Citizen’s Participation Through E-Petition: New Wave of Green Movement in Indonesia

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Abstract. At the present, internet era brings a huge change in people lifestyle. The way people interact with their virtual environment represents their thought about the real environment. Go green campaign become widely shared on the internet through various internet communication. This study identified what environmental issues which netizens concern and who they think should take action. We analysed e-petitions issued between January until October 2016 which published by netizens in change.org. A qualitative content analysis was performed to conclude the main message delivered in each e-petition. There were 136 petitions retrieved by keyword environment, but only 62 e-petitions contained go green campaign. This study shows that green movement on the internet mostly initiated by common people. Moreover, the existences of independent lifestyle communities also promising watchdog on environmental issues. Both of these non-incorporated netizens mostly underlined the quality of environment they living as the main messages of the e-petitions. On the other hand, issues related wildlife preservation was spoken up by incorporated netizens such as NGO. Surprisingly, netizens tend to pointed government as the responsible actor in this environmental damage rather than considered to shared responsibility. Finally, we found that citizen's participation in go green campaign was determined by their nearest daily living environment which same idealized vision will bring them to more solid movement.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelago with huge number of people living across its thousand islands. More than half of this population are active internet user. It indicates that Information and Communication Technology have high possibility to be considered as a potential channel in strengthening the citizens-government relations. Digital communication in term of statehood have been talked in many previous studies. It is considered as an effective mechanism in increasing the participation of lay people in the policymaking process of the country [1]. All this time, communication between citizens with their government in Indonesia still relay on structured mechanism from district, province to national government. It is left behind United States that already launched their own e-petitioning site to encourage the submission of citizens’ policy suggestions.

Even though e-petition is new, the popularity begins to climb up. It brings not only an immediate and visible impact but also reflect structural changes in social movement [2]. The academic reviews about e-petitions were variously explained the popularity determinants of e-petition [3], mechanism to successfully recruit supporters [4], and deep analysis on dynamic e-petitions behaviours in various
countries [5,6,7,8]. Unfortunately, in our knowledge, there were only limited study analyse the content and stakeholder characteristics that contributed to the e-petitions successfuleness bridging citizens and their government. An intense mobilization of mind, which could be happen through e-petition, results to an immediate conversion of other community members [9]. By analysing the content and actors mentioned in the e-petitions, it will able to construct the design structurally in order to reach conversion.

Environment issues are already blowing up by various initiated e-petitions. Studies in e-petitions utilization among environmental issues revealed that there are specific characteristics of e-petition which determine the popularity of e-petition. The ability of e-petition attract the community attention tend to depends on policy momentum [10]. Moreover, the affective connection was a significant predictors of community intention to engage with current environment issues which lead to their participation in e-petition [11]. The openness of political regimes that belong to e-petitions also determine the participation of environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) in decision making related environmental impact assessment (EIA) in China [12].

However, the objective of e-petitions is not merely about popularity. When making an e-petition, the e-petition makers hope that their voice will be heard by the decision makers. By those purpose, understanding the characteristic of key message and key person in e-petitions are important. E-petition makers should make sure the appropriateness of agenda and target of their e-petition so could be considered by decision makers. The authority of each decision makers should be considered when targeted specific decision makers. In other hand, finding the exact responsible person pointed in e-petition will provide the e-petition with strong arguments in designing the key message and assign the target. This study identified what environmental issues which netizens concern and which party should take action toward this environment issues.

2. Research method

We analysed e-petitions issued between January until October 2016 which published by netizens in change.org. As one of leading private e-petition platform, it provides significant e-petitioning platforms with features that make petition creation and solicitation of signatures. This is the only private platform of e-petition that considered by United States beside their official e-petition platform. A qualitative content analysis was performed to conclude the main message delivered in each e-petition. There were 136 petitions retrieved by keyword environment, but only 62 e-petitions contained go green campaign. The content analysis process includes evaluation of e-petitions’ purpose, main message, and assertion. We also descriptively analysed the man behind e-petition and their targeted responsible actors. In order to determine the reliability of coding, second random coder encodes 10% of the samples and inter-coder agreement calculated by Holsti’s method.

3. Results and discussion

Electronic petitions or generally called by e-petitions is increasing community participation tools in this digital era. It is already considered as an influential mechanism for political participation [6]. The quality of decision in environment issues will be raised when people meet on equal terms, exchange views, discuss, and interact [16]. All of the characteristics are found in e-participation. Based on this e-petitions’ digital footprints, how lay people reacts to environmental issues could be drawn.

3.1. Who is deemed to be responsible?

Table 1 shows that majority of e-petitions targeted government as the stakeholder who should take action regarding the existed environment problems. It could be explained that political talk which commonly blamed government is positively and consistently associated with the digital media utilization [1]. Co-signatures logically must be an active internet user. Moreover, only few number of e-petitions targeted the law enforcer despite most of these content focused on law enforcement purpose (Table 2). Our study successfully mapped that the assertion of e-petitions was not only related
with those two institutional parties. The individual and community stakeholder was also asserted by limited number of e-petitions.

This finding also identified that individual initiator is the most active stakeholder in the digital green movement. Most of these e-petitions were initiated by individual users. Based on influence path, individual users could be significantly attract more co-signatures if the individual is highly well known among community [13]. Unfortunately, even though individual co-signatures behaviour is literally correlate with their commitment and consistency toward petitions objective [6], our study design could not accommodate to analyse this phenomenon among petition initiator. Free platform with huge coverage of readers will be very beneficial for them to reach more people to promote their vision in environment management. This is in line with explanation that e-participation in government affairs is influence by non-technology factors [14].

| Targeted party          | number of e-petitions | %  |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----|
| Individual person       | 1                     | 1.6|
| Private companies       | 1                     | 1.6|
| Government              | 49                    | 79.0|
| Public community        | 5                     | 8.1|
| Law enforcer            | 2                     | 3.2|
| Other                   | 4                     | 6.5|

| Initiator               | number of e-petitions | %  |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----|
| Individual community    | 36                    | 58.1|
| Group community         | 14                    | 22.6|
| NGO                     | 10                    | 16.1|
| Other                   | 2                     | 3.2|

3.2. What is the content?

In accordance with the spirit of green movement, majority of these e-petitions support environment preservation. Deciding the right population as targeted co-signatures in the petition determined the popularity of e-petition [4]. The right population will be only considering the exact content that appropriate with their value [15]. E-petitions in this study declared various messages which not only related with preservation of extinct animal and plant but also the quality improvement of surrounding living environment. Wildlife conservation is the most mentioned object in e-petitions. Other issues including mining, land conversion, forest fire, nature exploitation, and green energy are also linked to wildlife conservation issue.

Wildlife preservation, the most popular issue, mostly popped up by NGO. Non-government organization utilize e-petitions platform in gaining community support. Environment issues related surrounding living also highlighted in the rest of e-petitions. The aspect of this surrounding environment are mostly caused by human behaviour such as smoking and domestic pollution. As explained in Table 1, green movement through e-petition mostly initiated by common people. Moreover, the existences of group communities also promising watchdog on environmental issues. By analyzing the behaviour of individual and community initiator, we found that citizen's participation in go green campaign was determined by their nearest daily living environment which same idealized vision will bring them to more solid movement. Other popular issue was response to the new existed government policy in industrial exploration that impacted environment such as mining. While e-petitions which categorized as unsupported contents mostly talk about the fine of several environment regulations such as plastic bag charge and littering sanction. Table 2 explains the detailed contents of these e-petitions.
As explained in Table 1, netizens tend to pointed government as the responsible actor in this environmental damage rather than considered to shared responsibility. Only few e-petitions which the assertion do not ask responsibility of government. Surprisingly, even though almost half of e-petitions targeted government as the main party who should responsible for environment quality improvement, there are more e-petitions blame how bad the awareness of citizens toward environment.

| Table 2. E-petitions content          | Number of e-petitions | %   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|
| **Support**                          |                       |     |
| Do not support                       | 4                     | 6.5 |
| Support                              | 58                    | 93.5|
| **Focus**                            |                       |     |
| Smoking                              | 3                     | 4.8 |
| Mining                               | 8                     | 12.9|
| Wildlife conservation                | 17                    | 27.4|
| Land conversion                      | 11                    | 17.7|
| Industrial pollution                 | 2                     | 3.2 |
| Domestic pollution                   | 8                     | 12.9|
| Forest fire                          | 5                     | 8.1 |
| Nature exploitation for tourism      | 6                     | 9.7 |
| Green energy                         | 2                     | 3.2 |
| **Assertion**                        |                       |     |
| Law enforcement                      | 14                    | 22.6|
| Citizen's awareness                  | 23                    | 37.1|
| Revocation of business licenses      | 14                    | 22.6|
| Other                                | 11                    | 17.7|

In managing an environment conflict, the key stakeholders involvement and the degree of participation are suggested [17]. Our study came out with conclusion that the degree of participation should be created by considering the utilization of e-petition. Further study should consider to analyse the response of co-signatures. It is needed to comprehend the causal relation between the existence of co-signatures for objectifying successful petitions. E-petitions utilization for complains delivery is linked to the people knowledge on e-petitions usefulness. The perceived knowledge of systems and engagement in specific issues significantly increases adoption intention [18]. Moreover, the intention to speak up their insight is also related to personal norm about the environment. Personal norm is known as the most immediate and influential predictor of voluntary reported environmental complaint intention. It shows how people morally react to specific actions related to environmental damage. It mediates how people’s ascribed responsibility could trigger their environmental complaint intention [19]. When citizens think that they have a responsibility for environment preservation, their personal norm will determine whether they should speak up their complaints or not. Another study also revealed that intention to act both in favor of and against environment preservation issues was more strongly based on moral considerations than on self-interest [20]. By understanding the types of co-signatures, petitions creator will be able to designing more structured petitions content that engages the co-signatures. More community engagement toward environmental issues in e-petitions establish sustainable action feedback.

4. Conclusions
Our study revealed that e-petition is an effective channel for lay people to speak up their awareness of the green movement. The e-petitions content which mostly pointed the domestic living environment indicates that ascribed responsibility to their daily environment already triggered their environmental
complaint intention. The individual initiator is the most active stakeholder in the digital green movement. This finding confirmed that personal norm is the most immediate and influential predictor of deliberate reported environmental complaint intention. The government should able to use the personal norms to actualize this digital participation in real activity in environment preservation. By considering to analyze the response of co-signatures, the future study will be able to explain what factors which will attract the massive number of e-petition users.

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