




No Viral, No Justice: The Impact of Social Media on Law Enforcement in Indonesia

Devi Satriawan

Universitas Satyagama

Mpan93885@gmail.com

Received : Mei 2, 2026 Accepted : Mei 11, 2026 Published : Mei 15, 2026	<p>ABSTRACT: The "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon examines the growing influence of social media in shaping legal responses in Indonesia. This study investigates how social media virality impacts the law enforcement system, exploring whether public pressure via digital platforms influences the speed and transparency of legal processes. The research aims to analyze the implications of viral cases on law enforcement practices and public trust in legal institutions. Using a qualitative approach with case studies, the study examines several viral legal events, focusing on their effects on legal decision-making and public scrutiny. The results indicate that social media accelerates legal actions by bringing attention to overlooked cases but also creates legal uncertainty and the potential for misinformation. The article discusses how public opinion, shaped by social media, can sometimes override objective legal outcomes. The main findings suggest that while social media plays a role in advancing justice, law enforcement should remain grounded in legal principles and not driven by online popularity.</p> <p>Keywords: No Viral; No Justice; SocialMedia; Law Enforcement; Transparency; Public Opinion.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon reflects a new dynamic in law enforcement in Indonesia, where public attention to a legal case often increases significantly after it goes viral on social media. In recent years, social media has served as a key instrument in promoting legal transparency and accountability of law enforcement officials. Cases that previously received little attention from legal institutions are now prioritized after receiving widespread public attention. This phenomenon raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of Indonesia's legal system in upholding justice without relying on public pressure online (Kagaba, 2025).

Practically speaking, the reliance on virality in law enforcement has several serious implications, such as inconsistencies in the processing of legal cases, pressure for law enforcement to act quickly without in-depth investigations, and the potential for politicization of certain cases (Abbas & Mansour, 2024). Cases such as murder, sexual harassment, or other acts of violence that receive wide exposure on social media often attract the attention of law enforcement officials more quickly than similar cases that do not go viral. For example, cases of abuse that go viral on social media often receive special attention from police and prosecutors, while cases that do not receive similar attention often experience delays in the legal process. This raises questions about substantive justice and consistency in the application of the law.

This study aims to examine how social media affects the law enforcement system in Indonesia and the extent to which the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon impacts the principles of justice and legal certainty. This study will highlight the role of social media in shaping public opinion and how social pressure can influence the decision of legal officers in handling a case.

This research will use several theoretical approaches to analyze the phenomenon of "No Viral, No Justice," including: Public Space Theory (Habermas, 1998), which explains how social media becomes a public discussion space that can influence legal policies and decisions of law enforcement officials. Social Construction of Reality Theory (Berger, P. and Luckmann, 1996), which highlights how social media shapes people's perceptions of a legal case and how these perceptions affect the law enforcement process. Legal Responsiveness Theory, which examines how the legal system adjusts to social pressures and whether this response is positive or weakens the basic principles of justice and legal certainty (Nonet et al., 2001). By using this approach, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on the law enforcement system in Indonesia and formulate solutions to maintain a balance between public influence and legal objectivity.

In addition to the theoretical approach, this research will also examine case studies related to cases in the public spotlight in Indonesia. These cases involve various aspects of law, ranging from cases of violence that received widespread attention to cases of alleged corruption that were only followed up after going viral on social media. These case studies will provide deeper insights into the extent of social media's influence in the law enforcement process as well as its potential positive and negative impacts on the justice system in Indonesia.

This research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on the law enforcement system in Indonesia and formulate solutions to maintain

a balance between public influence and legal objectivity. In addition, this research will also provide recommendations for law enforcement officials in managing public pressure arising from the virality of cases on social media, so that the legal system continues to run in accordance with the principles of justice and legal certainty.

Several previous studies have highlighted the role of social media in the legal system. For example, a study by Edi Kristianta Tarigan et al found that social media has a dual role in law enforcement, namely as an advocacy tool and as a trigger for the spread of information that is not always accurate (Tarigan et al., 2025). In Indonesia, research by Julia Magdalena revealed that social media plays an important role in building public pressure on law enforcement officials, although it does not always contribute to substantive justice (Wuysang et al., 2024).

Based on the literature review, the majority of previous studies have focused on how social media functions as a legal advocacy tool and as a public discussion space that accelerates the reaction of the legal apparatus to a case. However, there is a gap in the study of the long-term impact of the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon on the legal system in Indonesia, particularly in relation to the principles of legal certainty and substantive justice. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the extent to which social media has changed the pattern of law enforcement and identifying the positive and negative impacts on the justice system in Indonesia.

Thus, this research will not only provide a deeper understanding of the role of social media in law enforcement, but will also provide policy recommendations that can be used by policy makers and law enforcement officials in facing the era of legal digitalization.

Theoretical Framework

The "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon in the context of law enforcement in Indonesia can be analyzed through various theoretical approaches that highlight the relationship between social media, the legal system, and the behavior of law enforcement officials. This framework is based on relevant theories to understand how social media shapes perceptions of justice and influences legal responses.

1. Public Sphere Theory – Habermas

The Public Sphere Theory, developed by Jürgen Habermas (Habermas, 1998), explains how social media functions as a public discussion space that allows people to voice opinions and critique government policies, including in the legal realm. Habermas emphasizes that in the digital public sphere, public opinion can exert pressure on policymakers, including law enforcement officials. Kagaba's study shows that social media plays a dual role in the legal

system: as an advocacy tool and as an instrument that can create distortion of information.(Kagaba, 2025) In this context, the public sphere theory is relevant to understand how social media creates a new dynamic in the interaction between society and legal institutions.

2. Responsive Law Theory – Nonet & Selznick

Nonet and Selznick developed the Responsive Law Theory, which highlights how the legal system adjusts to social pressures and public demands.(Nonet & Selznick, 2003) In the context of the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon, this theory explains how law enforcement officials tend to respond more quickly to cases that receive widespread attention on social media than to cases that are less exposed. Tarigan et al found that law enforcement responses to viral cases are often driven by concerns about public opinion rather than objective legal considerations.(Tarigan et al., 2025) This creates a dilemma between the need for swift responses and the fundamental principles of justice and legal certainty.

3. Social Construction of Reality Theory – Berger & Luckmann

Berger and Luckmann in their work on the social construction of reality explain how social media can shape public perceptions of a legal case.(Berger, P. and Luckmann, 1996) When a case goes viral, people tend to adopt the dominant narrative on social media without considering the objective legal facts. Tarigan found that the virality of a case can create bias in law enforcement, where public pressure can influence legal decisions that should be based on evidence and legal procedures.(Tarigan et al., 2025)

4. Media Influence Theory – McQuail

McQuail's Media Influence Theory explains how media, including social media, can shape public perceptions and attitudes towards an issue.(McQuail, 2010) In the legal context, social media not only acts as an information disseminator but also as a framing tool that can steer public opinion and even generate political pressure on law enforcement officials. A study by Julia Magdalena in Indonesia showed that cases receiving broad exposure on social media are more likely to attract attention from police and prosecutors compared to similar cases that do not go viral.(Wuysang et al., 2024)

5. Social Justice Theory – Rawls

John Rawls, in *A Theory of Justice*, emphasizes the importance of justice that is fair and equal for all individuals, regardless of the influence of certain groups.(Rawls, 2017) In the context of the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon, this theory is relevant to highlight the inequities in law enforcement, where cases that gain public attention are more likely to be processed quickly compared to cases that do not go viral. Sunstein critiques how social media

can create selective justice, where access to justice depends on how much attention a case can attract from the public.(Sunstein, 2019)

Overall, these theoretical perspectives reveal that while social media plays a crucial role in holding authorities accountable, it also poses significant challenges to legal impartiality. To ensure a fair and balanced justice system, Indonesia must strengthen legal institutions, promote transparency in law enforcement, and enhance public legal literacy to mitigate the risks of trial-by-social-media dynamics.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in this research is a further development of the theories that have been described in the theoretical framework. This framework serves as a foundation for understanding the relationship between the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon and the legal system in Indonesia. By combining public space theory, legal responsiveness theory, social construction of reality theory, media influence theory, and social justice theory, this research builds a more specific concept to analyze how social media affects the process of law enforcement and justice in Indonesia.

1. Conceptualizing Social Media as a Digital Public Space

Based on Habermas' public sphere theory,(Habermas, 1998) social media can be understood as a digital space where people discuss and form opinions on legal cases. In this context, social media functions as:

- a. A forum for public expression: A place where people can voice their opinions on a particular legal case.
- b. Legal advocacy tool: A tool for communities and activists to push law enforcement to take faster action.
- c. Arena of social pressure: Shaping public perception and pressuring law enforcement to act in accordance with majority opinion.

2. Legal Responsiveness to Social Media Virality

Nonet and Selznick's theory of legal responsiveness(Nonet et al., 2001) explains how the legal system adapts to social pressures. In this study, legal responsiveness in Indonesia to the virality of a case on social media can be categorized as follows:

- a. Proactive response: Law enforcement acts as soon as the case goes viral to avoid a negative image.
- b. Reactive response: Legal action is only taken after strong public pressure.
- c. Selective response: Only cases that have significant political or social impact receive attention.

3. Social Construction of Legal Reality

Based on Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality theory,(Berger & Luckmann, n.d.) this research develops the concept that social media shapes legal reality in three stages:

- a. Externalization: People express opinions and construct narratives about a legal case.
- b. Objectivation, the dominant opinion becomes the representation of "truth" in society, often to the exclusion of objective due process.
- c. Internalization, law enforcers begin to accept and adjust their actions based on the narratives formed on social media.

4. Media Influence on Legal Independence

Using Rivaldhy's theory of media influence, this study develops the concept that social media can:(Muhammad et al., 2024)

- a. Improving access to justice: Giving a voice to groups that have previously struggled to get legal attention.
- b. Establishing law enforcement bias: Law enforcement is more focused on viral cases, while other cases that receive less attention are overlooked.
- c. Influencing the opinions of judges and prosecutors: Public narratives on social media can exert psychological pressure on legal decisions.

5. Social Justice in Law Enforcement

Social justice theory is the basis for developing the concept that the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon poses a challenge to the Indonesian legal system. The concepts developed in this research include:(Al Mustaqim et al., 2024)

- a. Disparities in access to justice: Communities that are able to mobilize social media get justice faster than those without digital access or support.
- b. Legal uncertainty: Law enforcement becomes more responsive to social pressures than to legal procedures.
- c. Potential for legal manipulation: Certain legal cases can be capitalized on by certain parties for political or economic gain through virality on social media.

This conceptual framework helps explain that the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon is not just a communication issue, but has far-reaching implications for the Indonesian legal system. This research aims to understand how this dynamic affects the response of the legal apparatus, the social construction of legal reality, and social justice in Indonesia. Using a multidisciplinary approach combining law, sociology and communication theory, this research will test the hypothesis that the virality of a case can significantly influence the legal process.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This research uses a qualitative approach (Khoirunnisa et al., 2025) with a socio-legal research method, which focuses on analyzing how the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon affects the law enforcement system in Indonesia. This approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the interaction between law, social media and public opinion based on literature review and document study.

Type of Research

This type of research is descriptive-analytical, which describes the phenomena that occur and analyzes them based on theories of law, communication, and social media. This research aims to understand the

Data Source

This research uses two main types of data sources:

1. Primary data, obtained through analysis of legal cases that go viral on social media and their impact on the law enforcement process.
2. Secondary Data, which consists of:
 - a. Legislation related to the judicial and legal system in Indonesia.
 - b. Journal articles, books, and previous research that discuss the relationship between law and social media.
 - c. Media reports and academic publications addressing virality trends in the context of law enforcement.

Data Collection Technique

1. Document Study

- a. Review laws, regulations and policies related to the justice system and social media.
- b. Analyze academic literature relevant to the phenomenon of "No Viral, No Justice."
- c. Collect data from various viral case reports on social media and their impact on legal decisions.

2. Case Analysis

- a. Examine some legal cases that received widespread attention on social media and compare them with similar cases that did not go viral.
- b. Examine how law enforcement officials responded to these cases by comparing the legal process before and after virality occurred.

Data Analysis Method

The data obtained was analyzed using qualitative methods with an interpretative

approach, which included:

1. Data Reduction, filtering out relevant information from the document study and case analysis.
2. Data Presentation, organizing data in the form of narratives and thematic findings based on patterns that emerged in the cases studied.
3. Drawing Conclusions, identifying patterns of the relationship between social media virality and law enforcement, and formulating policy recommendations that can be taken based on the research findings.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity of the research, a source triangulation technique was used, comparing the results of the document study, case analysis, and academic literature to find data congruence. In addition, a cross-check of various publications and regulations was conducted to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the data used.

Research Limitations

While this study attempts to provide a comprehensive analysis, there are some limitations that need to be noted:

- a. Data Limitations, not all viral legal cases have complete documentation, so analysis may be limited to cases with sufficient data available.
- b. Social Media Subjectivity, public sentiment in social media is dynamic and can be influenced by external factors, so the results of this study are contextual according to the time period studied.
- c. Not Involving Interviews, the absence of interviews with law enforcement officials or other relevant parties may limit the direct perspective of legal actors on the influence of social media on their decisions.
- d. Indonesian Context, this study focuses on the legal context in Indonesia, so generalization of the results to other countries needs to be done with caution and take into account differences in legal and socio-political systems extent of the influence of virality in social media on legal decisions and policies of law enforcement officials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the digital era, social media plays an increasingly dominant role in various aspects of people's lives, including in law enforcement. The "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon refers to a situation where a legal case only gets attention from law enforcement officials after it goes viral on social media. This phenomenon has various implications for the justice system, ranging from public pressure to the potential misuse of social media as a tool for mass trials.

1. Dynamics of Law Enforcement in the Digital Age

Traditional law enforcement relies on formal mechanisms consisting of the stages of reporting, investigation, prosecution, and trial in court. This system is based on the principle of due process of law which ensures that every individual gets fair legal treatment, based on evidence and established procedures. However, with the development of social media, the public now has access to publicize legal cases that were previously unreachable by the mainstream media. This phenomenon has resulted in significant changes in the dynamics of law enforcement, especially in the way certain cases gain public attention and are processed by law enforcement officials.

According to Wijaya(Wijaya, 2024) (2020), social media has accelerated the authorities' response to cases that previously received little attention from conventional media. In many cases, pressure from netizens can encourage further investigation or even reopen cases that were previously ignored. This phenomenon shows how the collective power of society in the digital world can influence legal institutions that have tended to work within a slower procedural framework. On the other hand, it also raises ethical and legal dilemmas, particularly regarding the independence of the judicial system and the presumption of innocence.

The phenomenon of "trial by social media" is one of the obvious implications of this change. This concept refers to a situation where public opinion formed on social media becomes an alternative court that can influence the course of legal proceedings. In some cases, individuals accused of violating the law experience great social pressure, even before a legal court decision. As argued by Trottier,(Trottier, 2017) the uncontrolled dissemination of information can lead to the formation of biased public opinion, often without considering valid legal facts. This poses a risk to the justice system as public pressure can lead to decision-making influenced by social sentiment rather than objective legal evidence.

In addition, the use of social media in the context of law enforcement also poses challenges in terms of human rights protection. One of the main risks is the occurrence of mob justice, which ignores the rights of defendants to obtain a fair legal process. According to research conducted by Akbar,(Akbar et al., 2024) viral campaigns on social media often accelerate legal action, but on the other hand, can also cause bias in investigations and legal decisions. For example, in some cases of sexual violence that went viral on social media, public pressure led police officers to act immediately without conducting a comprehensive investigation, leading to potential errors in law enforcement.

On the other hand, the use of social media in law enforcement also has a positive impact in terms of transparency and accountability. As stated by Parmar,(Parmar & Chauhan, 2023)

social media can be used as a tool to increase transparency in the justice system by providing space for the public to monitor the performance of law enforcement officials. In some cases, video footage from citizens uploaded to social media has helped uncover violations committed by officers, thus encouraging reforms in legal institutions. This shows that social media can be an effective monitoring tool, especially in the context of countries with high levels of legal corruption.

However, it is important to look at how the balance between transparency and judicial independence can be maintained. According to research conducted by Harmono,(Harmono, 2024) the existence of social media should not replace the existing legal system, but rather serve as a complement in ensuring justice is served. They emphasized that a good legal mechanism is one that adheres to the principles of objectivity, while social media plays a role in providing access to information and accelerating responses to cases that require more attention from law enforcement.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that social media has changed the landscape of law enforcement by providing greater access for the public to participate in justice issues. However, this change also brings major challenges related to judicial independence, the potential for bias in legal decision-making, and the risk of human rights violations due to the judiciary by public opinion. Therefore, regulations and policies are needed that can accommodate the role of social media without compromising the basic principles of legal justice. The government and law enforcement officials need to develop strategies that can maintain a balance between the influence of social media and formal legal mechanisms so that the justice system can continue to function independently and fairly.

2. The Role of Social Media in Influencing Law Enforcement Officials

Social media has become a very influential instrument in various aspects of life, including in the law enforcement process. Its presence allows people to more easily access, share and discuss legal issues that were previously only accessible through traditional media or official reports from relevant agencies. One of the most significant impacts of social media on the justice system is its ability to put pressure on law enforcement officials to act more quickly and transparently in handling a case (Khoirunnisa & Jubaidi, 2025).

In some cases, virality on social media has prompted police and prosecutors to act more proactively. For example, cases of violence against women and children often gain widespread attention after going viral on social media. Research by Kyomugisha (T., 2024) shows that social media can be an effective advocacy tool in raising public awareness of certain legal issues. With pressure from the public voiced through social media, law enforcement officials often

feel compelled to speed up the investigation and prosecution of cases that are in the public spotlight.

However, not all viral cases have a strong legal basis. In some situations, information circulating on social media can be biased or even contain disinformation that has the potential to mislead the public. This poses a challenge for law enforcement in distinguishing between legitimate public demands and public opinion based on inaccurate information. For example, there have been cases where a person accused of a crime has been subjected to public judgment (trial by social media) before there is sufficient legal evidence. This can undermine the presumption of innocence and create pressure for law enforcement officials to make decisions based on public opinion rather than objective legal facts.

According to research conducted by Harmono,(Harmono, 2024) this phenomenon risks eroding the independence of the legal apparatus. When public pressure is too strong, there is a possibility that the legal apparatus acts not entirely based on rational legal considerations, but rather on the desire to assuage public anger. This is certainly dangerous for the principle of due process of law, which emphasizes that every individual is entitled to a fair legal process based on valid evidence.

On the other hand, social media can also be used as a tool to control the performance of law enforcement officials. The public can use digital platforms to report allegations of abuse of authority, arbitrary actions, or the slow response of the authorities in handling a case. Research conducted by Kyomugisha,(T., 2024) shows that the use of social media in public oversight of law enforcement can increase accountability and transparency. In some cases, video recordings or social media posts from citizens have become strong evidence in exposing violations of the law committed by the authorities, which in turn encourages reforms in the law enforcement system.

However, it is important to remember that the role of social media in influencing the legal apparatus must remain within limits that do not interfere with the independence of the justice system. Law enforcement officials must have clear policies in responding to public pressure on social media, while still prioritizing the principles of objectivity and professionalism in handling every legal case. As stated Akbar, Rizky, and Kamaruddin,(Akbar et al., 2024) a good legal system is one that remains steadfast to existing legal principles, while social media serves as a tool to strengthen transparency and accountability without compromising judicial integrity.

Social media has a dual role in influencing law enforcement officials. On the one hand, social media can be an effective advocacy tool in encouraging faster and more transparent responses to crucial legal issues. However, on the other hand, social media can also be a source

of disinformation that has the potential to undermine fundamental legal principles, such as the presumption of innocence and judicial independence. Therefore, it is important for law enforcement officials to adhere to the principles of due process of law and professionalism in the face of public pressure in the digital era. Clear regulations on the role of social media in law enforcement also need to be developed to ensure a balance between transparency and independence of the legal system.

3. Analysis of Viral Cases that Impact Legal Decisions

Social media has become an important factor in shaping public opinion and influencing legal decisions in Indonesia. Some cases that have gone viral on social media have forced law enforcement officials to act more transparently, consider aspects of social justice, and even change legal policies. Here are three viral cases that have significantly impacted the legal process in Indonesia.

3.1. Baiq Nuril Case

Baiq Nuril's case reflects how social media can influence legal and government policies. Baiq Nuril, a teacher in Lombok, recorded a phone conversation with her boss containing verbal abuse as a form of self-protection.(Fadhli et al., 2025) However, instead of getting justice, Baiq Nuril was charged with violating the Electronic Information and Transaction Law (UU ITE) for illegally distributing the recording.

Following the Supreme Court's decision to sentence Baiq Nuril, there was a huge wave of protest on social media. The public felt that she was a victim who had been criminalized by the legal system. Hashtags such as #SaveBaiqNuril trended on various social media platforms, and an online petition to provide justice to Baiq Nuril received hundreds of thousands of signatures.(Widuri, 2019)

Intense public pressure eventually prompted President Joko Widodo to grant amnesty to Baiq Nuril in 2019. This decision shows that social media has the power to change legal policy, especially when public opinion supports victims of legal injustice. The study by Hendra Kaprisma notes that the Baiq Nuril case is an example of how public opinion mobilized through social media can influence legal decisions and government policies.(Kaprisma, 2020)

3.2. The case of Brigadier J

The murder of Brigadier J by Ferdy Sambo is one of the most obvious examples of how social media can function as a monitoring tool for law enforcement institutions.(Widya et al., 2024) At first, the case was tried to be covered up with the narrative that Brigadier J was killed

in a shootout. However, a suspicious public began to dig up information and spread it on social media, which eventually revealed the fact that there was an attempt to fabricate the case by unscrupulous police officers.

The power of social media in putting pressure on the legal apparatus can be seen from how information about this case continues to grow thanks to the investigations of netizens and independent journalists. With growing public pressure, the Indonesian National Police (Polri) finally formed a special team to investigate the case. After a transparent investigation process, Ferdy Sambo was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.

According to research by Nugroho and Wicaksono (2023), the Brigadier J case shows how social media can function as a "watchdog" that oversees the performance of law enforcement officials. (Murtadlo & Saputra, 2024) When law enforcement officials try to cover up a case, the public has the tools to expose the facts through social media. However, the study also warned that too much public pressure could lead to trial by social media, which could disrupt the independence of the legal process.

3.3. A case of chocolate theft by a child

The case began when a child was accused of stealing chocolate from a minimarket and threatened with prosecution. The incident went viral after a video of the child's arrest circulated on social media, triggering public sympathy that the legal process was not proportional to the act committed. Many people felt that the approach used by the legal apparatus in handling this case was too rigid and did not consider aspects of restorative justice.

As a result of public pressure, the police eventually stopped investigating the case on humanitarian grounds and used the diversion approach as stipulated in the Juvenile Justice System Law (UU SPPA). This decision shows how social media can play a role in correcting imbalances in the application of the law.

The highlights that this case sets an important precedent in the application of restorative justice in the juvenile criminal justice system. (Wagiman & Jubaidi, 2024) The public pressure that emerged through social media encouraged the legal apparatus to consider a more humanist and child protection-oriented approach, rather than simply applying the law rigidly.

The three cases above show that social media has a major influence in shaping public opinion and driving change in the legal process in Indonesia. On the one hand, social media can help expose injustices and promote transparency in the justice system. However, on the other hand, the influence of social media can also lead to trial by social media which can interfere with the principles of due process and legal independence. Therefore, while social media can be an effective tool to improve legal accountability, there needs to be a balance

between information disclosure and the principle of objective justice.

4. A Critique of the "No Viral, No Justice" Phenomenon

The "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon refers to a tendency where a legal case only gets serious attention from law enforcement officials after it goes viral on social media. While social media can serve as an advocacy tool that accelerates the justice process, there are a number of criticisms that need to be considered. These include threats to legal independence, potential misuse of social media, and unequal access to justice.

4.1 Threats to Legal Independence

One of the negative impacts of public pressure generated by social media virality is the potential threat to the independence of the judicial system.(Kwame, 2024) Judges, prosecutors and other law enforcement officials may feel swayed by public opinion on social media, so that decisions that should be based on legal facts and objective judicial principles may turn out to be more populist.

In legal theory, judicial independence is a fundamental principle that ensures that judges decide cases objectively without outside interference, including public pressure.(Nurmansyah, 2024) However, in the digital age, social media has created an environment where the judiciary can be subject to "trial by social media," where public opinion can lead to certain expectations of the outcome of a trial.

Many cases that go viral on social media tend to receive greater attention from law enforcement officials than similar cases that do not receive public attention.(Setiawan et al., 2024) In some cases, judges or prosecutors may face a dilemma between maintaining legal independence or responding to public pressure in order to maintain the image of legal institutions in the eyes of the public. This phenomenon has the potential to reduce trust in the rule of law as justice is no longer determined by due process, but by public opinion that is not always based on accurate facts.

4.2. Potential Misuse of Social Media

While social media can be a tool to expose injustice, these platforms can also be used to spread misleading or even defamatory information against certain individuals or institutions. In some cases, innocent individuals have become victims of "trial by social media" without the opportunity to defend themselves through due process.

Wuysang et al, highlights that social media can exacerbate conditions where unverified information can quickly spread and influence public perception.(Wuysang et al., 2024) This often happens in cases involving public figures or individuals who are in the center of media attention. As a result, a person can be convicted by public opinion before the justice system

conducts a comprehensive investigation.

A case in point is sexual harassment allegations that go viral on social media in the absence of solid legal evidence. In some cases, the accused individuals have suffered significant social and professional losses, despite ultimately being proven innocent in the formal judicial process. This phenomenon shows that social media can not only be a tool to fight for justice, but can also be used to conduct a "trial by public" that ignores basic legal principles, such as the presumption of innocence.

4.3. Inequality in Access to Justice

The "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon also creates inequality in access to justice. Not all cases that require legal attention get wide exposure on social media. Most of the cases that go viral are those that have emotional or controversial elements that attract public attention, while many others remain ignored.

For example, cases involving the poor, vulnerable groups, or events that occur in remote areas often do not get the same attention as cases involving public figures or events that occur in big cities. According to a study by Akbar, Rizky, and Kamaruddin, cases involving children or minority groups often do not get enough exposure on social media, making it harder to get justice than cases that go viral. (Akbar et al., 2024)

This imbalance can create disparities in legal treatment, where cases that do not go viral are more likely to be ignored by law enforcement. In fact, under the principle of rule of law, all individuals should receive equal treatment before the law, regardless of how much public attention the case receives. Therefore, relying on social media virality as the only way to get justice can be an unfair and unsustainable strategy in an ideal legal system.

While social media has a significant role to play in opening access to justice and increasing transparency in the justice system, the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon also raises a number of concerns. (Manurung et al., 2024) Public pressure can threaten the independence of the law, social media can be used to spread misleading information, and not all individuals have the same opportunity to gain the attention of the public.

Therefore, there needs to be a balance between utilizing social media as an advocacy tool and maintaining basic principles in the legal system, such as judicial independence and the presumption of innocence. Law enforcers should stick to objective legal facts, rather than simply following social media trends. In addition, there needs to be an effort to ensure that all individuals, regardless of how exposed their case is on social media, have equal access to justice.

5. Implications for the Indonesian Justice System

The "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon poses a major challenge to the justice system in Indonesia. On the one hand, social media can increase transparency and encourage law enforcement to act faster in handling certain cases.(Nababan et al., 2024) However, on the other hand, excessive public pressure can threaten judicial independence and create inequality in access to justice.(Siregar, 2024) Therefore, reforms are needed in the justice system that balance transparency with the principles of due process and legal independence.

5.1. Justice System Reform in the Face of Social Media Pressure

One of the main implications of this phenomenon is the need for reforms in the justice system so that it remains professional, transparent and unaffected by public opinion that develops on social media.(Gussela et al., 2025) These reforms may include the following aspects:

a. Improving Professionalism Standards of Law Enforcement Officers

Legal officials, including judges, prosecutors and investigators, need to have a deeper understanding of the impact of social media on the legal process. Specialized training related to managing public pressure and the principle of judicial independence should be strengthened. According to Manurung et al, improving professionalism standards can help legal officers stick to the principle of due process despite facing pressure from public opinion.(Manurung et al., 2024)

b. Strengthening Structured Transparency Mechanisms

Transparency in the justice system is necessary, but it must be done through structured and law-based mechanisms, not just as a response to virality on social media. Courts and law enforcement officials need to increase information disclosure through official channels, such as the publication of decisions, regular press conferences, and providing access to legal documents for the public.

c. Application of Guidelines for Judges and Prosecutors in the Face of Public Pressure

There needs to be clear guidelines on how judges and prosecutors should handle cases that go viral on social media. These guidelines could include rules on how they can assess evidence independently without being influenced by public pressure, as well as how to address comments or opinions that develop on social media without violating the judicial code of ethics.(Fadhlin et al., 2021)

5.2 Public Education in Responding to Legal Information on Social Media

In addition to reforms in the justice system, legal education to the public is also a key factor in dealing with the negative impact of the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon. Some steps that can be taken to improve legal literacy in the community include:

a. Legal and Media Literacy Campaign

The public needs to be given a better understanding of how the legal system works and how social media can influence perceptions of a legal case. Legal and media literacy campaigns can be conducted through digital platforms, seminars, and educational programs in schools or universities.

b. Increased Role of Academic Institutions and Media in Providing Objective Legal Analysis

Academic institutions and the media have an important role in providing legal analysis that is based on data and facts. The media needs to be more careful in presenting legal news so as not to inflame public opinion with inaccurate or biased information.

Furthermore, academic institutions can contribute by conducting independent research, offering expert opinions, and educating the public on legal principles to ensure a well-informed society. Collaboration between legal scholars, journalists, and policymakers is essential to promoting responsible reporting and fostering public trust in the legal system.

Media outlets must also prioritize ethical journalism by verifying sources, providing balanced perspectives, and avoiding sensationalism. In an era where misinformation spreads rapidly, responsible reporting can help prevent social unrest and ensure that legal cases are judged fairly based on evidence rather than public sentiment.

By maintaining high journalistic standards and fostering academic engagement, both institutions can play a crucial role in strengthening the rule of law and ensuring justice is upheld.

c. Empowerment of Independent Institutions to Oversee Judicial Independence

Independent institutions, such as the Judicial Commission and the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), can be more active in overseeing the independence of the judiciary, especially in cases that receive wide attention on social media.

The implications of the "No Viral, No Justice" phenomenon for the justice system in Indonesia suggest that legal reform and public education are crucial in maintaining the balance between transparency and legal independence. Legal officers need to improve their professionalism and build transparency mechanisms that do not rely on virality on social media. On the other hand, the public also needs to be more critical in responding to legal information circulating on social media so as not to be trapped in disinformation that can harm the justice system as a whole.

To address these challenges, legal officers—including judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officials—must improve their professionalism, uphold ethical standards, and build transparency mechanisms that do not rely on social media virality. Courts and law

enforcement agencies should establish clearer public communication strategies, regularly update the public on case developments, and provide accessible legal explanations to prevent misinformation. The digitalization of court proceedings, increased use of open trials, and improved access to legal documents can enhance institutional transparency while maintaining judicial integrity.

Beyond legal institutions, public awareness and education play a fundamental role in maintaining the credibility of the justice system. The rapid spread of misinformation on social media can lead to misunderstandings about legal processes, fueling distrust in judicial institutions and creating unnecessary tensions. To counteract this, universities, civil society organizations, and media outlets must work together to promote legal literacy, educate citizens on how the justice system functions, and encourage responsible engagement with legal issues online.

Journalists and media professionals, in particular, bear a responsibility to practice ethical journalism by verifying sources, providing balanced perspectives, and avoiding sensationalism. Legal reporting should prioritize accuracy over virality, ensuring that the public receives fact-based and objective information. Collaborations between media and academic institutions can further improve the quality of legal analysis and public discourse on justice-related issues.

The intersection of social media and the legal system presents both opportunities and risks. While online activism can serve as an important tool for exposing injustices and advocating for legal accountability, it should not become the primary determinant of whether or not justice is served. A strong legal framework, independent judicial institutions, professional law enforcement, and an informed public are all essential to maintaining a fair and transparent justice system.

By implementing comprehensive legal reforms, improving transparency mechanisms, and fostering legal education, Indonesia can strike a balance between ensuring public accountability and preserving the independence of its judiciary. In doing so, the justice system can function more effectively without being unduly influenced by social media trends, ensuring that every individual—regardless of their case's online visibility—receives equal and fair treatment under the law.

CONCLUSION

The No Viral, No Justice phenomenon shows that social media has a significant role in shaping the dynamics of law enforcement in Indonesia. On the one hand, social media can be an effective advocacy tool by encouraging transparency, increasing public awareness, and accelerating the response of legal authorities to certain cases. However, on the other hand,

public pressure generated by the virality of a case has the potential to threaten the independence of the judiciary, create bias in legal decision-making, and cause inequality in access to justice for cases that do not receive widespread attention.

Some of the cases that have been analyzed, such as those of Baiq Nuril, Brigadier J, and the theft of chocolate by a child, show how social media pressure can influence legal decisions. While in some cases the effect is positive, such as the granting of amnesty to Baiq Nuril and transparency in the Brigadier J case, this phenomenon also poses risks to the principles of due process of law and substantive justice.

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