

Law Enforcement in Indonesia and the Tendency to Collective Action Among College Students: Moderation of Online Political Discussions

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Abstract: Indonesian college students perceive injustice as a violation of fundamental moral principles, which motivates them to engage in collective action. This study investigates the mediating roles of group-based anger, group efficacy, and politicized identification in the relationship between moral conviction regarding law enforcement and the propensity for collective action. The sample comprised 546 students. The findings demonstrate that anger, efficacy, and political identity mediate the relationship between beliefs about law enforcement and the tendency to participate in collective action. However, online political discussions did not significantly increase their propensity to engage in collective action. The identification of a negative moderating effect of online discussions extends SIMCA theory and highlights the complexity of mobilizing collective action in digital environments.

Key words: Collective Action, Anger, Efficacy, Identity, Discussion

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, law enforcement in Indonesia has often attracted public attention. A major ongoing issue in the country's justice system is the widespread corruption among government officials and law enforcement agencies (Nelso, 2023). Injustice in law enforcement is a serious issue that must be addressed promptly to meet public expectations and foster trust in the legal system. Ineffective law enforcement in Indonesia is a long-standing problem (Nikhio et al. 2023). For students, this issue is not only viewed as a legal issue but also as a moral one concerning justice, equality, and the integrity of state

institutions.

Students have a historical role as agents of social change in Indonesia. From the national movement to the 1998 reform era, students consistently demonstrate their role in encouraging collective action that promotes democratization. Recent events have shown that students were still actively participating in mass demonstrations in early September 2025, with demands including the government's revocation or revision of policies that are not in favor of the people (Dwi 2025). Students, as key members of the academic community, demand transparency and accountability in law enforcement. Through collective action, they require clarity on unresolved cases (Debora 2025). Through discussions, academic studies, petitions, and demonstrations, they assert their strategic role in maintaining justice and overseeing the legal process to prevent irregularities. In the current context, the emergence of social media has expanded students' political space, enabling them to express criticism, build solidarity, and mobilize the masses in a more rapid and distributed manner. However, while online spaces offer new opportunities, their effectiveness in encouraging concrete action remains a matter of academic debate (Chen et al. 2021).

Several studies explain how students are motivated to engage in collective action. Van Zomeren (2012) suggests that collective action is motivated by three main pathways: moral emotions (such as anger), group efficacy, and politicized political identity. Moral convictions about a particular issue can activate all three of these mechanisms. Thus, in the context of law enforcement, students who perceive injustice as a violation of fundamental moral principles will be more motivated to engage in collective action, especially if they feel anger, believe in collective efficacy, and have a strong political identity.

However, this dynamic becomes more complex when examined considering the role of online political discussions. Alberici & Milesi's (2018) study suggests that online interactions can strengthen political identity and moral awareness; however, other studies have found that online discussions also risk weakening real-world mobilization by generating "shallow participation" (slacktivism). Chen et al.'s (2021) findings on the Hong Kong protest movement illustrate that online networks can be fragmented and dependent on central actors, thus not always generating distributed mobilization.

Against this backdrop, this study examines how moral beliefs about law enforcement in Indonesia influence students' propensity for collective action, focusing on the mediating roles of group anger, group efficacy, and politicized identification, as well as the moderating role of

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Moral Conviction and The Tendency of Collective Action

Moral conviction denotes unwavering stances on moral issues, regarded as exception-intolerant and nonnegotiable, which renders violations particularly motivating for action (van Zomeren et al. 2012). These convictions are viewed as objective, necessary, universal, and infallible truths, closely associated with emotional processes, neural reward circuits, and value systems that regulate behavior (Decety 2024). Researchers incorporate moral conviction into collective action theory by connecting it to politicized identities and positioning morality as a central motivational component alongside identity, perceptions of injustice, and efficacy (Agostini & van Zomeren 2021).

Moral conviction is defined as the belief that a particular issue is intrinsically linked to an individual's core moral values, which is associated with heightened political engagement (Skitka 2010). Moral conviction facilitates collective action via identity-based and cognitive-affective pathways, thereby increasing individuals' readiness to participate. Empirical studies identify politicized identification, group-based anger, perceived collective efficacy, threat appraisal, and regulatory focus as primary mechanisms connecting moral conviction to both normative and nonnormative protest behaviors (Pauls et al. 2021).

Within the context of law enforcement, students perceiving legal injustice as a moral violation experience a sense of obligation to engage in collective action, irrespective of potential costs or risks. The present study found that the influence of moral conviction on collective action tendencies was mediated by group anger, group efficacy, and politicized identification (Malu et al. 2024; Thomas et al. 2022; Górska & Tausch 2022; Passini 2019).

Group-based Anger, Group Efficacy, and Politicized Identification

Collective emotions are central to the mobilization of collective action. Miller et al. (2009) demonstrated that group anger serves as a critical catalyst for collective action by providing the emotional impetus necessary for participation. When students observe legal injustice, anger directed at institutions perceived as failing to uphold justice often becomes a primary motivator for action. Consequently, group anger mediates the relationship between moral beliefs and collective action tendencies.

Collective action is often driven by emotional responses, particularly anger, which can significantly influence group behavior and mobilization efforts. Group-based anger is the feeling of anger on behalf of a disadvantaged group in response to perceived unfairness; it constitutes an emotion-focused pathway that increases collective action tendencies (Van Zomeren 2004). The interplay between group anger and collective action highlights the significance of emotional dynamics in social movements and their potential to either mobilize or hinder group efforts. Emotional dynamics, particularly group anger, can catalyze collective action, shaping the motivations and behaviors of group members engaged in social movements.

Consequently, recognizing the multifaceted role of group-based anger can enhance our understanding of how emotional responses contribute to collective action tendencies. This understanding is crucial, as group-based anger not only drives collective action but also interacts with factors such as collective identification and perceived injustice to shape the dynamics of the group.

The dual-pathway model of collective action emphasizes the importance of both group-based anger and collective identification in explaining collective action dynamics (Robbins 2025). According to this model, group-based anger constitutes an emotion-focused pathway, whereas collective identification represents a problem-focused approach; both pathways contribute to collective action tendencies. Understanding these mechanisms can inform strategies to enhance collective mobilization across diverse social contexts. Acknowledging the interplay between these pathways may facilitate the development of more effective interventions that promote collective action in response to perceived injustices.

Social Identity Theory posits that individuals derive part of their identity from the groups to which they belong (Reimer et al. 2022), which in turn influences their motivations for collective action. This theory emphasizes the importance of group membership in shaping individuals' emotions and behaviors, particularly in contexts where individuals perceive themselves as disadvantaged or unjustly treated. The implications of Social Identity Theory suggest that fostering a strong sense of group identity can enhance collective action, especially when individuals perceive shared injustices.

By integrating insights from the dual-pathway model and Social Identity Theory, we can gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of driving group anger and its role in mobilizing collective action. This

integration underscores the significance of emotional dynamics and group identification in promoting a collective response to social injustices.

The social context in which a group operates can significantly influence the levels of anger experienced, thereby affecting their likelihood to engage in collective action. Understanding how social contexts influence group anger is crucial for predicting collective action tendencies, as variations in context can either amplify or mitigate emotional responses among group members.

Group efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs about their group's ability to act together to produce desired outcomes, emphasizing both the capacity to perform and the expected consequences of collective action (Doherty 2014). Higher group efficacy is associated with an increased tendency for collective action, as individuals feel more empowered to achieve shared goals. This relationship underscores the importance of cultivating group efficacy beliefs to effectively motivate collective action. Moreover, understanding the nuances of collective efficacy can further enhance strategies aimed at promoting sustainable behaviors within groups (Reese & Junge 2017). Enhancing collective efficacy can lead to significant improvements in pro-environmental intentions, particularly when individuals perceive their group as capable of affecting change (Jugert et al. 2016).

This highlights the importance of targeted interventions that enhance both collective and self-efficacy to maximize the impact of group efforts on environmental initiatives (Jugert et al. 2016). Such interventions could be particularly effective if they focus on tasks of moderate difficulty, as this has been shown to strengthen collective efficacy beliefs and enhance sustainable intentions (Reese & Junge 2017). Therefore, fostering a sense of collective efficacy through well-designed interventions can significantly contribute to achieving law enforcement goals and promoting sustainable behaviors within communities.

Leveraging collective efficacy in law enforcement initiatives can create a ripple effect, inspiring individuals to engage more actively in sustainability efforts and fostering a culture of shared responsibility. This approach aligns with findings that suggest collective efficacy manipulations can enhance pro-environmental intentions by increasing individual self-efficacy (Jugert et al. 2016). By emphasizing the effectiveness of collective efforts, interventions can inspire greater participation and ultimately drive meaningful change in law enforcement behavior. This holistic approach not only empowers individuals but also reinforces the belief that collective action can lead to significant improvements in law enforcement.

Ultimately, group-based emotions can mitigate individual powerlessness; however, their mobilizing effect depends significantly on identity and collective efficacy (Brosch, 2025). Emotions experienced collectively gain legitimacy, are more readily expressed, and are more easily transformed into action-oriented norms. Group emotions thus provide psychological support that facilitates a transition from individual powerlessness to collective coping. Identity serves as a cohesive force that promotes integration (van Zomeren, 2008). In the absence of a robust political identity, anger may become a diffuse emotion, leading to venting, fragmentation, or symbolic expression without coordinated action. Both collective efficacy and the appraisal of injustice enhance intentions for collective action by influencing negative emotions, such as anger, and positive emotions, such as being moved (Landman, 2020).

Politicized Identification

Politicized identification refers to an individual's recognition of membership within a group that advocates for specific political interests. Alberici and Milesi (2018) demonstrate that political identity reinforces group cohesion and introduces a moral dimension to collective action. In the context of law enforcement, students who exhibit a strong political identity perceive participation in collective action as an expression of both moral and political allegiance.

This relationship suggests that stronger politicized identification may enhance the likelihood of engaging in collective action. Moreover, understanding the dynamics of politicized identity can help clarify the motivations behind collective action, as seen in various social movements. This understanding aligns with research indicating that group identity content significantly predicts identity-expressive collective action, particularly during pivotal moments, such as elections. This insight emphasizes the importance of politicized identity in mobilizing individuals, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on collective action in democratic processes.

Reference politics, identification impact, and the tendency toward collective action are essential for understanding how individuals relate to their political groups and the motivations that drive their participation. By examining these factors, we can gain a deeper understanding of the nuances of collective action dynamics. This analysis highlights the complex relationship between politicized identification and collective action, demonstrating how individual motivations intersect with broader group dynamics in political contexts.

Based on the description of the relationship between moral conviction, collective action, group anger, group efficacy, and politicized

identification, the following hypotheses are formulated for the case of law enforcement in Indonesia:

H1: Group anger mediates the relationship between moral conviction and the tendency to take collective action

H2: Group efficacy mediates the relationship between moral conviction and the tendency to take collective action

H3: Politicized identification mediates the relationship between moral conviction and the tendency to take collective action

Online Political Discussion as a Moderator

The development of social media has changed the landscape of action mobilization. Chen et al. (2021) demonstrate that online media can facilitate large-scale mobilization, such as the Hong Kong protests, by accelerating the diffusion of messages. However, they also emphasize that online networks are often fragmented and dependent on key actors.

This study highlights the need to explore how various factors, including online discussions and collective action intentions, influence contemporary social movements. Such exploration is vital, as it reveals how online interactions can either bolster or hinder the development of politicized identities, ultimately influencing collective action outcomes (Intyaswati 2023). Understanding these dynamics can inform strategies for enhancing participation in this form of collective action in democratic processes.

Previous studies have shown that online discussions can significantly influence activists' perceptions, highlighting the importance of context in shaping politicized identities and collective action intentions.

Anger is positively correlated with participation in online discussions (Wollebæk et al. 2019; Hasell & Weeks 2016). Furthermore, Wollebæk et al. (2019) explain that angry individuals also appear more frequently in debates between people with differing views and from different social classes or ethnic backgrounds. This implies that, in online debates, anger contributes more to what was previously referred to as trench warfare dynamics than to echo chamber dynamics. Trench warfare dynamics are characterized by a sharp and angry tone of discussion, where each side of an argument receives support from like-minded individuals.

Tafesse & Korneliussen (2021) found that previous social media experience, including the discussions that took place, contributed to enhancing collective efficacy. This is consistent with arguments in social cognitive theory, which suggest that mastery experiences enhance group performance by providing members with accurate, firsthand information

about their collective ability to succeed in subsequent tasks (Bandura 2009). Furthermore, in this study, group efficacy can contribute to collective action.

Thus, online political discussions have the potential to moderate the relationship between group anger, group efficacy, and politicized identification, influencing collective action tendencies either by strengthening or weakening them. The following hypotheses are then formulated:

H4: Online political discussions moderate the effect of group anger on collective action tendencies

H5: Online political discussions moderate the effect of group efficacy on collective action tendencies

H6: Online political discussion moderates the influence of politicized identification on the tendency to engage in collective action.

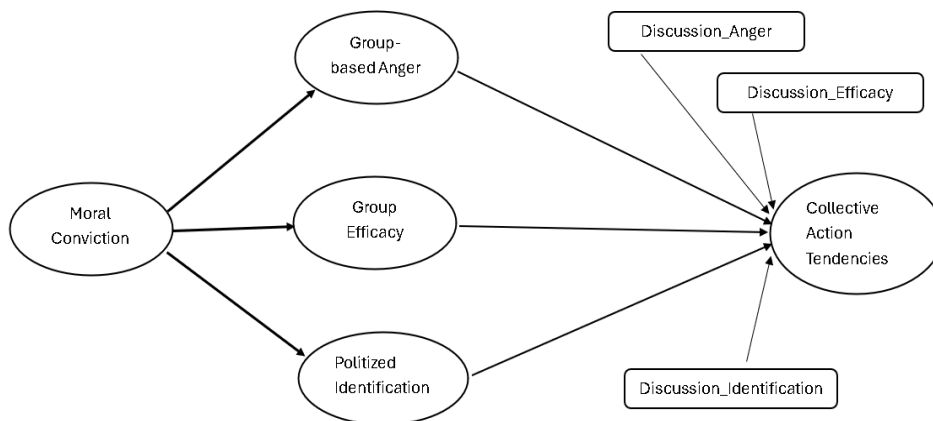


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework for the Study

METHOD

Sampling

The study population comprised Indonesian university students. A purposive sampling technique was employed, selecting participants who use social media and follow developments in law enforcement issues in Indonesia.

Data were collected between July and August 2025 using a Google Form questionnaire distributed via WhatsApp Groups (WAG), Instagram bios, and Twitter (X). Respondents received information about the research objectives and provided voluntary consent prior to participation. The sample size, determined by using the Cochran formula with a 5% margin of error, totaled 546 respondents.

The sample included 546 respondents: 232 males (42.5%) and 314 females (57.5%), with a higher proportion of female participants. Educational attainment comprised 29 diploma students (5.3%), 509 undergraduate students (93.2%), and 8 master's students (1.5%), indicating a predominance of undergraduates. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 43 years. The majority were aged 21 to 23, with 22-year-olds constituting 35.5%, 23-year-olds 19.8%, and 21-year-olds 19.2% of the sample. This demographic distribution is characteristic of undergraduate student populations.

Overall, the respondents were primarily female undergraduate students in their early twenties. This demographic is typically active on social media and familiar with contemporary issues, including law enforcement in Indonesia.

Measurement

The research instrument was a questionnaire designed to measure six primary constructs: moral conviction, collective action tendencies, group-based anger, group efficacy, politicized identification, and online political discussion. Each construction was assessed using a series of statements rated on a Likert scale.

Moral Conviction in this study, with six items adapted from van Zomeren (2012): Law enforcement in Indonesia is important, part of moral norms and values, has moral character, is a universal moral value, is a correct stance, and is like mine, and reflects an important part of myself ($M=4.109$, $SD=0.447$).

Group efficacy was measured using this construct; four items were adapted from van Zomeren (2012): In law enforcement in Indonesia, as students, participants can support, contribute to, advocate for, and believe they can effect change in law enforcement in Indonesia ($M=4.227$, $SD=0.491$).

Group-based anger, as measured by four items adapted from Shi et al. (2014), is: As a student, when faced with the law enforcement situation in Indonesia, I feel dislike, annoyance, anger, and rage ($M=4.265$, $SD=0.658$).

Politicized identification was measured with four items adapted from van Zomeren (2012): participants identified as members of a student group, felt a sense of belonging, and expressed pride in group membership. Non-politicized identification was assessed with four items evaluating self-identity as a student, connection to the student group, and pride in its existence ($M=4.166$, $SD=0.505$).

Collective action tendencies were measured using five items from Shi et al. (2014): participants indicated willingness to speak out, sign petitions, engage in collective action, and participate in efforts to influence law enforcement in Indonesia ($M=4.116$, $SD=0.577$).

Online political discussion was measured using five items adapted from Intyaswati et al. (2021): participants reported discussing politics online with individuals who share similar views, those with differing views, family members, student peers, and new acquaintances ($M=3.75209$, $SD=0.724$).

Validity and Reliability Test

Construct validity was evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The CFA results indicated a Chi-square/df (CMIN/DF) value of 1.655, GFI of 0.935, AGFI of 0.916, CFI of 0.951, and RMSEA of 0.035, demonstrating good model fit and instrument suitability.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. All variables demonstrated alpha values above 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability: moral conviction (0.706), group efficacy (0.713), group-based anger (0.826), politicized identification (0.828), collective action (0.780), and online political discussion (0.794).

The collected data were analyzed to examine hypothesized relationships among variables using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the AMOS 26 software.

RESULTS

The test results indicate that the structural model has good goodness of fit. Several model fit indices include: 1) CMIN/DF = 2.197, which meets the criteria (<3). 2) GFI = 0.904, AGFI = 0.903, CFI = 0.901, and TLI = 0.900, which meet the cut-off (≥ 0.90). 3) RMSEA = 0.047, which meets the criteria (≤ 0.08). Thus, the model is deemed suitable for use, with all indices indicating marginal fit.

Table 1. Regression Weight

Items	Unstandardized Estimated (B)	S. E	P	Standardized Estimated (β)
Moral Conviction \rightarrow Angry	0.500	0.103	***	0.312
Moral Conviction \rightarrow Efficacy	0.703	0.103	***	0.787
Moral Conviction \rightarrow Politized Id	0.657	0.093	***	0.671
Politized Id \rightarrow Collective Action	0.463	0.083	***	0.360
Efficacy \rightarrow Collective Action	0.695	0.115	***	0.493
Angry \rightarrow Collective Action	0.171	0.036	***	0.217
Discuss_Angry \rightarrow Collective Action	-0.022	0.016	0.164	-0.052
Discuss_Efficacy \rightarrow Collective Action	-0.037	0.017	0.033	-0.080
Discuss_Politized \rightarrow Collective Action	-0.025	0.016	0.124	-0.057

N=546. *** $p < 0.001$

Table 1 indicates that moral conviction exerts a significant direct effect on group-based anger, group efficacy, and politicized identification, with coefficient values of 0.500, 0.703, and 0.657, respectively. Group-based anger, group efficacy, and politicized identification each significantly influence the tendency toward collective action, with coefficients of 0.171, 0.695, and 0.463, respectively. In contrast, the moderating effect of online political discussions on the relationship between group-based anger and the tendency toward collective action is not significant, as indicated by a coefficient of -0.022. Similarly, online political discussions do not significantly moderate the relationship between politicized identification and the tendency toward collective action, with a coefficient of -0.025. However, online political discussions demonstrate a significant mediating effect on the relationship between group efficacy and the tendency toward collective action, with a coefficient of -0.037. The negative coefficient suggests that increased participation in online political discussions is associated with a reduced influence of group efficacy on the tendency toward collective action.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Test	Decision
H1	Group-based Angry mediates the Moral Conviction → Collective Action	Moral Conviction → Based-group Angry ($p < 0,001$) Based-group Angry → Collective Action ($p < 0,001$)	Accepted
H2	Group Efficacy mediates the Moral Conviction → Collective Action	Moral Conviction → Group Efficacy ($p < 0,001$) Group Efficacy → Collective Action ($p < 0,001$)	Accepted
H3	Politized Identification mediates the Moral Conviction → Collective Action	Moral Conviction → Politized Identification ($p < 0,001$) Politized Identification → Collective Action ($p < 0,001$)	Accepted
H4	Online Political Discussion moderates the Group-based Angry → Collective Action	Discuss_Angry → Collective Action ($\beta = -0,052$; $p = 0,164$)	Reject
H5	Online Political Discussion moderates the Group Efficacy → Collective Action	Discuss_Efficacy → Collective Action ($\beta = -0,080$; $p = 0,033$)	Accepted
H6	Online Political Discussion moderates Politized Identification → Collective Action	Discuss_Politized → Collective Action ($\beta = -0,057$; $p = 0,124$)	Reject

The results of the hypothesis test indicate that students' anger, efficacy, and political identification each significantly mediate the relationship between their values regarding law enforcement and their tendency to participate in mass protests. Furthermore, online political discussions act as a negative moderator, meaning that the more frequently students engage in online discussions, the less likely they are to engage in collective action. However, it is necessary to consider for future studies, based on the study by Brown and Mourão (2021), which explored how news frames and visuals influence support and identification with collective movements. The study further states that articles with legitimizing debate frames increase support for protesters and identification with protesters.

These findings highlight that students' tendency to participate in collective action related to law enforcement in Indonesia is strongly shaped by anger, efficacy, and political identification. Notably, political discussions on social media do not universally enhance engagement and may even reduce the effect of group efficacy.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that beliefs about law enforcement in Indonesia have a strong influence on three main factors: anger, efficacy, and political identity. These three factors, in turn, significantly contribute to increasing students' tendency to engage in collective action. This finding is consistent with the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) theory, which emphasizes the importance of identity, collective emotions, and efficacy in driving collective action.

First, the moral conflict → anger → collective action pathway supports the hypothesis that group anger is a key mediator. Students with negative perceptions of law enforcement tend to feel anger, and this emotion triggers the urge to take collective action. This reinforces the view that moral outrage plays a significant role in political activism. A study by Davenport-Klunder (2024) on anti-police sentiment in Australia provides material for developing more empathetic and targeted strategies to improve relations between police and citizens. It highlights the need to adopt emotion-based communication techniques and design persuasive campaigns that transform feelings of anger into trust.

Second, the moral conviction → efficacy → collective action pathway indicates that group efficacy is a key factor. Students who believe legal injustice exists are more motivated to act if they perceive a collective ability to change the situation. This finding aligns with previous research

that confirms that a sense of "being able to work together" (collective efficacy) is a catalyst for political participation (Ginsburg & Blanchet-Cohen, 2025; Velasquez & LaRose, 2015).

The findings of these two pathways align with those of Robbins' (2025) study, which found that anger and efficacy are triggered by a broad range of situational conditions, supporting a dual-pathway model of collective action. Meanwhile, Shi et al.'s (2023) study yielded different findings: procedural unfairness predicted protest via group-based anger, but not via group efficacy. Studies examining the mediating role of group-based anger and group efficacy in collective action have yielded inconsistent results.

Third, the moral conviction → identity → collective action pathway demonstrates the role of political identity. The more strongly students identify themselves as part of a group with specific political interests, the greater their likelihood of engaging in collective action. Group identity helps people see legal issues as shared challenges. According to Carter et al. (2019), identity, awareness, and mobilization all influence how ordinary people get involved in collective legal action.

These findings align with Turner-Zwinkels and Van Zomeren (2021). They found in their longitudinal prediction that politicized group identification predicted increases in the frequency of collective action more strongly than identification with a specific identity.

A key finding concerns the moderating effect of online political discussions. Only the efficacy pathway was significantly affected; online discussions weakened the influence of efficacy on collective action. This suggests that although students perceive collective efficacy, active online engagement may substitute for real-world participation, diminishing the efficacy effect. This negative moderation by online discussions extends the SIMCA theory and underscores the complexity of mobilizing for collective action in digital contexts.

Meanwhile, online political discussions did not moderate the influence of anger or political identity on collective action. This suggests that emotions (anger) and political identity are relatively stable in driving action, regardless of the presence or absence of online discussions.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted among Indonesian university students to examine the factors contributing to collective action tendencies, which can manifest as demonstrations, free speech on campus, the submission

of demands, and participation through social media. The media plays a role in providing information regarding law enforcement.

Social media is a platform for online discussions and a medium for mobilization, particularly among university students. Students' moral beliefs regarding the importance of law enforcement in Indonesia serve as the basis for determining their propensity to engage in collective action.

The results indicate that students' anger, efficacy, and political identity mediate their beliefs regarding the need for law enforcement in Indonesia, thus fostering a propensity to engage in collective action.

Social media use is integral to student activities, even serving as a means of communication and discussion. Intense student discussions via social media have been shown to negatively impact efficacy and may even decrease their propensity to engage in collective action. The findings of this study require further investigation for broader confirmation.

A limitation of this study lies in the lack of specific characteristics of the online discussions. More rigorous specifications and additional indicators would likely yield more conclusive results.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study confirms the relevance of SIMCA in the Indonesian context, particularly in relation to law enforcement issues. Identity, emotion, and efficacy have been shown to be the primary psychological mechanisms predicting student involvement in collective action.

Practically, these results provide a lesson that while digital media serves as a platform for political discussion, its use does not necessarily foster a tendency toward concrete action. This highlights the importance of activism strategies that extend beyond online discussions and focus on more concrete forms of collective participation.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from UPNVJ Research Ethics Commission (127/VI/2025/KEP).

Acknowledgements

This study was supported by DPPM Kemendikisaintek Indonesia TA 2025.

Thank you to Fathyo R.K. and Mira Andiani for their assistance with the research.

Declaration of Interest statement

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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