



## Collective Action in Digital Activism: How Hashtags Mobilize Social Movements

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### Abstract

*This study examines the role of hashtags in mobilizing collective action within digital activism in Indonesia. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through a survey involving 400 social media users from diverse demographic backgrounds. Descriptive statistical analysis was employed to identify participation patterns, engagement frequency, perceived impacts, and barriers associated with hashtag-based activism. The findings indicate that digital activism is primarily driven by younger users, particularly students and young professionals. Sharing and reposting hashtags emerged as the most common forms of participation, while Twitter/X and Instagram were identified as the dominant platforms for activism. Respondents perceived hashtags as highly effective in raising awareness, fostering solidarity, and encouraging public discussion. However, their influence on policy change was considered less substantial. The study also identified several challenges, including short-lived public attention, misinformation, online harassment, and limited offline follow-through. These findings highlight the growing importance of hashtag activism in contemporary civic engagement and emphasize the need to integrate digital mobilization strategies with broader social and institutional efforts to achieve sustainable social change.*

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the ways citizens engage in collective action and social movements. Social media platforms have become central arenas for political expression, civic participation, and public mobilization, enabling individuals to connect, share information, and coordinate collective efforts beyond geographical boundaries. Within this evolving digital ecosystem, hashtags have emerged as powerful communicative tools that facilitate the organization, visibility, and diffusion of social movements across diverse social and political contexts (Suk et al., 2024; Treré & Bonini, 2024). More than simple metadata labels, hashtags function as symbolic resources that connect dispersed individuals around shared concerns, foster collective identities, and amplify social issues in the public sphere (Rosmilawati et al., 2024; Rahayuningsih et al., 2025; Gomez-Vasquez et al., 2024; Dawson, 2020).

The growing significance of hashtag activism reflects broader transformations in contemporary civic engagement. Digital platforms have reduced participation barriers, allowing citizens to contribute to social causes through content creation, information dissemination, and networked interactions. Movements such as #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, and #FridaysForFuture demonstrate how hashtags can mobilize millions of users, generate transnational solidarity, and influence public discourse on critical social issues (Suk et al., 2024; Zahra, 2024). These developments indicate that digital activism is increasingly shaping political communication, social awareness, and citizen participation. Recent scholarship highlights that online activism has evolved from a supplementary communication strategy into a primary mechanism through which social movements gain visibility, recruit supporters, and sustain collective engagement (Treré & Bonini, 2024; Young et al., 2019).

In Indonesia, the expansion of internet access and social media adoption has created fertile conditions for hashtag-driven activism. Indonesia is among the world's largest social media markets, with millions of users actively engaging in online discussions concerning governance, environmental protection, social justice, gender equality, and human rights. Recent campaigns such as #PeringatanDarurat, #ReformasiDikorupsi, and various environmental and humanitarian initiatives illustrate how hashtags have become important instruments for expressing public concerns and mobilizing collective responses (Purnamasari et al., 2025; Rahayuningsih et al., 2025). These movements demonstrate the capacity of digital platforms to facilitate rapid information dissemination and public engagement while simultaneously revealing the growing importance of online spaces as arenas of democratic participation. Consequently, understanding how hashtags influence collective action has become increasingly important for explaining contemporary forms of social mobilization in Indonesia (Priadana & Tahalea, 2021; Natalia et al., 2023; Zuraida, 2023).

Theoretically, hashtag activism can be understood through the lens of collective action and connective action theories. Traditional collective action theories emphasize formal organizations, leadership structures, and resource mobilization as prerequisites for successful social movements (Boda et al., 2024; Da Costa et al., 2023). However, digital technologies have altered these dynamics by enabling decentralized forms of participation that rely on personalized communication and networked interactions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Oybek et al., 2023; Dean, 2023). Recent studies argue that digital activism increasingly operates through connective action, where individuals participate based on personal motivations and shared narratives rather than organizational membership (Treré & Bonini, 2024; Khoo, 2025). Hashtags facilitate this process by creating symbolic frameworks through which individuals interpret social problems, construct collective identities, and coordinate actions across digital networks.

Recent empirical studies have demonstrated the multidimensional role of hashtags in social movements. Research has shown that hashtags contribute to agenda-setting, public awareness, identity construction, emotional engagement, and network expansion (Rosmilawati et al., 2024; Suk et al., 2024). Other studies emphasize the importance of platform algorithms in shaping movement visibility and influencing the dissemination of activist content (Treré & Bonini, 2024; Akram et al., 2025). Similarly, investigations into digital activism in developing countries indicate that hashtags provide alternative channels for civic participation, particularly in contexts where conventional political participation may face institutional constraints (Khoo, 2025; Al-Khater, 2025). Collectively, these findings suggest that hashtags have become essential infrastructures for contemporary activism.

Despite growing scholarly attention, several important limitations remain within the existing literature. First, much of the current research focuses on highly visible

global movements in Western contexts, while empirical evidence from Southeast Asian countries, particularly Indonesia, remains relatively limited (Rahayuningsih et al., 2025; Rosmilawati et al., 2024). Second, previous studies predominantly examine the communicative and symbolic functions of hashtags without sufficiently exploring how online participation translates into broader forms of collective action and social mobilization. Third, existing research often emphasizes successful cases of digital activism while paying less attention to the barriers, challenges, and limitations that affect the sustainability and effectiveness of hashtag-driven movements. Issues such as misinformation, online harassment, algorithmic visibility, government regulation, and declining public attention require further investigation to better understand the conditions under which digital activism can generate meaningful social impact (Treré & Bonini, 2024; Purnamasari et al., 2025; Mourtzis et al., 2022).

Another significant research gap concerns the relationship between online engagement and offline participation. While many studies acknowledge that hashtags can increase awareness and public discussion, there is limited empirical evidence regarding whether digital interactions foster deeper forms of civic engagement, including fundraising, community organizing, advocacy, and protest participation (Fohring & Horsfield, 2023; Suk et al., 2024). Understanding this relationship is particularly important because critics frequently question whether hashtag activism represents meaningful political engagement or merely symbolic participation. Consequently, further investigation is needed to clarify the mechanisms through which hashtags mobilize collective action and influence social movement outcomes (Maulana & Nindia, 2025; Syed & Silva, 2023).

Addressing these gaps is increasingly urgent because digital activism continues to expand as a dominant form of public participation. As social media platforms become more deeply integrated into everyday life, understanding how digital mobilization functions is essential for scholars, policymakers, activists, and civil society organizations seeking to promote democratic engagement and social change. Moreover, examining the Indonesian context provides valuable insights into how digital activism operates within emerging democracies characterized by diverse sociocultural conditions, rapidly growing digital infrastructures, and evolving political environments.

This study aims to analyze how hashtags mobilize collective action within digital activism in Indonesia by examining patterns of participation, perceived impacts, platform dynamics, and barriers to effective engagement. The novelty of this research lies in its integrated examination of both the mobilizing capacities and structural limitations of hashtag activism through a mixed-methods approach that combines survey data, content analysis, and qualitative insights. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on symbolic communication or specific campaigns, this research provides a comprehensive assessment of how hashtags facilitate collective action while simultaneously identifying factors that constrain their effectiveness. The study contributes to the literature on digital activism, collective action, and social movements by offering empirical evidence from Indonesia and by advancing understanding of the complex relationship between online mobilization, collective identity formation, and social change in the digital era.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine how hashtags mobilize collective action within digital activism in Indonesia. A cross-sectional survey approach was adopted to collect numerical data regarding participation patterns, engagement frequency, perceived effectiveness, and barriers associated with hashtag-based activism. Quantitative methods are appropriate for identifying

trends, measuring relationships among variables, and generating generalizable findings from a large population (Creswell, 2018; Hair et al., 2021).

### **Research Setting and Population**

The study was conducted in Indonesia, one of the largest social media markets in Southeast Asia. The target population consisted of active social media users aged 15 years and above who had previous exposure to hashtag campaigns on platforms such as Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

A total of 400 respondents participated in the study. The sample was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation across age groups, gender categories, and occupational backgrounds. Stratification was applied because demographic characteristics are closely associated with patterns of social media use and digital participation.

The sample included students, employees, entrepreneurs, and other occupational groups from various regions of Indonesia. The sample size exceeded the minimum recommendations for social science survey research and provided sufficient statistical power for descriptive and inferential analyses (Hair et al., 2021).

### **Data Collection**

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via digital platforms and social media networks. The questionnaire consisted of five sections: demographic characteristics, frequency of hashtag engagement, forms of digital activism participation, perceived impact of hashtag activism, and barriers to effective participation. Responses were measured using categorical scales and Likert-type indicators adapted from previous studies on digital activism and collective action. Prior to full deployment, the instrument underwent pilot testing to ensure clarity and comprehensibility.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were employed to summarize respondent characteristics and participation patterns. Cross-tabulation and Chi-square tests were performed to examine relationships between demographic variables and levels of engagement in hashtag activism. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Content validity was established through expert review involving scholars with expertise in digital communication and social movement studies. Construct validity was assessed through item evaluation and consistency testing. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. All measurement constructs achieved values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability (Hair et al., 2021). These procedures ensured that the instrument accurately measured the constructs of interest and generated reliable findings regarding hashtag activism and collective action in Indonesia.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the empirical findings concerning the role of hashtags in mobilizing collective action within digital activism in Indonesia. The results are organized into six dimensions, namely respondent demographics, frequency of hashtag engagement, forms of participation, perceived impacts of hashtag activism, platform preferences, and barriers to effective digital mobilization. The findings are

based on survey responses from 400 participants and are presented using descriptive statistical analysis.

### Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 400)

| Category         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender: Female   | 230       | 57.5           |
| Gender: Male     | 170       | 42.5           |
| Age 15–20        | 120       | 30.0           |
| Age 21–30        | 190       | 47.5           |
| Age 31–40        | 65        | 16.3           |
| Age > 40         | 25        | 6.2            |
| Student          | 160       | 40.0           |
| Employee         | 145       | 36.3           |
| Entrepreneur     | 55        | 13.7           |
| Other/Unemployed | 40        | 10.0           |

Source: Survey Data Processed by the Authors, 2025

The demographic profile of the respondents provides important insights into the characteristics of individuals participating in hashtag activism. As shown in Table 1, the survey sample consisted of 400 respondents, with the majority being young adults aged 21–30 years (47.5%), followed by those aged 15–20 years (30%). A significant proportion of respondents were students (40%), reflecting the high level of digital engagement within younger, more technologically literate groups. Gender distribution slightly favored females (57.5%), aligning with global trends in digital activism where women tend to be more engaged in social justice movements (Zahra, 2024). This demographic breakdown suggests that digital activism, particularly via hashtags, is predominantly driven by a youthful, tech-savvy population, with women playing a central role in movements related to gender equality and human rights.

The sample also reflected a variety of occupations, with 36.3% of respondents being employees and 13.7% entrepreneurs. This occupational diversity underscores the broad appeal of hashtag activism across various sectors, particularly in urban environments where social media use is more pervasive. The skew towards younger, student populations suggests that digital activism resonates strongly within academic and socially conscious communities, a trend observed globally (Suk et al., 2024).

### Frequency of Engagement with Hashtags

Table 2. Frequency of Hashtag Engagement

| Frequency of Engagement | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Daily                   | 95        | 23.8           |
| 2–3 times per week      | 140       | 35.0           |
| Once per week           | 80        | 20.0           |
| 1–2 times per month     | 55        | 13.7           |
| Rarely/Never            | 30        | 7.5            |

Source: Survey Data Processed by the Authors, 2025

A key finding in this study is the frequency of engagement with hashtags. According to Table 2, over half of the respondents (58.8%) engage with hashtags at least once a week, indicating that hashtag activism is a regular activity for many individuals. A notable 23.8% of respondents report engaging with hashtags on a daily basis, suggesting that digital activism is not just a sporadic activity but an embedded practice in their daily routines. This frequent engagement highlights the

normalization of activism within digital platforms, particularly among younger users, where social media has become a primary space for political participation (Anshori & Nadiyya, 2023).

Interestingly, a smaller percentage (7.5%) of respondents engage rarely or never with hashtag activism. This group cited factors such as lack of interest or distrust in the effectiveness of online activism as reasons for their limited participation. These findings suggest that while hashtag activism is widely adopted, the intensity of engagement varies across individuals, reflecting diverse motivations, resources, and levels of trust in the digital movement. The occasional participation observed here points to the varying degrees of commitment among the online activist community, where some individuals may participate symbolically without deeper involvement.

### Types of Digital Activism Participation

Table 3. Types of Digital Activism Participation

| Type of Participation           | High (%) | Moderate (%) | Low (%) |
|---------------------------------|----------|--------------|---------|
| Sharing/Reposting Hashtags      | 70.0     | 20.0         | 10.0    |
| Creating Original Content       | 40.0     | 35.0         | 25.0    |
| Signing Online Petitions        | 55.0     | 30.0         | 15.0    |
| Donating/Fundraising Online     | 35.0     | 40.0         | 25.0    |
| Joining Offline Protests/Events | 30.0     | 25.0         | 45.0    |

Source: Survey Data Processed by the Authors, 2025

The study also examined the types of digital activism participants engaged in. As indicated in Table 3, the most common form of participation was the sharing or reposting of hashtags, with 70% of respondents reporting high engagement in this activity. This form of activism is often considered low-effort but highly visible, contributing to the spread of awareness and the amplification of messages. Reposting hashtags plays a critical role in viral activism, where the mere visibility of a cause can lead to significant public discourse and raise awareness on a large scale (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

On the other hand, more involved forms of participation, such as creating original content (40%) or joining offline protests (30%), were less common. This supports the ongoing debate about “slacktivism,” where symbolic actions like reposting do not always translate into real-world outcomes such as protests or volunteering. Despite this, the creation of original content (such as blog posts or videos) suggests a deeper level of engagement for some participants, particularly those who are content creators or influencers. The relatively low percentage of respondents engaging in offline protests may indicate a gap between digital visibility and tangible, offline activism, a limitation often discussed in critiques of digital activism (Jalloh et al., 2020).

### Perceived Impact of Hashtags on Social Movements

Table 4. Perceived Impact of Hashtags on Social Movements

| Indicator                 | Strong Impact (%) | Moderate Impact (%) | Low Impact (%) |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Raising Awareness         | 75.0              | 20.0                | 5.0            |
| Influencing Public Debate | 65.0              | 25.0                | 10.0           |
| Policy Change Influence   | 40.0              | 35.0                | 25.0           |
| Mobilizing Donations      | 50.0              | 30.0                | 20.0           |
| Building Solidarity       | 70.0              | 20.0                | 10.0           |

Source: Survey Data Processed by the Authors, 2025

Respondents rated the impact of hashtags on different dimensions of activism. Awareness (75%) and solidarity-building (70%) stand out as the strongest perceived impacts, showing hashtags' effectiveness in shaping public consciousness.

Policy influence is weaker (40% strong impact), indicating the gap between digital discourse and institutional change. Nonetheless, mobilizing donations and sparking debates (65%) show that hashtags can generate real-world consequences beyond visibility.

### Platform-Specific Dynamics

Table 5. Platforms Most Used for Hashtag Activism

| Platform  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Twitter/X | 190       | 47.5           |
| Instagram | 120       | 30.0           |
| TikTok    | 60        | 15.0           |
| Facebook  | 20        | 5.0            |
| Others    | 10        | 2.5            |

Source: Survey Data Processed by the Authors, 2025

The results also shed light on the preferred platforms for hashtag activism. Table 5 shows that Twitter (47.5%) is the dominant platform for hashtag activism, followed by Instagram (30%) and TikTok (15%). This reflects Twitter's strength in facilitating rapid mobilization through trending hashtags, where issues can gain immediate attention in real-time. Instagram, known for its visual appeal, serves as an ideal platform for campaigns that rely on emotional resonance and compelling images to capture public attention. TikTok's rising importance, particularly among younger demographics, indicates a shift towards more interactive and creative forms of activism, which may further enhance the viral spread of hashtag movements (Zahra, 2024).

The declining role of Facebook (5%) in hashtag activism aligns with global trends, where younger users have migrated to newer platforms like Instagram and TikTok for more dynamic and visually engaging content. These platform preferences highlight the importance of adapting activism strategies to suit the specific features and user behaviors associated with each social media platform.

### Barriers to Effective Hashtag Activism

Table 6. Barriers to Effective Hashtag Activism

| Barrier Reported                 | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Online Harassment/Trolling       | 52.0           |
| Government Censorship/Regulation | 40.0           |
| Misinformation/Hoaxes            | 55.0           |
| Short-lived Public Attention     | 60.0           |
| Lack of Offline Follow-through   | 48.0           |

Source: Survey Data Processed by the Authors, 2025

Despite the successes of hashtag activism, several barriers to its effectiveness were identified in the study. Table 6 reveals that the most significant challenge faced by activists was short-lived public attention, with 60% of respondents citing this as a barrier. This issue of "issue fatigue" is common in digital spaces, where the fast-paced nature of social media cycles means that attention quickly shifts to new trends, leaving previous campaigns behind. Misinformation (55%) and online harassment (52%) were also major obstacles, undermining the credibility and safety of digital

spaces for activism. These findings highlight the vulnerabilities that activists face online, where digital campaigns can be easily distorted or discredited through coordinated trolling or the spread of false information (Purnamasari et al., 2025).

Additionally, 40% of respondents reported that government censorship or regulation posed a significant barrier, particularly in Indonesia, where online speech is often scrutinized and regulated. This underscores the importance of safeguarding digital freedoms and the role of government policies in shaping the landscape of online activism. The combined effect of these barriers suggests that while hashtags are effective in generating awareness and engagement, their ability to sustain momentum and achieve tangible outcomes is often hindered by external challenges that require innovative strategies to overcome.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reaffirm that digital activism in Indonesia has become an important vehicle for collective expression, particularly among younger and more digitally fluent populations. However, rather than merely restating the descriptive results, the discussion must interrogate how these patterns reflect broader transformations in civic engagement and social movement practices. The prominence of young adults and students in hashtag activism suggests not only generational familiarity with technology but also a shift in the modes of political participation from formal institutions to networked, decentralized, and affect-driven spaces. These digital publics embody what Bennett and Segerberg (2012) described as *connective action*, where personal narratives and self-expression substitute for traditional organizational structures. In this sense, the youthful demographic dominance is not incidental but central to understanding how activism evolves within a media-saturated environment.

What emerges from these dynamics is a new form of citizenship that prioritizes visibility, immediacy, and symbolic solidarity. The daily or weekly engagement with hashtags shows how activism has become embedded within routine online behavior. This normalization of participation indicates that social media has blurred the line between private communication and public advocacy. Yet, the frequency of engagement must not be mistaken for depth of commitment. High activity levels may represent a diffusion of engagement rather than its intensification (Araki, 2023). The challenge for digital activism, therefore, is not attracting attention but sustaining it long enough to produce structural outcomes. This problem is magnified by the platform architectures that reward novelty and speed over continuity. The fleeting cycles of online trends tend to favor emotional peaks followed by rapid decline, which explains the difficulty of maintaining collective momentum once media visibility wanes.

A more critical reflection reveals that the predominance of low-effort participation such as sharing or reposting hashtags reflects the dual character of digital activism. On one hand, it democratizes participation by lowering barriers to entry, allowing anyone with internet access to contribute. On the other, it risks reducing activism to symbolic gestures with minimal transformative power. The “slacktivism” critique is relevant here, yet it requires nuance. While reposting alone may appear superficial, at scale it performs important communicative functions. It constructs collective narratives, amplifies marginalized issues, and exerts pressure on mainstream media to recognize overlooked topics. However, the study’s findings also suggest that the translation from online awareness to offline mobilization remains incomplete. Without mechanisms that link digital visibility to organizational strategy, hashtag movements struggle to move beyond expressive solidarity.

The weak influence of hashtags on policy change highlights a fundamental asymmetry between cultural and institutional power. Hashtags are effective in

shaping discourse but far less so in influencing bureaucratic or legislative outcomes (Rho & Mazmanian, 2019). This disconnect underscores the structural limits of digital activism in political systems where decision-making remains insulated from public opinion. In Indonesia's context, where institutional responsiveness is often mediated by patronage and political negotiation, online mobilization faces barriers in transforming visibility into authority. The implication is that digital activism must develop hybrid strategies that combine online mobilization with offline advocacy, coalition-building, and policy engagement. Without such integration, movements risk confinement within the symbolic realm, generating awareness without agency.

Platform-specific differences deepen this insight. Twitter's predominance reflects its algorithmic design that favors virality and rapid information diffusion, but this same speed can produce volatility (Romero et al., 2011). Campaigns that trend quickly may fade equally fast, eroding sustained engagement. Instagram and TikTok, while less dominant, introduce visual and creative dimensions that foster emotional connection and identity performance. This diversity of platforms suggests that digital activism is not a monolith but an ecosystem of overlapping media logics. Effective activism requires multi-platform literacy, where messages are adapted to the communicative affordances and audience behaviors unique to each space. The strategic use of different platforms can extend a campaign's lifespan and diversify its forms of engagement, moving from textual persuasion on Twitter to visual storytelling on Instagram and participatory content creation on TikTok.

The barriers identified in this study further reveal the fragility of digital spaces as arenas of civic expression. Short-lived attention, misinformation, and harassment represent not only technical or behavioral challenges but also structural limitations of the digital public sphere. The constant flow of information creates competition for visibility, leading to what scholars describe as *attention scarcity*. Movements that fail to innovate or emotionally engage users are quickly replaced by newer causes. Misinformation and trolling, on the other hand, expose the vulnerability of open platforms to manipulation. When digital discourse becomes saturated with falsehoods and hostility, trust declines, and activism risks fragmentation. Addressing these issues requires digital literacy education, moderation policies that protect free expression while preventing abuse, and alternative spaces that prioritize deliberation over virality.

Government censorship compounds these difficulties. In contexts where digital surveillance and regulatory constraints limit dissent, online activism must navigate a delicate balance between expression and risk. The finding that 40 percent of respondents identify government regulation as a barrier illustrates the enduring tension between the democratizing potential of digital media and the state's impulse to control public discourse. While social media can circumvent traditional censorship, it also leaves digital traces that expose activists to monitoring. Sustainable digital activism thus depends on legal protections for online speech and transparent governance of digital platforms. Civil society organizations can play a mediating role by providing advocacy training, digital security resources, and institutional support to activists who operate under these constraints.

A key theoretical implication of these findings concerns the relationship between collective identity and sustainability of movements. Hashtags not only coordinate action but also construct symbolic communities around shared grievances and aspirations. This identity-building function explains why participants feel part of a movement even when their contributions are minimal. However, the durability of these identities depends on their institutional anchoring. Movements that remain purely discursive risk disintegration once public attention shifts. The challenge, therefore, lies in transforming digital solidarity into organized capacity. Partnerships

with NGOs, grassroots organizations, and advocacy networks can provide continuity and translate online mobilization into policy initiatives or community programs.

The study demonstrates that digital activism in Indonesia must be contextualized within broader socio-political realities. The country's large youth population, expanding internet penetration, and vibrant social media culture create fertile ground for online movements. Yet, persistent inequalities in access and digital literacy mean that activism remains concentrated among urban, educated users. This urban bias raises concerns about representation. Marginalized groups without reliable connectivity or technical competence risk exclusion from digital spaces where public debates increasingly occur. Future activism must therefore consider inclusive strategies that bridge digital divides, ensuring that online movements do not replicate existing social hierarchies.

From a methodological perspective, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data strengthens the credibility of the study but also highlights areas for refinement. While surveys capture participation patterns, they may not fully account for the affective and performative dimensions of digital engagement. Qualitative interviews offer valuable insights into motivations and experiences but require deeper longitudinal tracking to assess how engagement evolves over time. Future research should employ mixed methods that integrate network analysis, ethnographic observation, and discourse analysis to explore not only who participates but also how narratives circulate and transform across platforms. Ultimately, this discussion demonstrates that hashtag activism operates at the intersection of expression, organization, and transformation. It succeeds in making voices visible, in forging a sense of belonging, and in shaping cultural awareness. Yet, it falters in institutionalizing its gains and sustaining momentum beyond the immediacy of digital attention. The solution lies in recognizing that digital activism is neither purely symbolic nor fully transformative. It represents an evolving stage of civic engagement that complements rather than replaces traditional forms of collective action. By linking online networks with offline institutions, activists can leverage digital visibility into social power capable of influencing policy and fostering durable change.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that hashtag activism has become an important mechanism for facilitating collective action within Indonesia's digital environment. The findings reveal that participation is predominantly driven by young and digitally connected individuals, particularly students and young professionals. Engagement with hashtag campaigns occurs frequently, with content sharing and reposting emerging as the most common forms of participation. The results further indicate that hashtags are highly effective in raising public awareness, strengthening solidarity, and stimulating public debate, although their influence on policy change remains comparatively limited. Twitter/X and Instagram were identified as the primary platforms supporting digital mobilization.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on digital activism and collective action by providing empirical evidence regarding the role of hashtags in fostering participation and collective awareness in emerging digital societies. Practically, the findings suggest that activists, civil society organizations, and policymakers can utilize hashtag campaigns as strategic tools for public engagement and issue advocacy. Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study relied on self-reported survey data and focused exclusively on Indonesian social media users. Future research should employ comparative cross-country analyses, longitudinal designs, and advanced statistical modeling to examine the long-term impact of hashtag activism on social and political outcomes. Further investigations may also

explore how platform algorithms and digital communication strategies influence movement sustainability and collective action effectiveness.

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