

Analysis of the impact of social media on shaping public perception of legal cases

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ABSTRACT

Digital social media significantly influences public opinion. Posts accompanied by additional narratives can influence the process of law enforcement. This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method. It analyzes events, facts, conditions, phenomena, and circumstances occurring during the research period by presenting what happened. The research object is the focus of the study, incorporating relevant theories. The findings conclude that social media can enhance transparency, accountability, and public participation in law enforcement. However, social media can also be a source of misinformation, defamation, and even negatively influence the judicial process. Therefore, it is important for the public, law enforcement officials, and social media users to be wise in sharing posts on social media and to be aware of the potential positive and negative impacts of such posts on the legal process. One example of a legal case impacted by the power of social media is Indonesia's e-KTP corruption case.

Keywords: Public perception, legal process, judicial process, legal case.

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



1. INTRODUCTION

The ongoing development of the times, accompanied by rapid technological advances, has influenced all aspects of society. One aspect affected by this technological development is the legal system. As we know, Indonesia is a democratic and constitutional state. Democracy and law are interrelated concepts, as the quality of a country's legal system can determine the quality of its democracy, and vice versa. In the concept of democracy, the principle of popular sovereignty (democratic) is embedded, while in the concept of the rule of law, the principles of the rule of law (nomocratic) are embedded. When these two concepts are combined in the governance of a nation, a democratic rule of law (i.e., constitutional democracy) is established. Democratic rule of law is based on the constitution and public participation.

The government and legislature have a huge responsibility to continuously update and improve prevailing laws and regulations so that they remain relevant and effective in facing the challenges of an ever-evolving era. This is crucial to ensure that Indonesia's legal system remains strong, stable, and capable of protecting the rights of citizens as a whole, as well as promoting justice and equality for all levels of society without exception. In addition, civil society and academics also have a very important role in providing input and constructive criticism of existing legal policies to create a better, more democratic legal system, and more responsive to the needs of society. Therefore, close and synergistic cooperation between the government, society, and legal institutions is needed to create a more advanced, equitable, and prosperous Indonesia for all its people. With good cooperation, we can build a better and more effective legal system to serve the needs of society.

Social media has become a powerful tool in the fight for justice in recent years. Through platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, people can voice the injustices they experience and witness. However, reliance on virality to obtain justice creates a paradoxical situation. From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon illustrates the discrepancy between legal facts, which should be objective, and social media facts, which are often subjective and emotional in nature. The legal process should ideally be based on the presumption of innocence, valid evidence, and fair procedure. However, the public pressure generated by viral content can influence the independence of law enforcement agencies and disregard these principles. (Nataningrum & Subarsyah, 2025)

In this era of globalization and with the passage of time, we will be faced with progress, where science and technology will continue to advance at a rapid pace. One proof of technology development is the progress in the fields of information and communication technology and education. Information and communication technology is now widely used by nearly all people on Earth, with most communities owning and utilizing such technology. This technology offers numerous benefits and has been applied across nearly every aspect of human life, including work, education, and government. Today, communication media plays an increasingly vital role in human activities. (Maolana, 2024)

Technology continues to develop rapidly and is utilized in almost every aspect of life, including the legal profession. This is due to the emergence of Internet-based media devices, such as social media (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, etc.). As a result, many types of information can be easily found worldwide by accessing digital social media. Social media serves as a platform for the public to express their opinions and shape public opinion on various issues, including the legal cases. Information disseminated on social media is not always accurate and may contain biases that influence public perceptions. In some cases, pressure from public opinion formed through social media can influence law enforcement officials to conduct investigations and prosecutions. This raises concerns about media trials, in which defendants are judged by public opinion before receiving a fair trial. (Yatnih, 2024)

The presence of social media has impacted how people communicate and share information. The presence of digital social media also influences cultural, social, and legal aspects of society. One of the influences of social media in the legal aspect is that news published on social media can influence the public perception of legal cases.

Digital social media has a significant influence on the legal process. Social media can increase transparency and accountability in law enforcement and enable the public to actively participate in

monitoring legal processes. However, social media can also be a medium for the spread of misinformation, defamation, and even a tool to influence public opinion and the judicial process.

Public opinion formed on social media can pressure law enforcement agencies and even influence court decisions. Currently, there is often a phenomenon known as “netizen power,” which shows that cases that go viral on social media tend to receive more attention from law enforcement agencies, while other cases may be neglected.

Social media users have significant power in shaping public opinions. With the ability to quickly and widely disseminate information, netizens can raise public awareness of specific legal issues. In some cases, netizen interventions have prompted law enforcement agencies to act more swiftly and transparently. This is particularly evident in cases that receive significant social media attention, where pressure from netizens can accelerate legal enforcement. However, netizen intervention in legal processes has drawbacks. It is not uncommon for opinions that develop on social media to be emotional and not based on complete fact. This can influence public perception and even influence legal decisions made by law enforcement officials. Significant public pressure through social media can create bias and disrupt the legal process, which should be objective and evidence-based. (Firman Akbar et al., 2024)

Cases that go viral on social media often receive increased attention from law enforcement, even prompting more responsive changes in attitudes and actions. (Didik et al., 2025) The corruption case involving several high-ranking state officials and members of the House of Representatives (DPR) in the e-KTP procurement project is a clear example of how public opinion can pressure the government to take decisive action against corruption.

Social media has become a channel for accessing information in various fields, including education, culture, society, economics, law, and politics. For example, it is used as a means of disseminating information about the importance of legal awareness in society, and there are several social media accounts that provide information about politics. Thus, it can be said that social media is a dominant force (people power) in influencing law enforcement and justice in Indonesia. (Adibah & Zhafira, n.d.) Therefore, we need to examine the impact of social media on shaping the public perception of legal cases.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using qualitative descriptive research methods. Descriptive data analysis techniques are a way of discussing data that have been collected, processed, and presented by assessing the data. The assessment is accompanied by in-depth, clear, and detailed analytical and argumentative descriptions. The results of this research emphasize an objective representation of the situation as it should be from the observed form. In addition to collecting facts, strong interpretations are also provided to obtain broad benefits in the research. The researcher used qualitative descriptive because this research presents problems in the research object that are studied in depth. The aim is to interpret the phenomena that occur and are carried out by involving various existing methods, namely efforts to understand the attitudes, views, feelings, and behaviors of both individuals and groups of people. The purpose of this research is to reveal events or facts, conditions, phenomena, and circumstances that occur during the research by presenting what actually happened. The research object is something that becomes the focus of the research by relating theories as a reference.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Public opinion can pose a significant challenge to law enforcement, as it can influence people's perceptions of an ongoing case, even before the legal process is complete, and can put enormous pressure on law enforcement officials to make decisions in line with public opinion. When public opinion is formed based on incomplete or inaccurate information, it can influence the public's perception of the case and distort justice, making the legal process unfair and ineffective. In addition, public opinion can also pressure law enforcement officials to make decisions in accordance with public

opinion rather than based on evidence and applicable legal procedures, which can threaten the independence and integrity of law enforcement agencies. (Ilham Hendrik, 2024)

However, public opinion can also be an effective means of social control in promoting transparency in the judicial process. When the public has adequate access to information about the legal process, they can monitor and evaluate the ongoing legal process and provide constructive criticism and suggestions to law enforcement agencies. Public opinion can be a means of expressing concerns and criticizing the legal process, thereby encouraging law enforcement agencies to increase transparency and accountability in carrying out their duties, as well as ensuring that justice is consistently served and not influenced by irrelevant external factors. (Kamaruddin, 2024)

However, it is important to remember that public opinion must be based on accurate and objective information and not influenced by emotions or vested interests that could pervert justice. When public opinion is formed based on inaccurate or incomplete information, it can influence the public's perception of the case and pervert justice, resulting in an unfair and ineffective legal process. Therefore, it is important for the public to have adequate access to accurate and objective information about the legal process so that they can form opinions based on facts and not on speculation or unfounded rumors.

Law enforcement agencies have a great responsibility to ensure that information about the legal process is accessible to the public in a transparent and accurate manner. This is important for maintaining public trust and ensuring that public opinion can act as an effective form of social control in promoting transparency and fairness in the judicial process. By doing so, we can create a fairer and more transparent legal system and ensure that justice is consistently served and not influenced by irrelevant external factors. Therefore, transparency and accountability in the legal process are essential to increase public trust in law enforcement agencies and the legal process.

Social media can shape public perception and influence legal processes. Law No. 19 of 2016 on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE Law), particularly in Article 27, paragraph (3), regulates the prohibition of disseminating electronic information containing defamatory content and/or slander. Additionally, Article 28 (2) of the ITE Law prohibits the dissemination of information intended to incite hatred or hostility toward individuals and/or groups of society based on ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations (SARA). This provision shows how important it is to regulate the information disseminated on social media platforms.

Social media plays an important role in public communication and has a dual influence on the legal process. On the one hand, social media can increase transparency and accountability in law enforcement and provide a platform for public participation. On the other hand, the spread of inaccurate or manipulative information on social media can worsen public perception and even disrupt legal processes.

Social media can quickly and easily disseminate information related to legal cases, investigative developments, and court proceedings. This encourages law enforcement officials to be more transparent and accountable in performing their duties. The public can use social media to express their aspirations, criticize, and monitor the legal process, thereby participating in enforcing justice. (Kurniawan, 2022)

Social media serves as a means to disseminate important information related to legal cases, such as evidence found, to the public, which can assist in the investigation and prosecution process. Social media also functions as a social control mechanism for law enforcement agencies, encouraging them to work in accordance with the rules and to act fairly.

Social media can have a negative impact if parties spread false or inaccurate information on it. Such information can easily spread and influence public opinion and may even lead to persecution or vigilante justice. Social media can shape biased public opinion on a case, which can influence the perceptions of judges and the judicial process.

The dissemination of information on social media can cause public pressure that may affect the performance of law enforcement officials and even interfere with legal proceedings. Social media can also be a tool for cybercrime, such as fraud, defamation, or the dissemination of illegal content, which can harm individuals and the legal process.

Social media and extensive media coverage can create significant public pressure on law enforcement officials and potentially compromise their objectivity and independence in handling cases. Public opinion formed through social media can shape the public's perception of a case before legal proceedings begin, which can influence how the case is handled and decided.

Social media is prone to the spread of unverified or false information, which can influence public opinion and ultimately affect the legal process. Groups or individuals with vested interests can use social media to manipulate public opinion for their own benefit, which can undermine the legal process and justice. If law enforcement agencies are influenced by public opinion, public trust in the legal system's independence and integrity may decline.

Legal proceedings can become unobjective and potentially result in unfair decisions when affected by public pressure that is not based on objective legal facts. In some cases, going viral on social media can trigger strong emotional reactions from the public, which can influence public opinion and pressure law enforcement officials. This can lead law enforcement officials to feel pressured to make decisions that align with public opinion rather than being based on evidence and applicable legal procedures. Law enforcement officials, such as prosecutors and judges, are responsible for carrying out their duties independently and objectively. They must consider the available evidence and apply the law in accordance with the applicable procedures, without being influenced by public opinion or external pressure. However, when public pressure becomes too strong, law enforcement officers may feel pressured to make unfair decisions to meet public demands. (Nurcahyo, 2020)

In addition, the public needs to understand that the legal process requires time and proper procedures to ensure true justice. The legal process cannot be simplified to "conforming" to public opinion or "following" social media trends. The legal process requires an in-depth analysis, careful consideration, and proper application of the law. By doing so, we can create a legal system that is fairer and more objective and not influenced by public opinion that is not based on facts. A fair and objective legal system can ensure that justice is served consistently and is not affected by external factors. Therefore, it is important for all of us to understand the importance of independence and objectivity in legal processes. We must ensure that law enforcement officers can carry out their duties free from public pressure that is not based on objective legal facts. By doing so, we can create a better and fairer legal system for everyone.

In the long run, creating a fair and objective legal system requires a collective effort from all parties, including law enforcement officials, the public, and the government. We must ensure that our legal system is based on the principles of fairness, equality, and objectivity and is not influenced by public opinion that is not based on facts. By doing so, we can create a fairer and more prosperous society for everyone.

Public opinion can be a means of social control over the legal process, ensuring that law enforcement is conducted transparently and accountably. Active community participation in monitoring the judicial process through public opinion can promote transparency and justice. Public opinion can also be used to increase legal awareness and encourage active participation in the law enforcement process. The corruption case involving several high-ranking state officials and members of the House of Representatives (DPR) in the e-KTP procurement project is a clear example of how public opinion can pressure the government to take decisive action against corruption. Ironically, the e-KTP program, launched in 2011 to create a more accurate and efficient identification system, became a platform for systematic corruption. The KPK began investigating the case in 2013 and named suspects between 2014-2016, including Setya Novanto, who was sentenced to 15 years in prison. This case resulted in state losses of Rp2.3 trillion, eroded public trust, and prompted legal reforms. Public reaction was intense, with significant media coverage and public demonstrations demanding justice for the victim. Other key actors included Irman and Sugiharto, who received bribes, and Andi Narogong, who provided bribes to win the tenders.

Public opinion can play an important role in ensuring that legal proceedings are conducted in accordance with the principles of fairness and transparency so that justice is consistently served and not influenced by irrelevant external factors. However, it is important to remember that public opinion must

be based on accurate and objective information, and not influenced by emotions or vested interests that could distort the facts and obscure justice. Therefore, the public needs to be given adequate and wide access to relevant and accurate information about the legal process so that they can form opinions based on facts and not on speculation, hearsay, or incomplete information. Thus, public opinion can be an effective and constructive means of social control in ensuring fairness and transparency in the legal process so that the public can monitor and evaluate the ongoing legal process. In addition, the government and law enforcement agencies also need to be open to criticism and suggestions from the public and ensure that the legal process runs transparently and accountably so that there is no impression that the legal process is carried out in a closed and non-transparent manner.

With good cooperation between the public and law enforcement agencies, a fairer and more transparent legal system can be created, and justice can be consistently served and not affected by irrelevant external factors. Therefore, it is important for all of us to understand the importance of transparency and accountability in the legal process and to ensure that public opinion can play an important role in ensuring fairness and transparency in the legal process. In the long run, creating a fair and transparent legal system requires a collective effort from all parties, including society, the government, and law enforcement agencies. We need to ensure that our legal system is based on the principles of fairness, equality, and transparency and is not influenced by irrelevant external factors. By doing so, we can create a fairer and more prosperous society for everyone. (Antony, 2025)

To overcome the negative impact of public opinion, efforts are needed to improve public legal literacy and awareness of the impact of spreading inaccurate information on social media platforms. Clear regulations are needed regarding the dissemination of information on social media to prevent abuse that could harm legal processes.

The quality of human resources and professionalism of law enforcement officials need to be improved so that they can work independently and objectively. Constructive dialogue between law enforcement officials and the public must be established to create a better understanding of legal processes. By overcoming these challenges and utilizing the potential of public opinion positively, law enforcement can be carried out more effectively and fairly.

4. CONCLUSION

Social media can shape public perception and influence legal processes. Law No. 19 of 2016 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE Law), specifically in Article 27 paragraph (3), regulates the prohibition of the dissemination of electronic information containing defamatory content and/or slander. Additionally, Article 28 (2) of the ITE Law prohibits the dissemination of information intended to incite hatred or hostility toward individuals and/or groups based on ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations. This provision highlights the importance of regulating the information disseminated on social media.

Social media has a complex and multifaceted impact on the legal process, requiring serious and wise attention from all parties involved in the legal process. On the one hand, social media can be a powerful tool for increasing transparency, accountability, and public participation in law enforcement. By using social media, the public can monitor and evaluate the ongoing legal process, as well as provide constructive criticism and suggestions to law enforcement agencies. In addition, social media can also be a means to increase public legal awareness and promote the values of justice and equality.

However, social media can also be a source of misinformation, defamation, and even negatively influence the judicial process. Inaccurate or incomplete information can be easily disseminated through social media, which can influence public opinion and pervert the course of justice. In addition, social media can be used to defame and disrupt the judicial process, affecting the independence and integrity of law enforcement agencies. Therefore, it is important for the public, law enforcement officials, and social media users to be wise in sharing posts on social media and be aware of their potential positive and negative impacts on the legal process. The public must ensure that the information shared on social media is accurate and does not trigger conflict or negatively affect the judicial process. Law enforcement

officials also need to ensure that they are not swayed by public opinion that is not based on facts, and maintain their independence and integrity in carrying out their duties.

Therefore, it is important to ensure that law enforcement agencies have clear and effective policies to manage the impact of social media on the legal process. They must ensure that the information shared on social media is accurate and does not fuel conflict or negatively affect the judicial process. In addition, law enforcement agencies must ensure that they can monitor and evaluate the impact of social media on the legal process and take the necessary steps to address any negative impacts. By doing so, we can create a fairer and more transparent legal system and ensure that justice is served consistently and is unaffected by irrelevant external factors. Therefore, it is important for all of us to understand the importance of being wise in using social media, as well as being aware of its potential positive and negative impacts on the legal process. By doing so, we can create a fairer and more prosperous society for everyone.

Ethical approval

This research did not require ethical approval

Informed consent statement

This research did not require informed consent

Author's Contributions

Not applicable.

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