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**What are the influencing factors to the online political participation of East Asian groups?
A study of East Asian communities in Düsseldorf**

Master Thesis

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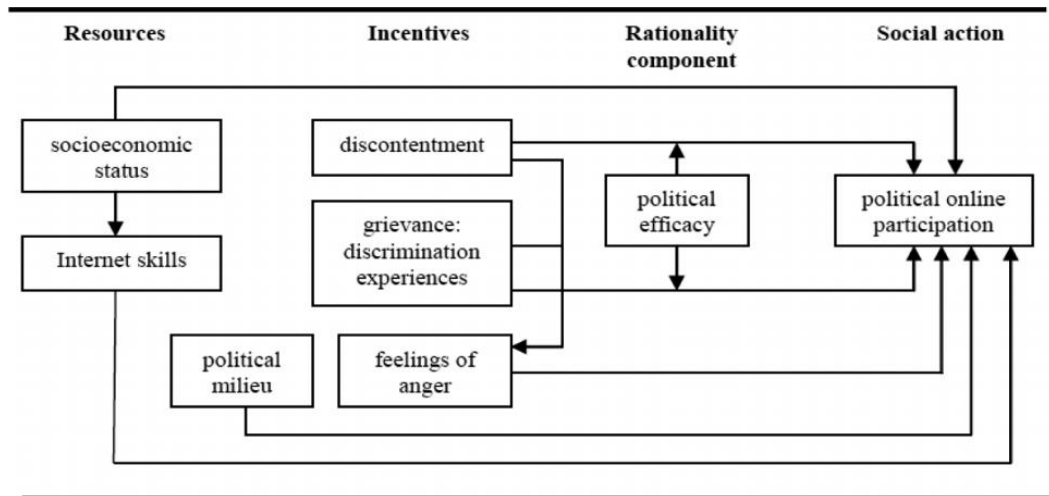


Figure 2 The Expansion of the Political Action Repertoire

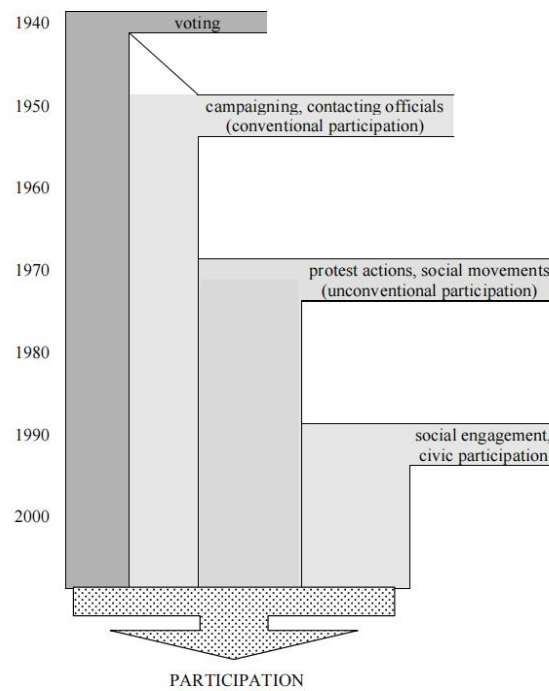
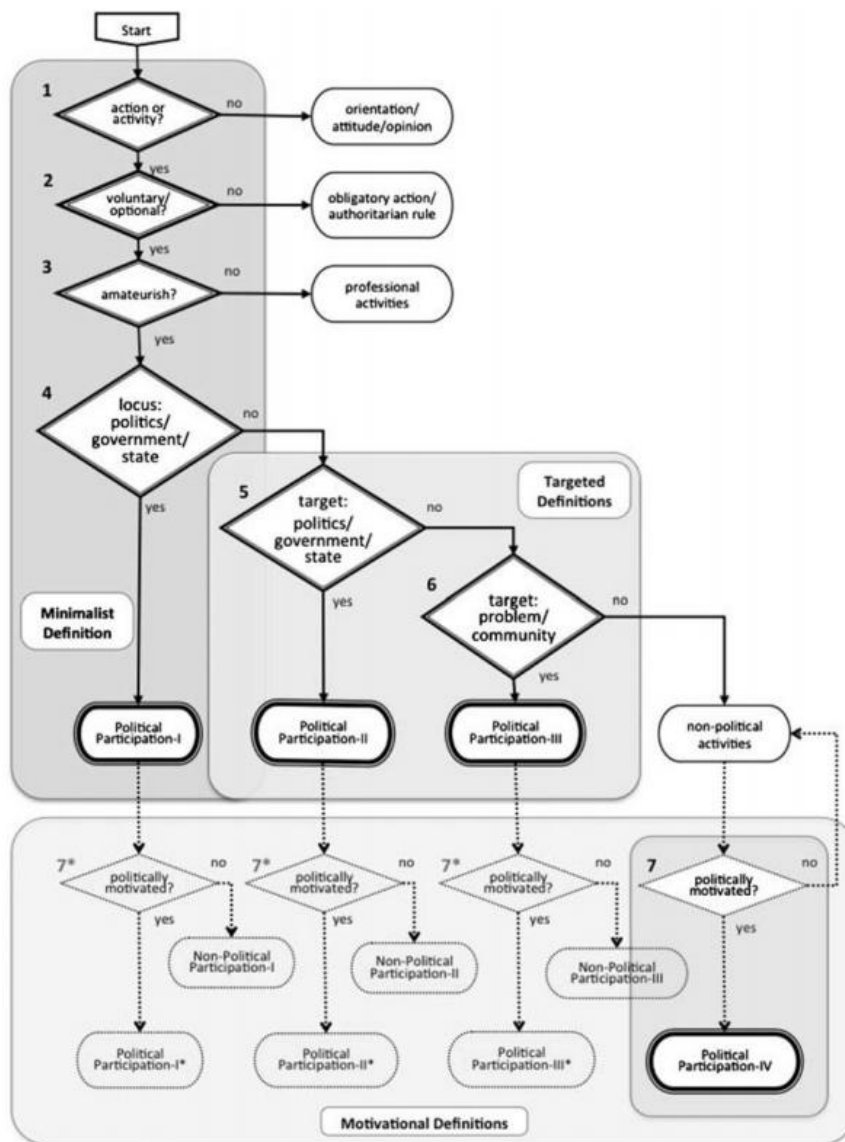


Figure 3 A Conceptual map of political participation (minimalist, targeted and motivational definitions)



Tables

Table 1 Interview questions

Factors	Questions
Offline participating experience	Do you have past experience with offline political participation?
Internet skills	Can you describe your experience and familiarity with the Internet? How frequently do you use it in your personal and/or professional life?
Benefits	How likely will you participate in online political activity if it relates to your group's interests or your own material benefits?
Political efficacy	To what extent do you believe your online participation can influence political affairs?
Organization/affiliation	Are you involved with a local community or organization? Do their activities motivate you to become politically engaged online?
Online political expression	How often do you express or discuss your political opinions on Social medias?
Dissatisfaction/grievance	Have you ever experienced dissatisfaction or grievance? To what extent would you like to address it through online political participation?
Quality of platform/information	How much do you value the usability of the participatory platform and well-structured information in fostering your online political participation?
Effort to participate	How do the requirement associated with online political participation (e.g., language, costs of Internet access, registration fees, or time consumed) affect your willingness to engage in those activities?
New factors	What other factors do you think are also necessary to inspire your online political participation?

Table 2 Demographics of interviewees

	Amount
Gender	
Female	17
Male	14
Age	
18-26	11
27-40	12
41-60	6
> 60	2
Ethnicity	
Chinese	12
Japanese	9
South Korean	10
Income Level	
Low	10
Medium	13
High	8
Educational Level	
Low	4
Medium	10
High	17
Total	31

Acknowledgements

Here declares the formal ending of my thesis and Master's study. Despite the trials of hardship, moments of despair, anxiety, and confusion, my past two years as a Pioneer have left an indelible mark, filled with wonder and cherished memories. Gratitude resonates towards my esteemed supervisor, Professor Steven van de Walle, whose guidance and expertise helped me shape the very structure of this research. I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to my cherished friends and family for their unwavering support which has been my constant stride and fuel my determination on this unprecedented ride. And I am grateful to Lana Del Rey, MC Pharaoh, Tatsuki Fujimoto, Denis Villeneuve, and the countless others whose creative genius graced my life, offered me mental refuge, pulled me from the abyss of nothingness time and again.

If art serves as a reflection of societal and political transformation, then the past year has undeniably ushered in an inspiring new chapter for Asians. As an East Asian woman claimed the prestigious Academy Award for Best Actress (though it has been the 95th edition), and as Asian culture gains visibility and recognition among a broader audience, we are reminded to embrace this remarkable era of change. It is a testament to a catalyst for embracing a future filled with possibilities.

During the interviews, there were moments when I recognized the academic nature of my research, and yet, there were also moments when I found myself captivated by the narratives shared by a group of individuals who have often been politically invisible and unheard. To what volume must our voices resonate in order to be seen and appreciated? How deep must our connections run to forge an unbreakable force? Will there come a time when there exists a brand of political correctness specific to Asians? When can we wholeheartedly embrace a truly egalitarian world? Although I may never find definitive answers to these questions, it became immaterial when I realized that my efforts held meaning for some of the individuals I interviewed. In China, there is a proverb that states, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." We realize it, engage in it, and ultimately achieve it. The answers will gradually reveal themselves.

Abstract

Against the background of the underrepresentation of minority groups in politics and the lack of research specifically focused on the East Asian community, this study examines the tendencies and influencing factors of online political participation among East Asian residents in Düsseldorf, Germany. By conducting a literature review on citizen and minority group's online political participation and its influencing factors, and employing semi-structured interviews with 31 respondents from diverse racial and demographic backgrounds, this study reveals that factors such as gender, group interests, political efficacy, participation platforms and information quality significantly influence the online political participation of the surveyed population. These findings contribute to future research on broader online participation of East Asian communities and provide theoretical foundations for developing policies and measures in Düsseldorf.

Introduction

Political participation lies at the heart of democratic theory and serves as a fundamental element of the democratic system. It embodies the principles of democracy and reflects the active involvement of citizens in shaping their society. The process of political participation is intricately linked to a range of social issues and objectives. By actively participating in political activities, individuals have the opportunity to ensure that their voices are heard and valued, which promotes the equitable distribution of social interests (Verba and Nie 1972). Although there are multiple forms and levels of political participation, the most comprehensive definition conceptualizes it as the activities initiated by citizens in order to affect politics (van Deth, 2016). With the advent of the Internet age, the application of the Internet also provides more opportunities and possibilities for political participation. The Internet can attract new participants to the decision-making process and change the decision-making environment as well as generate new influences outside of traditional political practices, which lead to changes in the agenda or promote new political activities. In addition, the Internet as a new media of communication facilitates mass communication, thus amplifying the voices of the people (Stanley and Weare 2004). Various online communities on the Internet also provide users with platforms for political expression and discussion. Participants in them can thus exercise their rights as citizens and engage in online political deliberations. With proper design, the Internet has the potential to expand the public sphere and thus facilitate political participation (Polat, 2005). Nevertheless, despite the vast opportunities presented by the Internet for broadening political engagement, persistent disparities and inequalities in participation exist. In an ideal scenario of equality, the Internet undoubtedly possesses the potential to involve new participants in the political process and facilitate the broadening of political participation. However, the current trajectory of Internet expansion does not necessarily guarantee a completely egalitarian future, as certain groups have traditionally held favorable positions (Krueger 2002). As an illustration, citizens' capacity to access and comprehend information on the Internet is contingent upon their educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, their information and knowledge levels are interconnected with their

inclination and motivation to engage in political activities. Consequently, a digital divide has emerged, particularly in the realm of political participation (Büchi and Vofler 2017). The achievement of complete political equality was once regarded as an unattainable or excessively costly goal. However, democracy and equity in politics strive to safeguard the interests of all individuals, which hinges on adequate representation of the participants (Verba 2003).

Numerous existing studies have delved into the factors that contribute to this disparity in participation, encompassing both general and online engagement. These studies have examined various groups, including the general population as well as minority communities. For example, differences in political participation are often influenced by factors like gender, civic skills, and economic status in conventional settings. However, the landscape of online political participation presents additional factors that come into play, including social media usage, online political discussions, and political efficacy, all of which significantly impact online engagement. When it comes to ethnic minority participation, factors such as race, socio-economic environment in their home countries, and the level of involvement in organizations or associations contribute to the participatory disparities. Minority online participation also exhibits distinctions compared to overall online participation. Factors like the immigration policies of host country, experiences of grievance, internet skills, and immigrants' online social networks shape their inclination to voice their opinions online. After reviewing the existing literature, it becomes apparent that studies on ethnic minority online participation in Germany predominantly focus on Muslim or Turk groups, while East Asian communities receive limited attention. Despite the fact that The political participation of East Asians is often overlooked, given the growing importance of diversity and inclusion in public realm, the representation and voices of all races should be valued. In order to contribute to investigating the factors influencing the propensity of East Asians to participate in politics online, this study poses the following research questions: what are the influencing factors to the online political participation of East Asian groups in Düsseldorf?

To answer this research question, this study will adopt a qualitative research approach to explore the factors that influence East Asians' online political participation in depth and detail. The method of semi-structured interview will be applied based on the outline of the interview to understand as much as possible the ideas of the participants. In the meanwhile, respondents will also have ample opportunities to express their views and opinions on online political participation. The construction of interview questions will be based on the influencing factors summarized in the relevant literature review, and will be verified through the investigating process. At the same time, open-ended questions will also be provided to the respondents to explore potential new factors and the possibility of covering unknown knowledge. Respondents for this study will be East Asians aged over 18 living in Düsseldorf, Germany. Participants will be recruited through both online and offline channels and screened based on their demographic and identity information to ensure that the research results objectively reflect the inclination of different groups. Interview conversations will be transcribed both manually and by software, and analyzed to identify all factors that influence online political participation of East Asians in Düsseldorf.

At last, the discussion section of this study will cover the following. First of all, the limitations and deficiencies of this study will be summarized which are expected to be improved and enhanced in future research. Secondly, academic and practical suggestions will be put forward based on the research results, including areas or topics that future research can focus on, and measures that the city of Düsseldorf can take to promote better integration of East Asian residents into the political process.

Problem Statement

Equal participation is critical to both political participation and political equality (Verba 2003). Racial equality plays a role that cannot be ignored in the political process. Providing equal and full opportunities for minorities to participate helps advance political equality and fosters the development of inclusive policies. At the same time, ensuring fair representation of all ethnic groups in political decision-making will help to establish and improve a political system of diverse representation, thereby creating a diverse political environment.

In Western Europe, minority political participation exhibits structural instability. The willingness of ethnic minorities to engage in politics is closely linked to their attainment of full citizenship rights, while policy inequalities can contribute to low participation rates among ethnic minorities. Even in cases where ethnic minority participation is not explicitly restricted, it often reflects underlying structural inequalities and societal biases within the political process (Crowley 2001). Immigrants and minorities remain underrepresented, and their political rights in the political system are relatively ignored. The status of immigrants' political integration has garnered less attention compared to other integration dynamics, particularly non-institutional and informal political activities beyond voting and elections. Similarly, racial inequality has received less scholarly emphasis in the literature on immigrant political participation and representation in Western Europe, with a greater focus on issues like gender inequality. Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the origins of ethnic minorities more seriously to contribute to a broader analytical framework (Bloemraad and Schönwälder 2013).

In Germany and even the area of Western Europe, studies on the political participation of immigrants or ethnic minorities mainly focus on ethnic minorities such as Turks, Moroccans, and Arabs, while studies on East Asians and even Asians are relatively insufficient. In the digital age, the gap in the participation of Asians in the political process is also more pronounced than that of other races. In the United States, for example, despite being the fastest-growing and most digital racial group in the country, Asian-American participation rates are lower than their counterparts in both online and

offline political activism. Even in online political activism, which is often supposed to broaden participation, Asians tend to lag behind. This shows that rich digital and socioeconomic resources does not absolutely lead to the rise of Asians' tendency to participate in politics. Asian Americans face a structural disadvantage online, and their political silence on the internet is disproportionate to their overall socioeconomic stage and internet access (Chan 2020). Research suggests that more caution and care is needed in applying factors that concluded from mainstream voters to studies of Asian groups (Lien et al. 2001). Therefore, the “puzzle” of Asian nonparticipation becomes a thought-provoking topic. The factors account for the disproportionate and low participation of Asians deserves further exploration.

Since the nineteenth century, a large number of Asians immigrated to Germany and became an important minority group that cannot be ignored (“Asians in Germany” 2022). However, considering the huge cultural background differences within the Asian group and the fact that East Asians are less studied and mentioned in political participation issues than West Asians, Central Asians, and South Asians, this study therefore selects German East Asians as the main Research objects and choose the Düsseldorf city for data collection.

Düsseldorf is the capital of the German state of North Rhine Westphalia and the seventh largest city in Germany. The foreign population accounts for around one-fifth of the total population of Düsseldorf, which in addition consists of the largest Japanese community in Germany showing that East Asian population is a vital ethnic group in Düsseldorf (“Düsseldorf” 2022). As a result, Düsseldorf can be considered a good representative of German cities in terms of city size, demographic composition and socioeconomic environment. The choice of East Asian residents in Düsseldorf as the data resource is therefore able to contribute to the overall view of online political participation of minority groups.

The city of Düsseldorf has been investing efforts to involve local citizens in the decision-making process. These initiatives include a section on the government website for citizens to provide feedback and live webinars for specific municipal projects. At the

same time, higher education institutions and research institutes located in Düsseldorf are also determined to explore the relationship between the Internet and civic participation and political mobilization. However, no effective racial policies have been introduced regarding the political participation of ethnic minorities, especially East Asian residents. Therefore, this study will focus on revealing the motivations and barriers which are driving or impeding the intention of East Asian residents in Düsseldorf in terms of online political participation. The findings are intended to provide insights into possible racial equality policies in the future while also contributing to the process of diversifying political participation in the city of Düsseldorf.

Literature Review

1. The factors that influence political participation

A healthy democracy benefits from the political participation of its citizens. The participation of the masses in the different political processes is seen as a crucial factor within a well-functioning democracy (Almond and Verba 1963). Therefore, investigating the influencing factors and motivations of citizens' political participation can help deeply explore the causal relationships behind participatory behaviour and even further contribute to the equality and inclusiveness of political processes. This section will review the relevant literature on the determinants of general civic political participation, which are clustered by different factors, including gender, income, civic skills, and religion, among others.

Gender is an important factor in political participation, and men are generally more active than women in political participation. A study of voluntary participation by US citizens showed significant gender differences in political activities such as working in a campaign, serving campaign contributions, and contacting government officials. Although the scope of political activity is often limited to voting, gender differences do not disappear even when it is extended beyond electoral activities. The current trend in public political participation is that men are more politically active than women. It is worth noting that this gender difference is not reflected in all types of activities. For example, women are more active than men in religious activities (Schlozman et al. 1994). The participation advantage for men is also related to educational background, income level and civic skills. Men have more opportunities to develop and nurture civic skills in the workplace, and on average, men are more likely to be in highly skilled jobs than women. Relatively speaking, women are less likely to acquire civic skills from the workplace than men, while it is more possible for women to acquire civic skills in religious activities (Schlozman et al. 1994). Women's sense of political efficacy, trust in government and interest in politics is lower than that of men. Their political participation can be inhibited by the lack of economic resources. At the same time, women are less likely than men to participate in political parties, collective political

action and direct political contact. Gender differences in political participation lie not only in the amount of participation but also in the way in which men and women take actions (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). Men are more interested in national politics than women and are more likely to talk about politics on a daily basis or to follow national political stories in the media. In addition to this, women have less political information than men (Verba, Burns and Schlozman 1997). Workforce can explain the disparity in political participation between women and men. The differences exhibited by gender in the workplace and at home further influence the political participation of citizens. The gender gap in work disadvantages women in accessing participatory resources, such as income and civic skills. As they move up the work hierarchy, they have less access to each of these participatory resources than men (Schlozman et al. 1999).

In addition to studies based on the American population, data from different parts of the world demonstrate the influence of gender in civic political participation. A study on political participation in eight countries points out that gender differences are prevalent in the UK, the US and in Western European countries including Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland (Jennings 1983). There is a consistent gender gap in conventional and non-conventional participation in almost all 17 Latin American countries, which can be attributed to individual differences between genders or contextual differences. The participation gap persists even in ideal socio-economic conditions (Desposato and Norrander 2009). In some East and Southeast Asian countries, gender differences are not evident in voting, but in other types of political activity, Asian women are significantly less involved than men (Liu 2020). In Africa, there are gender differences in political participation in both electoral campaigns and inter-electoral activities (political activities between elections), and the latter is more pronounced than the former (Isaksson et al. 2013). Furthermore, gender differences in political participation are not only detectable in the political activities of adults but also in the participation behaviour of young people and adolescents (Pfanzelt and Spies 2018; Gordon 2008.).

Civic skills or capacities, such as access to information about political activities, the ability to communicate one's preferences, critical thinking skills, decision-making skills,

and organisational skills, can be necessary for political participation. Mastering civic skills enable citizens to engage politically and to mobilise others to participate. These skills are helpful for citizens to participate in public assemblies or to solve public problems (Kirlin 2005). People need basic civic knowledge and sufficient civic skills to make appropriate political judgements which refer to understanding politics to a certain extent. Civic skills also influence citizens' motivation to participate (Maiello et al. 2003). Civic skills have a positive impact on voting, campaigning and social movement. Those who are highly educated, politically aware and literate are more likely to participate in political activities (Heath 2004). These capabilities are linked to socio-economic characteristics such as education and income. Differences in political knowledge, political efficacy and political interest play a decisive role in explaining the slight differences between genders in terms of political participation. These three factors are, in turn, influenced by political resources such as educational attainment, cognitive ability and civic skills (Verba et al. 1997). Therefore, education is another factor influencing political participation, with educated people being more likely to be mobilised or recruited (Schlozman et al. 1999). The role of education as a predictor of political activity is evident. This is because the level of education influences citizens' abilities, values, and networks (Verba 2003). The effect of higher education is influential in political participation, and there is a causal relationship between the positive and substantial impact of advances in higher education on political participation (Mayer 2011).

In addition, accesses to financial resources such as personal income, household income and controllable household income are aspects that must be mentioned. The most significant result of the differences in income is reflected in political contributions. Significant differences in economic resources have a relatively small effect on overall political participation, but their effect on political contributions is considerable (Schlozman et al. 1994). The uniqueness of political participation in the US lies in the unequal distribution of social classes, with individual financial contributions playing an essential role in participation. Low-income groups are less active than high-income groups in a variety of political activities, with the poor investing more of their time and relatively equal activity within the religious sphere. Beneficiaries of welfare programmes for the poor are less active in the various activities associated with the

programme (Schlozman et al. 1999). Data from Europe also show that personal income and household income have a significant impact on both conventional or unconventional political participation behaviour (Cicatiello et al. 2015).

Organizations and religions can also contribute to citizens' political participation, and people who are more involved in organizations and religions also have a stronger propensity to engage politically. For example, nonprofits have demonstrated potential as citizen intermediaries in some ways, particularly in facilitating voting and political connections. Nonprofits can also help clients or members gain the capacity for civic engagement by providing relevant political information (Leroux 2007). Involvement in social organizations helps citizens build political and civic skills and promotes participatory activities (Verba et al. 1995). In mainland China, civic associations can facilitate interaction between people of different social backgrounds, thus providing political information and reducing the cost of participation. In addition, members of associations are more active in various political activities (Guo 2007). Attending religious activities can promote political participation (Driskell et al. 2008). The importance of churches is reflected in their functional similarity to associations which play a central function in civic education and participation, especially in the absence of other civic organizations (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). The church also promotes civic political participation by recruiting members into the political process, and parishioners are more likely to see political activity as an extension of religious activity (Djupe and Grant 2001).

The propensity of those who recruit for political campaigns affects the stratification of the politically engaged population, thus resulting in unequal participation. Rational recruiters will target those who have been active in politics in the past (Schlozman et al. 1999). In addition, recruiters are more inclined to reach people with decent incomes and high levels of education in order to make civic participation more effective. As a result, the mobilisation process as a whole makes it difficult to include new people in the political participation process (Schlozman et al. 1999). In general, citizens with advantages in terms of education, income, social status, ethnicity or gender are more politically active than those who are not. Those who are more active in turn have better

resources for participation, and they are more likely to be mobilised or recruited in political campaigns. These intra-citizen differences in turn affect citizens' motivation and enthusiasm for political participation, as the Matthew effect suggests, ultimately creating a cycle of inequality (Verba 2003). Thus, the orientation of recruiters can lead to the underrepresentation of some groups of people, while groups not targeted by recruiters have less opportunity for political participation.

In the case of citizens themselves, their political participation is driven by both internal and external motivations, including selective gratifications and collective outcomes, the difference being that in the former, only the participating citizen benefits from the act of participation itself. In contrast, the latter benefits the entire group of participating citizens. Selective gratifications include selective material benefits related to material gain or career advancement, social gratifications involving group integration and cooperative pleasure, and civic gratifications referring to civic duty. Collective outcomes focus on political participation to influence the development and implementation of government policies to make them more beneficial to the participant group. A survey of civic engagement in the United States showed that while some political activists engage in political or non-political activities because of selective material benefits and social gratifications, participation because of civic gratifications is much more common. Material benefits play a relatively minor role in the motivation for political activism. In addition, for some activists, there exist reasons to participate because of attempts to interfere with policy (Schlozman et al. 1995). In addition, altruism and social identity can influence people's understanding of politics, their behaviour in the political process and drive people to engage in politics. Socially identified people tend to fight for the interests of their in-group, while altruists are more likely to support policies that are universally applicable. Those who want to help others may be more strongly motivated to participate than people who are self-interested (Fowler and Kam 2007).

2. The factors that influence online political participation

Given the growing public interest in increasing government transparency and accountability, governments around the world are beginning to harness the potential of ICT to promote citizen engagement in order to increase overall participation, strengthen the quality of public policy, and safeguard citizens' democratic rights (Wirtz et al. 2018). However, online participation is empirically defined as a distinct type of participation, with online and offline participation lying with a distinctly different focus (Oser, Hooghe and Marien 2012). Traditional predictors do not appear to be fully applicable to online political participatory activities (Jensen 2013). Therefore, this session provides a systematic overview of the factors influencing civic online participation.

Political discussion stimulates political participation. Although political discussion is not able to directly influence the authorities, it represents an active political interest. The size of online discussion networks has an evident impact on online political participation. Internet facilities can effectively facilitate the dissemination of political information and thus political engagement. The more agreement people can reach in online discussions, the more likely they are to engage politically. Furthermore, there is a positive association between the reasonableness of online discussions and political participation (Valenzuela et al. 2011). Data from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong suggest that cross-cutting political discussion on social media, which means exposure to people with different political views, can promote online political participation and that this positive relationship is moderated by online information search. Communication in social media spaces is not like instant face-to-face conversations, where individuals have time to think deeply about the conversations and are thus able to engage in more deliberate political expression (Chan et al. 2021). The inclination to engage in political discussion online is correlated with citizens' socio-economic status, with those of higher status being more likely to engage in political discussion than those of lower status. In addition, political recruitment on the Internet also influences citizens' online participation. It is more possible for younger people than older people to receive emails about requests for political activity, and they have an advantage due to the digital divide. However, older people are more active in the group that engages online (Schlozman et

al. 2012). While the internet has opened up new potential for individuals to engage politically online, the internet skills required for online participation are positively correlated with socio-economic status. People who have traditional resources offline also disproportionately possess online resources. Similar to what was mentioned earlier, age is not an independent predictor of online political activity, but internet skills can positively impact young people's online participation (Best and Krueger 2005).

Subject factors, such as political attitudes and political literacy, as well as contextual factors, including technology level and political institutions, can both affect citizens' online political participation. For example, Individual participation efficacy, both computer and political, is an important predictor of citizen participation online. In addition, an individual's value system and inclination towards freedom of participation can also influence a citizen's willingness to participate online (Alathur et al. 2016). In addition, data from Spain shows that citizens' internet skills, such as ICT knowledge and frequency of internet use, can have a strong impact on online political participation (Anduiza et al. 2010). Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour framework to explain citizens' motivation to participate leads to the conclusion that citizens' online participation behaviour is influenced by both behavioural and control beliefs. This includes factors such as voice, influence, inclusion, location, time and so on. Citizens are more likely to engage in online political participation if they believe it will make their voice heard, influence government behaviour, provide a greater sense of involvement, and provide specific incentives. In addition, the flexibility of access to the location of online participation, the time needed for completing participation, the effort required to participate, and the quality of the information and platform all have impacts on citizens' online political participation behaviour (van den Berg 2021). A study of the online engagement of party members of the German Green Party came to a similar conclusion: party members use online platforms because they are concerned about political issues and want to influence the political direction (Gerl et al. 2017). The fact that citizens will engage online also stems from their expectations of the usefulness of the media in influencing government decisions, although they do not necessarily believe that all types of engagement can directly influence government behaviour. In addition, citizens also involve because they are fond of the communicative nature and sociable function of online activities (Hoffman et al. 2013). A study of the factors influencing

online political participation of Nigerian citizens using the Civic Voluntarism Model and the Theory of Reasoned Action finds that democratic political culture and perceived e-democratic outcomes are effective predictors of citizen participation. In addition, citizens' political attitudes, political awareness, political efficacy, and subjective norms also influence citizens' online political participation behaviour. Finally, recruitment networks play an important role in mobilising citizens for online participation (Oni et al. 2017). Another study also concluded that subjective norms, attitudes and moral obligations effectively predict citizens' intentions to engage politically online. People who trust government institutions more are more likely to engage in online political activity, while those who believe they are unlikely to influence government decisions are less likely to engage politically online. The greatest influence on the propensity to participate in the future is past experience with online participation (Bosnjak et al. 2008). Lastly, digital media literacy is positively associated with the involvement in online political activism for high school and college students (Kahne et al. 2012).

In terms of contextual factors, a country's political system and level of technology influence citizens' online political participation. Countries with advanced ICT technology and a high level of democratisation are more likely to ensure free online participation. The combination of political systems and technological capabilities can increase the level of civic online participation (Jho and Song 2015).

Various social media are increasingly valued online platforms and their significance for online political participation deserves great attention. A survey by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project found that 66% of social media users do at least one of their eight civic or political activities through social media. Younger users in particular are more likely to express political views on social media, join political groups or encourage others to participate in political activities (Rainie et al. 2012). For example, blog use makes it possible to add new voices to the public sphere and expand democratic discourse, thus bring the possibility for making online political engagement. Furthermore, blog use serves as an explanatory factor for the positive relationship between online information search and political participation (Gil De Zúñiga et al. 2009). Another study also concluded that the use of blogs and SNS enhances citizens'

online political participation. Furthermore, exposure to like-minded views moderates the relationship between blog use and online political participation while exposure to cross-cutting opinions serves as an important mediator of SNS use and online political participation (Kim and Chen 2016). Social media such as Facebook can also facilitate participation by lowering barriers to political participation and initiating political mobilisation. For example, political expressions on Facebook timelines can have a positive impact on specific online political activities, including signing petitions, protesting and contacting government officials on the internet (Vissers and Stolle 2014). Moreover, in addition to individuals, the use of social media by government agencies also affects citizens' online political participation. Data from Pakistan demonstrates that government provision of quality information on social media can directly contribute to citizens' online political engagement, possibly because the more information citizens have, the more likely they are to participate. However, citizens' trust in government institutions or perceptions of their responsiveness can dampen this positive impact. If citizens have confidence in the ability of the institutions to solve problems, it could be less urgent for citizens to make their voices heard (Arshad and Khurram 2020).

The predictive effect of demographic characteristics on citizens' online political participation is mainly reflected in educational attainment, gender and socio-economic status. Firstly, educational attainment remains a strong predictor of civic engagement, with more educated people also participating more. Secondly, although gender is not as strong a predictor as education level, it can have an impact on online participation through the moderating effect of mobilisation. Women are more likely to be mobilised by social media than men. Furthermore, citizens from lower social classes are less likely to engage in offline activities and are instead more likely to be mobilised by social media for online participation. It is worth noting that age does not have a significant effect on online political participation, possibly due to a reduction in the intergenerational digital divide (Lilleker and Koc-Michalska 2018). Women pay more attention to the inclusion of political participation, while men are more concerned with influence. At the same time, people with secondary or lower education focus more on the perception of participation than those with higher education, and the former is relatively more attentive to the quality of information and platforms. In addition,

younger groups emphasize more on the time, effort and location required for online participation than older groups (van den Berg 2021). Furthermore, social media self-efficacy moderated the effects of educational attainment, age and gender on online political participation. Those with higher education, younger people and exhibited higher levels of social media self-efficacy, which in turn facilitated online political engagement (Hoffmann and Lutz 2019). Data from the UK similarly shows that Internet users are more likely to be male, highly educated and of high social class overall. Thus, the more educated and affluent are more likely to be politically engaged online. Young people are also far more active on internet political events than the traditional ones. Age is an extremely important predictor, with younger people significantly more likely to engage in online politics than older people (Gibson et al. 2005). Even among adolescents, boys and middle-class children are more likely to engage in online communication and follow political messages than girls and working-class children. In addition, boys and middle-class adolescents have higher levels of Internet self-efficacy (Livingstone et al. 2005).

3. The factors that influence the political participation of minority groups

Minorities may differ in culture, customs, and preferences from the dominant group in a country or region, and such disparities can also contribute to differences in their inclination toward political participation. Research on the motivations and influencing factors of political participation of minority groups is conducive to uncovering the deep-seated reasons behind the political behavior of minorities and understanding their political views.

First of all, similar to political participation in general, the participation behavior of minorities can vary depending on demographic factors. In the United States, race and gender are dimensions that cannot be neglected in the political participation of minority groups. Anglo-Whites show the highest level of activism in political participation compared to Blacks and Latinos. For example, Anglo-Whites are more involved in political activities such as voting, political campaigns and protests, and also contribute the most money. Even in areas outside the political sphere, Anglo-Whites continue to

have higher participation rates than Blacks and Latinos. They are actively involved in non-political organisations and charitable activities. Within the Anglo-White community, the participation rate of men is again generally higher than that of women (Burns et al. 2001).

Another study on the political participation of immigrants in Italy proved that factors such as gender, educational level and literacy, place of residence, naturalisation tendency, age and trust in other people all influence immigrants' political participation. Political participation is here divided into strong political participation and soft participation, the difference between the two being mainly related to the cost of participation. Strong political participation is more related to the socio-economic status of migrants, while soft political participation is related to the degree of integration of migrants into local life, such as language and interpersonal relations. In addition, strong political participation is more prevalent among male immigrant groups, and immigrants with higher education also show higher levels of political participation. In contrast to other factors, EU citizenship does not have a significant impact. Regarding immigrants' place of origin, people of African descent are more likely to engage in strong participation. At the same time, Asian immigrants are less likely to engage in soft political participation (Ortensi and Riniolo 2019). Ethnicity is also a significant factor affecting the political participation of Asian Americans, who are less likely than whites to register, vote and contact elected officials. Within Asian groups, Chinese, Japanese and Koreans are less likely to engage with officials. Yet Filipinos and other Asian Americans are somewhat more likely than whites to express their views through the news media. (Uhlener et al. 1989) .

Finally, the opportunities for minorities to engage in political activities also affect their actual participatory actions. Such opportunities are influenced by the socioeconomic environment, policies, religion, and political attitudes of minorities. Minorities are often among the most disadvantaged groups in society, and poverty, poor skills and inadequate education are clear barriers to racial integration and participation (Montgomery 2015). The participation behaviour of minorities is driven by a variety of factors. In the case of immigrants in Europe, they are often perceived as apolitical. The

influences behind this are usually twofold: the objective socio-economic environment in the host countries and the subjective perception of the political environment by the immigrant group. The former includes factors such as barriers to citizenship, the 'institutional adequacy' of the community in which the immigrants live, and the density of migrant association networks, while the latter encompasses the political values, sense of belonging to the host country, language skills, educational level and socio-economic status of the immigrants (Martiniello 2006). The physical and emotional security, financial resources and minimum level of education of minorities are prerequisites for their participation (Ghai 2003). In the meanwhile, the degree of politicization of immigrants is also a significant factor contributing to their participation. It is highly polarised within immigrant groups and might be related to the minority's civic skills or political literacy. Part of immigrants are highly politicised and are politically active in their country of origin, to the extent that political reasons are the leading cause for their desirability to live in Europe. Nevertheless, the other part shows less interest in politics and is often characterised by political apathy (Martiniello 2006). Even when minorities are highly politicised, a lack of knowledge of the political norms of the host country and the complexity of the political process can be a barrier to their participation.

Opportunities for minority participation can be increased through political mobilisation and policy stimulation (Montgomery 2015). The electoral system and representation in the host country also affect the voice of the minority, for example, separate representation or proportional representation can increase the influence of the minority, with majoritarian being the most detrimental to the minority in comparison. If the minority is not adequately represented, their views will not be successfully conveyed to the authorities for attention. Among the different types of proportional representation, it is worth mentioning List Proportional Representation, under which the minority can be represented through their own party. This system is therefore more likely to promote minority representation and provide incentives for minorities to form political parties and thus engage in political participation. Power sharing and autonomy are two other systems that have the potential to increase opportunities for minority representation, although their mechanisms and modalities still need to be further explored (Ghai 2003).

Non-political organisations or affiliations such as immigrant communities and churches can play a role in the political participation behaviour of minorities. Active civic communities have a positive impact on the political participation of immigrants according to research. The minority groups with a high participation rate in elections often have a tightly knit network of associations. Such a community or network can develop political trust and thus facilitate the political participation of immigrants (Martiniello 2006). The size of minority populations and communities also makes a difference. Smaller groups may be warier in political participation because of the potential for unpopularity. An increase in population can lead to more political resources, thus removing the fear of political exposure. In a sense, numerical superiority is a political resource. As a result, the minority is exposed to the risk of marginalisation (Crowley 2001). In addition to minority communities, associations can help individuals with socialisation and mastering public norms as well as socio-economic inequality. Associations can therefore be considered a powerful political resource for minority participation (Montgomery 2015).

The impact of churches or religions is particularly evident in the black community. African Americans, both women and men, are the most likely to develop civic skills and be recruited into the political activities of the church, whereas Anglo-White males are not usually given such an advantage. Latinos are consistently the least psychologically engaged in politics, lagging far behind other groups. They are also less likely to be recruited by churches because they are more religiously inactive, leading to lower levels of political participation (Burns et al. 2001).

However, minorities are not often in a disadvantaged position for political participation. One study on minority participation in public meetings came to a different conclusion, stating that there is not a systematic lack of minority representation in public assemblies, but rather that African Americans are more likely than whites to participate in public meetings, especially on issues related to crime reduction. Although educational attainment is an essential factor in civic participation, this conclusion holds even when educational attainment is not taken into account. Moreover, African Americans also have stronger political efficacy than whites. The reason behind this is similar, however,

in that African Americans' higher church involvement led to their active participation in public meetings, as it was in church that African Americans acquired the necessary civic skills and received considerable political mobilisation. In addition to this, the success of the civil rights movement also provided African Americans with political efficacy (Williamson and Scicchitano 2015).

4. The factors that influence the online political participation of minority groups

Information technology has opened up new possibilities for political participation, providing access and opportunities for a growing number of groups to participate. Socio-economically rich groups are often considered to be the main group to benefit from technological progress, and the digital divide is still hotly debated. On the one hand, disadvantaged groups such as immigrants on a low socio-economic level are considered to be lagging behind in the age of information technology, while on the other hand, they are also considered to benefit from the empowerment of the Internet.

Online political participation of ethnic minorities, like that of the general public, can be influenced by individual and contextual factors such as socio-economic status and cultural factors. In terms of individual factors, minorities at higher social classes have greater opportunities to leverage the available resources, including ICT, to leverage the socio-economic capital of the host and home countries. They are therefore more likely to use the internet for political participation. At the same time, increased education also enhances the likelihood that the minority will use the internet to focus on political issues. Similar to minorities' general political participation, political motivation is more positively associated with online participation in the host country than economic motivation. For example, if minorities migrated for political reasons, they tend to have lower expectations of their home country and thus turn to political participation in the host country. In contrast, minorities motivated by economic motives demonstrate less interest in political participation. Finally, internet access is the basis for online political participation. There are differences in internet use skills and goals among the minority in different regions, and their online participation can be thus affected (Kim and Ball-

Rokeach 2009). Internet access can also help young people engage in politics in a safer environment. Ethnic minorities will be more willing to use the internet to participate if they feel more like an ordinary citizen on the internet rather than a minority with a particular label (Šerek et al., 2015)

Regarding contextual factors, minorities living in areas with a high level of social capital or a strong communication infrastructure have more opportunities for online participation. Furthermore, if the host country's immigration policy defines minorities as foreigners, they will tend to use the internet to reconnect with society. Minorities are also more likely to be politically engaged if there is less of a gap between their home and host countries, or if they live in a communicative environment that encourages integration (Kim and Ball-Rokeach 2009).

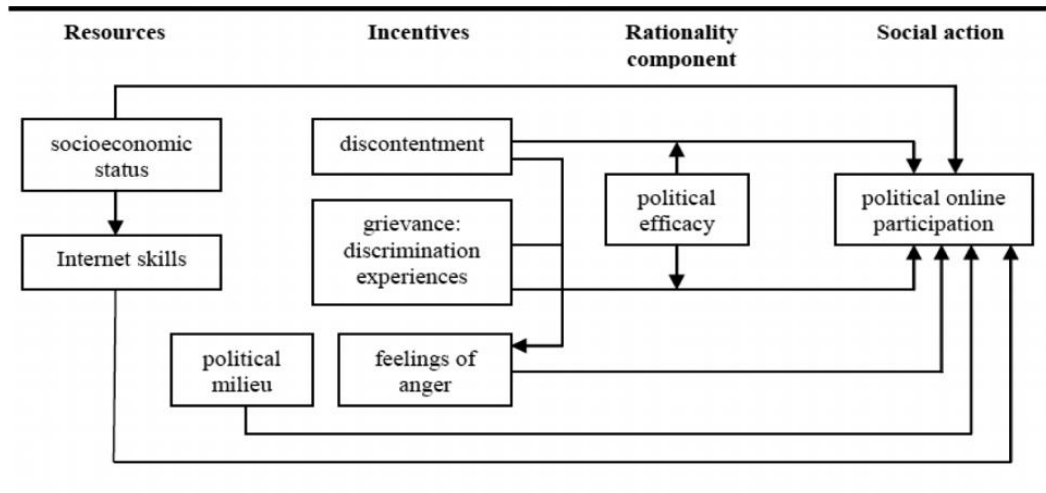
A study of Taiwanese Americans shows that the Internet has become one of the most essential tools to practice political participation. While the identification of Taiwanese Americans at the time influences their focus on political information, online political participation in turn shapes their identity construction. Groups with a greater preference for and identification with Taiwanese culture are more involved in political activities related to Taiwan issues. At the same time, people with mixed or changing identities pay more attention to American political issues (Wang et al. 2009).

Among the various online platforms, social media is a module that cannot be ignored. Technologies such as WhatsApp can contribute to the political participation of Latinos in the US through political expression. At the same time, the norm of acculturation can act as a moderator between the two. The more Latinos talk about politics with people from other communities, the stronger the link between political expression and political participation (Velasquez et al., 2021). However, another study of minority college students in the US concluded that their emotional attachment to Facebook had a limited effect on online political participation. Instead, it had a more significant effect on offline political participation (Dalisay et al. 2016).

Different democratic frameworks influence the forms of the online political activity of ethnic minority activists. For example, online minority activists often operate within competing frameworks of consultative democracy and multiculturalism. These frameworks affect the strategies minority activists use to engage in online political activism, and the goals they seek to achieve. Deliberative democracy, which emphasizes informed and inclusive discussion, can create a space for marginalized voices to be heard, but may also be dominated by majority views. Multiculturalism, which recognizes the importance of diverse perspectives, can promote minority activism, but can also lead to group fragmentation and a lack of cohesion. In some sense, both of them can facilitate and hinder minority participation in online activism (Siapera 2005). For example, In societies with an emphasis on multiculturalism, such as the Netherlands or the USA, minorities are provided with more resources and space. The internet is therefore more able to strengthen the links between minorities and the host country (Kim and Ball-Rokeach 2009).

In Germany, researches on the online political participation of ethnic minorities mainly focus on Turks, Russians and Arabs. A study comparing native German young people and a group of Arab and Turkish young people analysed the differences in political participation behaviour on the Internet between these two focus groups using an integrated model combining rational choice and resource models.

Figure 1 Theoretical model explaining political participation on the Internet



Note. From “Empowerment or democratic divide? internet-based political participation of young immigrants and young natives in Germany, ” by V. Spaiser, 2012, *Information Polity*, (17:2), pp. 115–127, (<https://doi.org/10.3233/ip-2012-0268>). Copyright 1992 by Information Polity.

These participation behaviours include search and reception of political information online, production of political online content and participation in political online discussions, etc. Overall, minority groups are not lagging behind in online political participation. On the contrary, they are even more active than young people in Germany in some respects. The fact that minorities are particularly interested in issues such as environmental issues and human rights may be related to their experiences of discrimination in society. Discrimination has led to anger among young people from minority groups, which in turn is reflected in online political participation. However, minorities are still disadvantaged regarding their socio-economic level and internet skills (Spaiser 2012). Another study of young native Germans and Russian and Turkish immigrants came to similar conclusions. Young people's offline and online political participation show significant differences according to age and ethnicity, while contrary to conventional wisdom, the Turkish minority is more active than the German majority. Furthermore, motivation to participate and collective efficacy evidently impact online participation (Jugert et al. 2012). Online political participation is also driven by political grievances or dissatisfaction and political efficacy in relation to experiences of relative

deprivation and discrimination. Among German-Turkish youth, grievances lead to feelings of anger, while among German-Eastern European youth, grievances lead to feelings of disaffection. Socio-political context, while not having a direct impact on online political participation, is associated with political efficacy. In addition, internet skills are particularly crucial for online political participation (Spaiser 2013).

For other German migrants, the different political interests in their country of origin and host country (Germany) influence their engagement behaviour on the Internet, with country-of-origin oriented migrants more likely to learn about political topics on the Internet or to vote and protest online. One reason for this country-of-origin orientation is that some migrants do not have German citizenship, which leads to the lack of the legal right to vote. Using the Internet to connect with their country of origin is a crucial motivation for many migrants, suggesting that their online activities are influenced by their migration experiences (Kissau and Hunger 2010). However, the internet has more potential to make migrants heard and thus make more of a political difference than offline participation. In addition, joining a regular discussion group or online community can facilitate the exchange of political information among immigrants online. Further, immigrant-related issues and interests not addressed online can discourage immigrants from using political parties or political institution websites (Kissau 2007). Turkish migrants in Germany demonstrate a similar tendency to voice or have political influence via the internet. However, their acceptance by the host country can also influence their behaviour in the political process. The internet acts as a mirror of real society, while migrants are excluded from the national public sphere in some senses (Kissau 2008). Turkish migrants in Germany believe that the image of German Turks portrayed by the media is not representative of them, therefore they try to counteract this on the internet. By creating a new public space online, German Turks can express their views and represent their interests (Murt 2008). A study of immigrants in Germany, Austria and Switzerland demonstrates that the extent to which migrants are politically active online is affected by their online social networks. Both online connectivity and bridging have a positive impact on migrants' online political participation. In addition, migrants' offline political activity is a strong predictor of their online political engagement behaviour (Kissau 2012).

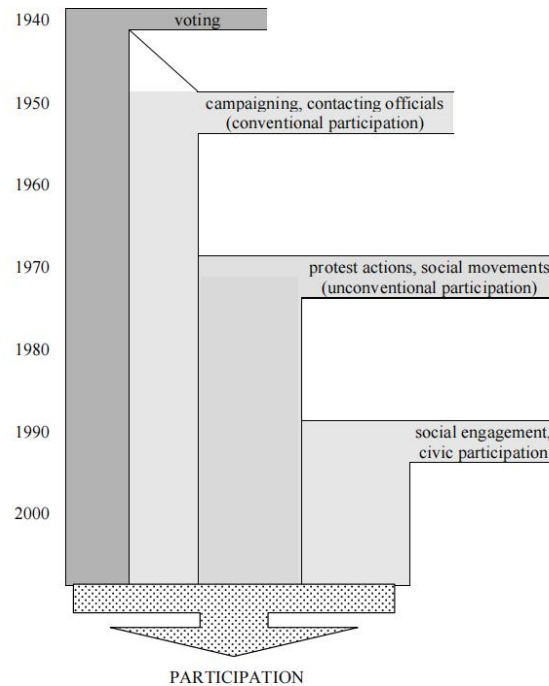
Methodology

1. Definition of online political participation

1.1 Political participation

Political participation has been broadly and variously defined as a channel for citizens to express their views and communicate with government officials in the democratic process. Verba et al. (1995) argued that political participation refers primarily to activities that directly or indirectly attempt to influence government behaviour, public policy making, or the election of decision-makers. While traditional political participation often involves only elections and voting, the actual scope of participation goes far beyond that. It includes political contributions, participation in protests or marches, access to government officials, running for office and so on. In the realm of participation, citizens can be involved in various activities related to various issues. Political participation is concerned with the process of influencing policy and the formation of national interest and is the actual act of citizens' participation rather than their psychological inclination (Verba and Nie 1972). As the field of social activism distended and government responsibilities increased, the scope and forms of political participation expanded with it, from the act of voting to most non-private acts, including participation in organizations, fundraising, contacting the media, and displaying banners, among others.

Figure 2 The Expansion of the Political Action Repertoire

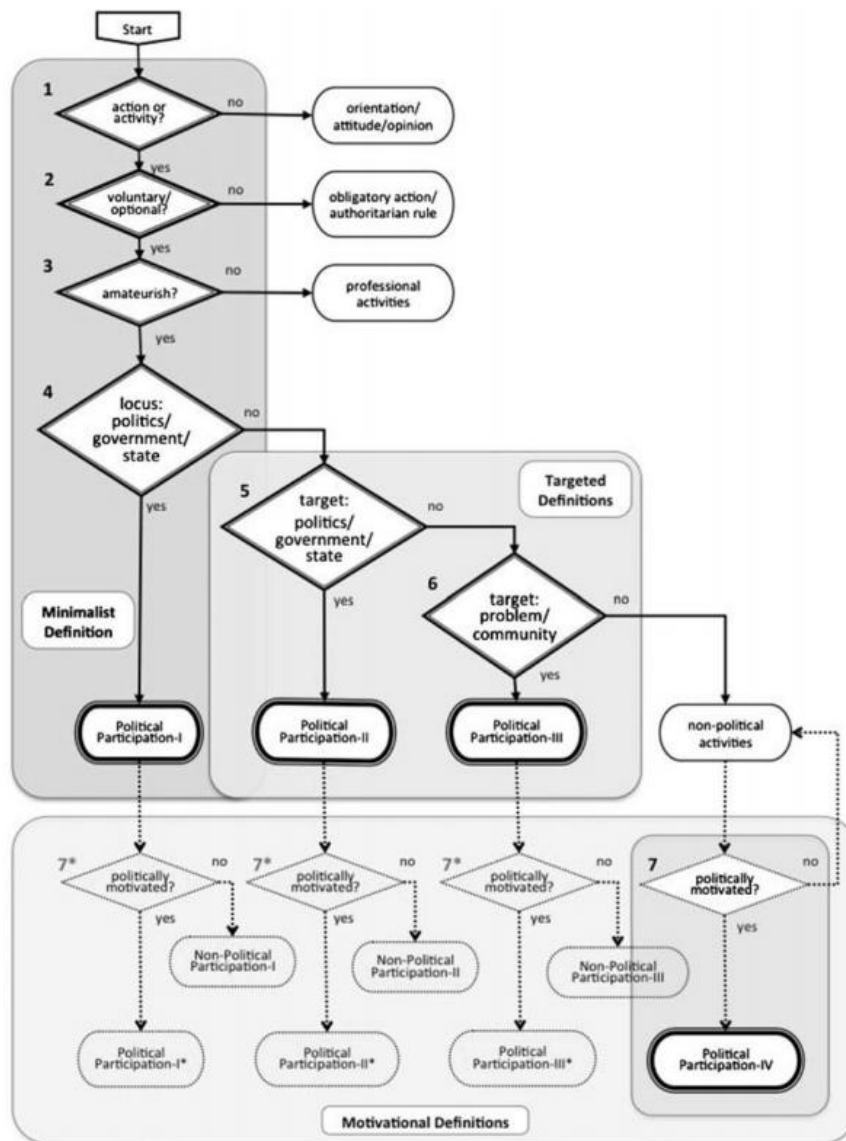


Note. From “Studying Political Participation: Towards a Theory of Everything?” by J. W. V. Deth. (<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258239977>).

At the same time, in the context of increased government intervention in all areas of society, the connotation of politics itself has been extended, “...when about one-third up to one-half of the national product is linked to the public sector, you do not need strong arguments to participate in politics.” (Deth 2001). The statement that political participation is not just an enumeration of certain specific modes or activities is the basis of all existing definitions of political participation. In the concept of political participation, there are usually four commonalities. First, political participation is defined as an action. Second, people engage in political participation as citizens. Third, the act of political participation is voluntary rather than compulsory. Fourth, political participation involves government, politics, or the country. Based on these four principles, an operational definition of political participation emerges as *a voluntary activity by citizens in the area of government, politics or the state* (Deth 2014; Deth

2016). Figure 3 illustrates the process of determining whether certain phenomena are political participation activities that meet this definition

Figure 3 A Conceptual map of political participation (minimalist, targeted and motivational definitions)



Note. From “A conceptual map of political participation,” by J. W. V. Deth, 2014, *Acta Politica* (49:3), pp. 349–367, (doi: 10.1057/ap.2014.6).

1.2 Online political participation

Although the definition of political participation has been constantly modified and expanded by changes in the social environment, the definition of online political participation has not become clearer and more consistent with the advent and widespread use of the Internet. Many studies on online political participation have focused on specific online platforms, such as email and social media sites. It is worth noting, however, that studies of online political participation have also included passive participation in their focus on the expressive aspect of political participation. Online political participation is not precisely the online equivalent of traditional political participation; rather it is shaped by the online platform. (Ruess et al. 2021). Oser et al. (2012) also demonstrated that online political participation is a unique type of participation, with online and offline activists having different preferences and focusing on different aspects of the actual participation process. Online activists are also significantly different from offline activists in terms of their age. The Internet has created different avenues of political participation and introduced new dimensions of engagement by providing various digital tools, such as mobile apps and social media platforms. Although it is difficult to prove its specificity, online political participation activities form unique practices. Online and offline political activities overlap regarding the participatory modes, but what is recognized as passive participation, such as news consumption and political expression, are more common online (Kuban 2021; Gibson and Cantijoch 2013). Accordingly, the behaviors and modes of online and offline political participation cannot be completely equated, and therefore a broad definition of political participation cannot be fully applied in the field of online participation. Rather, the nature and means of the act of citizen participation should be specifically determined. Hoffman (2012) tested Verba et al. 's (2015) Civic Voluntarism Model and argued that it does not perfectly predict online political participatory behavior, and proposed a definition of online political participation: "*an information-rich activity that utilizes new media technology and is intended to affect, either directly or indirectly, policy-makers, candidates, or public officials.*"

2. Research design

2.1 Qualitative semi-structured interview

Quantitative research methods allow the researcher to study the topic or case in depth and detail, and the data collection process is not limited by pre-determined elements or analytical methods. Quantitative methods can provide rich detailed data through in-depth investigation, description, and citation of a small group of participants or cases. In addition, quantitative research designs have naturalistic characteristics, where the researcher cannot plan or manipulate evaluation activities. Naturalistic inquiry is open-ended and thus helps to explore unanticipated variations, unanticipated impacts of certain issues, and individual differences in participants. Moreover, in the fieldwork of the actual investigation, the researcher can stay in close touch with the participants and draw more information from their speech and behaviour (Patton 1987). The open-ended questions that are often adopted in qualitative research give participants ample room to answer and reflect to cover as many topics as possible. With the increase of understanding and research in related fields, most important questions have been identified, but there is still the uncertainty of missing content. In addition, qualitative research can also help to build and develop theories and generate hypotheses (Sofaer 1999). Qualitative interviews allow the interviewer to diverge to obtain more complementary information in the actual situation, for example, by asking new questions based on the interviewee's responses. Thus, the flexible and discursive nature of qualitative interviews enable the interviewer to adjust the direction and research emphasis according to the selected topic. This feature is more evident in the semi-structured and unstructured interviewing methods.

Semi-structured interview is a very versatile and powerful social research method, which has a rigorous and systematic character and gives the researcher the opportunity to deal with multiple aspects of the interview process. Both open-ended and theory-driven questions can be contained in a semi-structured interview, “...it creates opening for a narrative to unfold, while also including questions informed by theory.” (Galleta 2013).

In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has both an interview guide that can be used to instruct the process of the interview and the leeway to explore new questions and directions. What's more, additional thoughts concluded in the previous interviews can be applied to subsequent interviews to refine new information (Bryman 2012). Semi-structured interviews have greater opportunities and possibilities to generate knowledge and topics through dialogue and allow the interviewer to become a knowledge producer during the interview. At the same time, the interviewer has a voice on topics they consider more relevant or essential to the research programme (Brinkmann 2018).

2.2 Data collection

The data collection for this study involves conducting semi-structured interviews with East Asian residents in Düsseldorf who are over 18 years old. The research aims to gather qualitative information about their experiences and perspectives. A multi-channel approach was employed to recruit participants, including both online and offline methods. Online channels included social media platforms, community forums, and relevant online groups. Offline methods involved approaching ethnic community centers and commercial sites, cultural events, and local establishments frequented by East Asian residents. To ensure a diverse representation, efforts were made to include participants from different demographic groups. This involved recruiting individuals from various gender identities, educational backgrounds, ethnicities and income levels within the East Asian community. By encompassing a wide range of perspectives, the research aims to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the participatory experiences of East Asian residents in Düsseldorf.

Before the interviews, a consent form was sent to potential participants. The consent form has clearly outlined the purpose of the research, the use of collected data, and the assurance of data privacy and confidentiality. Participants have the option to provide informed consent by signing and returning the form or through an online consent process. Throughout the data collection process, confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. Each participant will be assigned a unique identifier to ensure the protection

of their personal information. All collected data will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing for a balance between predetermined questions and the flexibility to explore emergent themes. This approach could provide an opportunity for participants to share their personal experiences, opinions, and expectations related to their online political participation tendency in Düsseldorf. The interviews were conducted either in person or through video conferencing in English or Chinese, depending on the preference and availability of the participants. The data collection phase will conclude when a sufficient number of interviews have been conducted to achieve data saturation, where new information or themes are no longer emerging from the interviews. At this point, the collected data will be transcribed, anonymized, and analyzed to identify common patterns, themes, and insights.

By employing a semi-structured interview method and including participants from diverse democratic groups, this data collection process aims to provide valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of East Asian residents' online political participation inclination in Düsseldorf. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of their challenges, needs, and motivations, with potential implications for community engagement and policy-making.

2.3 Interview questions

The structuring process of interview questions in this study is aimed at examining both the relationship between specific factors and participants' inclination to engage in online political activities, as well as exploring new factors that have not been extensively studied before. The selection of these factors is informed by the literature review, which provides valuable insights into the influencing factors that shape the inclination of minority groups or citizens in general to participate in online political engagement. The literature review serves as the foundation for identifying and understanding the factors that have been previously investigated and documented in relation to online political

participation. The factors identified from the literature review are organized and clustered into meaningful categories or themes. This clustering process helps to structure the interview questions and ensures that they cover a wide range of relevant factors. By including both established and potential new factors, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics underlying participants' inclination to engage in online political activities. Table 1 lists the full range of research questions:

Table 1 Interview questions

Factors	Questions
Offline participating experience	Do you have past experience with offline political participation?
Internet skills	Can you describe your experience and familiarity with the Internet? How frequently do you use it in your personal and/or professional life?
Benefits	How likely will you participate in online political activity if it relates to your group's interests or your own material benefits?
Political efficacy	To what extent do you believe your online participation can influence political affairs?
Organization/affiliation	Are you involved with a local community or organization? Do their activities motivate you to become politically engaged online?
Online political expression	How often do you express or discuss your political opinions on Social medias?
Dissatisfaction/grievance	Have you ever experienced dissatisfaction or grievance? To what extent would you like to address it through online political participation?
Quality of platform/information	How much do you value the usability of the participatory platform and well-structured information in fostering your online political participation?
Effort to participate	How do the requirement associated with online political participation (e.g., language, costs of Internet access, registration fees, or time consumed) affect your willingness to engage in those activities?
New factors	What other factors do you think are also necessary to inspire your online political participation?

Results

1. Demographics

In conducting a comprehensive study, a series of interviews are implemented with 31 participants, aiming to explore various dimensions of the research. The participants were carefully selected to ensure representation across different demographics. Data are categorized based on four key variables: gender, yearly income, educational level, age and ethnicity. By analyzing these factors, the patterns, commonalities, and disparities within and across groups can be identified. The gender distribution among the participants was balanced, with 17 individuals identifying as female and 14 as male. Regarding income and educational levels, the interviewees were distributed across various brackets, allowing us to explore the different perspectives that arise from different socio-economic circumstances. The data were also gathered from individuals with varying ethnicities, including Chinese, Japanese and South Korean. This allowed us to explore the influence of ethnicity or country of origin on perspectives and experiences. Lastly, significance of age was recognized in this study and ensured representation across different generations. Table 2 shows the accurate distribution of numbers in each category.

Table 2 Demographics of interviewees

	Amount
Gender	
Female	17
Male	14
Age	
18-26	11
27-40	12
41-60	6
> 60	2
Ethnicity	
Chinese	12
Japanese	9
South Korean	10
Income Level	
Low	10
Medium	13
High	8
Educational Level	
Low	4
Medium	10
High	17
Total	31

1.1 Gender

Firstly, the most distinguishing factor in the demographic characteristics of the respondents was gender. This is reflected in the highly clear gender differences in the respondents' intention to engage in online political participation. Female respondents are much more willing to engage in online political activities than male respondents regardless of age group, educational background and income level. This gender difference is also reflected in a number of areas such as group interest concerns, political efficacy and political discussion. For example, female respondents are particularly concerned with feminist issues and minority interests, with a number of respondents indicating that they would be willing to participate in events related to the advancement of gender equality and the rights of LGBT people.

“If it's a movement like this with the Asian or women's community or the LGBT community, I'm 100% in. If the theme doesn't go against my own wishes and it's something I agree with or am interested in, I will definitely participate.” - Participant 19

“I'm looking for opportunities to attend events that are related to our community, related to women's rights or LGBT, and if it's relevant to my community or a community I care about I'd like to join.” - Participant 7

Secondly, female respondents also generally have a firmer belief in political efficacy than males. They were more likely to believe that their online participation could influence policy or political decisions to some extent, while male respondents were mostly less likely to share the same thoughts.

“It is very certain that it will influence government decisions or policies and that my participation is valuable.” - Participant 4

Finally, female respondents engage in more political discussions to possess more well-informed and objective information before involving in the actual act of participation so that the effectiveness of their participation is maximized.

“I feel that discussion is a prerequisite for my participation. I can't just blindly attend an event without discussing it with others, and if I want to attend an event in the future, I will certainly do so only after a lot of discussions online or offline.” - Participant 7

1.2 Age

Age is another significant difference reflected in respondents' propensity to engage in politics online. According to the interview data, respondents in the 27-40 age group show the highest intention to participate, followed by those aged 18-26. The former also tend to be characterised by a stable income and a high level of integration, with language barriers and monetary costs less likely to be a deterrent to their participation in online political activity.

“I am willing to make a big effort, even if it costs a lot of time and money, if the activity is in line with my wishes or my political views.” - Participant 17

In addition, compared to younger respondents, those aged 27-40 are concerned with a broader range of topics, including career and family issues. This drives them to participate positively in political activity in various fields to struggle for their rights.

“I would like to participate as long as it is related to parents, family and children, and my life. If it's for a right that I'm fighting for, for example, if it's career-related, I might also take part.” -Participant 14

1.3 Educational Level

The effect of educational attainment on respondents' online political participation is also significant. Respondents with higher education show a stronger willingness to participate than those with medium and low education. This is first and foremost reflected in their political awareness and political literacy. Respondents with higher education are more likely than other respondents to be aware of the influence and

importance of politics, and they are also more familiar with the German political system. Thus, higher-educated respondents have a clearer idea of why and how they want to get involved.

“I think people must have common sense in politics to participate. Like voting, you have to know what you are voting for and how and where to vote. If you know all of these things, it will be easier and more confident to participate.” - Participant 24

Respondents with a higher level of education also possess a stronger sense of political efficacy than those with a medium or low level of education. Some respondents believe that Germany has a relatively well-developed political system and democratic processes and that the opinions of citizens are respected. They are therefore willing to contribute to a democratic society and democratic values.

“The political system is constantly improving and people are now increasingly concerned with defending their rights. If the government and politicians want to get the support of the citizens they must respond to people's needs, otherwise they will not have an advantage in terms of mass support or in elections.” - Participant 28

2. Internet Skills

Possessing internet skills has become increasingly significant for active online political participation. Proficiency in navigating online platforms, effectively utilizing search engines, understanding privacy settings, and critically evaluating information are essential skills for individuals to engage meaningfully in the digital realm.

For a proportion of respondents, proficiency in internet skills is an advantage, giving them access to a wealth of information about political issues and related activities. Online political engagement often starts with certain events being walked and promoted on the internet, and potential participants are more likely to actually get involved if they have a greater likelihood of noticing or hearing about them.

“I usually surf the internet a lot in my daily life. Sometimes I see other people posting events, such as petitions or protests by international students, and I will go and support them if I think it is necessary.” - Participant 6

Some respondents are more familiar with social media, and they interact and discuss with others on social media platforms to learn about different political views and improve their political literacy. Being inspired and encouraged by other users on the internet to participate in political activities was a frequently cited reason by respondents.

“I will look through the political comments that others post on social media, especially some of the influencers I follow, and sometimes discuss with netizens and then be inspired by them.” - Participant 4

However, not all respondents are sufficiently aware of the internet functions and use the platforms. Especially for some older or under-educated respondents, most of them are not skilled in exploiting different participatory channels including government websites and social media platforms. Accordingly, they have less access to information about political activities and policies.

“I don't usually go online, I haven't downloaded any social networking software, and I don't have an account on Twitter or Facebook. I usually only talk to friends I know and basically don't follow political information, mostly in German which I can't read.” - Participant 14

“Lots of those apps that I feel are mostly used by youngsters, not so much by people our age, and they are not necessary. We can call or text if anything comes up. Occasionally I use them for short videos or news, but not much for politics.” - Participant 25

In addition, the lack of internet skills can result in a sense of exclusion or isolation for some respondents. The Internet has become a vital tool for modern communication, socialization, and accessing opportunities. Some respondents could miss out on valuable

connections or community engagement without the use of the Internet which further decreases their opportunities to involve in online political activities.

“I’ve never joined any organisations, and I’m very busy at work. I’ve heard of them and some events from colleagues and friends, but I don’t know how to join. I am not familiar with those websites and software here, and sometimes I need my daughter to guide me.”

- Participant 26

3. Past offline experience

Respondents with past experience of offline political participation are more likely to engage in political activity online than those without relevant experience. The most important reason for this is that respondents with previous experience are more politically aware and inherently more interested in particular issues. As a result, they are more motivated to participate in related activities and keen to contribute to both online and offline political activities.

“I’ve attended public preaches on gender construction, feminist classes, and some offline marches. I also participated in some rallies on the third world and labour exploitation. Because I studied a major related to politics, I probably know more about these topics than the average person.” - Participant 9

“I joined a petition on the US White House website about a Chinese student who was killed, and people want a closer look into it. I also participated in some anti-Asian Hate marches and petitions because racial discrimination against Asians is getting worse nowadays. I am very concerned about the rights of Chinese or Asian people and I hope something can be done about it.” - Participant 5

Secondly, participants with prior experience in offline political participation possess valuable knowledge about various engagement models and methods of getting involved, particularly those with extensive experience in deep engagement. They have a thorough understanding of the types of activities that are most impactful and motivating for

potential participants on specific issues. Moreover, they are familiar with advocacy and organizational processes, allowing them to navigate political landscapes with ease. As a consequence, experienced participants exhibit greater comfort and confidence in their political engagement, which translates into a higher willingness to participate in political activities, whether online or offline. Their expertise and familiarity with effective strategies make them more inclined to engage actively in the political sphere, harnessing both online platforms and traditional offline avenues for meaningful civic involvement.

“I took part in the White Paper campaign and some feminist events and helped out in all aspects of the process, such as designing slogans and photography and so on. But campaigns like the petition signing are probably better suited to online as it's easier to spread and less resource intensive.” - Participant 19

Moreover, several participants shared their experiences of successful participation, where their political activities had yielded the desired outcomes. As a result, this subgroup of respondents exhibited a heightened sense of political efficacy and displayed greater confidence in their ability to influence policy-making. Unlike other participants who did not attain the anticipated benefits, these individuals demonstrated a stronger motivation to engage in political participation. Their past successes served as catalysts, reinforcing their belief in the effectiveness of their actions and inspiring them to continue their involvement. This heightened level of motivation stemmed from the tangible impact they had witnessed, fueling their commitment to further political engagement.

“I joined the march against the covid policy. I saw others marching against the it that I also don't support, so I took part in. It didn't take long for the policy to be scrapped. I think it's useful for people to speak out and voice their demands. If we remain silent, there will never be any change.” -Participant 1

Finally, a subset of the remaining participants demonstrated a reduced level of concern regarding barriers to participation and associated costs. This divergence in attitude can

be attributed to the nature of offline events, which typically require individuals to invest additional time, financial resources, and linguistic abilities to participate fully. However, those with prior offline participation experience exhibit a greater willingness to devote time and effort to political activities compared to their counterparts. Consequently, they naturally display heightened enthusiasm for online political engagements, which offer the advantages of flexibility in terms of location and ease of engagement.

“I have attended many rallies and protests in Berlin, and although sometimes I had to make special time and spend money on transport, I think it was worth it. It would be much easier if it was online, just click on some web pages and you can participate.” - Participant 6

4. Level of integration

The level of integration plays a significant role in shaping the willingness of online respondents to participate in political activities, particularly in relation to politicization, the influence of local organizations, and the emotion-driven. Respondents with a high degree of integration exhibit a stronger inclination to engage in political participation compared to those with a lower degree of integration. This is often observed in individuals who have resided in Germany for an extended period and possess a deep understanding of German society.

Those who are highly integrated have immersed themselves in the local culture, customs, and political context, resulting in a greater sense of connection and identification with the issues at hand. They are more likely to have a comprehensive understanding of the political landscape and systems. In contrast, individuals with a lower level of integration may exhibit a comparatively lower willingness to participate due to a less extensive familiarity with the nuances of German society and its political intricacies. This lack of familiarity may contribute to reduced motivation to engage actively in political activities.

“Since I came to Germany when I was about ten years old, I've been following some political information since high school. I used to go to political events with local people, initially out of curiosity, but now it's more about attending events that I care about, like labour treatment or gender equality or something like that.” - Participant 17

“I have not been in Germany for long, I do not have many interactions with the locals and I have few channels to get to know German society in depth. The goal at this stage is to work and earn money, politics is not necessary for life.” - Participant 3

Furthermore, participants with a high level of integration demonstrated a higher frequency of involvement in local organizations compared to those with a lower level of integration. Several respondents expressed that their engagement in relevant organizations derived from their emphasis on specific issues, which in turn motivated and empowered them to voice their opinions at political events. For others, their organizational involvement fostered a certain sense of responsibility and awareness of their civic duties and social obligation which result in exhibiting a greater willingness to participate in online political activities, driven by their commitment to contributing to public values. The connection between organizational engagement and online participation was evident as respondents recognized the role of being part of such groups in shaping their attitudes and motivations.

“I'm involved in animal protection organisations and I'm more interested in the topic. If it's something about animal rescue I'm likely to go online and participate in it.” - Participant 17

“I was in some environmental organisations before, and sometimes I would go out with them to do some environmental campaigning or litter collection. I think we are responsible for the environment we live in and it is getting a lot of attention these days. If there is such an online activity, I think I would like to join it.” - Participant 4

Finally, respondents with high integration status reported more experiences of resentment, such as racial and gender discrimination, among others. This is partly due to

the fact that they have been in Germany longer and therefore have more experience. Therefore, for the purpose of fighting back and defending their rights, respondents with a high integration level are more willing to act on their accumulated negative feelings. Respondents with a lower level of integration choose to avoid or remain silent because they are not sufficiently emotionally driven or worried about the risk of speaking out impulsively.

“I think it's quite possible for me to resolve these emotions or conflicts by going online, exposing it or even starting my own petition if it's serious, or joining in immediately if I see someone else starting a similar campaign. When I first came to Germany I thought it was unnecessary, but now I think it's important to speak out.” - Participant 6

“I think Germany is taking too many refugees and it will have an impact on normal taxpayers. I have an opinion but I also think it's a humanitarian act. And sometimes it's just a different stance and I'm more worried about suffering reprisals if you take part in an event that touches someone else's interests.” - Participant 11

5. Group benefit and personal interests

Among the various factors influencing online political activities, the significance of personal interests and the relevance of one's group's interests emerged as the most commonly cited motivations among the respondents. Irrespective of their ethnicity, educational background, or income level, the majority of participants expressed a heightened interest in issues and activities that directly resonated with them or held personal significance. The respondents emphasized the importance of connecting with topics that they genuinely cared about. This connection often stemmed from a sense of personal investment, whether it be related to their own experiences, values, or aspirations.

First, the respondents highlighted the role of their group's interests in shaping their motivations. This could encompass various dimensions, such as shared identities, affiliations, or communities. Recognizing the impact of collective interests, participants

felt compelled to participate in online political activities to advocate for and advance the concerns and aspirations of their respective groups.

For example, female groups and sexual minorities are more likely to focus on issues such as gender equality, equal pay for equal work, female empowerment and protection of the rights of sexual minorities. Most respondents in this category indicated that their participation in online events related to these groups was significantly increased.

“I think it's very possible for me to support, for example, participation like voting, if it's with minority groups, women and refugees. If I'm asked to give a speech, maybe not, but just to participate and support, I mean just to be a part of the campaign and to speak out or sign my name, I would be very willing to do that.” - Participant 16

“If it's about women or women's rights in the workplace, I'll probably check it and call for people to speak out and get involved in a less aggressive way. But first I would see if it is of direct interest to me and if it would help me in my future career, for example, by increasing the number of jobs for women, then the payoff would be obvious and I would get involved.” - Participant 5

“I would definitely attend, if there was one. Because I'm gay myself, and the situation of our community is still in need of improvement, and it's not exactly equal. There is a need for that, both for the gay group and for myself.” - Participant 30

According to the majority of interviewees, the primary focus of group interests lies within the Asian community or their respective ethnic groups. The interviewees commonly expressed the belief that Asians in Germany are not only a minority but also face various challenges, such as limited representation and low levels of participation. They argued that active engagement and vocal participation would offer Asian communities greater visibility and opportunities for their voices to be heard. By actively participating in online political activities, they believed that the rights and needs of Asian residents could be acknowledged, considered, and ultimately promoted. The interviewees emphasized the importance of advocating for the rights and interests of the

Asian community as a means to address the existing disparities and empower Asian individuals within the broader German society.

“I will participate in events that are more beneficial to my group, such as anti-East Asian hate and some feminist events or marches against the rights of Asian immigrants.”

- Participant 6

“Although we are not directly involved in the policy making process, we are willing to speak up for the groups we belong to, such as the Asian community, if we have the opportunity to do so.” - Participant 2

“If you can participate, you must, whether it's a simple vote or a mass petition. Life here is not as easy for Asians as it is for locals, or even for Turks. The more you don't fight for your rights, the easier it is to fall to the bottom.” - Participant 28

Respondents who display willingness to engage in online political activities and are driven by group interests have a broader objective beyond defending their own rights or those of their group. They aim to promote collective empowerment as a primary motivation. These individuals recognize that by actively participating in online political activities, they can contribute to the overall empowerment of their group. They understand that when the collective is empowered, the group as a whole can have a stronger voice, greater influence, and improved representation. By advocating for the rights and interests of their group through online engagement, they seek to uplift their community, foster unity, and create positive change that benefits all members. These respondents recognize that promoting collective empowerment is essential for achieving long-term progress and addressing systemic challenges. Their commitment to online political activities reflects their dedication to the betterment and advancement of their group as a whole, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society.

“The more people who attend, the more likely it is that they will be taken seriously. Many minority groups have been discriminated against in the past, and it is only by speaking out that they can fight for their rights.” - Participant 11

“While one person's involvement may be just a number plus one, if everyone doesn't do it, eventually, it will go nowhere. Many events rely on the attention and involvement, and persistence of netizens to make progress.” - Participant 7

“It takes generations to make progress for our rights, and there are some things you will feel you have to do even if you could fail just in order to succeed one day, so I don't care if there is an impact, I expect it, but it's okay to fail, so I'm full of hope.” - Participant 16

In addition, many respondents denoted that participating in online activities related to their group made them feel more connected to it. Engaging in political activities online for the benefit of their group creates a sense of belonging. They find support, validation, and shared values within their group, which fosters a sense of identity and motivates them to actively participate in online political activities to further strengthen their connection to their identity. Online political engagement allows the participants to connect and collaborate with like-minded individuals or organizations who share their group's interests. By networking and sharing resources, they can exchange ideas, coordinate efforts, and strategize collective actions, further motivating their involvement in online political activities. Engaging in political activities online for the benefit of a group fosters a sense of solidarity among individuals. By actively participating in online campaigns, discussions, or events, the participants can develop a shared identity, build trust, and strengthen bonds within their group. This sense of solidarity becomes a motivator to continue engaging and working together for the common benefit.

“If it is related to the rights and interests of us Asians and Asian workers, I still want to support it. Because it is more difficult for Asians to unite together, and it is even sometimes there are Chinese, Japanese and Korean people who often dislike each other. But the locals or other immigrants are very united, and I hope that Asians can learn from others too.” - Participant 22

“I have tried to join some organisations, and there are some Japanese clubs here in Düsseldorf, and they have organised some events. If you live abroad, you feel more at home with people of similar backgrounds. It's also better to work together than to work alone.” - Participant 29

In addition to group benefit, personal interest emerges as a significant motivation for respondents to engage in online political activities. While some activities may not directly benefit their group as a whole, respondents are motivated by the personal benefits that such activities can bring. They willingly participate in online political activities that align with their individual interests and priorities, recognizing the potential for personal growth, fulfillment, or advancement.

Among the personal benefits mentioned earlier, career development and promotion opportunities are the most commonly cited factors by respondents. Many respondents view online political engagement as a means to pursue more favourable career prospects or advocate for their rights in the workplace. For instance, some express a desire to leverage this diversity trend by speaking up, aiming to enhance the chances of Asian job seekers being hired and represented in various industries. Others seek to participate in advocacy actions such as strikes and protests to defend their legal rights as employees, striving for improved wages or humane treatment in the workplace.

Furthermore, some respondents view online political activities as a pathway to gain insights into German society and law, as well as an opportunity to enhance their presentation and interpersonal skills. By engaging in relevant activities, they aim to improve their professional competencies, expand their networks, and ultimately optimize their performance and career development.

“If it's something to do with women's rights or labour discrimination, or something to do with group interests, then I'll participate if I see it. If it's about a profession, I'll definitely participate, because professions are still very important and if I can fight for my rights, like the Germans on strike, I'll participate.” - Participant 13

“If it's related to my own interests and I have the time, I would definitely participate. For example, if there's a strike demanding higher wages or reduced working hours, I would be more willing to join. Online activities are even more convenient because they require less time and energy commitment, making it easier for me to participate.” - Participant 9

“I might consider participating if the activity doesn't require divulging too much of my privacy. But if it could expose my personal information, I may choose not to join. If the activity is beneficial for my work, allowing me to deal with my profession more confidently and perform better in the workplace, I would be more inclined to participate.” - Participant 8

Respondents who are already employed or actively seeking employment tend to prioritize career development and workplace rights. On the other hand, respondents who are still studying place a higher emphasis on their rights as international students. They are concerned about issues such as visa regulations, tuition fees, fair treatment in academic settings and so on. Their motivation to engage in online political activities stems from their personal interests in safeguarding their rights and ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment for international students.

“If it's something like a tuition fee increase involved, I'm probably 95% likely to go, and if it's a fellow receiving bullying here, I'm probably 60% likely to attend. Tuition is a very intuitive issue and I don't want this to cost more than I can afford.” - Participant 12

“I've heard that some states in Germany are going to start charging tuition fees, and if this happens in my place or university, there's a campaign about it, like some online joint letter or something, and I'll definitely sign it. Because many international students choose to come to Germany to study just because the tuition fees are free or very little.” - Participant 1

There were also respondents whose motivation to participate rooted in their genuine interest in specific issues. Even if they did not expect direct personal benefits from their

involvement, this group expressed a strong willingness to actively participate in online political activities based on their deep concern and interest in the matter at hand. Their motivation was driven by a sense of social responsibility and a desire to contribute to the broader discourse and progress on the issues they cared about.

For example, some interviewees stated that they were involved in online political activities because of their duty as residents of Germany to improve the social environment. They believe that active engagement is essential for the functioning of a healthy democracy. Other respondents are motivated by their interest in participating in the politics of their home country and supporting democratic movements and processes there. These people feel a strong connection to their homeland and a deep sense of attachment to its political process.

“It depends on what it is and the circumstances and whether I am interested in it, for example, during the White Paper Revolution, I would have participated if I thought the situation was tense.” - Participant 18

“I am planning to settle in Germany, so I feel that I have an obligation to speak out, both for myself and for others. Because this is the country I want to live in and I want to make the social environment better and more humane.” - Participant 30

Other respondents who were willing to engage in online political activities out of personal interest were motivated by a specific issue that held strong significance or concern for them. They willingly dedicated their time and effort to contribute to the progress of that issue, driven by their personal passion and commitment, even if the activities they participated in did not guarantee immediate personal benefits.

For these interviewees, their involvement in online political activities was driven by a sense of purpose and fulfillment derived from pursuing their interests and hobbies. They found satisfaction in actively participating, sharing their knowledge and perspectives, and being part of a larger movement or community centered around their chosen issue. Their motivation stemmed from the intrinsic value they derived from engaging in

activities aligned with their personal passions, beliefs, or areas of expertise, rather than solely seeking personal gains or rewards.

“I am usually interested in art-related exhibitions, and Düsseldorf has a policy to support this. If I had the chance, I would contact the government with my friends to collaborate on some activities, and also to promote Asian culture and anti-discrimination via art.” - Participant 7

6. Political Efficacy

According to the respondents' responses, political efficacy plays a key role in shaping individuals' intentions to engage politically online. Respondents with a high sense of political efficacy showed a stronger intention to engage politically online. They believe that their actions can have an impact on the political sphere. This sense of efficacy strengthens people's confidence and motivation to engage in online political activities energetically. In addition, this group of respondents also perceive their participation as meaningful and influential, as they believe they can affect political outcomes and contribute to positive change.

Respondents with high political efficacy expressed their belief that their participation can have an impact on political affairs, primarily due to the effects of "accumulation of small actions" and "strength in numbers." This belief leads the participants to believe that each individual's participation can cumulatively have a positive impact. Firstly, people's willingness to engage in online political activity is encouraged by the recognition that each individual's small actions can contribute to collective goals. Secondly, they believe that greater impact can be achieved through joint and collective action. They recognise that their voices can be amplified and diffused, thus drawing more attention and participation by coming together through online platforms.

“I imagine there will still be some impact, and the more people sign the petition, the more effective it will be. If the process wasn't too complicated for me to participate and it was just a signature I would probably participate.” - Participant 10

“Honestly, I'm willing to join, but I'm not sure if it will truly have an impact on policies. If it's on a large scale or has a significant number of participants, then it might have an influence. But I will support it with the belief in the power of accumulation of small actions.” - Participant 11

Other respondents' sense of efficacy is derived from their trust in the German democratic system and diversity policy. They firmly believe that Germany should consider the voices of its local population as a democratic country. The emphasis on diversity and inclusiveness in society further strengthens their belief that they have ample opportunities to express themselves as a minority group. This trust in the democratic system and the recognition of the importance of diverse perspectives give them the confidence and motivation to participate politically online.

“I think it will have an impact, for example, there have been some relevant petitions and signings here before, and it has some effect in the end. It feels like the Germany will focus on the ideas of each individual citizen, even though one person is neglectable, but it is possible for everyone to participate and to push for something to happen.” - Participant 6

The convenience and network effect advantages offered by online channels and platforms have been key factors in motivating people to engage in online political activities. Online platforms offer people the opportunity to participate in a wide range of political activities, removing some of the barriers to traditional offline political participation. Regardless of the participants' location, socio-economic status and background, people can easily participate in various political discussions, voting, signature campaigns and other activities via the internet. In addition, online platforms allow people to easily access political information and resources, as well as facilitate social interaction between people and form broader community networks. Participants can collaborate with others to create greater influence. All these features and benefits incline respondents to act on their belief in the facilitation of political participation through online channels.

“I think it's hard to say what the impact of this can be, and there are successful and unsuccessful events. But online campaigns are much easier to promote, you forward a link, then more people will see it. Contacting the authorities is something you can do by writing an email, and voting is just a matter of moving your fingers. The more people who participate in this way, the greater the impact it may have.” - Participant 24

“At this stage, I'll support most of these types of campaigns as long as I see them online. After all, it doesn't take time to sign up and vote online or anything. You don't need to go to a specific place or march somewhere and you can help others.” - Participant 23

The remaining respondents felt that online political participation was predictable and feasible, as they learned that some campaigns against unreasonable policies had the desired effect. These activities may take the form of online petitions, social media campaigns, digital campaigns and online protests. They have witnessed examples of governments responding positively to public voices, policy changes or policy agendas being repositioned. This experience therefore strengthened their confidence and motivation for online political participation.

“For example, the cancellation of the zero-covid policy can only be achieved by everyone protesting online and offline. Offline demonstrations and rallies may be stopped, but online movements are reposted by everyone, and the scale is so large that it is impossible to block them all. So we still have to speak up, the Internet is a very useful channel.” - Participant 7

In contrast to the facilitative effect of high political efficacy, low political efficacy is an important factor leading to low participation tendency or even refusal of many respondents. This group of respondents typically reported feeling powerless and unconfident about the outcomes of their political engagement. They believe that individual participation has no substantial impact on political decision-making, and feel that the government or policymakers will not really pay attention to the voice and needs of the people, thus they believe that their participation is futile.

One of the reasons for the low political efficacy among some interviewees is their perception that East Asian groups, with their distinct cultural backgrounds and language habits, are still considered a marginalized minority in German society. Many respondents believe that East Asians, for various reasons, exhibit lower levels of political participation, both online and offline, and have limited opportunities for organized engagement in political affairs. In the case of online political activities, the absence of face-to-face interaction and the limited scope for sharing perspectives hinder the promotion of unity and overall participation levels. Consequently, this perception diminishes the interviewees' sense of political efficacy, as they believe their involvement lacks the potential for substantial impact. As a result, their willingness to engage in online political activities is decreased.

“I think it has little effect. Because I feel that in the context of Germany, there is an unspoken racism. East Asians are different from German society, and there are not as many of them. In terms of politics, I think East Asians have very little influence, especially at the macro level such as society or policy.” - Participant 1

“First of all, it depends on the nature of the activity. If it is just popularizing East Asian or Chinese culture, the impact will be very small, because long-term popularization is required. Then the participation of the Chinese themselves is relatively low, and they are not local citizens, so they will pay more attention to survival and risk issues.” - Participant 5

Another reason respondents reported low political efficacy was their lack of personal experience when online political activism fully met expectations. Many of them have not witnessed or participated in a event where online political advocacy achieved significant results or policy changes. This lack of first-hand experience can lead to skepticism and questioning about the effectiveness and impact of online political campaigns. Therefore, they are less willing to participate in online political activities.

“I think the effect is still limited. We have protests here every week, but the real decisive thing is the interests of the authorities or political parties. The voice on the Internet is just a kind of momentum.” - Participant 9

Some respondents indicated that their low political efficacy could be influenced by their East Asian cultural background and the political environment of their country of origin. These respondents have grown up with specific values and political ideas that differ from the political realities of German society, which further leads to unfamiliar or uncomfortable intention with the German political system and political participation methods and even a certain sense of distrust. In addition, the influence of the political environment in their country of origin also leads them to be wary of participating in online political activities, including censorship of speech and restrictions on activities. These experiences and beliefs can affect respondents' confidence and willingness to participate in politics, causing them to avoid unnecessary risks and thus weakening their willingness to participate in online politics.

“The cultural background factor is very important, because the education I received did not encourage me to participate in these things. It is a very new environment in Germany, and I only participated step by step after seeing Germans doing the same. Like some students, if they don't learn sociology, political science and similar subjects, they may not understand or have access to relevant information, so the previous basic education is very important.” - Participant 13

“I grew up in a place where the political environment is very scarce. Many people will avoid talking about politics. It is different from the political soil in Europe. For example, everyone will chat and do things in distinct ways.” - Participant 18

Finally, some interviewees pointed out that compared with offline activities, online political activities lack the advantages of being easy to gather people and build momentum, which is also one of the reasons for their low political efficacy. On online platforms, people often only communicate through text, images or videos. In contrast, offline political activities are usually characterized by collective action, and participants

can witness and feel the support and participation of others, which enhances their motivation and confidence to participate.

Moreover, offline political campaigns are often able to generate wider attention and discussion through media coverage and social media distribution, which further extends the reach of the campaign. In contrast, online political campaigns may be relatively limited in terms of dissemination. While online platforms can amplify the visibility of campaigns through social media sharing and online publicity, online campaigns tend to have lower visibility and media attention compared to offline, which leaves some respondents with a lack of motivation to engage in online political campaigns.

“It depends on the degree of promotion of the activity on the Internet. If it is only a small-scale activity, I think the influence is not very great. If online activities are extended to offline, such as street protests, it may have a greater impact.” - Participant

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7. Dissatisfaction and grievance

Experiences of grievance and dissatisfaction are also important factors influencing respondents' online political participation tendencies. According to the respondents, severe wrath and dissatisfaction can motivate them to take action, seek change and solve problems. When they experience or witness unjust, unequal or unsatisfactory policies or practices, anger and dissatisfaction can be the driving force for them to express their views and demands through online political participation.

First, the respondents mentioned that the negative sentiment mainly comes from dissatisfaction with German policy or the administrative system. This kind of dissatisfaction may stem from the unfairness and irrationality of policies, discrimination against specific groups, the inefficiency of government agencies or the differential treatment of staff, which stimulated the respondents to express their views and demands. Individuals therefore long for an opportunity to express their views and opinions, strive for change and solve problems. Online political participation provides a convenient

means for people to express their grievances on channels such as social media, forums, and blogs, and to communicate and discuss with others with similar positions. This act of expressing dissatisfaction can make individual voices heard by more people, and may attract public attention and discussion. In addition, through online platforms, people can organize campaigns, launch petitions, co-sign open letters, directly contact politicians or complain to advocate for policy changes and government reforms. These actions can bring together more supporters, create greater voice and pressure, and force the government to respond to and improve on dissatisfied issues.

“The bureaucracy in Germany is very serious and the work efficiency is low. If there is a local petition against the SAFE and the Labor Bureau to urge them to make some changes, I will definitely participate. If this matter is legal, I am willing to participate, because I feel that it is very related to my actual interests.” - Participant 5

“Now if I encounter something like gender discrimination, I will definitely participate. Although Germany's policies for women are relatively sound, I think it can be improved, such as income equality or public gender facilities.” - Participant 19

For some of the respondents, their experience of grievance stemmed from past experiences of discrimination, prejudice, or unfair treatment. These experiences may involve discrimination based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or unequal treatment in the workplace, educational setting, or social interactions. These negative experiences fueled their intense anger and resentment against social injustices and prompted them to engage in online political activism in search of justice and change. By participating in online political activism, these respondents can express their voices and amplify their influence. They can sign petitions, launch protests, engage in online campaigns, and more to drive social and political change that eliminates discrimination and inequality.

“I think there are still a lot of discrimination or sexual harassment here, because I have this kind of personal experience, and then I have legal support and some deep insight.”

Because I feel sad and I want to reduce this feeling, so I'm gonna participate.” - Participant 9

The remaining respondents indicated that while they had not directly experienced personal anger at being infringed, they had witnessed or experienced injustices that were close to them or pervasive in society that fueled their feelings of resentment. This experience of sensing or witnessing the injustice of others produced a strong emotional resonance and empathy for these respondents. They are willing to participate in online political activities in order to protect the interests of relatives and friends and to find ways to solve problems.

“Some parts of Germany are still relatively conservative, and inequality between genders is common. If I see relevant activities on the Internet, I will want to participate. It is more difficult to organize by myself. But as long as someone organizes it, I will participate. When you see the injustice, you have to solve it. After all, I have to find a way to protect my own rights and interests when I still live here.” - Participant 13

“My child has experienced similar discrimination and the teacher did not treat my child in the same way as other children. There's a 50% chance that I'll go online when I am unsatisfied with something. But I would be very angry if it was about my kids, and I would be very willing to participate in such activities.” - Participant 14

However, not all respondents actively engage online when faced with anger and resentment. Some respondents expressed that their dissatisfaction stems from distrust of online channels, such as concerns about personal information security and the risk of cancel culture. They worry that participating in online political activities may expose their personal privacy or suffer malicious attacks, and thus fall into a greater predicament. This sense of mistrust makes them have reservations about online participation, choosing to avoid or limit their participation in online political activities.

Other respondents felt that the anonymity of online platforms and the widespread nature of information dissemination could lead to an inhospitable environment for participation,

triggering personal negative emotions. They worry that online discussions will become vicious, filled with hate speech and irresponsible views, further undermining their enthusiasm for online political engagement. These respondents believe that rational and constructive dialogue is easier to achieve in an offline environment, while the anonymity and speed of communication online may intensify confrontation and conflict, affecting their willingness to actively participate.

“If I voice too much on the Internet, which affects the interests of other groups or individuals, they may take actions that are not conducive to me. Also, personal information can be exposed online. How can it be secured though? I don't want to be targeted just because of political disagreements.” - Participant 8

“I have a strong dissatisfaction with the overly free internet culture. As a result, young people in particular suffer negative effects and many young people in their 20s and 30s also find it difficult to maintain their correct values and beliefs.” - Participant 22

8. Effort to participate

The cost and effort required for online political participation, such as language, time, and expenses, are also essential factors that affect respondents' willingness to participate in political activities.

Language is the first important factor among them. Many respondents indicated that language can be a barrier to participation for non-native speakers or those with limited language skills. First, political activities often involve professional political terms and concepts, which may be difficult for non-professionals to understand and use. They could feel that they do not fully understand political issues or express themselves in an accurate way.

In addition, political discussions and debates often require verbal expression and communication. Participants need to be able to articulate their views, understand the views of others, and be able to engage in meaningful dialogue and debate. This can be a

challenge for non-native speakers or those with limited language skills. They may feel insecure, concerned that they will not be able to express themselves adequately, or that they will not be able to correctly understand the perspective of others. This language barrier can make them feel excluded and marginalized, reducing their willingness to engage in political activism online.

“As a person who doesn't speak German, if the event is all in German, it is basically impossible to participate, even if it is related to my interests, I will not participate. Unless the effect can be seen immediately, I may be willing to translate the content, otherwise I will definitely give up.” - Participant 5

“Language has a great influence. If the basic language of the event is German, I think it should be accompanied by some interaction or video or pictures, otherwise it will be difficult for foreigners to invest so much time and focus. If your language is not up to standard, you will not want to participate.” - Participant 6

“If it is a kind of all-German activity with more dictation, I can only understand very few of the content, and then I don't get what they mean, so I don't want to participate.” - Participant 7

In addition to basic language skills, hidden cultural differences behind language are also factors that many respondents were concerned about.

Different cultural backgrounds and language habits could cause barriers in understanding and communication among participants. First, political views and values are often influenced by cultural background. Different cultures possess different concerns and attitudes towards political issues. Therefore, participants need to use their familiar cultural frameworks to understand and express political views.

In addition, language carries cultural values, beliefs and traditions. Specific language and metaphors are often used to communicate political views, which can be challenging

for people from different cultures to understand these linguistic and cultural implications.

Moreover, language is closely related to identity and social belonging. Using a particular language is primarily associated with a particular cultural or social group, and interviewees confessed that they lacked a sense of comfort and belonging in language use which resulted in their uncomfortable feeling, thus reduce their willingness to participate.

“Even if you I the German test, it does not mean that I can communicate with Germans smoothly, and there are cultural differences. For example, when Germans give speeches, they may quote classics, but you may not understand them. Another example is about how to give speech in German to resonate with others.” - Participant 12

“Language is still very important in Germany. There may be a gap between Germans and foreigners, and it is difficult to participate in activities and discuss together.” - Participant 13

In terms of the cost of online political participation, the factor most frequently cited by respondents is time.

Political involvement can take a lot of time learning about policy details and events, looking through the participatory requests and discussing about political opinions. However, the hustle and bustle of modern life can limit the amount of time people have to engage in political activities, which can be a challenge for those respondents with limited time. A number of respondents said they were still under pressure from work, family and other personal responsibilities. As a result, they have little time to delve into political issues or engage in time-consuming political activities.

“I think if it takes too much time I would not like to engage . Because I need work, I would be more willing to spend my time on things that are more valuable to my future.”
- Participant 11

“Time and money are big issues. As a new immigrant, I must first take care of my own life. And only when you reach a certain income class will you think of helping others.” -

Participant 13

In addition, the respondents who have no intention to settle in Germany in the future are also not willing to spend too much time participating in online political activities. Participating does not align with their personal interests and it is not worth devoting additional time to German politics. The rewards of political engagement are not appealing to this group of respondents.

“I am very serious about the cost of participation, especially time or expense. Because as an outsider, if I have no plan to live in Germany for a long time, German politics has little to do with me. It's not worth the extra effort and money invested in this.” -

Participant 1

The final cost factor that affects participants' propensity to participate in online politics is the monetary expense. Participating in political activities may involve payment of fees, such as membership dues, donations, or participation fees. For participants with limited financial resources, this can limit the avenues or reduce their desire to participate.

“If the operation is difficult, it will take more time and energy, then I I don't want to participate. Fees have a big impact, and if the fees required are too high, I will not participate.” - Participant 4

9. Quality of participatory platform and information

When asked about the influence of participating platforms and the quality of information on online political participation, most respondents said that they attached great importance to the ease of use of platforms and the comprehensiveness and objectivity of information.

Respondents believe that a good engagement platform should provide a user-friendly interface and operation, enabling users to easily browse, post and exchange politically-related information. If the platform is technically problematic, unstable or difficult to use, it may reduce people's willingness to participate. Platform stability and technical reliability are also key factors. Respondents would be frustrated and dissatisfied if the platform frequently experienced technical issues, crashed, or loaded slowly. This may reduce their trust in the platform and willingness to engage.

A feature that was mentioned more often by the respondents and that they attached great value to is the user interface of the platform. A well-designed, easy-to-understand user interface can make users feel comfortable and confident, which largely enhances their engagement experience and thereby their willingness to participate in online political activities.

“It definitely has an impact, just like a social platform, user experience is very important. For example, if you want to submit something and fail to submit it all the time, then you must give up.” - Participant 10

“It will have a great impact. If the website has a good user interface, it will greatly enhance my willingness to use this website.” - Participant 12

“It will have an impact. For example, if the software is not well designed, or the interface is not very easy to use, and there are some bugs, such as no response to the next step after filling out, it will reduce my willingness. If the interface is accessible and the description is clear, I will be willing to use it. If it is real-time, I will often spend some scattered time to see what I can do.” - Participant 15

In addition, respondents also place great importance on the simplicity and time-saving nature of participating in online political activities. They seek platforms that enable them to engage in political discussions, express their opinions, and take action effortlessly. They prefer a streamlined process that doesn't require excessive time and effort, allowing them to actively participate without burdensome constraints.

Respondents generally believe that the platform should provide a simple and intuitive operation process so that users can quickly understand and exploit various functions. For example, users can easily register, log in, and navigate the platform to find desired political topics, discussion boards, or event pages. They can also quickly locate and participate in political events of interest through a clear interface and simple menu structure. Respondents expect platforms to provide convenient tools and features that allow them to express their opinions and engage in political action with ease. For instance, providing simple voting, signing support or online petition functions, allowing users to participate in political activities in a simple and fast way, and express their positions on specific issues or policies. In addition, the platform should also support user interaction and communication with other participants to facilitate cooperation and share information without requiring excessive time and effort from users.

“I feel that there is a lack of such a platform now. When encountering injustice, I don’t know where to find such information and where to report it. If there is one, many people can report the situation they have encountered. It needs to be done step by step. It may not be that comprehensive at first, and it can be improved if people are allowed to comment.” - Participant 13

“If it is on an app, I can see various topics as soon as I open it, about various aspects, such as children, single mothers, and families. I can participate by answering questions then I will do it. If it is too complicated, for example the language is too difficult, I will not participate.” - Participant 14

Respondents are also concerned about the reliability of participating platforms when considering participating in online political activities. They placed significance on whether their personal information is adequately protected from the risk of misuse or disclosure. A reliable platform should have strict privacy policies and security measures to ensure that participants' information is not misused or accessed without authorization. In addition, respondents also believed that platforms should establish sound rules and regulations to ensure a fair and harmonious environment for participation. This includes

developing a code of conduct, mechanisms for dealing with inappropriate speech or behaviour, and providing appropriate education and training to facilitate rational and constructive discussion. Such a platform would gain the trust of participants and increase their willingness to engage in online political activities.

“I think the justice of the platform is also very important. If it is a platform of a government agency, it does work better in some aspects. But if it is a social media platform like Facebook, it will involve issues of exposure and algorithms, especially now that there are some so-called political correctness or incorrectness, so the platform must be a factor to be considered.” - Participant 11

“For a correct online policy, it is necessary to introduce a system of using clear names and to clearly warn people with extreme and violent political tendencies. All members should have an understanding of human nature and its positive and negative side, while showing a love for human beings” - Participant 20

Respondents' emphasis on information related to online activities is mainly concentrated in comprehensiveness and objectivity.

Respondents indicated that they are more motivated and confident to participate in political discussions and actions when they have access to comprehensive, accurate and reliable information, including various political issues, policy details, positions of candidates, political parties and so on. If participants believe that the information they have received is not complete enough, they may have doubts about the significance of their participation and even reduce their motivation to participate. Furthermore, comprehensive information not only enables participants to better understand and evaluate various viewpoints and positions, but also helps them make more informed decisions. Respondents need sufficient information to form their own opinions and engage in meaningful discussion and debate with other participants. Incomplete information or information asymmetry may result in participants lacking a basis for dialogue, limiting effective participation and interaction.

The comprehensiveness of the participation process, approaches, and steps also has an impact on the respondents' willingness to participate in online politics. When they know and can easily understand the various paths and steps in the engagement process, they are more likely to actively participate. This means that participants are provided with clear instructions on how to participate and express themselves, such as the registration process, the method to use the discussion platform and the way polls or surveys are conducted.

“I value the usability of the platform and the completeness and clarity of the information. If a person starts out just out of curiosity, but with a certain understanding of an event or activity through well-developed information, there is an incentive to participate or express an opinion.” - Participant 1

“If the platform is easy to use or the information is comprehensive, it will have a great impact on me. Because if the process is too complicated and cumbersome, I don't bother to read it at all, and as a person whose mother tongue is not German, I may not even understand proper nouns.” - Participant 11

The objectivity of participation information influences respondents' political participation intentions by affecting their trust in online political activities.

Respondents stated that when they perceive the reliability and credibility of information sources, they are more willing to trust and participate in relevant political activities. Objective information provides participants with accurate political context and reality. When participants are able to understand the full picture of political issues, the differences in viewpoints, and the authenticity of relevant data, they are more confident to participate in discussions and express their opinions. Second, objective information helps to create a rational and constructive political discussion atmosphere. When participants base their discussions and debates on objective information, they are more likely to avoid emotion and bias and to be able to communicate opinions in a rational and reasonable manner. This rational and constructive discussion atmosphere helps to attract more people to engage and improve the overall level of political participation.

“Trust in online information and sources can also impact an individual's willingness to engage in online political activity. Concerns about misinformation, disinformation, or fake news can lead to skepticism or reluctance to participate in online political discussions or share content, impacting willingness to engage.” - Participant 21

“The second is whether the motivation of this political activity is objective and unbiased. For example, the information it gives should not be inductive or provocative, but introduce the content of the event in a neutral way and guide us how to participate. If I find out that this information is intended to incite confrontation, or cause conflict, I will definitely not participate.” - Participant 28

10. Political awareness and literacy

Political awareness and political literacy have an important impact on respondents' willingness to participate in online politics. These two factors relate to an individual's level of awareness, understanding, and participation in political issues, thereby influencing their desire and ability to participate in online political activities.

Many interviewees emphasized that political consciousness is crucial for individuals to pay attention to political issues, comprehend national affairs and public policies, and recognize the impact of political decisions on both individuals and society as a whole. This political awareness drives people to actively participate in political discussions and activities, making them more conscious of pursuing political change, expressing their views, and influencing political decision-making.

Respondents with high political consciousness pay more attention to public affairs and social issues. They are highly sensitive to issues such as social justice, environmental protection, and human rights, and are willing to participate in relevant political discussions and actions through online platforms. At the same time, they are more aware of the importance of political participation and actively seek ways to solve problems and improve society. In addition, politically aware respondents are able to

understand the impact of political decisions on resource allocation, social equity, and individual rights, and are less likely to remain silent about injustice and disorder. Therefore, these respondents are willing to participate in online political activities to express their voices and propel policy changes in order to promote social progress and achieve personal political goals.

“I think politics is related to the environment you grow in. Because the education I have received since childhood is that I don’t care much about those things, and we instinctively accept everything the government gives us, thinking that they are all good, and I don’t have the consciousness to resist or argue. It was only after arriving in Germany that I began to reflect on it, and felt that it should not be like this.” - Participant 16

“I think it is the awakening of ideology and subjective initiative. If you feel that this matter is wrong from the bottom of your heart, you will participate. Or you are motivated to understand new political views, the most important thing is the transformation of ideology and the awakening of political consciousness.” - Participant 18

“A positive perception of politics and sufficient education on the fact that politics has a great impact on life are necessary.” - Participant 21

Under the premise of having a certain political awareness, political literacy is a necessary factor for respondents to participate in online political activities. When respondents are politically literate, they are better able to understand and analyze the logic behind political events, policies and decisions. Political literacy enables them to discern the credibility and bias of information, thereby more objectively evaluating and understanding different viewpoints and positions. In addition, political literacy encompasses an understanding of and respect for democratic values, principles of the rule of law, and civil rights. This understanding enables respondents to engage in public discussion, debate, and decision-making processes to advance legitimate and constructive political engagement.

Political literacy first means the overall understanding of politics in general. Respondents with high political literacy better understand the impact of political actions and are able to assess the credibility and reliability of information presented on online platforms. Additionally, they are able to navigate complex political environments, identify biased or misleading content, and actively seek diverse perspectives. Participants with high political literacy have a higher ability to be informed and actively participate in the political process, and are more willing to contribute to the vitality and inclusiveness of the online political field.

In contrast, respondents with lower political literacy showed more indifference and prejudice towards political concepts and the goals of political activities. They tend to reckon that politics is irrelevant, or that policies and political decisions could not be forwarded by the voice of the citizens.

“I think politics is a very unrealistic thing, and I don't know the meaning of these activities. Once the policy is confirmed, you just have to follow it. If it can be easily changed just because everyone opposes it, what effect does the policy have? I just need to live my own life well, and social development is beyond my influence.” - Participant 27

“Policy is finally made by government agencies, isn't it? And the power of the government and politicians is also given by votes, and the any political decisions are not only determined by one person or one political party. A democratic society and political system should naturally respect the wishes of the people. If so, we as part of the mass must express our views.” - Participant 28

Knowledge of the German political process is also part of political literacy. This includes understanding the procedures of political decision-making, the legislative process, intergovernmental consultation and public participation mechanisms. Being aware of the political process can lead to a better understanding of how government decisions are made and how to participate in public discussions and make

recommendations. Whether the respondents have this knowledge is also an important condition that affects their willingness to participate in online politics.

“Also, if I know more about the German system, tradition and organizational structure, I will be more willing to participate, because everyone likes to stay in their comfort zone. If I know exactly which channels to choose and how to participate can be the most effective, I would definitely want to participate more.” - Participant 8

11. Initiative of the government

Finally, the interviewees expressed a strong willingness to support the government's initiatives if they demonstrate an inclination to integrate East Asian residents and organize related online activities.

Government initiatives can enhance respondents' trust in the political process and willingness to participate. When the government shows that it cares about and values the participation of residents of different backgrounds, they will feel valued and recognized, and they will be more willing to participate in political affairs. So government initiatives can promote diversity and inclusion in political activity. The government can use various methods to encourage and attract citizens of East Asian background to participate in political activities, to ensure that various voices and interests are equally represented and paid attention to, thereby breaking down barriers and barriers to participation, providing opportunities to those groups that were less involved, and enabling The society as a whole is more diverse and inclusive.

By actively involving East Asian residents in online political activities, the government can address their specific needs and concerns, foster a sense of representation, and empower them to participate in shaping policies and decisions that directly affect their lives. The interviewees recognize the importance of government initiatives in creating an inclusive and participatory political environment, and they are ready to lend their support and engagement to these efforts.

“The local policy towards East Asians or foreign residents is very important for me, because some policies just make me feel like an outsider. If the government or officials take the initiative to involve East Asian groups and listen to our voices, I may participate.” - Participant 1

“If the government holds an event and I’m invited, I will definitely participate if I have time, because I am in a marginalized group, and if someone offers an opportunity to engage, I will definitely use this channel.” - Participant 9

“Emphasising inclusivity and diversity can enhance political potential by ensuring that different perspectives and voices are represented and heard. This could include promoting inclusivity in decision-making processes, valuing diverse opinions and fostering an inclusive and respectful political environment.” - Participant 20

Second, respondents also considered government-sponsored online campaigns or political activities with government endorsement to be more reliable and more likely to achieve their intended purpose.

Government initiatives can provide respondents with broader opportunities and channels to participate in political affairs. As an institution that organizes and manages social affairs, the government has the resources and power to organize and promote citizens' participation in political activities. Through government advocacy and support, citizens can more easily understand and participate in political decision-making and public affairs. Government initiatives therefore can encourage citizens to participate more actively in political life and express their opinions and appeals.

Moreover, government agencies can provide guarantees and protections for participation in politics. In the process of advocating and promoting citizen participation, the government can ensure that citizens' rights and interests are respected and protected. A corresponding legal and institutional framework can be established to protect citizens' freedom of speech, organization and participation, which is highly valued by many

interviewees. Governments can also provide information and resource support to enable citizens to make informed decisions and engage in specific political activities.

“Depending on the foreseeable consequences of this activity, I may only participate if I feel that this activity can achieve its original purpose to a large extent. If there is government support, this possibility is definitely greater. The relationship between the individual and the government is like a balance, so if the government has enough sincerity, that individual's willingness to participate will be particularly strong. ” -

Participant 8

“If it is invited by the government, I am more willing to participate. I feel like we are always being represented in our own country, so we have no chance to express our wishes, and the education we receive is not to engage in too many such things. But there is more freedom here, and now that the government encourages you to participate, then why not?” - Participant 12

Discussion

By conducting semi-structured interviews with 31 East Asian residents of the city of Düsseldorf, this study investigates their attitudes and views on online political participation. In this discussion section, the following three aspects will be elaborated upon. Firstly, the connection and difference between the research results and the existing research will be demonstrated, and the explanatory factors accounting for the difference will be discussed. Subsequently, the limitations of the study and possible solutions will be presented. Finally, based on the verified influencing factors, scientific suggestions will be provided for the future research in terms of the research field and directions. In addition, practical suggestions on the possible initiative and integration policy into East Asian population of Düsseldorf city will also be put forward.

1. Connecting findings to prior research

The findings of this study are mostly consistent with existing research. This study further corroborates the relationship between age, education, and Internet skills among East Asian residents of Düsseldorf and their propensity to participate in online politics. The study found that participants who were young, highly educated, and possessed good Internet skills were more inclined to participate in online political activities, which is consistent with previous research on the motivations and influencing factors of political participation of general citizens and ethnic minorities (Gibson et al. 2005; Best and Krueger 2005; Anduiza et al 2010; Spaiser 2013; Verba et al 1997; Schlozman et al. 1999; Montgomery 2015). Furthermore, the research highlights that past participation experience plays a significant role in fostering participants' willingness to engage in online politics, aligning with the findings of Kissau (2012) and Kah et al. (2012). Participants' inclination towards online political activities is also associated with their level of integration, encompassing factors such as citizenship, involvement in local organizations, and cultural identity. These findings are consistent with the studies conducted by Martiniello (2006) and Ortensi and Riniolo (2019). Moreover, participants generally exhibit a greater interest in political activities that concern the interests of

their groups, and they are more inclined to engage in online activities that yield personal benefits. This finding aligns with the conclusions drawn by Schlozman et al. (1995), who suggested that selective gratifications and collective outcomes are associated with individuals' political participation. The political efficacy that has a significant impact on people's political participation confirmed in the existing literature (Verba et al. 1997; Oni et al. 2017; Spaiser 2013) is also drawn in this study. Participants' past experiences of dissatisfaction and grievances can serve as motivating factors for their engagement in online political activities, a finding that is in line with the study conducted by Spaiser (2013). Additionally, participants' emphasis on the quality of participation platforms and information, as well as the required effort involved in participation, including considerations such as time, language, and cost, can influence their online political participation. These findings align with the conclusions of the research conducted by van den Berg (2021), Arshad and Khurram (2020) and Ortensi and Riniolo (2019). Finally, the findings of this study indicate that political awareness and literacy has a significant impact on participants' inclination further supports the conclusions drawn by Martiniello (2006), Alathur et al. (2016) and Oni et al. (2017).

In addition to the influencing factors that have been confirmed in the aforementioned literature, this study also found that East Asian residents in the Düsseldorf region have additional concerns about the government's initiative and determination to integrate minority groups. This finding reveals that East Asian residents are greatly concerned about the role that the government plays in political activities and social interactions. This emphasis on government initiative may be related to their cultural background and experience, such as recognition of government authority and expectations of government responsibilities and functions in East Asian cultures.

However, not all research findings are totally in accord with the existing literature. In contrast to the widely reported gender differences that indicate higher political participation among men, this study found that among the 31 respondents, female participants demonstrated significantly higher levels of participatory willingness and political efficacy compared to their male counterparts.

According to research, the low political participation rate among East Asian women can be attributed to various factors, including literacy rates, the proportion of higher education, and social ideology. Studies have shown that higher female literacy rates and education levels are associated with increased political ideology and empowerment within social culture, which in turn enhances the likelihood of East Asian women engaging in the political process (Haque, 2003). Furthermore, Asian women's political participation is often influenced by their self-confidence in their abilities and can be shaped by political discussions with others (Wen et al., 2013). Similarly, Asian women are more likely to participate in politics when they are able to integrate more fully into the host country's society and possess personal resources (Phillips and Lee, 2018). Therefore, the higher participation tendency of East Asian women in Düsseldorf can be explained by the following reasons. Firstly, a higher proportion of the female respondents have attained higher education compared to the average in East Asia. This likely results in their greater awareness of political knowledge and the impact of political activities. Additionally, in contrast to a significant number of less educated East Asian women, these respondents are more likely to possess social and personal resources that enable political engagement. Secondly, the interviewees are more likely to be influenced by the prevailing gender equality and women empowerment trends in German society. As a result, they exhibit a greater concern for relevant policies and issues. Lastly, the freedom for East Asian residents to express political opinions and engage in discussions about political events on the Internet further could promote their inclination to participate in politics. In summary, the factors that typically hinder East Asian women's political participation are less likely to affect the female respondents in this study. This may lead to their higher tendency to participate in politics in Düsseldorf.

2. Research limitation

While the primary factors influencing the online political participation tendencies of East Asians in Düsseldorf are identified through the analysis and summary of interview data from diverse backgrounds, this study has some limitations and deficiencies.

Firstly, the limited number of interviews is a notable limitation of this study. The findings may not provide a comprehensive representation of the entire population of East Asian residents in Düsseldorf since small sample size could introduce bias and affect the generalizability and reliability of the study. Moreover, a smaller number of interviews may restrict the depth of data analysis as well as the consistency and stability of the research results. Secondly, the demographic information of the interviewees is not well-balanced, which is another limitation of the study. For instance, there is a significant underrepresentation of respondents who are over 60 years old and those with lower levels of education. This imbalance may also lead to the bias in the research results regarding age and education variables. Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that the choice of research methods and the reliance on self-reported data are additional limitations. This study solely employed qualitative semi-structured interviews as research method, and the data primarily relied on the respondents' self-reports. As a result, the findings may be subject to subjective experiences, opinions, and potential factors such as individual preferences, cognitive biases, and self-presentation. Recall bias or social expectations might result in inaccuracies or biased descriptions of the participants' political participation experiences.

There are several possible approaches to address the aforementioned limitations in the research. First solution is to expand the sample size and study sites to gather a larger and more diverse pool of participants. By increasing the number of respondents, the research can achieve a higher degree of representativeness and improve the generalizability of the findings. In addition to conducting research in Düsseldorf, including other cities or regions with diverse East Asian communities would provide a broader perspective. This would allow for a better understanding of how different geographic backgrounds may influence political participation tendencies. Secondly, future studies can strive to balance the distribution of the sample population. This can be achieved by consciously recruiting participants from various backgrounds and characteristics. Researchers can set specific criteria and indicators to ensure that each subgroup is adequately represented. The potential biases and enhance the validity of the results can thus be reduced. Lastly, employing a multi-angle data collection approach is essential. In addition to semi-structured interviews, other research methods such as

questionnaires, observations, and experimental designs can be adopted to gather more comprehensive data. Additionally, by incorporating quantitative research methods, the study can quantify and validate the research findings thus increase the overall credibility and reliability of the research. Furthermore, considering multiple data sources, such as document research, text analysis, and social media data, would provide a more holistic perspective of East Asian residents' political participation from different dimensions.

By implementing these solutions, future research can address the limitations identified in the study and obtain more comprehensive and accurate conclusions. These efforts would enhance the validity, generalizability, and depth of understanding regarding the factors influencing the online political participation tendencies of East Asians in Düsseldorf .

3. Future implication

3.1 Scientific implication

Despite the limitations and flaws in this study, it still offers valuable contributions and insights that have scientific implications for future research in related fields.

The findings of this study reveal that factors such as group benefit, personal interest, political efficacy, and effort to participate often serve as mediating factors between other variables and political participation tendencies. For instance, women who prioritize the interests of women's groups or middle-aged individuals who focus on labor rights are more likely to engage in online political activities. Past experiences and political awareness can influence political efficacy, which in turn affects political participation. The quality of engagement platforms can also enhance political engagement by addressing language barriers or reducing the time required for engagement.

In future research, hypotheses can be formulated to examine the mediating role of these factors or to further investigate their relationships using quantitative methods. This

would allow for a more rigorous examination of the underlying mechanisms and enhance our understanding of the complex dynamics between various factors and political participation tendencies. By incorporating these suggestions, future studies can provide additional theoretical perspectives and assumptions that contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

Furthermore, given the inconsistent findings regarding the influence of gender factors as identified in this study compared to existing literature, it is necessary to further investigate the reasons behind the higher political participation tendencies of women. These studies can employ qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine and analyze the influences of women's political consciousness, socio-cultural factors, personal experiences, and motivations. By gaining a deeper understanding of these factors, more effective policy and practice recommendations can be provided to promote broader and more equal political participation. Additionally, this study also found that government initiative has an impact on the political participation tendencies of East Asian residents. This finding deserves further confirmation and validation in future research. Future studies can delve into the specific mechanisms through which government proactiveness affects political participation by employing various research methods.

3.2 Practical implication

This section aims to offer guidance and recommendations to policy makers, community organizations, and relevant institutions based on the study's findings. The goal is to enhance the practical application and value of the research, specifically focusing on increasing the political participation of East Asian residents in Düsseldorf. Given the results of this study, the following recommendations can help the city of Düsseldorf formulate relevant policies and initiatives to integrate local East Asian residents into the political process.

Firstly, the government can provide channels to assist some East Asian residents in improving their internet skills, political awareness, and political literacy. For example,

organizing corresponding online or offline activities to guide residents in using local government websites or social platforms and providing them with essential political knowledge and awareness. Secondly, the government should help East Asian residents integrate into the local society, such as organizing cultural and artistic events and supporting the development of East Asian community, to increase their sense of belonging and thereby enhance their confidence and willingness to engage in online political activities. Furthermore, the government should actively respond to and address the demands of East Asian residents, such as helping to combat racial discrimination and workplace inequalities. This can increase their trust in the government and relevant institutions, leading residents to believe in the impact of their voices and thereby enhancing their sense of political efficacy. Lastly, the government should actively establish and promote user-friendly online participation platforms and provide objective and comprehensive political information, thereby reducing the barriers and costs of residents' online political engagement.

Conclusion

In view of the ongoing discussions on the relationship between online political participation and participatory equality, as well as the underrepresentation of minority groups in the political process, this study focuses on minority group's online political participation as its primary research area. Through a thorough review of the literature pertaining to citizen and minority group's online political participation and its influencing factors, it was observed that studies specifically focusing on East Asian or even Asian immigrants in Germany are notably scarce. Given the fact that Asian immigrants constitute a significant portion of the minority population in Germany, the East Asian immigrant community in Düsseldorf was selected as the research population for this study considering its socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. In summary, the main research question of this study lies in the factors influencing the online political participation tendencies of East Asian residents in Düsseldorf.

To address the research question and deeply explore the underlying influencing factors, a qualitative research approach employing semi-structured interviews was employed in this study. A total of 31 East Asian residents in Düsseldorf were interviewed, ensuring diversity in terms of race, age, gender, and socioeconomic status among the respondents. Through answering the formulated research questions and open-ended inquiries, participants were asked to express their attitudes and perspectives regarding online political participation. By analyzing and summarizing the interview data, this study revealed the factors influencing the online political participation of East Asians in the city of Düsseldorf, and verifies the contributory factors widely recognized in the existing literature, while also exploring the new elements. The research shows that the significant factors affecting the online political participation of East Asian residents in Düsseldorf include gender, personal or group interests, political efficacy, participation platform and information quality. More specifically, it was observed that female respondents exhibited a greater inclination towards political participation compared to their male counterparts. This trend was evident in their deeper concern for ethnic group interests, stronger sense of political efficacy, and more frequent engagement in political discussions. Moreover, respondents who demonstrated a higher degree of group and personal interest displayed a greater propensity for participation. This connection was

influenced by factors such as their emphasis on human rights and equality, as well as their sense of ethnic belonging. Additionally, respondents with a heightened sense of political efficacy exhibited a stronger willingness to engage in online political activities. This can be attributed to their recognition of the significance of civic voices, their trust in democratic systems, and their confidence in online platforms as effective channels for political participation. Furthermore, the presence of high-quality participation platforms and relevant information can facilitate and enhance respondents' participation intentions by reducing time commitments, improving efficiency, and enhancing their understanding and trust in political interactions. Apart from those, factors such as internet skills, level of integration, experience of grievance, effort required to participation and political awareness also deserve great attention. Respondents who possess internet literacy, high level of integration, political awareness and literacy exhibit a higher inclination to participate in online events due to their better comprehension of the participation processes and operational mechanisms of online activities. Additionally, they display greater confidence in their political engagement abilities and their potential to enact meaningful change. Dissatisfaction and grievance experienced by respondents serve as motivating factors, driving them to opt for online platforms as a means to express their views and address responsive issues. Moreover, respondents show a greater willingness to participate in online political activities when language barriers are minimal and the time and financial requirements are reduced. Lastly, interviewees emphasized the significance of the government's initiative and commitment to integrating the East Asian population and expressed their willingness to support the government-led online political activities.

Despite uncovering the primary factors that influence online political participation among East Asian residents in Düsseldorf, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. These limitations include a small sample size, unbalanced demographic representation, and the possible biases resulting from the reliance on self-reported data . To improve these deficiencies in future research, efforts can be made to increase the sample size, ensure a more balanced representation of demographics by establishing clear screening criteria and targeting specific subgroups, recruit respondents through

multiple channels, and incorporate quantitative research methods alongside qualitative approaches.

Lastly, future research could delve deeper into the mediating role of factors such as group benefit, personal interest, political efficacy, and effort to participate in the relationship between other factors and the tendency for ethnic minorities to engage in online political participation. Furthermore, it is crucial to further validate and confirm the impact of government initiatives on the online political participation tendencies of East Asian immigrants through multiple research methods. Additionally, future studies can also explore and discuss the reasons behind the gender differences observed in this study, which contradict existing research conclusions. From a practical standpoint, the Düsseldorf city government can refer to the findings of this study to develop and implement more comprehensive policies and measures for the integration of East Asian residents. These may include initiatives such as providing education on political knowledge, addressing the demands of minority groups, and establishing inclusive online participation platforms, among others.

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Appendix

Transcription

1. Do you have past experience with offline political participation?

“I joined the march against the covid policy. I saw others marching against the it that I also don't support, so I took part in. It didn't take long for the policy to be scrapped. I think it's useful for people to speak out and voice their demands. If we remain silent, there will never be any change.” -Participant 1

“I joined a petition on the US White House website about a Chinese student who was killed, and people want a closer look into it. I also participated in some anti-Asian Hate marches and petitions because racial discrimination against Asians is getting worse nowadays. I am very concerned about the rights of Chinese or Asian people and I hope something can be done about it.” - Participant 5

“I have attended many rallies and protests in Berlin, and although sometimes I had to make special time and spend money on transport, I think it was worth it. It would be much easier if it was online, just click on some web pages and you can participate.” - Participant 6

“I've attended public preaches on gender construction, feminist classes, and some offline marches. I also participated in some rallies on the third world and labour exploitation. Because I studied a major related to politics, I probably know more about these topics than the average person.” - Participant 9

“Since I came to Germany when I was about ten years old, I've been following some political information since high school. I used to go to political events with local people, initially out of curiosity, but now it's more about attending events that I care about, like labour treatment or gender equality or something like that.” - Participant 17

“I took part in the White Paper campaign and some feminist events and helped out in all aspects of the process, such as designing slogans and photography and so on. But campaigns like the petition signing are probably better suited to online as it's easier to spread and less resource intensive.” - Participant 19

2. Can you describe your experience and familiarity with the Internet? How frequently do you use it in your personal and/or professional life?

"I will look through the political comments that others post on social media, especially some of the influencers I follow, and sometimes discuss with netizens and then be inspired by them." - Participant 4

"I usually surf the internet a lot in my daily life. Sometimes I see other people posting events, such as petitions or protests by international students, and I will go and support them if I think it is necessary." - Participant 6

"I don't usually go online, I haven't downloaded any social networking software, and I don't have an account on Twitter or Facebook. I usually only talk to friends I know and basically don't follow political information, mostly in German which I can't read." - Participant 14

"Lots of those apps that I feel are mostly used by youngsters, not so much by people our age, and they are not necessary. We can call or text if anything comes up. Occasionally I use them for short videos or news, but not much for politics." - Participant 25

3. How likely will you participate in online political activity if it relates to your group's interests or your own material benefits?

"I've heard that some states in Germany are going to start charging tuition fees, and if this happens in my place or university, there's a campaign about it, like some online joint letter or something, and I'll definitely sign it. Because many international students choose to come to Germany to study just because the tuition fees are free or very little." - Participant 1

"Although we are not directly involved in the policy making process, we are willing to speak up for the groups we belong to, such as the Asian community, if we have the opportunity to do so." - Participant 2

"If it's about women or women's rights in the workplace, I'll probably check it and call for people to speak out and get involved in a less aggressive way. But first I would see if it is of

direct interest to me and if it would help me in my future career, for example, by increasing the number of jobs for women, then the payoff would be obvious and I would get involved.” - Participant 5

“I will participate in events that are more beneficial to my group, such as anti-East Asian hate and some feminist events or marches against the rights of Asian immigrants.” - Participant 6

“I'm looking for opportunities to attend events that are related to our community, related to women's rights or LGBT, and if it's relevant to my community or a community I care about I'd like to join. While one person's involvement may be just a number plus one, if everyone doesn't do it, eventually, it will go nowhere. Many events rely on the attention and involvement, and persistence of netizens to make progress. I am usually interested in art-related exhibitions, and Düsseldorf has a policy to support this. If I had the chance, I would contact the government with my friends to collaborate on some activities, and also to promote Asian culture and anti-discrimination via art.” - Participant 7

“I might consider participating if the activity doesn't require divulging too much of my privacy. But if it could expose my personal information, I may choose not to join. If the activity is beneficial for my work, allowing me to deal with my profession more confidently and perform better in the workplace, I would be more inclined to participate.” - Participant 8

“If it's related to my own interests and I have the time, I would definitely participate. For example, if there's a strike demanding higher wages or reduced working hours, I would be more willing to join. Online activities are even more convenient because they require less time and energy commitment, making it easier for me to participate.” - Participant 9

“The more people who attend, the more likely it is that they will be taken seriously. Many minority groups have been discriminated against in the past, and it is only by speaking out that they can fight for their rights.” - Participant 11

“If it's something like a tuition fee increase involved, I'm probably 95% likely to go, and if it's a fellow receiving bullying here, I'm probably 60% likely to attend. Tuition is a very intuitive issue and I don't want this to cost more than I can afford.” - Participant 12

“If it's something to do with women's rights or labour discrimination, or something to do with group interests, then I'll participate if I see it. If it's about a profession, I'll definitely participate,

because professions are still very important and if I can fight for my rights, like the Germans on strike, I'll participate.” - Participant 13

*“I would like to participate as long as it is related to parents, family and children, and my life. If it's for a right that I'm fighting for, for example, if it's career-related, I might also take part.”
-Participant 14*

“I think it's very possible for me to support, for example, participation like voting, if it's with minority groups, women and refugees. If I'm asked to give a speech, maybe not, but just to participate and support, I mean just to be a part of the campaign and to speak out or sign my name, I would be very willing to do that. It takes generations to make progress for our rights, and there are some things you will feel you have to do even if you could fail just in order to succeed one day, so I don't care if there is an impact, I expect it, but it's okay to fail, so I'm full of hope.” - Participant 16

“It depends on what it is and the circumstances and whether I am interested in it, for example, during the White Paper Revolution, I would have participated if I thought the situation was tense.” - Participant 18

“If it's a movement like this with the Asian or women's community or the LGBT community, I'm 100% in. If the theme doesn't go against my own wishes and it's something I agree with or am interested in, I will definitely participate.” - Participant 19

“If it is related to the rights and interests of us Asians and Asian workers, I still want to support it. Because it is more difficult for Asians to unite together, and it is even sometimes there are Chinese, Japanese and Korean people who often dislike each other. But the locals or other immigrants are very united, and I hope that Asians can learn from others too.” - Participant 22

“If you can participate, you must, whether it's a simple vote or a mass petition. Life here is not as easy for Asians as it is for locals, or even for Turks. The more you don't fight for your rights, the easier it is to fall to the bottom.” - Participant 28

“I have tried to join some organisations, and there are some Japanese clubs here in Düsseldorf, and they have organised some events. If you live abroad, you feel more at home with people of similar backgrounds. It's also better to work together than to work alone.” - Participant 29

“I would definitely attend, if there was one. Because I'm gay myself, and the situation of our community is still in need of improvement, and it's not exactly equal. There is a need for that, both for the gay group and for myself. I am planning to settle in Germany, so I feel that I have an obligation to speak out, both for myself and for others. Because this is the country I want to live in and I want to make the social environment better and more humane.” - Participant 30

4. To what extent do you believe your online participation can influence political affairs?

“I think it has little effect. Because I feel that in the context of Germany, there is an unspoken racism. East Asians are different from German society, and there are not as many of them. In terms of politics, I think East Asians have very little influence, especially at the macro level such as society or policy.” - Participant 1

“It is very certain that it will influence government decisions or policies and that my participation is valuable.” - Participant 4

“First of all, it depends on the nature of the activity. If it is just popularizing East Asian or Chinese culture, the impact will be very small, because long-term popularization is required. Then the participation of the Chinese themselves is relatively low, and they are not local citizens, so they will pay more attention to survival and risk issues.” - Participant 5

“I think it will have an impact, for example, there have been some relevant petitions and signings here before, and it has some effect in the end. It feels like the Germany will focus on the ideas of each individual citizen, even though one person is neglectable, but it is possible for everyone to participate and to push for something to happen.” - Participant 6

“For example, the cancellation of the zero-covid policy can only be achieved by everyone protesting online and offline. Offline demonstrations and rallies may be stopped, but online movements are reposted by everyone, and the scale is so large that it is impossible to block them all. So we still have to speak up, the Internet is a very useful channel.” - Participant 7

“I think the effect is still limited. We have protests here every week, but the real decisive thing is the interests of the authorities or political parties. The voice on the Internet is just a kind of momentum.” - Participant 9

“I imagine there will still be some impact, and the more people sign the petition, the more effective it will be. If the process wasn't too complicated for me to participate and it was just a signature I would probably participate.” - Participant 10

“Honestly, I'm willing to join, but I'm not sure if it will truly have an impact on policies. If it's on a large scale or has a significant number of participants, then it might have an influence. But I will support it with the belief in the power of accumulation of small actions.” - Participant 11

“It depends on the degree of promotion of the activity on the Internet. If it is only a small-scale activity, I think the influence is not very great. If online activities are extended to offline, such as street protests, it may have a greater impact.” - Participant 17

“At this stage, I'll support most of these types of campaigns as long as I see them online. After all, it doesn't take time to sign up and vote online or anything. You don't need to go to a specific place or march somewhere and you can help others.” - Participant 23

“I think it's hard to say what the impact of this can be, and there are successful and unsuccessful events. But online campaigns are much easier to promote, you forward a link, then more people will see it. Contacting the authorities is something you can do by writing an email, and voting is just a matter of moving your fingers. The more people who participate in this way, the greater the impact it may have.” - Participant 24

“I think politics is a very unrealistic thing, and I don't know the meaning of these activities. Once the policy is confirmed, you just have to follow it. If it can be easily changed just because everyone opposes it, what effect does the policy have? I just need to live my own life well, and social development is beyond my influence.” - Participant 27

“Policy is finally made by government agencies, isn't it? And the power of the government and politicians is also given by votes, and the any political decisions are not only determined by one person or one political party. A democratic society and political system should naturally respect the wishes of the people. If so, we as part of the mass must express our views. The political system is constantly improving and people are now increasingly concerned with defending their rights. If the government and politicians want to get the support of the citizens they must respond to people's needs, otherwise they will not have an advantage in terms of mass support or in elections.” - Participant 28

5. Are you involved with a local community or organization? Do their activities motivate you to become politically engaged online?

"I have not been in Germany for long, I do not have many interactions with the locals and I have few channels to get to know German society in depth. The goal at this stage is to work and earn money, politics is not necessary for life." - Participant 3

"I was in some environmental organisations before, and sometimes I would go out with them to do some environmental campaigning or litter collection. I think we are responsible for the environment we live in and it is getting a lot of attention these days. If there is such an online activity, I think I would like to join it." - Participant 4

"I'm involved in animal protection organisations and I'm more interested in the topic. If it's something about animal rescue I'm likely to go online and participate in it." - Participant 17

"I've never joined any organisations, and I'm very busy at work. I've heard of them and some events from colleagues and friends, but I don't know how to join. I am not familiar with those websites and software here, and sometimes I need my daughter to guide me." - Participant 26

6. How often do you express or discuss your political opinions on Social medias?

"I feel that discussion is a prerequisite for my participation. I can't just blindly attend an event without discussing it with others, and if I want to attend an event in the future, I will certainly do so only after a lot of discussions online or offline." - Participant 7

7. Have you ever experienced dissatisfaction or grievance? To what extent would you like to address it through online political participation?

"The bureaucracy in Germany is very serious and the work efficiency is low. If there is a local petition against the SAFE and the Labor Bureau to urge them to make some changes, I will definitely participate. If this matter is legal, I am willing to participate, because I feel that it is very related to my actual interests." - Participant 5

“I think it's quite possible for me to resolve these emotions or conflicts by going online, exposing it or even starting my own petition if it's serious, or joining in immediately if I see someone else starting a similar campaign. When I first came to Germany I thought it was unnecessary, but now I think it's important to speak out.” - Participant 6

“If I voice too much on the Internet, which affects the interests of other groups or individuals, they may take actions that are not conducive to me. Also, personal information can be exposed online. How can it be secured though? I don't want to be targeted just because of political disagreements.” - Participant 8

“I think there are still a lot of discrimination or sexual harassment here, because I have this kind of personal experience, and then I have legal support and some deep insight. Because I feel sad and I want to reduce this feeling, so I'm gonna participate.” - Participant 9

“I think Germany is taking too many refugees and it will have an impact on normal taxpayers. I have an opinion but I also think it's a humanitarian act. And sometimes it's just a different stance and I'm more worried about suffering reprisals if you take part in an event that touches someone else's interests.” - Participant 11

“Some parts of Germany are still relatively conservative, and inequality between genders is common. If I see relevant activities on the Internet, I will want to participate. It is more difficult to organize by myself. But as long as someone organizes it, I will participate. When you see the injustice, you have to solve it. After all, I have to find a way to protect my own rights and interests when I still live here.” - Participant 13

“My child has experienced similar discrimination and the teacher did not treat my child in the same way as other children. There's a 50% chance that I'll go online when I am unsatisfied with something. But I would be very angry if it was about my kids, and I would be very willing to participate in such activities.” - Participant 14

“Now if I encounter something like gender discrimination, I will definitely participate. Although Germany's policies for women are relatively sound, I think it can be improved, such as income equality or public gender facilities.” - Participant 19

“I have a strong dissatisfaction with the overly free internet culture. As a result, young people in particular suffer negative effects and many young people in their 20s and 30s also find it difficult to maintain their correct values and beliefs.” - Participant 22

8. How much do you value the usability of the participatory platform and well-structured information in fostering your online political participation?

“I value the usability of the platform and the completeness and clarity of the information. If a person starts out just out of curiosity, but with a certain understanding of an event or activity through well-developed information, there is an incentive to participate or express an opinion.” - Participant 1

“It definitely has an impact, just like a social platform, user experience is very important. For example, if you want to submit something and fail to submit it all the time, then you must give up.” - Participant 10

“If the platform is easy to use or the information is comprehensive, it will have a great impact on me. Because if the process is too complicated and cumbersome, I don’t bother to read it at all, and as a person whose mother tongue is not German, I may not even understand proper nouns.” - Participant 11

“I think the justice of the platform is also very important. If it is a platform of a government agency, it does work better in some aspects. But if it is a social media platform like Facebook, it will involve issues of exposure and algorithms, especially now that there are some so-called political correctness or incorrectness, so the platform must be a factor to be considered.” - Participant 11

“It will have a great impact. If the website has a good user interface, it will greatly enhance my willingness to use this website.” - Participant 12

“I feel that there is a lack of such a platform now. When encountering injustice, I don’t know where to find such information and where to report it. If there is one, many people can report the situation they have encountered. It needs to be done step by step. It may not be that comprehensive at first, and it can be improved if people are allowed to comment. ” - Participant 13

“If it is on an app, I can see various topics as soon as I open it, about various aspects, such as children, single mothers, and families. I can participate by answering questions then I will do it. If it is too complicated, for example the language is too difficult, I will not participate.” -

Participant 14

“It will have an impact. For example, if the software is not well designed, or the interface is not very easy to use, and there are some bugs, such as no response to the next step after filling out, it will reduce my willingness. If the interface is accessible and the description is clear, I will be willing to use it. If it is real-time, I will often spend some scattered time to see what I can do.” -

Participant 15

“For a correct online policy, it is necessary to introduce a system of using clear names and to clearly warn people with extreme and violent political tendencies. All members should have an understanding of human nature and its positive and negative side, while showing a love for human beings” -

Participant 20

“Trust in online information and sources can also impact an individual's willingness to engage in online political activity. Concerns about misinformation, disinformation, or fake news can lead to skepticism or reluctance to participate in online political discussions or share content, impacting willingness to engage.” -

Participant 21

“The second is whether the motivation of this political activity is objective and unbiased. For example, the information it gives should not be inductive or provocative, but introduce the content of the event in a neutral way and guide us how to participate. If I find out that this information is intended to incite confrontation, or cause conflict, I will definitely not participate.”

- Participant 28

9. How do the requirements associated with online political participation (e.g., language, costs of Internet access, registration fees, or time consumed) affect your willingness to engage in those activities?

“I am very serious about the cost of participation, especially time or expense. Because as an outsider, if I have no plan to live in Germany for a long time, German politics has little to do with me. It's not worth the extra effort and money invested in this.” -

Participant 1

“If the operation is difficult, it will take more time and energy, then I I don't want to participate. Fees have a big impact, and if the fees required are too high, I will not participate.” - Participant 4

“As a person who doesn't speak German, if the event is all in German, it is basically impossible to participate, even if it is related to my interests, I will not participate. Unless the effect can be seen immediately, I may be willing to translate the content, otherwise I will definitely give up.” - Participant 5

“Language has a great influence. If the basic language of the event is German, I think it should be accompanied by some interaction or video or pictures, otherwise it will be difficult for foreigners to invest so much time and focus. If your language is not up to standard, you will not want to participate.” - Participant 6

“If it is a kind of all-German activity with more dictation, I can only understand very few of the content, and then I don't get what they mean, so I don't want to participate.” - Participant 7

“I think if it takes too much time I would not like to engage . Because I need work, I would be more willing to spend my time on things that are more valuable to my future.” - Participant 11

“Even if you I the German test, it does not mean that I can communicate with Germans smoothly, and there are cultural differences. For example, when Germans give speeches, they may quote classics, but you may not understand them. Another example is about how to give speech in German to resonate with others.” - Participant 12

“Language is still very important in Germany. There may be a gap between Germans and foreigners, and it is difficult to participate in activities and discuss together. Time and money are big issues. As a new immigrant, I must first take care of my own life. And only when you reach a certain income class will you think of helping others.” - Participant 13

“I am willing to make a big effort, even if it costs a lot of time and money, if the activity is in line with my wishes or my political views.” - Participant 17

10. What other factors do you think are also necessary to inspire your online political participation?

“The local policy towards East Asians or foreign residents is very important for me, because some policies just make me feel like an outsider. If the government or officials take the initiative to involve East Asian groups and listen to our voices, I may participate.” - Participant 1

“Depending on the foreseeable consequences of this activity, I may only participate if I feel that this activity can achieve its original purpose to a large extent. If there is government support, this possibility is definitely greater. The relationship between the individual and the government is like a balance, so if the government has enough sincerity, that individual's willingness to participate will be particularly strong. Also, if I know more about the German system, tradition and organizational structure, I will be more willing to participate, because everyone likes to stay in their comfort zone. If I know exactly which channels to choose and how to participate can be the most effective, I would definitely want to participate more.” - Participant 8

“If it is invited by the government, I am more willing to participate. I feel like we are always being represented in our own country, so we have no chance to express our wishes, and the education we receive is not to engage in too many such things. But there is more freedom here, and now that the government encourages you to participate, then why not?” - Participant 12

“If the government holds an event and I'm invited, I will definitely participate if I have time, because I am in a marginalized group, and if someone offers an opportunity to engage, I will definitely use this channel.” - Participant 9

“The cultural background factor is very important, because the education I received did not encourage me to participate in these things. It is a very new environment in Germany, and I only participated step by step after seeing Germans doing the same. Like some students, if they don't learn sociology, political science and similar subjects, they may not understand or have access to relevant information, so the previous basic education is very important.” - Participant 13

“I think politics is related to the environment you grow in. Because the education I have received since childhood is that I don't care much about those things, and we instinctively accept everything the government gives us, thinking that they are all good, and I don't have the

consciousness to resist or argue. It was only after arriving in Germany that I began to reflect on it, and felt that it should not be like this.” - Participant 16

“I grew up in a place where the political environment is very scarce. Many people will avoid talking about politics. It is different from the political soil in Europe. For example, everyone will chat and do things in distinct ways. I think it is the awakening of ideology and subjective initiative. If you feel that this matter is wrong from the bottom of your heart, you will participate. Or you are motivated to understand new political views, the most important thing is the transformation of ideology and the awakening of political consciousness.”. - Participant 18

“Emphasising inclusivity and diversity can enhance political potential by ensuring that different perspectives and voices are represented and heard. This could include promoting inclusivity in decision-making processes, valuing diverse opinions and fostering an inclusive and respectful political environment.” - Participant 20

“A positive perception of politics and sufficient education on the fact that politics has a great impact on life are necessary.” - Participant 21

“I think people must have common sense in politics to participate. Like voting, you have to know what you are voting for and how and where to vote. If you know all of these things, it will be easier and more confident to participate.” - Participant 24