

BALANCING VIRALITY AND PROCEDURAL JUSTICE: LAW ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES IN THE INDONESIAN DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

The digital era has significantly transformed the dynamics of law enforcement in Indonesia, particularly through the widespread use of social media. The phenomenon of “No Viral, No Justice” illustrates a growing trend where public pressure via social media accelerates legal processes, whereas cases lacking online attention often face delays or neglect. This study examines how social media virality influences criminal case handling, highlighting both normative and empirical dimensions of justice. Drawing on doctrinal legal research, statutory analysis, and case studies, the research identifies the paradox inherent in digital oversight: while virality can enhance transparency and accountability, it may also compromise the principles of due process, presumption of innocence, and equality before the law. The study reveals that the spread of information on digital platforms can shape public opinion, sometimes creating trial by media, misinformation, and populist pressure, which can distort substantive justice. Furthermore, virality often favors emotionally charged or dramatic cases, producing a hierarchy of attention that undermines equitable access to justice. To address these challenges, the study recommends integrated digital reporting systems, objective case prioritization based on urgency and impact, ethical guidelines for communication, and strengthening the professionalism of law enforcement. By balancing public participation with procedural integrity, the legal system can leverage social media as a tool for oversight without sacrificing fairness or judicial independence. This research contributes to legal scholarship by providing an operational analysis of the interaction between digital social control and criminal justice, emphasizing the need for adaptive policies that preserve fundamental legal principles while accommodating the realities of the digital public sphere. Ultimately, the findings underscore that justice should remain a guaranteed right for every citizen, independent of the popularity of cases in the digital space, ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability in law enforcement.

Keywords: *Social Media; Digital Justice; Virality; Procedural Fairness; Law Enforcement.*

A. Introduction

Legal justice is a fundamental principle in establishing a legal system that guarantees a sense of justice for all citizens.¹ Ideally, this principle is realized through well-organized regulations and

¹ Samuel Freeman, ‘The Law of Peoples, Social Cooperation, Human Rights, and Distributive Justice’, *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23, no. 1 (2006): 29–68, Cambridge Core, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505250606002X>; Jerold S. Auerbach, *Justice Without Law?* (Oxford University Press, 1984); Randy E. Barnett, *The Structure of Liberty: Justice and the Rule of Law* (Oxford University Press, 2014); John M. Darley, ‘Citizens’ Sense of Justice and the Legal System’, *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 10, no. 1 (2001): 10–13, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.00103>; John Rawls, ‘Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical’, in *Equality and Liberty: Analyzing Rawls and Nozick*, ed. J. Angelo Corlett (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1991), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-21763-2_10.

consistent law enforcement, so that the law not only provides certainty but also ensures justice and benefits for the people as the holders of sovereignty.² Indonesia, as a democratic country based on Pancasila, also guarantees freedom of expression and opinion, including in the digital space, which has become an integral part of social life.³ The constitutional guarantee of freedom of association, assembly, and expression is affirmed in Article 28E, paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution and reinforced by national and international human rights instruments.⁴

However, law enforcement in Indonesia still faces significant challenges. Practices often emphasize legal certainty (*rechtssicherheit*), while dimensions of justice (*gerechtigkei*) and expediency (*zweckmäßigkeit*) are not always equally present.⁵ This tension between norms and practices is even more evident in the digital age, where people have the ability to monitor, assess, and respond quickly to legal processes through social media. Within this context, the phenomenon of “no viral, no justice” has emerged, reflecting the perception that certain cases are only taken seriously after gaining widespread attention and going viral online.⁶ This phenomenon illustrates a shift in access to justice, moving from formal reporting mechanisms toward public pressure driven by virality. While virality can enhance accountability and social control, it also raises concerns regarding the presumption of innocence, as public pressure is not always aligned with legal evidence and does not automatically result in justice.⁷ Therefore, law enforcement agencies require internal policies to manage this phenomenon, ensuring that case handling is guided by

² Isabel Lifante-Vidal, ‘Is Legal Certainty a Formal Value?’, *Jurisprudence* 11, no. 3 (2020): 456–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20403313.2020.1778289>; Gustav Radbruch, ‘Five Minutes of Legal Philosophy (1945)*’, *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 26, no. 1 (2006): 13–15, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ojls/gqi042>; Gustav Radbruch, ‘Statutory Lawlessness and Supra-Statutory Law (1946)*’, *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 26, no. 1 (2006): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ojls/gqi041>; Robert Alexy, ‘On the Structure of Legal Principles’, *Ratio Juris* 13, no. 3 (2000): 294–304, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9337.00157>.

³ Emi Puasa Handayani et al., ‘Criminal Penalties in Cyberspace: Between the Development of Digital Democracy and Authoritarianism’, *Indonesian Journal of Criminal Law Studies* 10, no. 1 (2025): 45–82, <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijcls.v10i1.19652>; Rahayu et al., ‘Human Rights Defenders in Indonesia’s Digital Age: Navigating Limited Spaces in the Quest for Digital Democracy’, *Sriwijaya Law Review* 8, no. 2 (2024): 358–75, <https://doi.org/10.28946/slrev.Vol8.Iss2.3860.pp358-375>; Chaerul Shaleh et al., ‘Human Rights in the Control of Digital Public Space Freedom: A Collaborative Approach Based on Islamic Law Principles’, *Jurnal Hukum Islam* 23, no. 1 (2025): 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jhi.v23i1.01>.

⁴ Siti Fatimah et al., ‘Global Perspectives on Freedom of Expression in Environmental Governance: Legal Implications and Challenges’, *Jambe Law Journal* 7, no. 2 (2024): 481–507, <https://doi.org/10.22437/home.v7i2.456>; Syafridi and Selvi Harvia Santri, ‘Press Freedom and Its Relevance to the Theory of People’s Sovereignty In the Indonesian Legal Regime’, *Prophetic Law Review* 7, no. 1 (2025): 47–69, <https://doi.org/10.20885/PLR.vol7.iss1.art3>; Zico Junius Fernando et al., ‘The Freedom of Expression in Indonesia’, *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2022): 2103944, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2103944>.

⁵ Radbruch, ‘Five Minutes of Legal Philosophy (1945)*’.

⁶ Dona Budi Kharisma, ‘No Viral No Justice: Is It a Principle of Social Justice? (Study of Viral Cases on Social Media in Indonesia)’, *Safer Communities* 24, no. 2 (2024): 103–15, <https://doi.org/10.1108/SC-07-2024-0037>.

⁷ Eva Naura and Benny Sumardiana, ‘Implications of No Viral No Justice on the Principle of Equality Before the Law in the Criminal Justice System’, *Law Research Review Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2026): 439–66, <https://doi.org/10.15294/lrrq.v12i1.44990>.

professional standards and due process rather than popularity.⁸

Existing studies provide an important foundation for understanding how digital spaces function as arenas for deliberation, advocacy, and oversight. However, most of these studies remain at the macro level—explaining general changes in the digital public sphere—and have not specifically examined how virality shapes the behavior of law enforcement institutions, influences criminal justice processes, or impacts the principles of due process and equality before the law in the Indonesian context.⁹

Previous research shows that virality can act as a mechanism of social pressure that shapes institutional responses, including in law enforcement.¹⁰ In Indonesia, this aligns with the “no viral, no justice” phenomenon, reflecting declining public trust in a formal legal system perceived as slow or unresponsive when cases do not attract attention. Consequently, social media exposure often accelerates case handling and encourages officials and public figures to act with greater transparency and responsiveness.¹¹

The rapid flow of information, along with the emergence of other cases, is often interpreted by the public as a lack of institutional attention to cases that are not in the spotlight. When a case goes viral again on social media, increased public attention often prompts the police to emphasize that the investigation is ongoing, including efforts to apprehend remaining suspects. This reinforces the relevance of the “no viral, no justice” issue, highlighting the tendency for cases to

⁸ Raymond Surette, ‘Performance Crime and Justice’, *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 27, no. 2 (2015): 195–216, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2015.12036041>; Rustamaji Muhammad et al., ‘The Reduction of Criminal Justice Policy in Indonesia: Justice versus Virality’, *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 5, no. 2 (2025): 442–72, <https://doi.org/10.53955/jhcls.v5i2.637>; Benjamin Loveluck, ‘The Many Shades of Digital Vigilantism. A Typology of Online Self-Justice’, *Global Crime* 21, nos 3–4 (2020): 213–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2019.1614444>; Mark Wood et al., ‘Viral Justice? Online Justice-Seeking, Intimate Partner Violence and Affective Contagion’, *Theoretical Criminology* 23, no. 3 (2019): 375–93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480617750507>.

⁹ Muhammad et al., ‘The Reduction of Criminal Justice Policy in Indonesia: Justice versus Virality’; Kharisma, ‘No Viral No Justice: Is It a Principle of Social Justice? (Study of Viral Cases on Social Media in Indonesia)’; Julia Magdalena Wuysang et al., ‘Viral Justice: Law Enforcement in the Social Media Era’, *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari’ah Dan Masyarakat* 24, no. 1 (2024): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.19109/nurani.v24i1.22274>.

¹⁰ Arthur Josias Simon Runturambi et al., ‘No Viral No Justice: A Criminological Review of Social Media-Based Law Enforcement from the Perspective of Progressive Law’, *Jurnal IUS Kajian Hukum Dan Keadilan* 12, no. 1 (2024): 177–95, <https://doi.org/10.29303/ius.v12i1.1361>; Wuysang et al., ‘Viral Justice: Law Enforcement in the Social Media Era’; Rong Wang and Wenlin Liu, ‘Moral Framing and Information Virality in Social Movements: A Case Study of #HongKongPoliceBrutality’, *Communication Monographs* 88, no. 3 (2021): 350–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2021.1918735>; Muhammad et al., ‘The Reduction of Criminal Justice Policy in Indonesia: Justice versus Virality’.

¹¹ M. Ilham Tanzilulloh and Khoirun Nisa Aprilian Agmar, ‘Virality, Justice and the Principle of “Blocking the Means to Evil.”’, *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syari’ah* 16, no. 2 (2024): 317–35, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v16i2.28847>; Idris Sandiya et al., ‘Transforming Democratic Policing in the Digital Era for Law Enforcement Accountability in Indonesia’, *Journal of Law and Legal Reform* 6, no. 4 (2025): 1723–60, <https://doi.org/10.15294/jllr.v6i4.30554>; Kharisma, ‘No Viral No Justice: Is It a Principle of Social Justice? (Study of Viral Cases on Social Media in Indonesia)’.

receive faster responses when they gain digital exposure.¹²

Based on these conditions, this study addresses a research gap by examining the “no viral, no justice” phenomenon in Indonesia from normative and empirical perspectives. It aims to analyze how public pressure on social media influences law enforcement responses and case dynamics and to determine its impact on the principles of equality before the law and due process.

The novelty of this study lies in operationally analyzing the interaction between digital public spaces, public accountability, and the criminal justice system. Scientifically, it contributes to legal scholarship by identifying convergence and conflict points between digital social control and judicial procedures. The findings can inform standards to ensure law enforcement maintains accountability without allowing public media trials to undermine due process or violate equality before the law. Ensuring that public participation through digital spaces strengthens justice, rather than weakening fundamental legal principles, is therefore essential.

The study employs doctrinal legal research, which examines legal issues through analysis of applicable norms. It applies a statute-based approach and a case-based approach by examining cases that have attracted public attention on social media.

B. The Dynamics of ‘No Viral, No Justice’: Social Media, Public Pressure, and Law Enforcement in Indonesia

The development of digital technology is progressing rapidly and has significantly reshaped patterns of life within society.¹³ Modern life is nearly inseparable from electronic devices that support daily activities, making digital technology the primary means of fulfilling various human needs¹⁴. While the digital era offers numerous benefits that can be optimized, it also introduces

¹² Andi Nadia Aryana et al., ‘Digital Forensics and Legal Communication: Network Analysis of Law Enforcement Response to Viral Youth Violence Cases in Indonesia’, *Frontiers in Human Dynamics* 8 (2026): 1709823, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2026.1709823>; Muhammad et al., ‘The Reduction of Criminal Justice Policy in Indonesia: Justice versus Virality’; Runturambi et al., ‘No Viral No Justice: A Criminological Review of Social Media-Based Law Enforcement from the Perspective of Progressive Law’; Kharisma, ‘No Viral No Justice: Is It a Principle of Social Justice? (Study of Viral Cases on Social Media in Indonesia)’; Sandiya et al., ‘Transforming Democratic Policing in the Digital Era for Law Enforcement Accountability in Indonesia’.

¹³ Martin Hilbert, ‘Digital Technology and Social Change: The Digital Transformation of Society from a Historical Perspective’, *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience* 22, no. 2 (2020): 189–94, <https://doi.org/10.31887/DCNS.2020.22.2/mhilbert>; Thomas Vernon Reed, *Digitized Lives: Culture, Power and Social Change in the Internet Era* (Routledge, 2018); Abdullah Alsaleh, ‘The Impact of Technological Advancement on Culture and Society’, *Scientific Reports* 14, no. 1 (2024): 32140, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-83995-z>; Aga Natalis and Naufal Hasanuddin Djohan, ‘Cybersex Trafficking: Legal Challenges and Protection for Women and Children in Indonesia’, *International Cybersecurity Law Review* 6, no. 3 (2025): 421–56, <https://doi.org/10.1365/s43439-025-00149-1>.

¹⁴ Christian Montag and Sarah Diefenbach, ‘Towards Homo Digitalis: Important Research Issues for Psychology and the Neurosciences at the Dawn of the Internet of Things and the Digital Society’, *Sustainability* 10, no. 2 (2018): 415, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10020415>; Mohammad Alsharif and Hussein Hnit, ‘Digital Human Rights: Legal

complex challenges across multiple domains. These challenges extend beyond information technology, encompassing political, economic, socio-cultural, and security dimensions.¹⁵

The digital era emerged with the development of internet and computer-based information technologies.¹⁶ Digital media, a product of this era, can be easily modified and interconnected through networks, allowing information to spread faster and more widely than ever before.¹⁷ This transformation has prompted mass media to adapt to digital platforms, fundamentally changing how people access information and utilize digital services. These services are now more readily available to various segments of society, while still operating within certain regulatory frameworks.

One of the most prominent manifestations of this development is social media, which has become a central tool for communication and a major channel for information dissemination in the digital era. Social media enables people to obtain information instantly, whether regarding community activities, social events, or breaking news. It also provides a platform for individuals to share personal experiences and current conditions, often through widely distributed status updates across multiple platforms.¹⁸

Society can be understood as a structured group of individuals who coexist and interact with one another, sharing a set of norms, values, and institutions that allow them to function collectively. The concept of society extends beyond mere aggregation of people; it encompasses the relationships, behaviors, and interactions that create patterns of social life.¹⁹ A community is commonly referred to as a society when its members are able to engage meaningfully through

Debates and Emerging Foundations Under the International Bill of Human Rights', *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 12 (January 2025): 102160, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.102160>.

¹⁵ Justin Paul et al., 'Digital Transformation: A Multidisciplinary Perspective and Future Research Agenda', *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 48, no. 2 (2024): e13015, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.13015>; Yeti Rohayati and Abdillah Abdillah, 'Digital Transformation for Era Society 5.0 and Resilience: Urgent Issues from Indonesia', *Societies* 14, no. 12 (2024): 266, <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc14120266>; Montag and Diefenbach, 'Towards Homo Digitalis: Important Research Issues for Psychology and the Neurosciences at the Dawn of the Internet of Things and the Digital Society'.

¹⁶ Mark Knell, 'The Digital Revolution and Digitalized Network Society', *Review of Evolutionary Political Economy* 2, no. 1 (2021): 9–25, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43253-021-00037-4>; Jill Shepherd, 'What Is the Digital Era?', in *Social and Economic Transformation in the Digital Era* (IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59140-158-2.ch001>.

¹⁷ Klaus E. Meyer et al., 'International Business in the Digital Age: Global Strategies in a World of National Institutions', *Journal of International Business Studies* 54, no. 4 (2023): 577–98, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-023-00618-x>; John V. Pavlik, *Media in the Digital Age* (Columbia University Press, 2008); Jorge Reyna et al., 'The Internet Explosion, Digital Media Principles and Implications to Communicate Effectively in the Digital Space', *E-Learning and Digital Media* 15, no. 1 (2018): 36–52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2042753018754361>.

¹⁸ Runturambi et al., 'No Viral No Justice: A Criminological Review of Social Media-Based Law Enforcement from the Perspective of Progressive Law'; Mark W. Moffett, 'What Is a Society? Building an Interdisciplinary Perspective and Why That's Important', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 48 (2025): e51, Cambridge Core, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X24000037>.

¹⁹ Moffett, 'What Is a Society? Building an Interdisciplinary Perspective and Why That's Important'.

available channels of communication and collaboration. This engagement is not only limited to face-to-face interaction but also includes participation in social, economic, cultural, and political activities that contribute to collective welfare. Another perspective emphasizes that society is a human community characterized by continuous interaction, governed by a system of customs, traditions, and shared expectations, and unified by a collective identity. The shared identity serves as a social glue, providing members with a sense of belonging and a framework for mutual understanding, which is crucial for social cohesion and cooperation.²⁰

For a society to maintain continuity over time, it must fulfill several fundamental characteristics. Firstly, there must be regular and meaningful interaction among its members, which enables the transmission of knowledge, norms, and values across generations. Interaction can take various forms, including cooperation, negotiation, dialogue, and conflict resolution, which together maintain the dynamic equilibrium of the social system. Secondly, the existence of customs and established traditions provides a sense of predictability and stability, guiding behavior and creating a framework within which social actors operate. These customs may encompass religious practices, moral codes, familial structures, and civic responsibilities, forming an intricate web that connects individuals and groups. Thirdly, continuity over time is essential for the development of institutional memory, cultural heritage, and social capital, all of which are instrumental in ensuring resilience in the face of social change or disruption. Finally, a strong collective identity unites members under common symbols, narratives, and goals, fostering solidarity and enabling coordinated action toward shared objectives. The interplay of these four characteristics—interaction, customs, temporal continuity, and collective identity—constitutes the backbone of a stable and cohesive society.²¹

In the contemporary context, the ways in which individuals interact have expanded dramatically due to advances in digital technology. While traditional societies relied primarily on physical proximity and direct communication, modern societies increasingly engage through digital platforms that enable interaction beyond geographical constraints. Social media, online forums, messaging applications, and other digital communication tools have become primary avenues for social connection, allowing people to form and participate in “online communities.” These digital spaces replicate many of the functions of traditional communities by facilitating information sharing, collective deliberation, and social mobilization. Members of online

²⁰ Louis Moustakas, ‘Social Cohesion: Definitions, Causes and Consequences’, *Encyclopedia* 3, no. 3 (2023): 1028–37, <https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia3030075>.

²¹ Andi Sepima et al., ‘Penegakan Hukum Ujaran Kebencian Di Republik Indonesia’, *Jurnal Retentum* 2, no. 2 (2020): 108–16, <https://doi.org/10.46930/retentum.v2i2.908>.

communities engage in discussions, collaborate on projects, advocate for causes, and provide mutual support, creating patterns of social interaction that parallel those in offline contexts. Importantly, these interactions are often asynchronous, meaning participants can communicate at different times and from different locations, which enhances inclusivity and accessibility.

The emergence of online communities also introduces new dynamics in the formation of social identity and collective behavior. Shared interests, values, or experiences become the basis for digital affiliation, allowing individuals to transcend local or national boundaries and connect with like-minded participants worldwide. These communities cultivate collective identity through digital rituals such as hashtag campaigns, online challenges, collaborative content creation, and collective decision-making processes. Just as traditional societies rely on customs and conventions to maintain cohesion, online communities develop norms, codes of conduct, and governance mechanisms to regulate behavior, enforce accountability, and resolve conflicts among members. This digital adaptation demonstrates that while the means of interaction have evolved, the fundamental principles of social cohesion, continuity, and collective identity remain relevant.

However, digital societies also present challenges and limitations. The ease of forming connections online can result in fragmented communities where engagement is shallow or ephemeral. Echo chambers may reinforce pre-existing beliefs and foster polarization, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. Moreover, digital interactions are susceptible to manipulation, misinformation, and performative behavior, which can undermine trust and authenticity within the community. Despite these challenges, online communities continue to play a critical role in contemporary social life, reflecting the adaptive capacity of society to integrate new technologies while preserving essential social functions.

From a demographic perspective, the composition of the online community in Indonesia shows that male users are slightly more numerous than female users, although the difference is relatively small. Internet usage between urban and rural areas is also fairly balanced, indicating that internet access and information technology infrastructure in rural areas are developing rapidly and catching up with urban areas. Additionally, young people, particularly those aged 12 to 34, constitute the largest segment of internet users, making the digital space increasingly influenced by the dynamics of the younger generation.²²

The phenomenon of “no viral, no justice,” which has given rise to digital vigilantism, can be understood as a psychological response to situations where society perceives formal justice

²² Izhatullaili et al., ‘Konstruksi Keadilan Di Era Media Sosial: No Viral No Justice Dalam Kontroversi Bupati Pati’, *Jurnal Civicatio* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1–9, <https://civicatio.my.id/Jurnal/index.php/Jc/article/view/1>.

channels as slow or unresponsive. In this context, virality functions as both a trigger and a multiplier: the more viral a case becomes, the greater the social pressure, and the stronger the public's belief that justice can only be achieved through digital exposure. From the perspective of social identity theory, netizens tend to form an "us" group—those who see themselves as defenders of justice—versus a "them" group, which includes perpetrators, suspects, or authorities deemed negligent. This dynamic fosters conformity and normative social influence, as individuals participate in spreading, criticizing, or attacking targets because they perceive it as the "correct" action within their group.

From the perspective of justice theory, particularly procedural justice, when the public perceives legal procedures as unfair, non-transparent, or unequal, they are driven to seek "swift justice" through digital spaces, such as hashtag campaigns, the dissemination of identities, or direct pressure on authorities.²³ However, this dynamic also explains the paradox of "no viral, no justice": virality can encourage accountability and accelerate responses, but it also increases the risk of trial by social media, misinformation, and misidentification of perpetrators. Collective psychological dynamics often prioritize outcomes over the process of proof. At this point, digital vigilantism can reinforce the perception that justice depends on who can mobilize the masses, rather than on equality before the law and due process. Therefore, strengthening institutional responses—ensuring transparency, speed, and objectivity—is crucial to prevent digital social control from devolving into mob justice, which undermines judicial integrity.

This situation confirms that society in the digital era has become an integral part of contemporary social life. Information technology is no longer merely complementary; it has become a necessity that is both normal and difficult to avoid. The "no viral, no justice" phenomenon in Indonesia reflects declining public trust in the formal legal system, which is perceived as slow or unresponsive when cases lack public attention. It also demonstrates that law enforcement is often influenced by digital exposure, with social media attention acting as a catalyst for faster responses from officials.

Although this dynamic reflects public demand for more transparent and accountable law enforcement, it also raises ethical concerns and the risk of violating the principle of presumption of innocence. Increased public pressure due to virality does not always correspond to achieving true justice, which should be based on transparent, fair, and consistent legal procedures. Therefore, a balance is necessary between using social media as a tool for social control and maintaining the

²³ Lisa Angela et al., "No Viral, No Justice": Unveiling the Phenomenon of Digital Vigilantism from a Psychological Perspective, *Buletin Psikologi* 32, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.22146/buletinpsikologi.97562>.

integrity and objectivity of law enforcement processes. One measure is to establish internal policies for law enforcement that regulate digital reporting and implement a response system based on objective priorities, determined by the urgency and impact of a case rather than its popularity or virality. With such standards, case handling can remain professional, measurable, and less susceptible to the influence of social media opinion.

Virality in the digital space does not always arise from the urgency of a legal issue, but is often influenced by communication factors such as emotional narratives, the involvement of influencers, and timing.²⁴ In practice, cases that contain dramatic elements, evoke public emotions, or are easily packaged into short and “stirring” content tend to spread faster than cases that are more complex from a legal perspective. This situation creates an attention bias: the more appealing the narrative, the greater the likelihood that a case will go viral, even if it may not necessarily have the most urgent legal significance. As a result, the public agenda on social media can form a “hierarchy of cases” based on popularity rather than on the need for legal protection or measurable social impact.

The law should be responsive to social change and public demands. In this context, law enforcement practices tend to move faster when a case gains widespread attention and goes viral on social media. The strong social pressure that builds in the digital space often compels law enforcement officials to act immediately, demonstrating that the dynamics of law enforcement are not entirely neutral but are influenced by evolving social forces.²⁵

Social media pressure manifests in various forms of digital mobilization, such as hashtag campaigns, calls for boycotts, the dissemination of incomplete information, and trials by social media. In extreme cases, this pressure can escalate into personal attacks in the form of cyberbullying against law enforcement officials or judges, which may compromise objectivity and independence. This is particularly relevant because the autonomy of judicial power is protected by Article 24 of the 1945 Constitution and affirmed through Law No. 48 of 2009 on Judicial Power, which establishes the judiciary as an independent authority.²⁶ If public opinion is allowed to replace established mechanisms of evidence and legal procedures, the judicial process risks

²⁴ José-Borja Arjona-Martín et al., ‘Virality as a Paradigm of Digital Communication. Review of the Concept and Update of the Theoretical Framework’, *Profesional De La Información* 29, no. 6 (2020): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.nov.07>.

²⁵ Melinda Dina Gussela et al., ‘Fenomena “No Viral No Justice” Perspektif Teori Penegakkan Hukum’, *Ranah Research: Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 7, no. 2 (2025): 792–800, <https://doi.org/10.38035/rj.v7i2.1326>.

²⁶ Luthfi Widagdo Eddyono, ‘Independence of the Indonesian Constitutional Court in Norms and Practices’, *Constitutional Review* 3, no. 1 (2017): 71–97, <https://doi.org/10.31078/consrev314>.

undermining fundamental principles such as the presumption of innocence, impartial examination, and evidence-based assessment.²⁷

The phenomenon of “no viral, no justice” reflects the complexity of law enforcement in the digital age.²⁸ In this context, social media has become an effective instrument for expressing perceived injustice and attracting the attention of law enforcement officials, aligning with the concept of living law that has developed organically within society. For instance, the Jessica Wongso case demonstrates how public opinion, shaped through social media virality, can influence perceptions of justice and exert pressure on the judicial process, even sparking debates regarding standards of proof and the need for legal reform.²⁹

However, when virality is treated as a prerequisite for a case to gain attention, this condition has the potential to threaten the principle of equality before the law, as guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution. This situation also introduces the risk of a “trial by public,” in which judgment based on popular opinion can interfere with the independence of law enforcement officials and undermine the integrity of the judicial process.³⁰

At this juncture, a paradox of justice emerges. Many citizens propel cases to virality due to their distrust of the formal system, which is perceived as slow or unresponsive. Yet, when virality becomes a “requirement” for a case to be taken seriously, dependence on public attention can erode the legitimacy of legal institutions themselves. The judicial system may then be perceived as dysfunctional, not because of established norms and procedures, but because of the influence of mass pressure. Over time, this dynamic can foster an unhealthy cycle: the lower the public trust, the greater the urgency to make cases go viral; the more frequently cases are handled in response to digital pressure, the stronger the perception that legal outcomes are determined by “virality.”

This phenomenon also illustrates the transformation of the digital public sphere. Ideally, the public sphere is conceived as an arena for rational deliberation, a space where arguments are tested openly and critically. In practice, however, social media often transforms this space into a “spectacle” that prioritizes drama, emotion, and rapid responses. When “emotional dramaturgy” supplants substantive discourse, there is an increased risk of digital justice gaps. Individuals or

²⁷ Henny Saida Flora, ‘Modus Operandi Tindak Pidana Prostitusi Melalui Media Sosial Online’, *Journal Justiciabelen* 2, no. 2 (2022): 120–38, <https://doi.org/10.35194/jj.v2i2.2115>.

²⁸ Runturambi et al., ‘No Viral No Justice: A Criminological Review of Social Media-Based Law Enforcement from the Perspective of Progressive Law’; Kharisma, ‘No Viral No Justice: Is It a Principle of Social Justice? (Study of Viral Cases on Social Media in Indonesia)’.

²⁹ M. Fikri Ihsan et al., ‘Fenomena “No Viral No Justice”’: Dinamika Komunikasi Dalam Mencari Keadilan Pada Era Digital Di Indonesia’, *Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan, Administrasi Publik, Dan Ilmu Komunikasi (JIPIKOM)* 7, no. 1 (2025): 20–27, <https://doi.org/10.31289/jipikom.v7i1.5780>.

³⁰ Muhammad et al., ‘The Reduction of Criminal Justice Policy in Indonesia: Justice versus Virality’.

groups with access to extensive networks, narrative production capabilities, or influencer support gain greater amplification than those lacking digital capital. This environment fosters punitive populism, characterized by demands for harsh punishment driven by public anger, which can undermine the rule of law because the legal process becomes responsive to collective emotions rather than established standards of proof and due process.

The “no viral, no justice” phenomenon can be understood as a new form of social control in the era of information transparency and new media culture, simultaneously reflecting heightened public attention to certain issues. This term captures the negative perception among some Indonesians toward law enforcement, suggesting that a case may only be taken seriously once it gains virality on social media. At this stage, the public appears to recognize the emergence of a new legal culture in which social media serves as a “weapon” of civic engagement, employed to monitor officials and promote accountability.

However, this widespread involvement also brings problematic impacts. Digital participation often exposes the gap between legal knowledge and legal sentiment; as a result, public opinion can form rapidly without adequate understanding, giving rise to unhealthy legal culture patterns and potentially compromising the objectivity of the law enforcement process. While public participation through social media can have positive effects—for example, promoting transparency, efficiency, and responsiveness—the “no viral, no justice” phenomenon, as a strategy for achieving justice, still cannot guarantee the realization of true justice. In fact, reliance on virality tends to create inequality in case handling and increases the risk of violations of individual rights.³¹

From an Islamic legal perspective, the principle of *saddu al-dzari'ah* (blocking the path to harm) implies that any means with the potential to cause harm—including the negative impacts of a case going viral—should be prevented, for example by providing alternative pathways or access that are fairer and beneficial to all parties. However, this study has limitations, as it does not fully explore how “virality,” as part of legal culture, can vary across regions or social groups in Indonesia, potentially resulting in unequal impacts. Therefore, further research is recommended using a multidimensional analysis that incorporates political, economic, and social factors, as well as the perspectives of stakeholders within the legal system. Future research should also develop more representative quantitative studies to map interaction patterns on social media and to more objectively measure the influence of virality on public opinion and legal decisions.³²

³¹ Tanzilulloh and Agmar, ‘Virality, Justice and the Principle of “Blocking the Means to Evil.”’

³² Ibid.

Criminal law enforcement in the current digital era is also aided by the participation of netizens, who can monitor the progress of a case to ensure it remains within procedural boundaries and is not stalled due to the actions of irresponsible officials. In this context, law enforcement officials need to optimize social media as a channel for complaints and public communication for those seeking justice, who, in many cases, receive support from netizens to expand attention through virality. However, the power of netizens in the digital space can be seen as a “double-edged sword,” as it has the potential to produce both positive and negative impacts. The positive impact is that information can spread widely and quickly, thereby encouraging change, including the acceleration of cases that were originally slow to be followed up more seriously by officials after becoming the subject of public attention. Conversely, negative impacts arise when netizens do not first verify the quality, context, or accuracy of information but instead disseminate it immediately. This lack of caution risks causing misinformation, reversing true and false facts, and triggering confusion, which can ultimately disrupt order and the overall conduciveness of social life.

C. Digital Vigilantism and Legal Responses: The Role of Virality in Indonesian Justice

Justice in Indonesia is fundamentally embodied in the fifth principle of Pancasila, which emphasizes social justice for all Indonesian people.³³ This principle does not merely function as a theoretical ideal but serves as a tangible legal and moral compass guiding governance, legislation, and the behavior of public officials. Social justice, as envisioned in Pancasila, asserts that the state and its institutions bear the responsibility to protect every citizen, particularly the marginalized and vulnerable, ensuring that no one is subjected to arbitrary or discriminatory treatment.³⁴ In practice, this principle requires that legal policies, administrative procedures, and law enforcement practices operate on the basis of fairness, transparency, and accountability. It discourages the abuse of power and seeks to prevent any arbitrary exercise of authority that could oppress those who lack social, political, or economic influence. The implementation of justice as a state principle thereby becomes both a measure and a reflection of societal health; where justice is upheld, communities thrive in harmony, trust in institutions is reinforced, and social cohesion is strengthened. Conversely, when justice is neglected, the fabric of society risks disintegration, leading to distrust,

³³ Joko Setiyono and Aga Natalis, ‘Universal Values of Pancasila in Managing the Crime of Terrorism’, *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 15, no. 2 (2023): 48–63, <https://doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v15.i2.8084>.

³⁴ Suyahman et al., ‘Intersectionality in Social Justice: Unpacking the Complexity of Oppression’, *Jambura Law Review* 7, no. 1 (2025): 275–308, <https://doi.org/10.33756/jlr.v7i1.27828>.

social tension, and potential conflict. Historical and contemporary experiences in Indonesia demonstrate that the absence of social justice often correlates with episodes of unrest, systemic inequality, and the erosion of public trust in governance.

The importance of justice in Indonesia extends beyond the legal and political sphere into the moral and spiritual domains, reflecting deeply ingrained cultural and religious values. In Islamic teachings, justice is not merely a procedural requirement but a moral obligation mandated by God. The Qur'an explicitly commands that every decision, whether personal or institutional, must be made fairly and with integrity. Surah An-Nisa, verse 58, instructs that all judgments be rendered justly, emphasizing that impartiality should prevail even when decisions affect oneself, close relatives, or those with whom one has personal interests. This divine command underscores that justice is to be maintained above personal desires, ambitions, or biases, highlighting the ethical dimension that underpins the legal and social conception of justice in Indonesia. Further, Surah An-Nisa, verse 135, reinforces that adherence to justice requires vigilance against personal inclinations that may lead to deviation, illustrating that justice is both a societal and an individual responsibility. These religious imperatives provide a moral foundation that complements legal frameworks, reinforcing the principle that fairness, integrity, and ethical accountability are inseparable from the practice of law and governance.³⁵

Justice also requires the elimination of discrimination and prejudice in all forms. Hatred, animosity, or bias toward a particular group—whether based on ethnicity, religion, social class, or other characteristics—cannot justify unjust actions. The Qur'an in Surah Al-Ma'idah, verse 8, instructs believers to uphold justice even against those toward whom they may harbor personal animosity, reflecting a universal principle that moral and legal obligations transcend personal feelings. Similarly, Surah Asy-Syura, verse 15, commands the maintenance of justice regardless of differences in belief, reinforcing the necessity of impartiality and equality. In the Indonesian context, these teachings resonate with Pancasila's vision of a pluralistic society in which citizens of diverse backgrounds coexist peacefully and equitably. Justice, therefore, is not merely a procedural requirement; it is a moral and social contract that binds society together and legitimizes governance. By embedding these values into law, policy, and everyday social practice, Indonesia seeks to cultivate a culture in which equality, objectivity, and non-discrimination form the

³⁵ Barda Nawawi Arief, *Bunga Rampai Kebijakan Hukum Pidana: Perkembangan Penyusunan Konsep KUHP Baru* (Kencana, 2011).

cornerstones of public life.³⁶

The realization of justice is also reflected in the legal system, which should act as an institution that guarantees fairness, protects rights, and remedies wrongs. Structural inequalities, however, continue to challenge the full realization of social justice in Indonesia. Those who lack access to education, information, networks, or social influence frequently encounter obstacles in asserting their legal rights, while individuals with social, political, or economic capital may more easily obtain favorable treatment. Such disparities highlight the ongoing need for reforms and systemic safeguards to ensure that justice is not contingent upon social standing or public visibility. Mechanisms such as legal aid, transparent case management systems, and independent judiciary oversight are essential to counteract potential biases and uphold equality before the law. The principle of justice, therefore, operates at multiple levels: as an ethical mandate, a societal expectation, and a practical requirement for institutional accountability.

Beyond the formal legal and moral dimensions, justice in Indonesia is deeply intertwined with social stability and national development. When justice is upheld, citizens perceive the state as legitimate, trust in institutions grows, and social cooperation is strengthened. Conversely, the absence of justice erodes confidence, fosters cynicism, and may trigger social unrest. Historical examples, such as cases of corruption, discrimination, or the unequal enforcement of laws, illustrate the consequences of failing to uphold justice, often leading to widespread disillusionment and protest. Therefore, justice is not merely an abstract value but a practical instrument of social governance. It enables the state to maintain order, protect vulnerable groups, and ensure equitable distribution of opportunities and resources, all of which are essential for sustainable national development.

The integration of justice into public life requires active participation from all members of society. Citizens must engage in social and civic responsibilities, advocate for the rights of the marginalized, and hold institutions accountable. Simultaneously, state actors must embody the principles of impartiality, transparency, and ethical decision-making. This dual responsibility creates a system in which justice is both a collective aspiration and an operational standard, bridging moral principles, legal frameworks, and societal expectations. In contemporary Indonesia, where the complexities of governance, social inequality, and pluralism intersect, the practice of justice is dynamic and requires continuous vigilance. Legal frameworks alone are

³⁶ Iqbal Kamalludin and Barda Nawawi Arief, 'Kebijakan Reformasi Maqâshid Al-Syariâh Dan Kontribusinya Dalam Formulasi Alternatif Keringanan Pidana Penjara', *Al-'Adalah* 15, no. 1 (2018): 182–218, <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v15i1.2931>.

insufficient without the reinforcement of cultural, ethical, and religious norms that support fairness, equity, and accountability.

There are structural inequalities in the legal system, namely conditions where victims who do not have access, networks, or strong public support tend to find it more difficult to obtain the protection and justice they deserve. In other words, the opportunity to receive an institutional response can shift from the measure of legal needs to the measure of “publicity” in the public sphere.

The normative implication of this phenomenon underscores the urgent need to rethink and restructure the intricate relationship between public accountability and procedural justice within contemporary governance. In democratic societies, public accountability serves as a vital mechanism through which citizens can monitor, evaluate, and influence the actions of state institutions, including law enforcement and judicial authorities. It operates as a form of legitimate oversight, ensuring that governmental power is exercised transparently, responsibly, and in alignment with societal expectations of fairness and integrity. However, while public accountability is essential, it is not without limitations. When exercised indiscriminately or amplified through unmoderated digital platforms, it can transform into a form of coercive pressure that risks undermining the procedural rights of suspects or defendants. In such scenarios, the pursuit of justice may be overshadowed by public spectacle, where cases are judged more for their popularity or virality than for the evidence and legal merits they present. Similarly, victims’ experiences and dignity may be inadvertently reduced to consumable content, vulnerable to manipulation, sensationalism, or distortion by media dynamics and social media campaigns. Such dynamics highlight the paradoxical tension between democratic participation and the protection of fundamental legal rights, illustrating that the unchecked influence of public opinion, particularly in digital spaces, can erode the very principles that procedural justice seeks to uphold.

Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach to strengthen internal policies and institutional frameworks within law enforcement and judicial bodies. One critical measure is the establishment of transparent yet carefully calibrated communication standards that allow public information to be shared responsibly. These standards must balance openness with discretion, ensuring that cases are neither concealed nor prematurely adjudicated in the court of public opinion. By providing clear guidance on the dissemination of information, institutions can prevent misinformation, speculation, and undue pressure from shaping legal outcomes. Such standards also reinforce the principle of impartiality, as officials can communicate effectively without compromising the integrity of investigations or predisposing public perceptions toward

guilt or innocence. This approach not only safeguards procedural fairness but also fosters public trust in institutional processes, as citizens are reassured that information is accurate, contextualized, and presented in a manner consistent with legal norms.

Another essential dimension involves the development of robust case response guidelines grounded in objective and evidence-based indicators. These guidelines would serve as benchmarks for evaluating which cases require prioritization, the intensity of follow-up actions, and the allocation of resources. Factors such as the urgency of the matter, the social and legal impact, the vulnerability of victims, and the necessity for protection should guide institutional responses rather than reactive measures driven by virality or media attention. By adhering to such criteria, law enforcement agencies can ensure equitable treatment across cases, avoiding the distortion of justice that occurs when some cases receive disproportionate attention while others, equally deserving, remain neglected. Objective indicators provide a measurable framework for consistency, accountability, and fairness, reducing the risk of arbitrary decision-making or selective responsiveness that could compromise institutional legitimacy.

Additionally, protecting the integrity of the judicial process against digital intervention is paramount. In an era where social media can rapidly amplify narratives and mobilize public sentiment, mechanisms must be implemented to shield judges, prosecutors, and investigators from undue influence. This includes the creation of legal and operational safeguards to prevent intimidation, harassment, or coercion through online platforms, while simultaneously upholding transparency in judicial conduct. Such mechanisms reinforce the independence of the judiciary, ensuring that decisions are made based on the rule of law and evidentiary standards rather than on external pressures or popular opinion. Moreover, they contribute to the preservation of due process, as every individual involved in the legal system—be they defendants, witnesses, or victims—retains the right to a fair hearing without interference from sensationalized narratives or orchestrated public campaigns.

When these measures are integrated into a cohesive framework, the digital space can continue to function as a platform for democratic oversight and civic engagement without compromising legal principles. Citizens retain their role as vigilant participants in governance, empowered to monitor and hold institutions accountable, yet within boundaries that respect procedural justice and individual rights. In this sense, digital participation is harnessed constructively, transforming potential pressures into informed oversight that enhances, rather than disrupts, the functioning of the legal system. By aligning public accountability with structured institutional safeguards, law enforcement and judicial authorities can maintain legitimacy, uphold

equality before the law, and ensure that due process remains central to the administration of justice.

Ultimately, the normative implication emphasizes that accountability and justice are mutually reinforcing when properly structured. Public engagement is essential to a vibrant democracy, yet it must operate within frameworks that protect the rights of all parties and sustain the impartiality of legal institutions. Strengthening internal policies, defining objective response criteria, and safeguarding judicial independence together create a resilient system in which the democratic ideals of transparency, fairness, and accountability coexist harmoniously with the rule of law. Such a system not only mitigates the risks posed by unmoderated public pressure but also ensures that the principles of justice remain steadfast, guiding society toward equitable, consistent, and dignified outcomes for every individual involved in the legal process. In this context, the digital era becomes not a threat to justice but an opportunity to enhance oversight, engagement, and responsiveness, provided that it is anchored in normative principles that respect both procedural safeguards and human dignity.

The digital era has brought significant changes to people's lives, particularly in the context of law enforcement. Social media now serves as a platform for public participation, allowing individuals to voice their demands while simultaneously placing pressure on law enforcement officials. The phenomenon of “no viral, no justice” is the most prominent reflection of this dynamic, as it demonstrates that legal responses often appear to be faster when a case gains widespread attention and goes viral on social media. From a sociological perspective, this situation indicates a negative perception and public dissatisfaction with a law enforcement system that is considered unresponsive. Social media no longer functions solely as a medium for information; it has also become an arena for advocacy, where demands for justice can influence how institutions respond to public expectations.

Cases that frequently arise and become topics of discussion in the virtual world include domestic violence and crimes committed by law enforcement or state officials. Posting videos or other content on social media not only attracts public attention but also encourages faster handling by authorities. This underscores the positive potential of social media in uncovering cases that might otherwise remain hidden and in promoting more responsive law enforcement. However, relying on virality as the main trigger for justice also carries consequences that require critical examination. The negative impacts include the rapid and widespread dissemination of information, the difficulty of removing digital traces, and challenges in regulating and governing law enforcement processes. Public opinion pressure can also threaten the independence of authorities, while the formation of mass opinion does not always stem from complete or verified legal facts.

Digital traces that are difficult to erase may also produce long-term consequences for all parties involved.

Therefore, although social media plays an important role in raising public awareness of justice issues and encouraging legal action, mechanisms are necessary to balance the demands of responsiveness in the digital space with the principles of an objective, fair, and rule-of-law-based legal process. Over-reliance on virality as the sole path to justice risks undermining the foundations of a legal system that should be universally applicable without discrimination. Consequently, further research is needed to formulate effective strategies for integrating the role of social media into justice enforcement without compromising the integrity and objectivity of the legal process.

Digitalization has transformed the relationship between the police and the public, particularly regarding transparency, accountability, social mobilization, and the role of the media in shaping public perceptions of justice. Empirically, this study identifies three main findings. First, there has been a shift in the pattern of public-police interaction: digital technology expands the space for citizen participation in monitoring police performance, while simultaneously increasing the intensity of public pressure through social media. Second, virality has emerged as a variable influencing law enforcement priorities; viral cases tend to receive faster responses, giving rise to the “no viral, no justice” pattern. Third, the digital space carries the risk of misinformation and trials by social media; although transparency may increase, the spread of hoaxes and hastily formed opinions has the potential to distort substantive justice.³⁷

D. No Viral, No Justice: Social Media, Public Pressure, and Law Enforcement Challenges in Indonesia

Law enforcement influenced by the dynamics of social media has the potential to give rise to the phenomenon of “no viral coverage, no justice,” because public pressure often emerges when a case becomes widely discussed on digital platforms. This pressure encourages law enforcement officials to respond immediately and handle viral cases, creating the perception that cases lacking widespread attention are not processed effectively or prioritized. In the Indonesian context, this pattern of law enforcement does not fully align with the principles of progressive law, as some cases appear to be handled more quickly due to their popularity, without always being accompanied by comprehensive considerations of justice and human rights protection. Progressive law emphasizes the importance of equality before the law and respect for the principle of

³⁷ Sandiya et al., ‘Transforming Democratic Policing in the Digital Era for Law Enforcement Accountability in Indonesia’.

presumption of innocence.³⁸ In practice, however, virality on social media often triggers a trial by media, where an individual is effectively “convicted” by public opinion before a fair trial takes place. Therefore, ideally, law enforcement should continue to prioritize substantive justice and equal treatment without discrimination as the primary basis for handling cases, rather than allowing public pressure to dictate the direction and priorities of law enforcement.³⁹

Social media functions as a space for public discourse, capable of raising issues that have been marginalized or received little attention from mainstream media. Through the power of virality and broad public participation, social media can accelerate the formation of collective opinion, which in turn provides social oversight of the performance of law enforcement agencies. However, this dynamic also presents ethical and legal dilemmas because legal processes that should be based on the principles of legality and objectivity are often driven by the popularity of an issue rather than the actual need for justice. This condition has the potential to disrupt the principle of due process, as public pressure can affect the neutrality of officials in handling cases and shift law enforcement orientation from fair evaluation of evidence to reactive responses.⁴⁰

Criminal law enforcement in the digital age should adhere to the principles of objectivity, legality, and substantive justice. In practice, however, social pressure arising from mass media and social media frequently influences the course of legal proceedings, particularly in cases that go viral. A primary concern with this condition is the potential loss of objectivity in law enforcement. Significant public pressure may encourage officials to take populist measures or make decisions in response to public opinion, rather than relying on facts and applicable legal provisions. This situation contradicts the principles of due process and the presumption of innocence, which require that every stage of the legal process be conducted professionally, free from external interference, and with full respect for the human rights of all parties involved.⁴¹

A more fundamental criticism of law enforcement influenced by socio-political pressure is the erosion of the integrity of the legal system when legal institutions no longer operate according to their normative mandate but instead react to public opinion, political interests, or mass demands.⁴² Under such circumstances, the law risks losing its nature as an impartial, rational, and

³⁸ Satjipto Rahardjo, ‘Hukum Progresif: Hukum Yang Membebaskan’, *Jurnal Hukum Progresif* 1, no. 1 (2011): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.14710/hp.1.1.1-24>.

³⁹ Runturambi et al., ‘No Viral No Justice: A Criminological Review of Social Media-Based Law Enforcement from the Perspective of Progressive Law’.

⁴⁰ Muhammad et al., ‘The Reduction of Criminal Justice Policy in Indonesia: Justice versus Virality’.

⁴¹ Febrian Rizky Akbar and Dhikma Heradika, ‘Fenomena “No Viral No Justice” Di Indonesia: Disrupsi Legitimasi Institusional Dan Dilema Keadilan Selektif Di Era Jaringan’, *Journal of Innovative and Creativity* 5, no. 3 (2025): 34599–607, <https://doi.org/10.31004/joecy.v5i3.5499>.

⁴² Muhammad et al., ‘The Reduction of Criminal Justice Policy in Indonesia: Justice versus Virality’.

predictable mechanism, shifting instead to situational responses dictated by external forces. In the long term, this pattern can undermine public trust in the rule of law, as people perceive that the direction of law enforcement is determined not by norms, evidence, and procedures but by “who is the most powerful” or “what issues are the most discussed.” Consequently, law enforcement, which should serve as a pillar of justice, becomes an instrument easily manipulated by socio-political dynamics.⁴³

From the perspective of legal utilitarianism, as developed by Jeremy Bentham⁴⁴ and John Stuart Mill⁴⁵, the law should produce the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people (the greatest happiness for the greatest number). However, this benefit can only be realized sustainably if law enforcement is consistent, transparent, and reliable. If the law only “works” when social pressure arises, the benefits tend to be temporary and unstable. One case may be expedited because it goes viral, while another equally urgent case may be neglected due to lack of attention. This uncertainty creates collective losses, as society can no longer rely on formal procedures as the main avenue for obtaining justice. In other words, laws subject to social pressure risk producing new injustices, both in the form of unequal treatment and disproportionate decision-making, making it difficult to achieve the utilitarian goal of the common good.

Therefore, it is important to emphasize that public pressure should not be the primary factor determining the direction and priorities of law enforcement. In a democratic country, public oversight is indeed necessary, but its role should ideally be as a check-and-balance mechanism to prevent irregularities, not as a “command” that replaces evidence-based and procedural mechanisms. The most urgent need is to build a strong, independent, and transparent legal system, so that institutional responses are based on objective standards: the urgency of the case, the quality of evidence, the protection of victims, and the guarantee of suspects’ or defendants’ rights in accordance with due process.

Legal reconstruction efforts should focus on strengthening access to justice, reforming legal culture, digitally transforming the legal process to be more inclusive, and enhancing the capacity and competence of law enforcement officials. Additionally, preventing injustice must include the formulation of adaptive regulations, community involvement in the legislative process within the digital space, and the application of technology-based access to justice. Thus, justice is no longer determined by the popularity of a case but is positioned as a fundamental right guaranteed by the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Clarendon Press, 1876).

⁴⁵ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, *Utilitarianism* (Longmans, Green and Company, 1879).

state.

Social media holds significant power in shaping public perception. Information circulating on various platforms, often without adequate verification, can rapidly influence public opinion regarding a criminal case, both toward the suspect and the victim. This impact can extend to the legal process, as public pressure formed through social media has the potential to influence the response of law enforcement officials and the dynamics of the trial. For example, investigations may be disrupted by information leaks or because public opinion has already formed before judicial proceedings begin, resulting in bias and prejudice in legal decision-making.

Social media poses a serious challenge to the principle of impartial justice. High exposure in the digital space often triggers a trial by media for suspects, where the public effectively “judges” them before the formal court examines the case, thereby undermining the presumption of innocence.⁴⁶ Victims are also vulnerable to negative impacts, such as online harassment and the dissemination of personal data, which violates privacy. To minimize these impacts, a stronger framework and stricter regulations are needed regarding the use of social media in criminal cases.⁴⁷ Policy recommendations include increasing public digital literacy to curb the spread of misinformation and developing ethical guidelines for the media and law enforcement officials in engaging with social media. This approach helps balance freedom of expression in the digital space with the protection of individual rights within the criminal justice system.

Law enforcement officials currently lack sufficient professionalism in identifying perpetrators, which leads to errors in determining suspects. Moreover, investigations that do not follow applicable legal provisions contribute to human rights violations. These findings underscore the importance of procedural compliance to prevent harm to innocent parties. Therefore, reforming the investigation mechanism, strengthening the use of forensic technology, and improving the education and training of law enforcement officials are essential to prevent misidentification and ensure fairer law enforcement.

The phenomenon of “no viral, no justice” can be seen as a strong signal that Indonesian society is beginning to build alternative justice mechanisms in the digital space. These mechanisms

⁴⁶ Shauna Hall-Coates, ‘Following Digital Media into the Courtroom: Publicity and the Open Court Principle in the Information Age’, *Dalhousie Journal of Legal Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015): 101–39, <https://digitalcommons.schulichlaw.dal.ca/djls/vol24/iss1/4/>; Zakaria Garno, ‘Digital Justice: The Impact of Social Media on Legal Reforms and Judicial Processes’, *Legal Ethics*, 19 December 2025, 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1460728x.2025.2605699>.

⁴⁷ Putri Zaltina and Lidwina Nurtjahyo, ‘Right to Be Forgotten as a Legal Protection for The Victims of Electronic Sexual Violence Cases’, *The Indonesian Journal of Socio-Legal Studies* 3, no. 2 (2024): 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.54828/ijls.2024v3n2.4>.

have emerged in response to gaps in formal governance and bureaucratic performance, which are perceived as incapable of fulfilling the basic promise of the rule of law, particularly regarding responsiveness and certainty in case handling. The primary challenge for the legal system is to formulate ways to accommodate demands for accountability and transparency brought about by virality, without compromising procedural integrity and due process principles. If law enforcement continues to depend on the virality of a case, legal legitimacy will weaken, as the public perceives justice to be triggered by attention rather than objective legal standards.

Effective reform should focus on strengthening the responsiveness and internal accountability of law enforcement agencies, ensuring justice as an unconditional right for every citizen. The state must also ensure that access to justice does not depend on victims' or communities' ability to "produce" dramatic, emotionally charged narratives that attract public attention in the digital space. If formal channels provide equitable and reliable access to justice, the slogan "no viral, no justice" will lose its critical significance, as it will no longer reflect systemic failure.

The Indonesian legal system still faces challenges in ensuring equitable justice free from discrimination. Dependence on virality as a trigger for attention and legal action reflects a crisis of public trust in formal law enforcement institutions. From a legal philosophy perspective, this situation contradicts the ideas of justice articulated by Aristotle, Rawls, and Kant, which demand that justice be upheld rationally, equally, and based on accountable principles rather than the popularity of a case.

Criminal cases in Indonesia, including instances of sexual harassment in public spaces, often illustrate this pattern. Widely discussed cases tend to receive faster and more serious responses from authorities than similar cases that are not exposed publicly. This creates inequality in access to justice, as victims with digital literacy and strong social networks are better able to mobilize public support to accelerate legal processes, while others risk being neglected.

From a legal philosophy perspective, this situation conflicts with the principle of legal positivism, which emphasizes the objective and consistent application of norms without external influence, such as public opinion. Furthermore, reliance on virality may erode the presumption of innocence and foster mob justice, where mass judgment in digital spaces can compromise objectivity and the integrity of the judicial process. Nevertheless, social media also functions as a mechanism for public oversight, encouraging transparency and accountability among officials. The main challenge, therefore, is to balance public engagement in the digital space with consistent law enforcement while adhering to the principles of procedural justice.

E. Conclusion

The digital era has made social media the primary space for opinion formation and social oversight, which can promote faster and more transparent law enforcement. However, the phenomenon of “no viral, no justice” demonstrates that legal responses are often influenced by virality, thereby risking inequality of access to justice and undermining the principles of equality before the law, due process, and judicial independence. Consequently, internal law enforcement policies are required, including integrated digital reporting, public communication standards, and a response system based on objective priorities—such as urgency, impact, and victim vulnerability—rather than popularity. In this way, social media can continue to serve as an effective form of oversight without compromising the integrity of the judicial process.

The influence of social media on law enforcement has the potential to give rise to the “no viral, no justice” phenomenon, characterized by cases being handled more quickly when they go viral, while cases that receive little exposure risk being neglected. This situation can compromise the objectivity of law enforcement, undermine equality before the law, and weaken due process through trials by media, misinformation, and populist public opinion pressure. Therefore, reforms in law enforcement governance are necessary, including the implementation of an integrated digital reporting system, responses based on objective priorities, the strengthening of investigative and forensic professionalism, and ethical communication guidelines to ensure public accountability without compromising judicial integrity. Through these measures, justice can be upheld as a fundamental right that does not depend on the popularity of a case in the digital space.

It is essential to develop an integrated and easily accessible digital reporting system so that every report can be recorded, followed up, and monitored for progress without waiting for it to go viral. Case handling should be guided by objective priorities such as urgency, impact, victim vulnerability, risk of recurrence, and protection needs—not by the popularity of a case on social media. Additionally, law enforcement institutions need to establish transparent public communication standards while upholding the principle of presumption of innocence, including restrictions on the leakage of investigative information and measures to prevent premature judgments.

Strengthening professionalism through continuous training, enhancing the capacity of law enforcement officials, and ensuring the quality of investigations are also crucial to prevent the misidentification of suspects and to ensure that procedures comply with due process. The independence of the judiciary must be protected from digital intimidation, and digital literacy among the public should be increased to curb the spread of false information, doxing, and trials by

social media. With these measures in place, social media can continue to function as an effective oversight mechanism, while the integrity of the judicial process is preserved, and justice is ensured as a fundamental right for every citizen, rather than being contingent upon virality.

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