

Exploring The Links Between Social Media Use and Political Self-Efficacy In Chinese College Students: Insights For Digital Pedagogy In Political Education

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Abstract: This study explores how Chinese college students use social media while examining their political self-efficacy levels to make recommendations about political-ideological education in China. Through a descriptive-correlational design, researchers studied 350 students to investigate their social media behavior and political individual belief scale. Research findings showed a positive medium-strength connection ($r = 0.334, p < 0.01$) between students' time on social media and their belief in their political capabilities. Students from both groups used social media more often but different age groups expressed higher political self-confidence. Student participation on WeChat and TikTok social media produced greater political self-confidence when they carried out political activism events including campaigning and electoral participation. Politic-ideological education in China stresses civic responsibility and socialist values so the inclusion of social media in the curriculum delivers benefits to student political efficacy. The suggested curriculum implementation plan starts from teaching political basics advances to virtual advocacy programming alongside community service projects. The paper presents specialized instructional approaches because it targets youth students with game-based lessons while targeting high school students with policy simulation activities. Social media needs ethical guidelines developed through the collaboration between educational institutions, political leadership and protective application monitoring for political learning. Chinese education students employ digital technology platforms to revolutionize their political interest levels and citizen participation rates according to research data.

Keywords: *Social media, Political self-efficacy, Digital pedagogy, College students, Education*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in China has political-ideological education as its fundamental principle which the government directs to develop civic responsibility and maintain core socialist values (Wu, 2021). Social media has become a powerful tool that allows students to receive immediate access to political information while engaging in civic discussions while taking part in public activities (Li 2020 and Wang and Zhao 2019). The

research explores how Chinese college students develop political self-efficacy through social media engagement while analyzing its educational value for improving civic commitment. The research investigates how social media enables theoretical-to-practical political transitions to develop effective techniques which connect digital spaces to political educational methods. The present-day youth population displays high online activity through social media which functions as an influential platform to discover multiple political concepts combined with civic participation opportunities (Zheng, 2021).

The belief students have in their capacity to shape political processes receives heightened examination because social media continues to become more prevalent in their daily existence (Wang & Zhao, 2019). Digital platforms give individuals enhanced power through their creation of novel political engagement methods accompanied by social group opportunities and public debate access (Chen & Li, 2020). The research gaps within this study focus primarily on two aspects: the insufficient investigation about how specific Chinese college student groups utilize social media platforms for political participation and the risks associated with misinformation spread along with echo chamber effects and social media dependence for political access.

The study evaluates social media engagement impacts on political self-efficacy levels within Chinese college students. What specific features of social media involvement which include virtual political discussions combined with open-minded viewpoint exposure and digital activism functions best at modifying students' political orientations and conduct? The research seeks to determine viable methods for merging social media platforms with political-ideological training to boost student engagement in politics coupled with improved political consciousness. This study explores China's social media environment which includes WeChat and TikTok since these platforms both serve as social exchange tools and political platforms for dialogue and engagement among Chinese citizens.

The findings of this study offer significant practical value because they demonstrate methods to create educational systems linking abstract political knowledge to concrete political participation. The study examines how to build educational techniques for political education programs through social media platforms to develop practical pedagogical methods. This approach creates students who participate with higher engagement while gaining better knowledge that translates into increased political activity in Chinese society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Opportunities in Social Media Engagement for Political Self-Efficacy

Social media platforms have radically modified how younger participants get involved in political activities. Facebook alongside Twitter and WeChat along with TikTok platforms maintain their essential political information sharing and debate functions (Chen & Li, 2020). The WeChat and TikTok platforms in China continue to affect the political awareness development of Chinese college students. Chinese college students can engage with dynamic political debates on their social media platforms to participate in political information sharing and become civically active according to Chan & Guo (2020) and Xenos et al. (2019). Self-confidence in politics develops through digital platforms because they show students various political perspectives that lead to their conviction that their actions will produce meaningful political transformations (Gil de Zúñiga & Diehl, 2019; Obenza & Rabaca, 2024). Online platform engagement allows students to develop social communities that spark political activism through their organization of social activities and political events (Hasebrink & Domeyer 2020).

The application of gamified learning techniques emerged as an effective technique for maintaining student engagement focused on younger generation students. The techniques employ game principles to create student motivation which generates interactive and attractive learning opportunities for political subjects (Liu & Chen 2019). These educational approaches were incorporated into Chinese educational programs to convert abstract political theory into practical applications so students could deeply study political systems and processes Garrett (2019). The educational methods lead social media passiveness to turn into political activity which results in enhanced civic participation.

Challenges of Social Media Engagement in Political Education

Social media provides many ways for people to connect politically but multiple issues still need improvement. The main problem on social media involves false information's dissemination combined with protective information silos. Students who get their political information from social media networks risk developing incorrect political views along with lower political self-confidence because they come across misleading content (David et al., 2019; Gao, 2020). When users encounter limited political viewpoints that match their established beliefs they become less likely to develop skepticism toward political content and consequently their social media involvement in political engagement decreases (Obenza & Rabaca, 2024). The Chinese digital environment stands out because it operates under strict regulation that controls political discussions and imposes censorship measures.

Proper ethical structures must guide social media applications in political education according to Gil de Zúñiga and Diehl (2019) and Spindt and Flanders (2024). The digital platform possesses powerful capabilities to advance political education but its wrongful use might eliminate political learning integrity. Teachers and representatives must generate professional guidelines to ensure responsible social media use for educational purposes that defends students from harmful content but allows beneficial political exchanges (Chen & Li, 2020; Nsereka, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers used a descriptive-correlational design to explore social media engagement versus political self-efficacy relationships in Chinese college students according to Creswell (2020). The researcher adopted this design because it enables assessment of present states alongside statistical variable relationship examination regardless of experimental variations or control (Zheng, 2021). An adjusted questionnaire served as the instrument to evaluate both social media engagement and political self-efficacy levels among the study participants.

Participants

Participants in this research study included 350 young people at Nanyang Medical College who were between ages 19 to 22. The investigation employed stratified random sampling to collect participants who studied Engineering Business or Education at Nanyang Medical College. This research method enabled researchers to collect different opinions about social media usage and political participation resulting in extensive analytical capabilities. The researcher modified the adapted questionnaire for participants through specific alterations to address their cultural needs as well as educational requirements to enhance understanding and local applicability. Social media engagement operated as the independent factor in the study and political self-efficacy acted as the outcome variable. The study period kept active all ethical rules including informed consent protection and confidentiality maintenance together with voluntary participation rights (Wu, 2021).

Instrumentation

The research adopted an adjusted version of the questionnaire to examine the level of political self-efficacy and social media engagement among Chinese college students. Beyens et al. (2020) developed the ESM Social Media Use Questionnaire for assessment purposes yet researchers adjusted the survey to suit the educational and cultural background of their test subjects. Based on reputable research (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2020) researchers validated this political engagement confidence scale for use with the study population. The measurement instruments exhibited high reliability based on Cronbach's alpha scores reaching 0.89 and 0.92. A preliminary assessment with 30 participants validated both cultural appropriateness and understanding of the adapted questionnaire. Feedback analysis led to minor modifications which resulted in better understanding for the users of the last version of the instrument. Political science and educational management experts evaluated the instruments to verify that the planned constructs could be accurately measured. The reliability coefficients achieved highs with 30 participants in the pilot test (social media engagement $\alpha = 0.87$, political self-efficacy $\alpha = 0.91$). Based on the feedback the researchers conducted minor changes to their questionnaire to improve clarity and usefulness of the final instrument.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection started after obtaining approval from both Nanyang Medical College's academic and student affairs offices to meet institutional requirements. Participants received the adapted questionnaire through a protected online survey system which provided free access to every potential respondent. The researcher explained in detail both the study's purpose and procedures together with the ethical standards before participants joined the study. All participants signed consent forms where they understood the survey condition of confidential information and voluntary participation. The screening period lasted two weeks to provide sufficient opportunity for all participants to finish the survey. Students received enough time during a two-week period to complete their questionnaires. The complete data collected was assembled for computation purposes after the completion of the study.

Data Analysis

Statistical software analyzed the questionnaire data through processing to guarantee data accuracy and reliability. The demographic analysis used descriptive statistics to present findings through frequency distributions and mean scores regarding respondent behavior. The analysis of social media engagement and political self-efficacy measure used a correlation technique with Pearson's coefficient to establish their relationship type. The study conducted analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify differences between specific demographic populations. This research design delivered extensive analysis on the connection between these studied variables. (Wang & Zhao, 2019). Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to evaluate the link between student political self-efficacy and their social media engagement. The research design serves effectively for identifying both magnitude and nature of relationships between continuous variables (Chen & Li, 2020). To determine statistical significance in the relationships the researcher established a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) served to investigate whether demographic factors including age and year level as well course affected social media engagement and political self-efficacy (Zheng, 2021). This study provides valuable insights into how social media impacts political participation of the youth.

RESULTS

This study delivers useful findings about how Chinese college students' social media use links to their political self-efficacy levels. This research examines three main factors that include students' social media participation alongside their political self-efficacy and evaluates their interdependent relationship. The research findings present information through tables that demonstrate student social media usage rates and their self-assurance regarding political engagement along with their correlation. Knowledge obtained through this research provides vital understanding when using social media for political education to increase student activism levels and self-assurance.

The table 1 below show the participants' level of social media engagement.

Table 1. Level of Social Media Engagement

No	Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1	Using online social media is my daily habit	4.49	0.59	Very High
2	I browse social media whenever I have free time	4.21	0.79	Very High
3	I check social media before bed, even if it's too late.	3.71	1.04	High
4	I am used to checking social media to relax myself.	4.11	0.83	High
5	The attention and comments from others on social media give me great sense of accomplishment,	3.60	0.96	High
6	Online social media can make me get more attention and influence than the real life.	3.45	1.03	High
7	In online social media, the support and encouragement of others is	3.66	1.03	High

very important to me.

8	When I don't have access to social media, I'm worried that I'm not processing important information in a timely manner.	3.51	1.08	High
9	I feel good about my relationship with my friends through my use of social media online.	3.95	0.89	High
10	I am satisfied with my relationship with my friends through the use of online social media.	3.88	0.96	High
11	Compared to the real world, online media makes me feel more comfortable.	3.51	1.14	High
12	I feel empty and bored when I can't use social media.	3.48	1.17	High
13	I am happier when I socialized online than in reality.	3.34	1.12	High
14	I habitually open social media when I open my phone.	4.05	0.90	High
15	I habitually open online social media once I open my phone.	4.01	0.96	High
(Overall) Social Media Engagement		3.80	0.42	High

Note: 1.00-1.80= Very Low, 1.81-2.60=Low, 2.61-3.40=Average, 3.41-4.20=High, 4.21-5:00=Very High

Table 1 reveals a high overall level of social media engagement among respondents, with a mean score of 3.80. The most prominent behavior, "Using online social media is my daily habit," scored 4.49, emphasizing the platform's integral role in students' routines. This highlights the central role of social media in students' routines. Other activities, such as browsing social media during free time, scored 4.21, and habitually opening social media upon accessing their phones scored 4.05. These findings emphasize the strong integration of social media into students' daily lives, influencing their interactions and access to information. Other high-ranking behaviors included browsing social media during free time (mean = 4.21) and opening social media as a habit when accessing their phone (mean = 4.05). This highlights the strong presence of social media in students' daily routines, which may significantly impact their political and social interactions.

Moving on from the patterns of social media use, it is essential to explore how these behaviors relate to students' political efficacy.

Table 2. Level of Political Self-Efficacy

No	Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1	State your own political opinion openly, even in clearly hostile settings.	2.89	1.17	High
2	Make certain that the political representatives you voted honor their commitments to the electorate.	3.85	0.92	High
3	Promote public initiatives to support political programs that you believe are just.	3.97	0.87	High
4	Maintain personal relationships with representatives of national government authorities.	3.81	0.92	High
5	Play a decisive role in the choice of the leaders of political movements to which you belong, or to which you are near.	2.87	1.19	High
6	Carry out an effective information campaign for the political movement or party with which you concur regarding beliefs and program.	4.01	0.81	High
7	Actively promote the election of political candidates in which you trust.	4.03	0.84	High

8	Promote effective activities of information and mobilization in your own community (of work, friends, and family), to sustain political programs in which you believe.	3.88	0.95	High
9	Collect a substantial amount of money to sustain the activities of your party.	2.29	1.11	Average
10	Use the means you have as a citizen to critically monitor the actions of your political representatives.	3.49	1.00	High
(Overall) Political Self-Efficacy		3.51	0.51	Very High

Note: 1.00-1.60= Very Low, 1.61-2.20=Low, 2.21-2.80=Average, 2.81-3.40=High, 3.41-4.00=Very High

Table 2 reveals that respondents exhibited a "very high" level of political self-efficacy, with an overall mean score of 3.51. The highest-rated item, "Actively promote the election of political candidates in which you trust," scored 4.03, reflecting students' confidence in political advocacy and participation. Another notable item, "Carry out an effective information campaign for the political movement or party with which you concur," scored 4.01, reflecting students' readiness to engage in advocacy efforts. However, the item "Collect a substantial amount of money to sustain the activities of your party" scored the lowest at 2.29, indicating a lack of confidence in financial aspects of political participation. Another notable finding is the high score for "Carry out an effective information campaign for the political movement or party with which you concur," with a mean of 4.01. This indicates that students not only engage politically but also feel capable of mobilizing others. Lower scores were seen in maintaining personal relationships with political representatives and raising funds for political parties, suggesting these are areas where students feel less efficacious.

The research study showed important differences existed regarding social media usage and political self-efficacy between different student population segments. Social media engagement was more pronounced among students under 20 years old since they spend more time using digital platforms for communication purposes. Higher political self-efficacy emerged among older learners possibly because they have encountered more political concepts through years of social development.

Academic students majoring in Education and Law demonstrated higher political self-confidence for active involvement than their peers studying Business or Engineering. Different population demographics require specific educational strategies for social media integration in political-ideological learning since demographics demand personalized intervention design.

The research analyzes social media engagement in relation to political self-efficacy in order to measure how social media affects students' political activities.

Table 3. Represents the important relationship between the respondents' level of social media engagement and political self-efficacy

Correlation Matrix		Social Media Engagement	Political Self-Efficacy
Social Media Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	.334**
	p-value		.000
Political Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.334**	1
	p-value	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (p-value).

According to Table 3 there exists a statistically significant positive connection that runs from social media engagement to political self-efficacy. The 0.334 correlation value demonstrates that students who participate more frequently on social media develop stronger belief in their political abilities. Social media demonstrates a moderate ability to build political awareness together with efficacy levels among college students. Students who dedicate themselves to social media platforms develop improved political self-efficacy. The statistical relationship shows social media might serve as a primary mechanism to develop political confidence abilities in students thus validating online tools for political education programs.

Research findings demonstrate that Chinese university students demonstrate robust social media usage together with political self-confidence since both variables show direct positive correlations. Social media proves to be a powerful instrument for enhancing political engagement and participation thus serving as a resource to advance digital-teaching methods related to political-ideological education.

DISCUSSION

The research results quantify social media as a major driver of how college students develop their political self-efficacy abilities. The active connection of students to digital products plays a vital role in enabling political dialogue and delivering various perspectives and enhancing their ability to affect political activities. Students gain empowerment through digital platforms as Chen and Li (2020) explain the systems provide immediate political information and develop networked communities. The researchers build upon Chen and Li's (2020) work by showing how older students tend to display more political self-efficacy in their study results. This investigation demonstrates how Chinese college students use social media at intense levels because digital platforms strongly influence the formation of their political efficacy. Wang and Zhao (2019) validate these findings because they demonstrate how regular social media usage develops political aptitude through immediate political content and group political conversations.

Analysis of this research demonstrates that participants showed a moderate relationship between social media networking and political self-efficacy results at $r = 0.334$. This finding indicates social media acts as a contributor to student political effectiveness. According to Liu and Chen (2019) students who experience diverse opinions through social media platforms participate more in politics yet they stress that students need to consistently focus on political content. The observed moderate relationship exists potentially due to differences in students' social media activities between recreational use and political participation and communication activities that impact their political self-efficacy outcome. People who consume political material online according to Xenos et al. (2019) tend to view themselves as able and execute political work like backing campaigns and participating in debates. The research highlights social media as an instrument that creates connections between political awareness and active involvement in political activism thus demonstrating its educational value in political-ideological education.

Digital platforms boost political self-efficacy concerning participatory actions but do not entirely supersede conventional political engagement ways. Students have lower self-efficacy when it comes to sustaining political representative connections and financing political campaign events showing they face specific obstacles in these tasks. The required assets such as funding autonomy and access to political connections and real participation opportunities are hard to obtain for Chinese college students. According to Gao (2020) young Chinese people tend to use economic giving and personal political pushing much less frequently in their political participation. Future educational strategies need to incorporate role-playing exercises that let students train their political skills in aspects of democratic involvement beginning from basic to advanced. This approach aims to enhance their capabilities and grow their comfort level. According to Chan and Guo (2020) social media helps political engagement yet students will develop complete political self-efficacy through a mix of digital social interactions and real-world political experiences.

Research findings demonstrate that political education needs digital instruments to become an essential part. A recent study by Gil de Zúñiga and Diehl (2019) shows that students gain stronger political efficacy through social media since it permits them to voice their opinion and become advocates for their causes. Students show increased political participation confidence when their awareness expands through social media according to results gathered in this research. Educators can produce interactive spaces for learning by

integrating digital platforms into their political-ideological programs. Teachers should organize social media discussions about modern political topics so their students can both review multiple opinions and develop their own political beliefs. This study demonstrates the powerful educational impact of social media for political knowledge acquisition but researchers should consider the potential limitations that affect these outcomes for improved assessment of results. The study includes several notable weaknesses which researchers should examine in new investigations. The study depends on participants' reported information which might lead to measurement distortions through their self-perceptions of social media usage and political abilities. The research took place in one institution only which restricts the ability to apply study findings across different groups of participants. Further research should integrate qualitative research methods including student interviews to generate comprehensive knowledge about their social media behavior alongside political activities. Expanding the study by researchers to include multiple institutions from different geographical regions would help increase the general applicability of the research results. These methods embrace how students already use digital platforms which fosters political content that becomes more suitable and accessible to students.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research data demonstrates that social media plays a vital part in boosting political self-efficacy within Chinese college students. Social media engagement produced a constructive association with political self-efficacy where younger participants showed higher engagement levels which corresponded to increased political confidence in older participants. Student demographics between academic fields emphasize the requirement to develop specific methods which maximize social media usage in political-ideological instruction. Academic background significantly affects political self-efficacy because education and law students display higher political competence than their peers from business and engineering.

Educators should use social media platforms to create curriculum-driven activities including virtual debates and political content evaluation and workshops for critical thinking development to extract the most benefits from these platforms. The successful implementation of social media education depends on creating specific strategies based on age where interactive classes and advanced academic tasks yield better results. Specialized digital pedagogy training is mandatory for teachers to direct students how they can handle social media in an ethical and responsible manner. Elective cooperation between teachers and policymakers leads to creating ethical standards about content accuracy alongside supportive approaches for digital citizenship and secure digital environments. For successful information management and active participation in politics online it is essential to develop critical thinking among students alongside promoting active political discussion engagement. Studies should expand their research to study students across various institutions and geographic regions because this would help fully comprehend how social media interactions affect political self-efficacy within different educational environments.

IMPLICATIONS

This study reveals the important societal power of social media while showing how it boosts political self-confidence of Chinese college students in their ideological development. Educational institutions should weave social media platforms into their teaching framework through practices that involve digital debates and political content breakdown and advocacy programs for students. These educational approaches fit well with student digital routines so they effectively combine theoretical lessons with practical experience in political education. The combination of games and policy development tasks represents effective instructional techniques which adapt to student age groups in ways that produce enhanced class engagement. Teachers should organize online debates about modern political matters as well as support student-run advocacy work along with collaborative activities that analyze political content on social media platforms.

Educational approaches need customization to match the distinctive characteristics of different student groups because demographic variations appear in this study. Learning activities that integrate games and targeted for digital tool usage should benefit students who are active on social media and belong to younger age groups. Advanced political activities like policy proposal drafting and community leadership become suitable tasks for older students possessing enhanced political self-efficacy.

Education officials together with policymakers hold essential roles to fulfill. Lawmakers need to create ethical standards that guide social media adoption in education while maintaining student security and confidentiality. Institutions serving education need to establish professional development training for teachers which builds their capabilities to use digital tools effectively within their educational methods. By establishing these initiatives schools will gain the ability to make the most of social media tools for enhancing civic engagement and political awareness development.

This research emphasizes the requirement for universities to execute social media integration in educational curricula through successive implementation steps. Universities should start basic political concept education before advancing to activities which combine virtual advocacy work with modeling political processes through simulated platforms. The method promotes continuous growth of political knowledge and self-confidence in students.

Educational institutions along with their teaching staff should blend traditional with digital pedagogies to help students develop their essential citizenship skills. The strategies establish a connection between book knowledge and real-world political engagement so the upcoming generation becomes ready to participate effectively in civic activities.

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