, the higher the level of their political involvement in social media.

Research Method

This research study applied a quantitative approach, namely an approach used to examine particular theories by investigating the relationship between variables. These variables are usually measured using research instruments so that data containing numbers can be analyzed based on statistic procedures (Creswell, 2016). The quantitative approach of this study applied a survey method that was done for 100 Chinese youth in Singkawang City using questionnaires as the instrument. The given questionnaire containing close-ended questions for respondents, such as how often they access social media, how long the intensity of Chinese youth of Singkawang City access political information on social media, how intense they are in following institution or political candidates on social media, and how often

they politically get involved on social media. The sampling of this study applied a nonprobability sample technique using voluntary sampling type that fulfilled criteria. This type of sample was done by asking random youth that fulfilled the set of criteria who were willing to be respondent voluntarily. In this case, samples that fulfilled the criteria are individuals who were included in a young age group (17-30 years old) whose ethnic was Chinese and lived in Singkawang City

Data analysis employed in analyzing the obtained data from questionnaire distribution including doing initial descriptive statistics that aims to reduce data to make it easy to interpret. The next step was measuring coefficient values of correlation between variables using multiple regression analysis. This analysis technique was one of a parametric technique used to analyze the correlation between two or more independent variables with one single dependent variable. The variables of online political engagement were regressed on the variable of social media usage intensity and socio-demography (gender, age, and level of education) to see how psychological factors of user and social media instruments influence one another on decision-making of participation in political or social issues.

Results and Discussion

The analysis result of 100 respondents filled the questionnaire shows that there is a low engagement in the following account discussing political issues and matters among young people. They also did not interest to follow political candidates' accounts and political campaign groups on social media. As the rate of internet media penetration was 12 hours per day (*mode*) or in average was 8.05 hours per day (*mean*), the Chinese youth in Singkawang City tended to be uninterested to follow accounts discussing about politics (33%), then the youth who never followed political candidates' account (48%), and the youth followed political campaign group in social media (62%) (Figure 1).

The Interest Toward Online Political Institutions
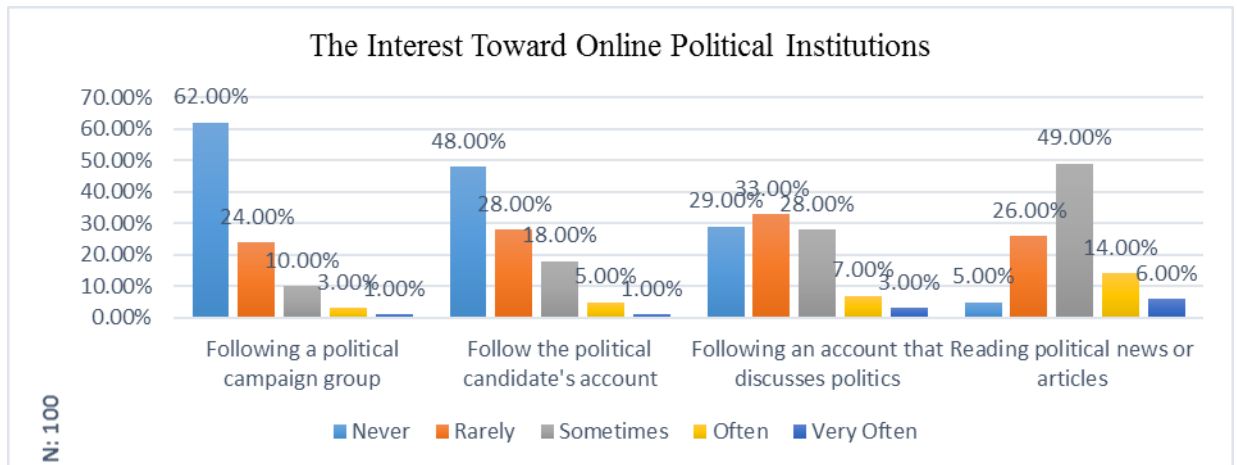
Even though the participation of Chinese youth in Singkawang City, especially interest towards online political institutions, was considered low, the level of their intensity in reading information about political issues was considered significant. 53% of 100 respondents are male and the remaining 47% are female. Only 5% out of 100% stated that they never read articles or news about politics, 26% said rarely reading, 49% stated occasionally reading, 14% were frequently reading, and 6% showed highly frequent reading.

The low intensity of Chinese youth towards online political institutions is followed by minimum political engagement (manifested as political expression) of Singkawang Chinese youth on social media. There are 5 political engagement manifestations; (1) inviting to vote political candidate through social media, (2) reposting political information on timeline or on their own social media account, (3) giving positive comments or opinions towards political reporting, (4) inviting to join social action, (5) signing online petition and inviting others to do the same thing. Among 5 manifestations of political engagement that has been explained, most of the respondents stated that they never did such actions. Among 100 young people becoming the respondents, 66% stated that they never made an open invitation on social media to vote political candidates, 57% said that they never reposted political news or information on their social media timelines, 59% mentioned that they never gave some comments to news or information concerning political issues on social media, 69% said that they never invited others to do social actions (such as anti-hoax campaign or social movement campaign) and 50% Chinese youth in Singkawang stated that they never signed online petition and never invited others to get involved in it (Figure. 2).

Political Engagement of Singkawang Chinese Youth in Social Media
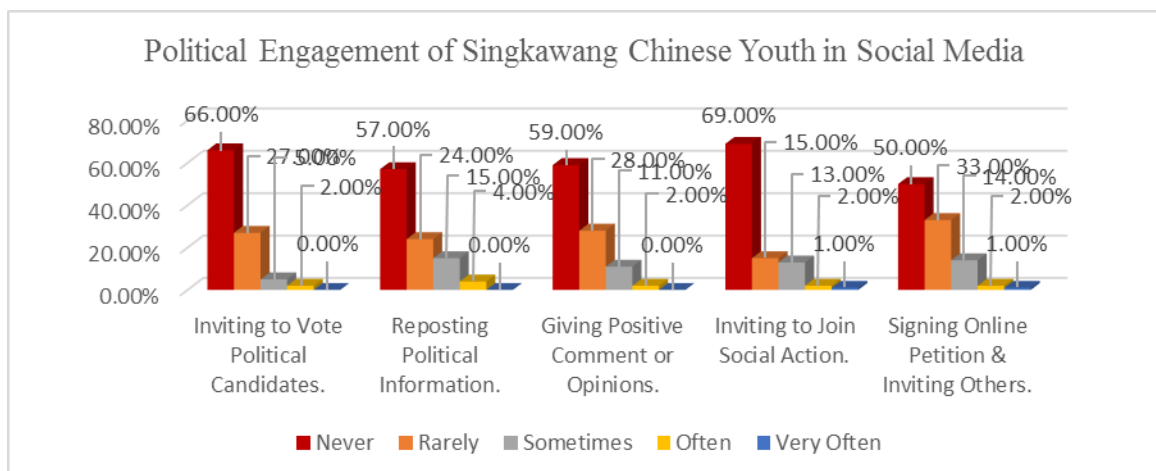
Multiple Linear Regressions Analysis

Multiple linear regressions are one of the parametric techniques used to analyze the correlation between two or more independent variables and one dependent single variable.

Dependent variable (Y) mentioned in this research is engaged in online political affairs, which is regressed into three independent variables such as duration of internet usage (X1), intensity level of political information (X2), and social-demography variable (sex, age, education) (X3). This study aims to measure how far the physiological factors of internet users and media instruments affect Chinese youth to involve themselves in social and political issues on social media.

From multiple linear regressions analysis, some findings concerning relationship degree in partial and simultaneous variable are found. Multiple linear regressions used t partial is the influence test towards variable X1, X2, and X3 partially on Y variable. In terms of basic decision-making in t partial test if the significance score is <0.05 then the independent variables (X1, X2, and X3) take effect on the dependent variable (Y) partially. The result of significance analysis using IBM SPSS program obtains variable significance (X1) which the duration of internet usage is 0.917 or >.005 that it concludes that the duration of internet usage variable (X1) do not affect the political engagement (Y). The longer duration spent on the internet does not affect Singkawang Chinese youth's political engagement on social media.

The next variable is the attentivness level (X2) of youth manifested in actions such as reading news or political articles, following political-related account, following the politician's account, and taking part in political campaigns. The analysis shows significance value results to 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05, it means that the higher intensity level of youth spent on political information, whether it is accessing or reading information related to political affairs or following institution affiliates with political affairs make their political engagement higher. The third variable (X3) is social demography (age, sex, and education) whereas the result of the analysis shows that significance value on variable X3 is 0.74 that it means >0.05 and it can be interpreted that age, sex, and education factors do not affect the political engagement of Chinese youth in Singkawang.

Apart from looking at the significance value, t partial test also can be conducted based on a comparison between calculated value with table value, whereas if $t_{test} > t_{table}$ then the independent variable (X) will partially affect the dependent variable (Y). The analysis shows value $t_{calculated}$ for X1 is 0.105, t_{test} X2 is 6.210 and value t_{test} X3 is 1.808. The formula to get t_{table} is $(\frac{\alpha}{2}; n - k - 1)$ that equals to $(\frac{0,05}{2}; 99 - 2 - 1) = (0.025 ; 96) = 1.984$. From the comparison between t_{test} X1 of 0.105 to t_{table} : 1.984, it can be concluded that the duration spent on the internet by Chinese youth in Singkawang does not affect their political engagement in social media. Meanwhile, the comparison between t_{test} X2 6.210 to t_{table} value 1.984, according to the requirement in decision making, that $t_{test} > t_{table}$ means the variables of intensity on information and political institution affect the political engagement. The higher or more intense youth in consuming political information and news, whether it is from political-related account or political candidate and group of political campaign, the level of political engagement expected to get higher. Besides, t_{test} value X3 shows a score of 1.808 smaller than t_{table}, it means that social demography variables such as education, sex, and age do not affect the political engagement.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.581	.860		-.676	.501		
	Internet Duration	.005	.044	.009	.105	.917	.976	1.024
	Attention	.544	.088	.541	6.210	.000	.977	1.023
	Socio-Demographic (Age, Gender, Education)	.448	.248	.158	1.808	.074	.967	1.034

a. Dependent Variable: Political Engagement

The next step is conducting F Simultaneous test. F Simultaneous test is combined effect or joint influence test between X1 variable (duration of internet usage), X2 variable (intensity in social media), and X3 variable (social-demography) on Y variable (political engagement) in multiple linear regressions based on significance value. Furthermore, the decision-making based on a significance value < 0.05 means that the independent variable (X) simultaneously affects the dependent variable (Y). According to the result of the F Simultaneous test using IBM SPSS 25 application, the significance value is 0.000.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.027	3	1.009	13.283	.000[b]
	Residual	7.216	95	.076		
	Total	10.243	98			

a. Dependent Variable: Political Engagement
b. Predictors: (Constant), Sosio-Demography, Attention , Internet Duration

From the result above, it can be concluded that duration of internet usage (X1), intensity level of political news (X2), and social demography factors (age, sex, and education) (X3), simultaneously affect the political engagement in social media (Y).

The last, multiple linear regressions test is used to find every determination coefficient of the independent variable (X1, X2, X3) on the dependent variable (Y) simultaneously. From the analysis, it is found that correlation coefficient (R) between independent variables and dependent variable is 0.544 and determination coefficient (R Square) is 0.296 which mean that there is positive and linear correlation of 26.6% between duration of internet usage, intensity in social media, sex, age, and education towards the political engagement level of Chinese youth in Singkawang on social media. Therefore, the level of correlation on each variable is 0.544 that can be reinterpreted as a moderate relationship.

Conclusion

The result of this research shows that the influence generated by social media does not directly affect the political engagement of Chinese young people in Singkawang City. Online political engagement in youth particularly Chinese ethnic in Singkawang City is not only affected by media factors or media message but also many dynamic and complex factors to determine whether they want to participate in political engagement. Some of the factors in this study, whereas age, education, sex,

duration of internet usage, and intensity of information or political-related news. The attention of information or political news is considered to have much effect rather than the other two (social-demography and duration of internet usage). Thus, the attention will stimulate audiences' knowledge on political issues which resulted in experience and individual point of view in political matters that can mobilize actual political action in the future. Attention should influence learning by making news content available for inforamtion processing. In effect, content must be attended to in order for it to lead to learning because without attention the information is never brought to conscious awareness of the infividual.

The topic of this research can be expanded with a larger scope where the pre-exposure factors such as ideology, personal value, psychological tendency, social institution perceptive, or political identity factors can be measured and examined in terms of its effect on online political engagement. The post-exposure factors can also be extracted deeper after cognitive which motivation and individual efficacy take action. And in-depth questions about why Chinese youth in Singkawang are less interested in acting or giving political opinions openly on social media but the intensity in reading or accessing political information tends to be high. This problem can be a topic of in-depth study of how the media also produces anxiety and uncertainty in communication actions.

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