



Online Petition as a Form of Citizen Participation in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

All aspects of human life today cannot be separated from technology. Technology has enabled citizens to convey their aspirations. This study analyzes the digital participation of Indonesian citizens through online petition platforms. Subject of this research is undergraduate students of Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). This research uses quantitative, literature study, and case study methods. Case study is conducted by analyzing various online petitions but mostly focuses on Indonesia's Omnibus Law of Job Creation. Quantitative method is conducted through Google forms distributed among ITB students. Based on the results, ITB students know and understand online petitions and have filed petitions on average 5 to 7 times. We have found that the petition is quite effective, but must be accompanied by further advocacy. We recommend readers to seek more information about advocacy of online petitions, and the Indonesian government should write a law regarding online petitions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Citizens can participate in politics, and there are various ways to do this. This participation includes voting in the process of electing representatives of the people, giving letters to the government, expressing opinions, joining political parties or community organizations, running for government, and participating in fundraising (Morissan, et al., 2016). Now, the current development of the times can no longer be avoided. All aspects of human life seem to have been wrapped in science and technology. It is also unavoidable that this technology has been implemented by humans who are essentially social beings. So it is not surprising that this technology has also participated in the framework of advocating human rights as citizens under a law that breathes ideology and the Constitution that has been drawn up and mutually agreed upon.

Of course, technology as a complement and tool in citizenship must not tarnish and differ from the fundamental values that existed before. So, we have to further study and criticize matters relating to the implementation of technology in citizenship. In the midst of the implementation of this technology, it cannot be separated from the digitalization and computerization process in it. Without exception in the scope of citizenship mechanisms. This technology encourages digitization which can facilitate the communication process and reduce difficulties in participating in politics by facilitating interaction between state or government institutions and citizens. This convenience exists because the internet is a medium that is very creative, interactive, creates equality, direct, and networked (Bakardjieva, et al., 2012). It is this process of digitalization and computerization that is being intensively used as a stepping stone to achieve optimal citizen participation in the constitutional sphere. Of course, a tool may not only provide benefits in the course of citizen participation, disturbances, threats and dangers can also be caused by it. So, we have to analyze more about the boundaries and regulations of digital implementation to be able to truly answer human needs as citizens.

One example of digital implementation cases in the framework of citizen participation which is currently being widely discussed is the case of submitting online petitions. This platform offers the public a wide range of access and is not complicated. From data from the Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers (APJII), there were 132.7 million people using the internet in Indonesia in 2016, around 51% of the total population of Indonesia at that time (256.2 million) (Tranggana, 2023). At first glance, this online petition seems to be an ideal and effective option. However, as an option that is only a tool, it certainly does not rule out the possibility that there will be defects that are far from ideal. By using online petition media, it is possible for the public to understand and support one another more because of the convenience of interacting and obtaining information (Kustriana, 2020). However, this may not be true. So, we can study more about the effectiveness of the online petition itself, and look for logical possibilities to increase its effectiveness. This research on online petitions aims to: (1) determine the level of understanding and frequency of using online petitions among college students; (2) knowing the main function of online petitions; and (3) determine the level of effectiveness of signing online petitions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. DIGITAL CITIZEN

Digital citizens are residents of a country who use digital systems in the form of information technology with the aim of involving themselves in society, politics and government (Jones and Mitchell, 2016).

There are nine important elements that make a person part of a digital citizen (Parry, 2008; Ribble, et al., 2004), namely:

1. Digital access: digital citizens start with easy access to technology. However, equitable digital access is often difficult to achieve in various countries due to social, economic and other disparities. To apply digital citizenship as a whole, digital access must be spread evenly.
2. Digital commerce: this element includes all types of economic activities carried out online, from buying and selling, banking, to even the legality of the goods purchased.
3. Digital communication: this element relates to understanding various online communication media such as email, instant messaging, Facebook messenger, various applications, and so on
4. Digital literacy: relates to how to use various digital devices. For example, how to properly search for something in a search engine versus a database.
5. Digital etiquette: how different media require different etiquettes. Certain media demand more appropriate behavior and language than others.
6. Digital law: law enforcement that must be done, such as for illegal downloads, plagiarism, hacking, creating viruses, sending spam, identity theft, cyberbullying, and so on.
7. Digital rights and responsibilities: is a set of rights that digital citizens have such as privacy and freedom of speech.
8. Digital health: digital citizens must be aware of the physical stress on their bodies from using the internet. They should be aware not to rely too much on the internet which causes problems such as eye strain, headaches and stress.
9. Digital security: regarding all types of digital security. Citizens should take action to be safe by practicing using secure passwords, virus protection, backing up data, and so on.

In addition to the nine elements that are often brought up when talking about digital citizens, Minjeong proposes the SAFE framework. SAFE stands for Self-identity, Activity in online, Fluency for digital environment (fluency in activities in a digital environment), and Ethics for digital environment (ethics in a digital environment). SAFE was created because many references did not make self-identity of adolescents or adolescent self-identity an important independent factor for becoming digital citizens (Kim and Choi, 2018).

2.2. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BY SOCIETY AS A FORM OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy will develop well if the level of political participation by the people increases. According to Budiardjo in Effendi, political participation itself can be defined as activities carried out to participate in political life. This participation takes various forms, from voting in presidential elections to indirectly influencing government policy decisions (Effendi, et al., 2020). Community political participation is the most important element in democracy, and has been regulated in article 1 paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

2.3. DIGITAL CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

According to Holzer, the development of digital citizen participation can be divided into two main stages, namely:

1. Information Dissemination

- a) Dissemination of static information, for example, citizens using read-only websites from reliable sources to formulate judgments or facts. Several reliable websites have been provided by the government.
- b) Dynamic information dissemination, a series of information dissemination activities that are more interactive by involving citizens and civil servants. Both questions and answers can be communicated, and citizens have the opportunity to engage in a question and answer dialogue through a two-way communication platform (Utami, 2020).

2. Residents'

Meeting It is a stage for evaluating what kind of participation and role a citizen can play to trigger some kind of change in government policy. For static citizen participants, they can play a role by being involved (Holzer, et al., 2004).

According to Roza, digital citizen participation will have a major influence on the development of democracy. Digital media can be a separate space for the public to express opinions and the process of disseminating information is also intent, fast, wide and evenly distributed. From the use of digital media, opinions will be easily formed, but the public remains skeptical. All of these things create a separate social construction (Isman and Canan, 2014).

2.4. ONLINE PETITION IN INDONESIA

Online petitions are statements submitted by the public to the government online so that the government takes certain actions (Fadhlorrohan and Purnomo, 2020) In Indonesia, online petitions are often used by the public to voice or support an opinion (Suryadharma and Susanto, 2017). An example of an online petition that is currently popular is the petition against the Job Creation Law as shown in Figures 1 and 2. The two petitions have 600 thousand and 1.4 million supporters respectively.



Source: <https://www.change.org/p/tolak-ruu-omnibus-law-cipta-lapangan-kerja-mositidakpercaya>

Figure 1. Online petition against the Job Creation Bill as of 30 October 2020 at 20.47 WIB.



Source: <https://www.change.org/p/ketua-dan-para-wakil-ketua-dpr-ri-ini-maklumat-pemuka-agama-indonesia-tolak-omnibus-law-dan-buka-ruang-partisipasi-publik-mositidakpercaya>

Figure 2. Indonesian religious leaders' petition for rejection of the Job Creation Bill as of 30 October 2020 at 20.47 WIB.

2.5. FUNCTIONS AND POSITION OF ONLINE PETITIONS IN INDONESIA

Lindner and Riehm divide the function of the petition into three levels, namely:

1. Individual level function, from the intention of an individual or a group. However, requests for changes in public policy also fall into this level of functioning. The purpose of changing public policy is how petitions can make an issue reach its goals.
2. Intermediate level function, this function is a function that is to assist the parliamentary part of a government, whether to provide assistance for aspirations, information, or to help maintain quality (quality control) in other areas of government.
3. System level function, this function is more complex, because it can change the system of a government. The purpose of changing the system is to pay attention to petitions in making a policy (Lindner and Riehm, 2011).

The online petition site that is very well known in Indonesia, Change.org, is a platform used to initiate social change (Sanjaya, 2018). Other online petition sites in Indonesia also follow the same system as Change.org (Lestari and Suranto, 2018). In Indonesia itself, there are no specific rules regarding online petitions. In other countries such as the UK, there is a special parliament to be accountable for and accommodate online petitions (Abdillah and Zulhazmi, 2021).

2.6. FURTHER ADVOCACY

Further Advocacy To make a change, Indonesian people still have to carry out advocacy (persuasive actions) such as lobbying, mediation, studies, campaigns, actions, or judicial reviews (Oktaviani and Sudibya, 2019). The government has provided online judicial review facilities through the official website of the Indonesian Constitutional Court (mkri.id). In the case of the petition against the Job Creation Law in **Figures 1 and 2**, there have been several advocacy efforts by the public to strengthen their objection. Some of these advocacies were carried out by the petitioner or other people who also agreed with the petitioner. One example of the advocacy carried out by the petitioner is the press conference and the submission of a letter regarding the rejection of the Job Creation Law which was made by religious leaders (**Figure 3**). This advocacy is a follow-up to the petition against the Job Creation Law by religious leaders (**Figure 1**). Examples of advocacy by other parties who are not petitioners can be seen in **Figure 4**, namely demonstrations by students and labor groups.



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sek2okisXQ4andab_channel=FraksiRakyatID

Figure 3. Online press conference as a follow-up advocacy of the online petition in Figure 1 and organized by the petitioner



Source: <https://www.kompas.tv/article/119203/sumpah-pemuda-ribuan-massa-dari-berbagai-elemen-demo-di-beberapa-titik-jakarta-tolak-omnibus-law>

Figure 4. Demonstrations by students and workers as follow-up advocacy of online petitions in Figures 1 and 2, organized by parties who were not the petitioners

If the focus of an online petition is the rejection of a policy, the public can conduct a test to cancel or change the policy. There are three types of tests that can be carried out, namely judicial review, legislative review, and executive review. According to Qamar, judicial review is a review process by a judicial power-executing body appointed by a constitutional body by way of interpreting the law and or interpreting the constitution (Qamar, 2012). In Indonesia, a judicial review will be carried out by the Constitutional Court or the Supreme Court.

Apart from judicial review, there are other alternatives, namely legislative review and executive review. In the legislative review, the test is submitted to the legislative body while in the executive review it is in the executive branch of the government. In the case of the petition against the Job Creation Law, other parties who were not petitioners, namely the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions (KSPI) and the Confederation of All Indonesian Trade Unions Andi Gani (KSPSI AGN), have submitted a judicial review to the Constitutional Court (<https://megapolitan.kompas.com/read/2020/11/03/09383301/buruh-resmi-ajukan-judicial-review-uu-cipta-kerja-ke-mk> taken on 7 November 2020). Finally, the dissemination of information regarding the issue from online petitions must still be carried out so that other people can learn more about the issue and determine their position in responding to the issue.

2.7. FURTHER ADVOCACY

There are several online petitions whose goals were achieved with the help of continued advocacy. The first example is a petition that went viral when a forest burning company in Aceh was found guilty and fined 366 billion by the Supreme Court, but the decision was overturned by the Meulaboh District Court Judge. 220,000 people protested through an online petition. Finally, the Supreme Court imposed a disciplinary penalty on the Meulaboh District Court Chief. Through a lawsuit filed by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, the Meulaboh District Court decision was annulled by the Banda Aceh High Court, so the company still has to carry out its sentence.

There are other petitions whose cases also end in 'winning', such as:

- 1) Rejection of the Law on MPR, DPR, DPD, and DPRD (UU MD3), with 240,000 supporters;
- 2) Termination of accessories made from birds of paradise, with 335,000 supporters;

- 3) Support for Bambang Hero, the witness who was counterclaimed by the forest burning company but eventually the lawsuit was withdrawn after going viral, with 150,000 supporters;
- 4) Refusal to send Berau Whale Sharks to Sea World Ancol, with 80,000 supporters (<https://tirto.id/daftar-kasus-yang-dimenangkan-petisi-changeorg-selama-tahun-2018> taken on 7 November 2020).

3. METHODS

The methods and approaches used in writing this scientific work are quantitative through surveys and qualitative through literature studies. This method and approach was chosen because the researcher wanted to find data that was in accordance with the field conditions. Although the results of the data obtained are generalizing, the quantitative approach shows a rough picture of the subject under study and is not just a conceptual study. The results of these methods and approaches are then described in detail and in detail in the results and discussion sections.

The technique chosen for collecting quantitative data is spreading surveys. This survey was created to show the tendency of respondents to ordinal online petitions using questions related to online petitions with answers on a scale of 1 to 5. Then in the same survey, multiple choice questions and written answers were also provided to show the respondents' perspectives and observations of online petitions. The survey was aimed at undergraduate students from the ITB environment as a sample. Respondents who were successfully obtained from the survey that was conducted were 100 ITB undergraduate students.

The technique used to collect data qualitatively is a literature study. This literature study was carried out as a comparison, support, and addition to insights or other points of view from the data obtained through surveys. A literature study was carried out by examining discussions related to digital participation, the relationship between digital participation and democracy, online petitions, and the effectiveness of online petitions themselves. The literature studies used in this study were sourced from carefully selected scientific journals, books, and sites. The results of the studies that have been discussed are compared with the results of data collection through surveys, then it is concluded whether online petitions have become an effective form of digital participation or not.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. UNDERSTANDING ONLINE PETITIONS

More details on the focus of the research subject can be seen in the following **Table 1**.

Table 1. Student familiarity with online petitions

LEVEL OF FAITHFITY	DISTRIBUTION (%)
Not familiar	4
Less familiar	7
Familiar enough	19
More familiar	39
Very familiar	31

Based on the results of a survey conducted with the public through the Google form media, when viewed from the data acquisition, it was found that the highest number was in the fourth choice, which means that the majority of respondents felt that they were more familiar

with online petitions. From the table, the number of respondents who feel very familiar with online petitions is also not much different from respondents who feel more familiar. This shows that online petitions are widely known by the public so that people feel familiar or have seen online petitions at least once. More details can be seen in the following **Table 2**.

Table 2. Student conditions regarding online petitions

CONDITIONS	DISTRIBUTION (%)
Never fill	60
Never fill up	40

Based on **table 2**, it was concluded that the majority of respondents had filled out online petitions, namely 60% of the total respondents. However, the number of respondents who never filled out a petition was also quite large at around 40%. This shows that the respondents' familiarity with online petitions is actually not enough, action is also needed from the respondents themselves.

4.2. USE OF ONLINE PETITIONS

From the data in **Table 2**, it was found that 60% of students had filled out online petitions. The author also conducted an additional survey on these students to find out how their online petitions were used. More details can be seen in the following **Table 3**.

Table 3. Frequency of student participation in online petitions

CHARGING FREQUENCY	DISTRIBUTION (%)
1 - 2	20
3 - 4	31,67
5 - 7	36,66
8 - 9	10
9>	1,66

Based on table 3, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents have filled out online petitions 5 to 7 times. This number is quite a lot, this means that the respondents are quite active in filling out online petitions. More details can be seen in the following **Table 4**.

Table 4. The number of students who continue to follow the issue of online petitions after filling them

STATUS	DISTRIBUTION (%)
Not following at all	11,67
Less following	21,67
Just following	43,33
follow often	15
Very follow to the end of the issue	8,33

Based on the data in table 4, it is known that the majority of respondents admitted that they had sufficiently followed the development of the problem after filling out an online petition. The high percentage of respondents who admit to following the development of the problem shows the high enthusiasm of the respondents towards the problem, which means that at least the respondents understand enough about the problem before signing an online petition. More details can be seen in the following **Table 5**.

Table 5. Issues raised by the petition signed by the students

ISSUES RAISED THE PETITION	MANY STUDENTS SIGNED (people)
Humanity	53
Law and politics	42
Socio-cultural	28
Education	19
Environment	3
Gender equality	1
Music	1
Animal protection	1

Based on the survey results, respondents have a tendency to sign on issues that are closely related to humanity; law and politics; socio-cultural; and education according to **table 5**. Significant differences start from issues regarding socio-culture followed by issues regarding education. Then, this significant difference reoccurred in issues concerning the environment with three respondents having filled out related online petitions followed by issues regarding gender equality, music and animal protection which had only been filled in by one respondent each. The tendency of students to sign online petitions that carry humanitarian issues; law and politics; and socio-cultural issues occur because these three topics include self-identity, are very likely to occur around respondents and have the possibility of influencing the lives of many people so that respondents have an urgency to carry out activities in online. Activity in online shows that respondents are interested in moving in positive fields that have an impact. Both of these components are included in the SAFE framework. More details can be seen in the following **Table 6**.

Table 6. Media where students find online petitions

MEDIA	LOTS OF STUDENTS (person)
Social media	57
Friends, family, acquaintances	22
Straight from the online	17
site Online or offline newspapers	11
E-mail	1
Television	1

Based on **table 6**, it can be concluded that most respondents found online petitions through social media followed by recommendations from friends, family and acquaintances and then the online petition site itself. This shows that online petitions spread easily through the internet and by word of mouth which is most likely also done through social media.

4.3. FUNCTIONS, EFFECTIVENESS AND FOLLOW UP OF ONLINE PETITIONS

After specifically asking respondents who had filled out online petitions, we again asked all respondents in this survey about the function, effectiveness, and follow-up of online petitions. More details can be seen in the following **Table 7**.

Table 7. Functions of submitting online petitions

FUNCTION	MANY STUDENTS (people)
Spreading awareness of an issue	57
Unifying sound	22

Change policy	21
elp fellow humans	3

From **table 7**, it can be seen that most people think that the main function of online petitions is to spread awareness (sensitivity) to an issue, but there are still other functions, namely to unify voices and change policies. This is in accordance with the section of the literature review which says that online petitions are a social mobilization tool. The next question we asked respondents was their opinion on the effectiveness of online petitions to solve a problem. In the data collection process, we use a scale of 1-5 to represent the opinions of respondents, each point has a meaning as shown in **table 8** below.

Table 8. Effectiveness of online petitions

EFFECTIVENESS	DISTRIBUTION (%)
Ineffective (1)	6
Less effective (2)	19
Moderately effective (3)	52
more effective (4)	20
Highly effective (5)	3

In table 8, it can be seen that the distribution is quite significant on a scale of 3, namely 'effective enough'. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents quite agree that submitting and signing online petitions is a solution to the problems in table 5. This is supported by a literature review which explains how online petition cases have successfully won various issues in Indonesia.

In addition, to respond further to the data from table 4, further questions are needed to find out the respondents' understanding of the follow-up of submitting and signing online petitions. To better represent the data, we also use a scale of 1-5 to determine the level of understanding of the respondents. Distribution for each point can be seen in **table 9**.

Table 9. Student understanding of follow-up to online petitions (for example, follow-up advocacy)

EFFECTIVENESS	DISTRIBUTION (%)
don't understand (1)	17
not really understand (2)	39
enough to understand (3)	35
Better understand (4)	7
Very understanding (5)	2

From **table 9**, it can be seen that the majority of respondents chose points 2 and 3. Based on this data it can be concluded that the majority of students felt they did not understand the follow-up of the submission/signing of the online petition. The results of these data support the data in table 4 which concluded that there were still many students who did not follow the issues from the petitions they signed.

In closing for respondents, we provide questions in the form of suggestions that they can give so that in the future online petitions can be even more effective. In this question, respondents can freely express their opinions, but can also choose not to answer. Most of the respondents hoped that socialization/education would be held regarding the use of online petition sites. This includes publications about the follow-up to the signing of the petition. The most recommended media is through social media and electronic mail. Furthermore,

several respondents suggested that the statutory rules for filing and signing online petitions must be formulated clearly and firmly, so that the implications of submitting online petitions can be considered constitutively.

There were also respondents who weighed in terms of submitting online petitions. They argue that additional security is needed in submitting online petitions on a site by carrying out layered verification, which aims to minimize petitions that are less important, contain false news, are inappropriate, and smell provocative which can cause chaos. For now, this online petition cannot be used as the main voice. Advocacy channels must also be taken that can support and strengthen the petition, so that the petition can be more easily accepted by the residents concerned and the government in authority.

5. CONCLUSION

The community is very familiar with online petitions, but the use of online petitions has not been practiced by everyone, only the majority. People who have filled out online petitions have, on average, filled in the 5 to 7 petitions they usually find on social media, and they have followed the progress of the issue after filling it out. The issues they follow are closely related to humanity, law, politics, socio-culture, and education. The main function of online petitions is to spread awareness (sensitivity) to an issue, but there are other functions too, namely to unite voices and change policies. Online petitions are quite effective, but they still need to be accompanied by further advocacy. However, most of the students still did not understand the follow-up. In order for online petitions to be even more effective, there must be socialization regarding the use of online petition sites.

6. RECOMMENDATION

We hope that by conducting this research, readers can participate in continuing this research which is still far from perfect. Unexpectedly, the response shown through suggestions received from respondents regarding the methods and steps seemed very enthusiastic about the topic at hand, moreover it was not uncommon for these suggestions to be solutive. Thus, there are several points from these suggestions that we can recommend to readers for further research.

We suggest readers to read more about further advocacy in order to strengthen the position of online petitions. In addition, it is necessary to make laws and regulations by the government in responding to the existence of online petitions. This research would not be meaningful without the participation of the readers. Thus, we are very open to all forms of support in the form of criticism or suggestions from readers regarding the topics that have been presented.

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