

Empowering Netizenship: The Politics of Defending the Environment in an Online Petition Change.Org

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ABSTRACT

This study shows how the impact of digital democracy in the change.org online petition contributes to efforts to save environmental damage, change individual community behaviour or ecological and natural resource governance policies. To collect data, the methodology is to categorize it into environmental themes, both local, national and global, on change.org and then validate with digital activism such as discussions, spreading meme propaganda to welcome selected petitions as an effort to consolidate data by utilizing Nvivo 12 Plus to see reactions, interactions. Thematic on Twitter, national-international media websites, and other social media. Digital democracy has driven public awareness and defence of the environment in the last decade. Another finding from this research is the power of online petitions in influencing policies or policy changes resulting from interactions on social media, at least in the last ten years. However, having a significant impact requires certain prerequisites to raise awareness of digital media users and forced power holders. In some themes, the online struggle of hundreds of online petitions on environmental-themed change.org turned out to have many impacts on project cancellations, courts, criminalization by companies or law enforcement officers or delaying and cancelling certain development policies.

KEYWORDS

Online petition;
Digital
democracy;
Ecology, Social
Media.

INTRODUCTION

Through the development of technology and information, people can be involved in massive street protests against those who should be responsible for environmental damage and environmental protection campaigns. Ecological problems include air pollution, water problems, illegal logging, forest fires, water scarcity, soil damage, climate change and the illegal sale of protected wildlife. A situation that requires a fundamental and revolutionary change related to the transformation of the perspective on the environment, both public awareness of the ecological condition that forms an attitude that recognizes the unity of life, the interconnectedness of life and the awareness that life is interdependent between humans, plants, animals and all universe. Environmental damage indicates that awareness of ecological understanding already exists but still lacks accuracy and depth of knowledge. With the environmental movement at the international level and the movement in Indonesia also moving to get justice, in addition to using social media, ecological issue activists or anyone who is impacted by the issue can also use a relatively new forum.

Change.org is one of the websites whose presence as an online petition includes environmental issues. An online petition is a form of political participation that connects the community with the government as a form of renewal of communication and information facilities that provide individuals and groups to conduct online petitions. The change.org platform offers the public a wider range of access to see today's ever-increasing internet and social media use. The percentage of internet usage in Indonesia is quite high, seeing that internet use in Indonesia reached 76.8 per cent at the end of March 2021 of the population (Katadata.co.id, 2021), while internet users in the country reached 212.35 million with an estimated total population of 276.3 million.

The percentage of Indonesian people's internet usage that is high enough so that social media can help fulfil policy advocacy goals to build networks through the use of social media has the advantage of facilitating further communication, which then creates a collaborative situation between platforms and social media networks as a means of campaigning petitions by the community and these activities form a digital community movement to develop changes in certain policies. Media users show an attitude spontaneously by uploading whatever they want on social media without any control. This movement is called the Digital Movement of Opinion (DMO). This movement follows technological developments, especially social media, which creates virtual networks between users interacting spontaneously to comment on an existing problem (Barisione & Michailidou, 2017).

One of the real political changes due to technology, namely, political migration from the physical space to the digital world, websites dedicated to online petitions as a powerful tool that the public can use to motivate social or political change. To influence or change existing policies, there will be a process that supports the achievement, participation or signing of petitions for one form of community participation in achieving political change, which then, as a form of political participation in the context of political participation, is community involvement in all stages of policy starting from the creation of the policy. Decisions up to decision assessments, including the opportunity to participate in the implementation of decisions. Online petitions which aim to indoctrinate petition targets and potential supporters, especially through textual research information (Chen et al., 2019), prove the success of online petitions by using cognitive, emotional and moral elements in the language of the petition.

The online petition's victory reflects the Indonesian people's concern about the issues that are developing around them. The mass media provides an understanding of the issue. It is now easier for someone to join in supporting social movements with new media and public awareness regarding the dynamics of environmental damage, as evidenced by several petitions aimed at protecting the environment in the Change.Org online petition.

This article aims to analyze the dynamics of issues, actors and discourses in the online petition on environmental matters on the change.org platform, such as: what specific

issues and addresses emerged in the petition? Who are the creators and signatories of each petition? We also find out how online petitions affect public behaviour and policy changes. The method we use is the Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study (CADS) which combines discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis approaches (Kusumasari et al., 2021). This article analyzed online petitions about environmental issues posted on the change.org platform during 2013-2020.

Fundamentally, people interact with government and society, creating new social and political phenomena, opportunities and challenges relevant to the community (Chen et al., 2019). Netizen is a creative combination of the terms 'internet' and 'citizen'. The term 'netizens' follows logically from a combination such as governance in cyberspace that makes the country move beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and meet as citizens of cyberspace or netizens through space. Provided on the internet, those exchange ideas and seek to change the 'offline' world (Chachage, 2010).

Technological developments have changed the socio-political and economic landscape and made social interactions and relations more dynamic, relational, and open so that they have the potential to promote democracy (Visvizi, 2019). Democracy, which requires efficient communication to fight for common interests where freedom of speech and opinion must be exercised freely and widely has been facilitated by the presence of the internet (Ramos, 2019). The ability of the internet to provide a locus for public debate makes it a "public space", which has strong political pressure to change social behavior and state policies. Although the concept of public space has been introduced by Habermas (1996) since two decades ago, with the definition of public space as a network to communicate information and opinions which are then selected into a set of public opinion, the internet as a public space has advantages that conventional public spaces do not have. namely: transnational in nature, decentralized sources of information, and the two-way character of communication (Visvizi, 2019). Therefore, the internet has become an important medium for civil society activism in mobilizing support and participants (Velasquez & LaRose, 2015). Activism through the internet is then known as cyber-activism or online activism.

Activism can be defined from an individual perspective as engaging in certain steps with the aim of creating social change, which can also focus on reactions to social, political, economic or environmental issues and activism can also involve groups of people acting together to achieve a common goal (Anderson & Hitlin, 2016). This research (Kojola & Pellow, 2021) finds that social inequalities, discrimination, and oppression that have shaped human experience and environmental risks that academic approaches fail to fully understand the extent of the environmental crisis. Research (Al-Lami et al., 2012) conceptualizes the evolution of a new media ecology finding that terrorist groups can benefit asymmetrically from a disorganized digital media economy, as content from individual lives and incidents can be rapidly reframed to support narratives.

Cyber-activism is civic participation from citizens that aims to build a more open, transparent and interactive society (Pérez-Escobar et al., 2020). Cyber activism is a model of civic empowerment that answers the needs of citizens to build horizontal communication between users around the world. Social movements and activism cannot be separated from the influence of globalization, technology and the rapid revolution in communication networks or cyber activism (Dhanorkar & Rosson, 2019). The social impact of technology for online activism can also have a positive effect on human behavior. (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013) found in his research that the role of social media as a catalyst for online deliberation can be an important element of online activism, finding that the type and structure of social platforms can determine the nature and content of online consideration. Clicktivism is used for actions whose success can be measured in virtual (online) and real (offline). Offline social movements will assume that social movements will potentially succeed in raising issues in action (Ahyar, 2019).

Instead of analyzing online activism mobilization on various social media platforms, this article chooses to analyze one of the online petition platforms, namely change.org. Our main reason is that social media is not the most appropriate locus to keep the focus on issues and discourses. Indeed, we can quantify the number of conversations on social media that represent how much a case is of public concern. Still, social media analysis often tempt researchers to analyze actors and interactions between actors in an activism project. Meanwhile, this article focuses on how much environmental activism substance projects are being championed through digital platforms. To avoid such distractions, we chose an online petition platform as a source of analysis.

Petitions have long been recognized as a method of proving support through "numerical logic" in the repertoire of social movements to show the extent of public support for a move or issue (Porta, 2009). In the old study of political participation, the petition is positioned as an activity similar to protest and the repertoire of action movements. A movement chose online petitions as one of its repertoires because of the cost efficiency in mobilizing the masses and overcoming the problems of distance and logistics for the movement (Wright, 2015). In addition, audience mobilization in online petitions must not only be initiated by an organization (organization-led), but also by individuals (Halpin et al., 2018), indicating that the majority of online petitions on the change.org platform in Australia were initiated by civil society individuals. Therefore, the analysis process of mobilization focuses more on issues and discourses than on the creator.

Previously, research on online petitions has attempted to answer several questions representing four dimensions: participation, creator, signer, and success. On the participation dimension, the question is whether online petitions equalize political participation or reinforce demographic bias. In the creator dimension, the general question is related to the reasons behind the creator's choice of online petition amidst the many other digital media options. In the signer dimension, the questions are related to the signer's social network, the number of signers, and the factors that influence the

number of signers of a petition. Finally, on the success dimension, they questioned the method for measuring the success of a petition, whether it was based on the number of signers, the power of influence on policy, or subjective reports, and what factors influenced it (Halpin et al., 2018). Here is a summary:

Table 1. Dimensions of Focus on Online Petition Research

Dimensions	Question Focus
Participation	Have online petitions succeeded in expanding participation and levelling the demographics? Or maintain a demographic imbalance?
Creator	Who is the creator of the petition? (individual or organization), and why do creators choose online petitions?
Signer	Who signed the petition? What is the relationship between the signatories? And what are the factors that influence the number of signatories?
Success	What indicators are used to measure success? (number of signatories, ability to influence policy, ability to influence behaviour change, or subjective reporting); and what factors influence success?

Based on the four dimensions of online petition analysis above, we are not suggesting that this article will use the four dimensions mentioned above, but at least tell us which dimension this article is in out of all the measurements above in analyzing online petitions on the topic of environmental issues in Indonesia from 2013 to 2021 available on the change.org platform (Halpin et al., 2018).

METHOD

This article uses the Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study (CADS) method. CADS is one of the methods in big data-based social research, which is a combination of Corpus Linguistic (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methods. Corpus Linguistics is a method that focuses on language analysis by analyzing a language's specific empirical meaning to understand the patterns that appear in a data bank (Ju et al., 2020). In contrast, Critical Discourse Analysis is a method that analyzes the relationship between language and context by using language to describe discursive practices when a discourse is shaped by the relationship between power and the constructive effect of the address on social identity. In the CDA method, language is a tool to show the practice of management in social life, and "context" is the intention of a course of power (Kusumasari, B., Rajiyem, & Santoso, 2021).

Meanwhile, CADS is a method that combines quantitative analysis of big data with emerging qualitative contexts. Words, numbers, and relationships between terms that emerge from the data set will require grouping and redefinition so that the data has social meaning. Therefore, CADS works by analyzing the purpose and providing the social context of a series of word patterns. CADS is able to reveal messages, purposes, and

ideologies from word patterns that cannot be seen with the naked eye so as to provide an explanation of the emerging patterns (Kusumasari, B., Rajiyem, & Santoso, 2021).

There are five steps in using CADS, including (1) selecting media, (2) determining the corpora, (3) creating datasets, (4) application use, and (5) critical discourse analysis. In this article, we first choose to use the change.org platform as a medium. Next, the corpora we decided were all online petitions about environmental issues in Indonesia that appeared in the 2013-2020 period. Third, we created a dataset using the QDSA technique on the Nvivo 12 Plus application (Ozkan, 2004). Fourth, we used the Nvivo 12 Plus application to the group to determine the number and keywords of the corpora that had appeared. Finally, we use CDA to understand groups, frequencies and keywords by relating them to certain issues or ideologies in a social phenomenon. To link CDA with the desire to find out how online petitions influence behaviour and policy change, we grouped each discourse into four dimensions in online petitions, namely the dimensions of participation, creator, signer, and petition success (Halpin et al., 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Change.org was founded in 2007 as a non-profit social network and project-based giving. Used by more than 70 million users in 196 countries, Change.org is the largest and most widely used and widely adopted petition platform by social movement organizations dealing with various issues (Huang et al., 2015). Change.org emerged in June 2012 in Indonesia with a working system to collect signatures and opinions through digital social networks. Every support collected will send a petition to the email address of the party who is the object of the petition. The world's largest petition platform that empowers anyone and anywhere to create change (Sukmi, 2015). This petition uses simple and clear sentences so that it can be easily understood by using neutral sentences (Kustriana, 2020). The environmental movement to break the mould reveals the understated historical forces and variables involved in social struggles (Clark, 2002).

Figure 1. Change.org petition movement

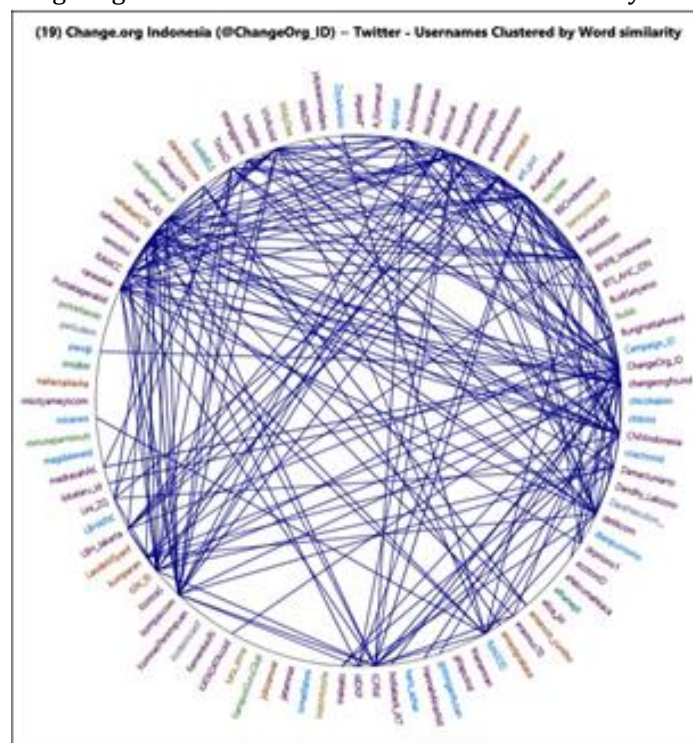


Source: Processed by researchers using NVivo12 Plus(2021)

From the picture above, it can be seen that the change.org petition movement has become a digital space for social movements. This is related to the presence of information communication technology as an online media platform to create an online movement into propaganda or Netizenship communication space. The change.org petition in Indonesia has become a forum for the environmental movement to seek justice with the participation of the people who signed the online petition. This phenomenon that gives rise to social movements that use online media as a means of supporting mobilization is an advancement in the movement's history. In addition to the narrowing of public space into cyberspace or digital space, people feel that there is no justice in their voting rights in policy making which is often not used properly so that the change.org petition becomes a hope for the community to seek justice.

Social media is an easily accessible platform because it can be opened, and social media is a feature that allows for sharing and exchanging information that can positively affect the use of social media and is a significant satisfaction that comes from behaviour (Tandon et al., 2021). As social media expands in life, it requires new skills and innovations to survive and develop social media (Pekkala & van Zoonen, 2021).

Figure 2. Change.org Indonesia Twitter Usernames Clustered by Word similarity



Source: Processed by researchers using NVivo12Plus(2021)

Citizenship participation through Twitter social media is increasing in the number of scale images above, which shows that the informant responded well to the change.org account. The petition was originally a form of community political participation to influence government policies or decisions related to policy issues. From the increasingly rapid development of the era, petitions have shifted through online petitions so that they

can provide space as a new form of an online petition that has the potential to contribute to the function of system integration and the legitimacy of the political system. Cyberactivism, or online activism, has several advantages over real activism. First, they can solve the problem of participation demographics.

Online activism allows individuals from any demographic area to be involved in a movement regardless of distance. Therefore, the reach of the audience becomes larger and has the potential to create a network of audiences. Second, online activism can help build identity, solidarity, and shared concern among activists. Third, online activism can reduce the potential problems arising from differences in activist backgrounds. Finally, activism is much more cost-effective. Lower costs can reach a wider audience (Mentes, 2019).

Table 2. Change.org campaigns

NO	PETITION TITLE	CREATOR	NUMBER OF SIGNERS	INFLUENCE
1	Lanjutkan dan Dukung Penerbitan Peraturan Kantong Plastik tidak Gratis (2013)	Tiza Mafira memulai petisi ini kepada Seluruh peritel yang tergabung dalam Asosiasi Pengusaha Ritel Indonesia (APRINDO)	32.971 (BERHASIL)	Belanja Pakai Kantong Plastik Bayar.
2	Segera Terbitkan Peraturan Cukai Kantong Plastik! (2018)	Nadia Mulya	1.190.350 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Inisiatif Pengurangan Sampah Plastik Pemerintah Daerah
3	Go-Jek, Sediakan Pilihan untuk Sertakan Alat Makan Sekali Pakai (2018)	Alicia Strous memulai petisi ini kepada Go-Jek	14.123 (BERHASIL)	Meningkatkan Kesadaran dan menginspirasi perusahaan besar untuk melakukan perubahan.
4	Kelola Limbah Medis, Segera Bangun Fasilitas Pemusnah Limbah Medis (2020)	DETALKS (Detoxify Through Talk)	29.834 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Mendorong KLHK untuk memperbaiki sistem pengelolaan limbah medis.
5	Bebaskan Bengawan Solo dari Mikroplastik Sebelum Terlambat! (2020).	ECOTON FOUNDATION	5.548 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Penegasan peraturan Pemerintah No 82/2001 tentang Pengendalian Pencemaran Air dan Pengelolaan Kualitas Air.
6	Bebaskan Sungai Brantas dari Mikroplastik Sebelum Terlambat! (2020).	ECOTON FOUNDATION	70.142 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Penegasan peraturan Pemerintah No 82/2001 tentang Pengendalian

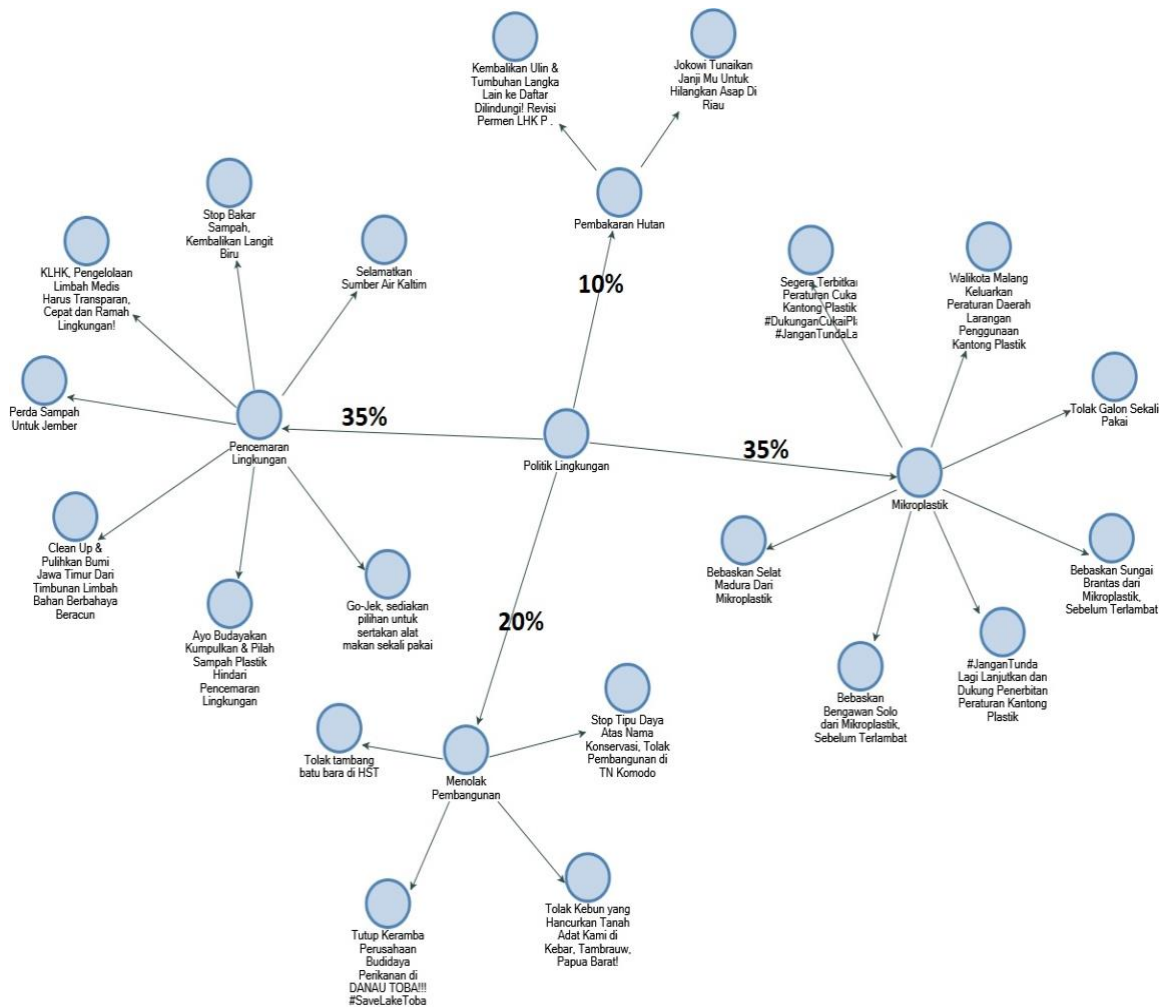
				Pencemaran Air dan Pengelolaan Kualitas Air.
7	Bebaskan Selat Madura dari Mikroplastik (2021).	Optic ID	161 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Penegasan peraturan Pemerintah No 82/2001 tentang Pengendalian Pencemaran Air dan Pengelolaan Kualitas Air.
8	Walikota Malang: Keluarkan Perda Larangan Penggunaan Kantong Plastik (2020).	Anna Zakaria Dan Malang Future Generation	2.799 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Walikota Malang untuk keluarin Peraturan Daerah (PerDa) Pelarangan Penggunaan Plastik Sekali Pakai di kota Malang.
9	Perda Sampah untuk Jember (2019)	PC IMM Jember	281 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Perda lingkungan di kabupaten Jember Perda Sampah sangat diperlukan
10	Clean Up dan Pulihkan Bumi Jawa Timur dari Timbunan Limbah Bahan Berbahaya Beracun (2020).	Ecoton Foundation	104 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Melakukan Koordinasi dengan membentuk Satuan Tugas Khusus Penanganan.
11	Tolak tambang batu bara di HST (2018)	Syahdi Anto	90.362 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Menghentikan Izin tambang yang diberikan Kementrian Energi dan Sumber Daya Mineral.
12	Jokowi Tunaikan Janji Mu Untuk Hilangkan Asap Di Riau (2019)	Ahlul Fadli	272.171 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Penegakan Hukum terhadap Pembakaran lahan dan Korporasi.
13	Stop Tipu Daya Atas Nama Konservasi, Tolak Pembangunan di TN Komodo (2018)	Chilfia Dewi dan Forum Masyarakat Penyelamat Pariwisata Manggarai Barat (FORMAPP).	737.858 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Menolak Pembangunan di TN Komodo yang Menyimpang dari Cita-Cita Konservasi.
14	Selamatkan Sumber Air Kaltim (2019)	Rahman Putra	482.691 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Menolak pabrik semen di Kaltim, melawan pembangunan serta perluasan tambang
15	Stop Bakar Sampah, Kembalikan Langit Biru Jakarta (2020)	Novita Natalia	78.760 (BERHASIL)	Kamis, 16 September 2021, Hakim Pengadilan Negeri Jakarta

				Pusat memenangkan gugatan polusi udara untuk warga yang diajukan Koalisi Ibukota
16	Tolak Galon Sekali Pakai (2020)	Elhan dan Helfia	53.792	Tidak lagi memproduksi kemasan galon sekali pakai
17	Tolak Kebun yang Hancurkan Tanah Adat Kami di Kebar, Tambrau, Papua Barat (2017)	Jan Sedik	129.844 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Pencabutan izin Perkebunan di Kebar, Kabupaten Tambrau, Papua Barat.
18	Ayo Budayakan Kumpulkan & Pilah Sampah Plastik Hindari Pencemaran Lingkungan (2019)	ADUPI	4.033 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Mengamankan, Memilah, Mengumpulkan dan Memanfaatkan ulang sampah plastic.
19	Kembalikan Ulin & Tumbuhan Langka Lain ke Daftar Dilindungi! Revisi Permen LHK P. 106/2018(2019)	Auriga Nusantara dan Ragil Satriyo	27.735 (BERHASIL)	Kementerian LHK akan Revisi Daftar Jenis Pohon Langka Dilindungi, termasuk Ulin
20	TUTUP KERAMBA PERUSAHAAN Budidaya Perikanan di DANAU TOBA!!! #SaveLakeToba (2019)	Yayasan Pencinta Danau Toba (YPDT)	4.796 (BELUM BERHASIL)	Kebijakan Menutup Keramba Perusahaan Budidaya Perikanan Kja Di Danau Toba

Source: Processed by researchers (2021)

Based on the table above, it is clear that change.org has a significant role where the petition in change.org in Indonesia has succeeded in encouraging regulation making, for example, reducing plastic bags. To continue and support the issuance of plastic bag regulations that are no longer free, with these efforts, you can reduce the use of plastic. However, most of the problems in change.org are environmental damage which has a very large impact on public health and eventually becomes a source of disease for the community. This is why people are enthusiastic about using change.org as an effective and efficient online petition.

Figure 3. Project Map



Source: Processed by researchers using NVivo12 Plus (2021)

Change petitions in Indonesia became a social movement based on virtual. Environmental petitions became the most dominant topic on the change.org website. Based on the research results above, the data processed through Nvivo 12 Plus, the authors group them based on the most prominent topic indicators from several environmental and political petitions, namely, environmental pollution 35%, resisting development 20%, microplastic 35% and forest burning 10%. From these data, it can be observed that the high environmental issues on the change.id websites are environmental pollution and microplastics. One Indonesian can produce 0.68 kilograms of waste in one day. This means that around 185,753 tons of waste are produced every day by 270 million people in Indonesia, and this has been recognized by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) in 2020 (tempo.com; 2022). Until now, the use of the change.id movement, which has tried to minimize waste with the policy that plastic in minimarkets is paid for and provides the option to include disposable cutlery. Until it becomes a movement that the government has given regulations from the change.id petition.

Website as a communication platform in the digital era has experienced rapid development and is widely accessible to anyone. And one of the features provided by change.org is the existence of a discussion room on a particular topic in it. So that it will increase the intensity of public involvement in responding to a certain phenomenon in the petition space. The discussion is presented in the form of opinions or arguments between the users of the petition account or civil society who signed the change.org petition.

CONCLUSION

Netizenship participation through social media and online media, not only as a means of information but even as an online-based social movement. It is proven that several social media are used as very effective media for the development of an increasingly rapid era. Petitions have shifted through online petitions so that they can provide space as a new form of an online petition that has the potential to contribute to the function of the integration system and the legitimacy of the political system. Petitions are positioned as activities similar to protests and the movement's repertoire of actions. Netizenship responses are experiencing very interesting dynamics in the increasingly varied digital space. Change.org gets a negative reaction from netizens or community participation worldwide and even in Indonesia. Most of the problems in the change.org petition are environmental problems that have a big impact on the community, ranging from flooding problems, environmental damage and others, so change.org has become a very effective digital petition space which affects the issuance of several advocacies from the change.org petition.

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