BANDUNG's POLITICAL AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL SPHERE

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ABSTRACT The development of political information media has progressed very rapidly. This research tries to explore and measure the political literacy and political participation of young people in Bandung City. The theory then used is cyberdemocracy to see the development of information space. The article uses a qualitative method based on library research to collect and analyze data from various literature sources, complemented by survey results from IPRC, to explore Cyberdemocracy theory and its application to social realities in Bandung City. The results show that the level of political literacy and political participation of the younger generation in Bandung City towards political information is still low. The results show that the advancement of information media only goes linearly with the increase in political literacy and political participation in virtual public spaces. As many as 42.3% of young people in Bandung City have been exposed to doubtful news or information. Exposure in this context is like receiving, reading, or even spreading information that is still doubtful and 52.4% have never expressed an opinion about political issues on digital sphere.

Keywords: Political Literacy; Political Participation; Youth; Cyber Democracy; Digital Sphere

ABSTRAK Perkembangan media informasi politik mengalami kemajuan yang sangat pesat. Penelitian ini mencoba menggali dan mengukur literasi politik dan partisipasi politik anak muda di Kota Bandung. Teori yang digunakan adalah cyberdemocracy untuk melihat perkembangan ruang informasi. Artikel ini menggunakan metode kualitatif yang berbasis pada penelitian kepustakaan untuk mengumpulkan dan menganalisis data dari berbagai sumber literatur, dilengkapi dengan hasil survei dari IPRC, untuk mengeksplorasi teori Cyberdemocracy dan aplikasinya terhadap realitas sosial di Kota Bandung. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tingkat literasi politik dan partisipasi politik generasi muda di Kota Bandung terhadap informasi politik masih rendah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemajuan media informasi hanya berjalan linier dengan peningkatan literasi politik dan partisipasi politik di ruang publik virtual. Sebanyak 42,3% generasi muda di Kota Bandung pernah terpapar berita atau informasi yang meragukan. Terpapar dalam konteks ini seperti menerima, membaca, atau bahkan menyebarkan informasi yang masih diragukan kebenarannya dan 52,4% tidak pernah menyatakan pendapat tentang isu politik di ranah digital.

Kata Kunci: Bidang Digital; Demokrasi Siber; Literasi Politik; Generasi Muda; Partisipasi Politik

INTRODUCTION

The digital sphere in recent times has shown such rapid development that social media users can be used as objects of scientific analysis (McAfee, 2006; Wigan et al., 2010). By 2022, 167 billion people, or 60.4% of the total human population, have become social media users, with 31.1% using it to share and discuss their opinions (We are Social, 2023). This condition can have a positive or negative impact. The positive impact is increased access, which can shape society, including increased literacy. However, at the same time, this can also create new threats, such as the misuse of the internet by certain groups, especially in the political context (Limilia & Fuady, 2021).

In the West Java region itself, in 27 regencies/ cities, it is explained that most people already have access to the internet. The data that supports this can be observed in the following Figure 1.

In a study conducted by Indonesian Politic's Research and Consulting in 2023 in the province of West Java, in November 2023 the results were obtained as shown above, with the question "Do you have internet access at home?" from this question, it

was found that Bandung City as much as 90% of its citizens had internet access. From the description of the table above, the average West Java people already have internet access in every home. The increased access to information, mainly political information, due to the widespread use of the internet and social media may impact the political literacy of the younger generation in West Java. It is worth exploring how the younger generation in West Java utilizes the internet and social media as a source of political information.
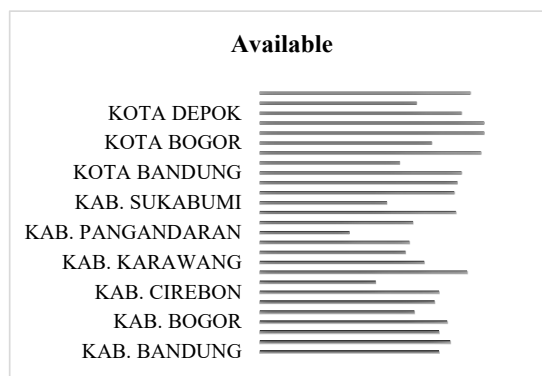
Source: IPRC (2023)

Figure 1. Distribution of Internet Access in 27 Regencies/ Cities in West Java Province (data interval scale is 1-100)

The rapid development of the internet can provide enormous access to the increased information society (Boediman, 2022). However, with this increase, it is necessary to see how information can be adequately conveyed, effectively, and efficiently, as well as changes in the formation of ideas and how to express opinions (Agrawal et al., 2011). One of these digital spheres is social media. Social media is referred to as new media, where social media platforms are generally used as personal archives that store a digital footprint, become a source of personal information and as personal ownership through created accounts (Wu & Fang, 2023).

There are several dilemmas in the use of social media as one of the information media consumed by the public where, on the one hand, information becomes decentralized. However, on the other hand, there needs to be a verification mechanism of information in the social media space. Of course, the impact of this is the occurrence of disinformation, misinformation, and the spread of hoaxes (Sakti & Nainggolan, 2023). Social media, on the one hand, is seen as a space that can then be utilized to increase public participation (Muradi, 2013, 2017; Sakti & Nainggolan, 2023), increase government transparency (Song & Lee, 2016) which can lead to increased public satisfaction with the government (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012). In addition, social media can also trigger and sharpen dissatisfaction with government performance.

Therefore, spreading information on social media can have positive and negative impacts so that social media cannot be seen as rigid and non-linear. Unlike traditional media, social media as a new media has its own space that can be used to convey various information (Zhang & Guo, 2019). This research will measure how the younger generation in West Java responds to the level of political literacy of political information spread on social media. This result becomes essential when the impression caused by the image spread in the digital sphere will directly affect the trust in actors, issues, and various kinds of political information received through the media (Fitri & Adeni, 2020).

Political literacy is a crucial thing in supporting political education in society. It can also support an aspect of being able to adapt to information sources that have been very mushrooming so that political literacy influences the filter of the information received. It is important to evaluate information based on relevant ideas so that later, the information can be validated critically and argumentatively (Latif et al., 2020). The role of the community to encourage the birth of democratic competition in a plural society and information that is spread very diverse to increase political effectiveness and citizenship awareness is essential (Marbun et al., 2022).

With the development of technology, especially digital sphere, one of which is the internet and social media as a means of communicating information dissemination (Sianipar, 2021), There are several advantages to politics, for example, politicians can then build political communication with the public (Lailiyah et al., 2018). In addition, social media has become a target for political institutions and actors to get voters' votes, especially young voters who are very active in using digital sphere. In such a short campaign period, the digital sphere is the right choice so that the campaign can be carried out effectively and efficiently.

The digital sphere has seen rapid development, making social media users a significant focus of scientific analysis (McAfee, 2006; Wigan et al., 2010). By 2022, 60.4% of the global population, or 167 billion people, used social media, with 31.1% engaging in sharing and discussing opinions (We are Social, 2023). While this growth enhances access to information and can improve literacy, it also introduces threats such as internet misuse in political contexts (Limilia & Fuady, 2021). In West Java, including Bandung City, high internet access (90%) underscores the potential for widespread political information dissemination. However, challenges like misinformation and the spread of hoaxes persist (Sakti & Nainggolan, 2023). Social media's decentralized nature requires effective verification mechanisms to ensure information accuracy (Zhang & Guo, 2019). This study examines how the younger generation in West Java uses social media for political information, assessing its impact on political literacy and trust in political entities (Fitri & Adeni, 2020). Understanding political literacy's role in shaping informed citizens is crucial for fostering democratic engagement and evaluating the public's response to political information online (Latif et al., 2020; Marbun et al., 2022).

This research will then explain the level of literacy of the younger generation in Bandung City, which will see the situation of the development of the use of digital sphere from the point of view of political literacy towards the political information received. This can contribute to using digital sphere as a source of information that impacts people's attitudes towards actors, issues, and other aspects of politics. Some studies that also look at the influence of frequency and exposure to digital sphere on society that affects perceptions of satisfaction with the government include (Curtice & Norris, 2004; Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012; Im et al., 2014; Sakti & Nainggolan, 2023; Song & Lee, 2016). To see the impacts, it is necessary to see how the community

owns political literacy, especially the younger generation, so that this also affects the perception of satisfaction, such as research conducted by: (Lailiyah et al., 2018; Latif et al., 2020).

METHOD

The research method used in this article uses a qualitative method using a library study (library search). This study adopts the library study method, known as library research, to collect data. This approach involves understanding and learning the theories contained in various pieces of literature relevant to the research focus. Data collection is done by searching and constructing information from various sources, such as books, journals, and previous studies. The literature material obtained from various references was analyzed critically and in depth to support the propositions and ideas put forward. In detail, some of the sources and data requirements needed in this article are described in the following table:

Table 3. Research Data Needs and Sources

Data Needs	Data Source
Survey results regarding the intensity of using online media as a source of political information	Indonesian Politics Research and Consulting (IPRC)
General overview of cyber democracy in Indonesia and the concept of cyber democracy	Anthony G. Wilhelm, *"Democracy in the Digital Age: Challenges to Political Life in Cyberspace"*, Routledge, New York, 2000

The research utilizes a library study method, also known as library research, to gather relevant data systematically from various sources, including books, academic journals, previous studies, and other literature such as reports, conference papers, and credible online sources. This approach is supplemented by survey results from the Indonesian Politics Research and Consulting (IPRC) conducted between July 17-27, 2023, involving 1200 respondents from various urban villages in Bandung City, ensuring a diverse sample in terms of gender, age, education, marital status, religion, and occupation.

The collected data is systematically organized and presented to facilitate analysis by categorizing it based on themes and topics relevant to Cyberdemocracy, tabulating demographic and survey data to highlight key statistics such as gender, age groups, education levels, and occupations, and summarizing findings from literature sources and survey results to provide context and background for the research. For instance, demographic data from the IPRC survey illustrates the diversity of the sample population, showing even gender distribution, predominant educational background (senior high school), marital status, religious affiliation (Islam), and age distribution (60% Generation Z and 40% Generation X).

Data analysis in this research follows a qualitative approach involving thematic analysis to identify and analyze key themes and patterns within the literature and survey data by coding significant concepts and trends, comparative analysis to identify similarities, differences, and gaps in the literature, and critical analysis to evaluate the credibility and relevance of sources, synthesizing information to support the research propositions and ideas. The theoretical framework of Cyberdemocracy is used as the main analytical tool, applying its principles and concepts to interpret survey data and literature findings, integrating theoretical insights with empirical data to discuss and elaborate on the research topic, and providing a comprehensive understanding of Cyberdemocracy, highlighting its implications and relevance to the social realities in Bandung City as reflected in the survey results. The qualitative analysis aims to provide a deep understanding of how Cyberdemocracy theory explains the interaction between digital media and democratic practices in Bandung City, offering a nuanced perspective on the findings and contributing to the broader discourse on digital democracy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

At first, the idea of cyberdemocracy emerged with the hope that it would operate across cyberspace. This idea was based on the optimistic belief that the internet was a public space where freedom of information could exist under robust, healthy, and universal conditions. However, as cyberspace began to be divided into various sites and channels with different categories, such as public service organizations, commercial, political, community, and social networks, cyberdemocracy developed with different characteristics. For example, cyberdemocracy found on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter will differ in configuration from those on political sites such as government sites, legislative sites, and political party sites. (Gatara, 2016).

The democratic process that takes place in the virtual world is known as cyberdemocracy, which is a virtual community that has its own rules. In it, democracy exists in the virtual world with the help of the internet as an intermediary (Hartley, 2004). Like democracy in the real world, cyberdemocracy can only survive if there is a public space, especially in the context of the internet (virtual public space).

Virtual public space is an essential prerequisite for the survival of cyber democracy. It contains the values and practices of connectivity, interactivity, and anonymity that generate direct, communicative, accessible, and confidential principles. These principles are already key requirements for political democracy in the real world.

This situation causes an understanding of the presence of a new mapping of cyberspace that can later become one of the benchmarks related to determining how time and space are components of a political discussion. Empirical, theoretical, and analytical investigations will be assisted by the unique characteristics of virtual public space to suggest ways or unique characteristics to achieve a more democratic, prosperous, and egalitarian social order (Wilhelm, 2000). This can be seen in the topography of the virtual political public sphere as follows:

Table 2. The Mapping of the Virtual Political Public Sphere

Previous Sources	There are skills and capacities to accomplish specific functions (participation in virtual political public spaces)
Participation	There is a belief that everyone who is affected by a particular policy could access and use digital media
Freedom	The delivery of one's opinion against public observation as part of life protection
Design	The architecture of the network is then developed to facilitate public communication

Source: Wilhelm (2000)

The internet creates cyberspace, a global communication space managed by civil society, which Mitchel (In Pilang, 2004) calls an electronic agora. In this space, members of society gather to talk, share information, debate, dialogue, find solutions, seek agreement, and criticize political ideas in a large community called a virtual community. Problems in the context of cyberdemocracy arise constantly in various studies and research, both in the context of information democracy and political democracy. The problem is further complicated when the question arises whether cyberdemocracy should be related to offline democracy, such as political democracy, or whether it is an independent entity with no connection to others (Gatara, 2016).

Public space can be defined as a place where every citizen can access information, and every issue can be raised unhindered, not an environment where everything is permitted. Moreover, it is also a space where conflicting interests between parties can be managed through means and media that are acceptable to each party. In other words, this space affirms the importance of deliberation processes that emphasize rational debate, exchange of views, and the goal of reaching mutual agreement. However, most internet environments, such as online comment spaces, do not reflect a different reality from the public sphere that the idea of a deliberative deliberation process emphasizes (Habermas, 2010).

General Overview of Cyber Democracy in Indonesia

The role played by new media is also increasingly significant in the changing political dynamics in Indonesia, especially in the democratic post-New Order era. The use of social media as a tool of contestation among various political forces and political parties in the competition for power has become very prominent. Terms such as digital democracy, cyber democracy, or virtual democracy have become the subject of attention among both politicians and academics as topics of study. Social media has created public spaces in cyberspace where various topics, including those related to politics, can be discussed. When there are significant political events such as Presidential Elections, especially after the implementation of the direct election system, new media is increasingly used to gain political support for each candidate (Persada, 2016).

In the political context, the use of new media to carry out political activities in several political contestation events in Indonesia has experienced development. It is often the primary source of media to communicate with the public. In election events, for example, starting from the Presidential Election, Governor, Regent/Mayor, even to the Village Head level, the use of new media in political moments has become a necessity along with the rapid development of media in the digital sphere. This is what is then referred to as the media effect, where some studies use the term "Magic Bullet" ("Peluru Ajaib") related to the influence of mass communication, where individuals are believed to be affected by media messages because of the assumption that the media is compelling to shape public opinion then.

However, the development of digital sphere can have positive and negative impacts. One of the negative impacts obtained is violations of digital sphere, especially in Indonesia, which is used to open space to use sensitive issues such as ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup issues. In the data findings of violation reports in digital sphere, there are approximately 586 reports, and there are 441 findings that occur regarding ethical violations in digital sphere (Imawan, 2022). The development of digital sphere in terms of digital democracy in Indonesia is often not followed by the strengthening of institutional mechanisms or rules for digital sphere in Indonesia.

The evolution of digital democracy in Indonesia, particularly in the post-New Order era, has significantly influenced youth interactions on social media, presenting both positive and negative implications. Social media has emerged as a crucial platform for political discourse, enabling public participation, transparency, and accountability in governance. It has allowed young people to engage actively in political debates, access information, and hold officials accountable, fostering a more participatory democracy. However, this digital sphere also harbors challenges, such as the spread of disinformation, hoaxes, and negative campaigning, which can distort public perception and exacerbate social divisions. Reports indicate numerous ethical violations in the digital sphere, highlighting the need for stronger institutional mechanisms and digital literacy initiatives to mitigate these negative effects. Overall, while digital democracy offers a promising avenue for enhancing political engagement and governance, it necessitates vigilant efforts to address its potential drawbacks and ensure it contributes constructively to Indonesia's democratic processes.

Digital sphere in a digital democracy can be used as a tool to participate, monitor, and respond to various political information where there are future notes that digital sphere has not received considerable attention considering that there is great potential for space that is not utilized positively but is used as a space to spread information which ultimately has an impact on the occurrence of disinformation, misinformation, and the spread of hoaxes due to the information available is disinformation, misinformation, and the spread of hoaxes.

However, on the other hand, using new media in the digital sphere in the context of politics in Indonesia can give birth to two exciting phenomena: First, it encourages good governance practices with the principles of transparency, accountability, and public participation. In an optimistic view, the presence of cyberdemocracy opens more comprehensive access for the public to participate in the decision-making process related to public policy. This is a positive development that can improve the quality of democracy in Indonesia, which is often hampered by structural and cultural factors. Secondly, cyberdemocracy also brings new problems, predominantly negative political campaigns during presidential and regional elections. The use of social media and digital sphere in negative campaigns often only emphasizes the negative side of each candidate pair. (Persada, 2016)

In the context of political development in Indonesia, the positive effects of the use of new media can also be seen in the increased transparency and accountability in government. Social media allows the public to more easily access information related to public policies and government activities, which then encourages public officials to be more accountable. People can participate directly in public discussions and provide input or criticize government policies through digital platforms. This creates a more dynamic and participatory dialog space, which is one of the important indicators of a healthy democracy. In addition, new media also facilitates public scrutiny of government actions, which often results in faster responses and corrective actions from authorities.

However, on the other hand, the presence of new media in the political sphere also brings its own challenges, especially in terms of the spread of inaccurate information. Disinformation and hoaxes spread through social media can influence public perception and create social tension. Negative campaigning that often relies on misleading or untrue information can damage the image of political candidates and divide communities. In some cases, the spread of misinformation can even trigger conflicts between groups. Therefore, further efforts are needed to strengthen people's digital literacy and develop effective regulations to address the spread of misinformation and ensure that new media is used to support healthy and constructive democratic processes.

Digital Sphere Intensity of Use as a Source of Political Information

Before discussing the political literacy and participation of young people in Bandung City in the digital sphere, it will first describe the extent of the activities of the people of Bandung City, especially young people, related to the use of digital sphere. The activities can be seen from the media used as a source of their political information.
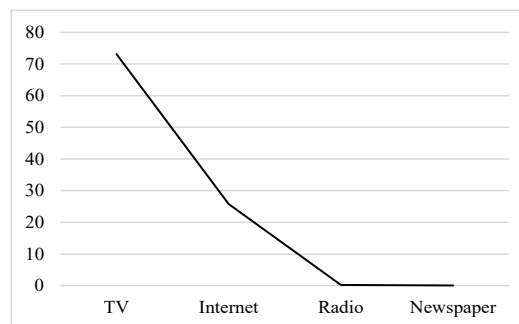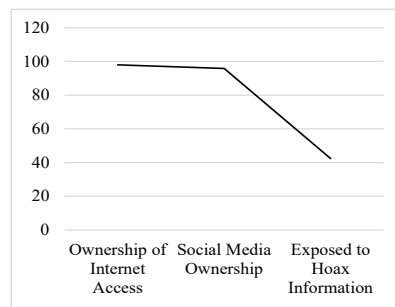

Source: IPRC (2023)

Figure 2. Bandung City's Young Generation Sources of Information

People in Bandung City generally use the internet as a source of information, with a percentage of 73.1% television, 25.8% internet, and the rest through radio and newspapers. From this data, digital sphere through the TV Show has become one of the primary sources related to information sources, one of which is a source of political information.

In addition, in terms of internet access, people in Bandung City generally already have internet access at their respective homes or through smartphones. This can be seen from the following Figure 3.

Figure 2. Youth, Internet, Social Media, and Hoax Exposure in Bandung

From the Graph above, the ownership of the people of Bandung City with internet access reaches a percentage of 98%. This illustrates that the people of Bandung City have the flexibility to access information, especially related to political information. However, the next question is whether the ownership of internet access is in line with the intensity to seek political information, which is also high. The answer to this question will be seen and described in the following analysis.

When viewed from the source of information, people, especially young people in Bandung City, have various social media. This can be seen from the graph below. From the graph above, the young generation of Bandung City has an average of 95.8% social media, namely Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Based on Graph 2, it can be interpreted that 42.3% of young people in Bandung City have been exposed to news or information that is still doubtful. Exposure in this context is like receiving, reading, or even spreading information that is still doubtful.

Literacy and Political Participation of Young People in Bandung City on New Media

From the description of the intensity of the people of Bandung City in seeking political information in the digital sphere. The graph below will illustrate how often, in terms of periods, people in Bandung City look for information about politics and government. (Figure 4).

From the graph, it can be illustrated that the intensity of the community in seeking political and government information in Bandung City is only a few hours a day, namely 36.9%. In addition, the second answer is at least once a day, 11.5%. When associated with this intensity, it can be interpreted that the people of Bandung City only access a few hours a day related to political and government information sources, which have an impact on

the intensity of the information received and the credibility of the information received will also have an impact because there is not enough space to check the accuracy and accuracy of the information source or information presented. This statement shows that the younger generation in Bandung often disseminates political information or political news without filtering in terms of validating the source or content of the news.
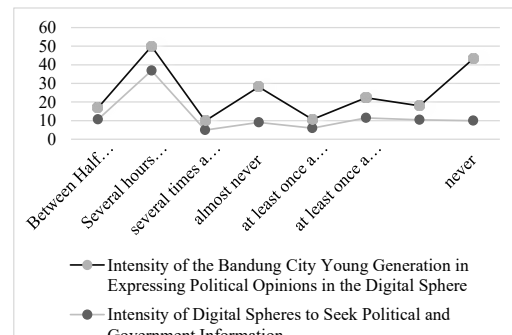
Figure 4. Bandung's Youth Engage in Online Political Discourse Through Digital Platforms

From the graphical presentation, the intensity of the younger generation in terms of political participation through digital sphere illustrates that 52.4% have never expressed an opinion about political issues happening in digital sphere. The result states that most of the younger generation in Bandung City still needs to be more active in responding to political issues that are currently busy in the digital sphere. Meanwhile, the interest of the younger generation in Bandung City to be interested in choosing political actors, both presidents and regional heads, is generally dominated by internet media sources.

Political Participation of Young People in Bandung City through Digital Sphere

This section will illustrate the extent to which young people in Bandung, both male and female, express opinions related to political issues in the digital sphere. This is illustrated in the following Figure 5.
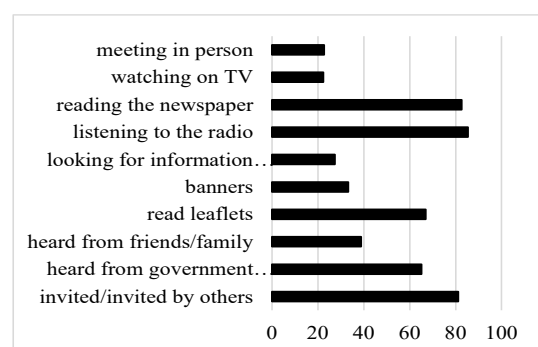
Graph 4. The Interest of Young Generation in Bandung City in Voting for President or

The graph above illustrates that digital sphere dominates, mainly searching for information on the internet, where 72.3% of young people in Bandung City are interested in choosing a president or regional head by searching for information on the internet. This is what must then be accompanied by sufficient political literacy to be able to validate a source of information received through digital sphere because, with freedom of access, various information without prior validation is spread in the community.

In the context of political literacy and political participation among youth in Bandung City, it appears that the intensity of digital media use plays an important role in shaping their political views. As depicted in the graph, most youth have high internet access, and many of them use social media as their main source of information. However, the intensity of access to political information is only a few hours a day, indicating that the time spent exploring political information is limited. This has an impact on the quality of information received, as limited time to verify the accuracy of information can result in the dissemination of invalid or incomplete information.

Furthermore, active participation in political discussions in the digital world is also low, with more than half of youth in Bandung never expressing their opinions on political issues on digital platforms. In fact, digital media provides great opportunities for broader and more inclusive political participation. This low level of participation shows the need to improve digital and political literacy among youth so that they can be more critical in consuming and disseminating information. Increasing this literacy is important so that youth are not only passive consumers of information but are also able to actively contribute to constructive political discussions, utilizing digital media to drive positive change in society.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the use of digital media by young people in Bandung. First, most people in Bandung use the internet as a source of information (73.1%) compared to television (25.8%). Second, 98% of the population has internet access. Third, 95.8% of young people have social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Fourth, 42.3% of them have been exposed to information that is doubtful. Fifth, 52.4% have never expressed an opinion on political issues on digital media. Sixth, 72.3% are interested in choosing a president or regional head by searching for information on the internet. The increase in the use of digital media to access political information is not proportional to the increase in political literacy and political participation of young people in Bandung. The low interest in validating political information sources makes young people vulnerable to hoaxes, and the low participation in expressing opinions and responding to political issues results in an increasingly pragmatic and apolitical attitude.

Acknowledgment

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