



Law under Algorithmic Pressure: A Critical Review of Viral Cases and Digital Public Opinion

Muhammad Ali Murtadlo *

Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari Ponorogo

email: alimurtadlo@uinponorogo.ac.id

Wahyu Saputra

Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari Ponorogo

email: wahyu@uinponorogo.ac.id

Abstract

The phenomenon of virality on social media has introduced new dynamics into the Indonesian judicial system. This article aims to critically examine how public opinion developing on social media, particularly in viral cases, can influence the direction and outcomes of legal decisions. Employing the approach of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) and media sociology perspectives, this paper explores the role of algorithms as invisible actors that generate social pressure on law enforcement authorities. Case studies of several viral legal proceedings in Indonesia indicate the presence of public opinion interventions in judicial processes. This study applies a qualitative-descriptive method with a library research approach. Data were collected from various literature sources and analyses of social media interactions concerning the Ferdy Sambo case. The findings reveal that public opinion on social media plays a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions of justice and fostering transparency in law enforcement. High levels of public participation often demand greater accountability from legal authorities. However, the inability to regulate such participation can lead to legal distortion, posing risks to the objectivity of judicial processes. Therefore, while public opinion may serve as a constructive instrument of social control, the legal system must be upheld independently.

Keywords: Public Opinion; Social Media; Viral Legal Cases; Law Enforcement

Abstrak

Fenomena viralitas di media sosial telah menghadirkan dinamika baru dalam sistem peradilan Indonesia. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji secara kritis bagaimana opini publik yang berkembang di media sosial, khususnya dalam kasus-kasus viral, dapat memengaruhi arah dan putusan hukum. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kritis hukum (critical legal studies) serta perspektif sosiologi media, tulisan ini menelaah peran algoritma sebagai aktor tak terlihat yang membentuk tekanan sosial terhadap aparat penegak hukum. Studi kasus terhadap beberapa perkara viral di Indonesia menunjukkan adanya indikasi intervensi opini publik dalam proses yudisial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif-deskriptif dengan pendekatan penelitian pustaka. Data dikumpulkan dari berbagai literatur serta analisis interaksi di media sosial terhadap kasus Ferdy Sambo. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa opini publik di media sosial memiliki peranan penting dalam membentuk persepsi masyarakat terhadap keadilan dan mendorong transparansi dalam penegakan hukum. Partisipasi publik yang tinggi sering kali menuntut akuntabilitas lebih besar dari aparat penegak hukum. Namun, ketidakmampuan untuk mengendalikan partisipasi tersebut dapat mengarah pada distorsi hukum, yang berisiko menggoyahkan obyektivitas proses hukum. Dengan demikian, meskipun opini publik dapat menjadi alat kontrol sosial yang konstruktif, sistem hukum harus tetap dijalankan secara independen.

Kata Kunci: Opini publik; Media Sosial; Kasus Hukum Viral; Penegakan Hukum

*Corresponding author

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Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of the lives of modern society, playing an important role in disseminating information, communicating, and influencing public opinion.¹ In Indonesia, internet penetration and social media use have increased rapidly in the last decade, bringing significant impacts on various aspects of life, including in the context of law enforcement.² This phenomenon brings complex new challenges in maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the judicial system amid the dynamics of information technology development. Social media has significantly influenced various aspects of social life, including in the context of law enforcement in Indonesia.³ The development of technology and the wider penetration of the internet have created new spaces for interaction, expression of opinions, and the dissemination of information in society.⁴ In the context of law, social media is a platform that allows various entities, including individuals, institutions, and law enforcement authorities, to participate in legal discussions, express opinions, and influence public opinion.⁵

The role of social media in law enforcement has evolved significantly.⁶ Social media allows for the rapid and widespread dissemination of information on legal issues, helps to rally support for legal cases, and facilitates public access to legal information. In addition, social media can be a transparency tool that allows oversight of the performance of law enforcement and related institutions. Social media platforms also open up space for communication between parties involved in legal cases, including advocates, clients, and the general public. This can influence the dynamics of the legal process, allow for open debate, and facilitate a wide range of community actions, including advocacy campaigns, fundraising, and efforts to fight for justice.⁷

In the ever-evolving digital era, social media has become the main stage for the public to voice their views, opinions, and concerns.⁸ In Indonesia, the phenomenon of legal cases

¹ Anang Sugeng Cahyono, "The influence of social media on social change in society in Indonesia," *Publiciana* 9, no. 1 (2016): 140–57, <https://doi.org/10.36563/publiciana.v9i1.79>.

² Lucy Pujasari Supratman, "The use of social media by digital natives," *Journal of Communication Sciences* 15, no. 1 (2018): 47–60, <https://doi.org/10.24002/jik.v15i1.1243>.

³ Viona Francesca Purba et al., "The Impact of Communication Technology Changes on the Increase in Social Crime: A Case Study of Social Media Use in the Digital Era," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Jurisprudence, Economic and Legal Theory* 1, no. 3 (2023): 477–85, <https://doi.org/10.62976/ijjel.v1i3.79>.

⁴ Rizki Setiawan, "Freedom of Individual Expression in Human Development in the Digital Era," *Proceedings of the National Seminar on Education FKIP* 1, no. 2 (2017).

⁵ Saeful Mujab, "The Policing Room on Social Media: A Challenge and Need," *Journal of National Security Volume V* 157 (2019).

⁶ Rahmat Syah, "Police Strategies in Preventing Phishing Crimes through Social Media in Cyberspace," *Jurnal Impresi Indonesia* 2, no. 9 (2023): 864–70, <https://doi.org/10.58344/jii.v2i9.3594>.

⁷ S H Nandi Abdallah Pahlevi, *Pengaruh Media Sosial dan Gerakan Massa Terhadap Hakim* (ciptapublishing, 2021).

⁸ Nandi Abdallah Pahlevi, *The Influence of Social Media and Mass Movements on Judges*.

that have gone viral on social media is increasingly emerging and raises profound questions about the role of public opinion in law enforcement. The socio-political context in Indonesia, with the transformation towards a digital society and an increasingly open democracy, poses new challenges for law enforcement officials.⁹ The public is not only a passive spectator, but also an active actor in expressing their views through social media.¹⁰ Public participation in the digital space is not only limited to informal discussions, but also involves public opinion campaigns, online petitions, and cyber movements.¹¹ The main question that arises is the extent to which this participation can be considered a form of constructive escort to law enforcement and in the context of cases that have gained the spotlight on social media.

A key factor to consider in this context is how public opinion on social media can influence legal decisions. In a judicial process that is supposed to be objective, neutral, and based on facts and law, ethical and practical questions arise when public opinion becomes a significant determinant in shaping the narrative around a case.¹² The impact of this public opinion can be reflected in court decisions, unequal access to justice, and even changing the direction of handling cases by law enforcement officials. This influence can be seen from the dynamics of debate and public response to certain cases, as well as how this view permeates and shapes legal perspectives in the courtroom.¹³ For example, several legal cases that have been in the public spotlight lately, namely law enforcement in the Ferdy Sambo case. In the context of the FS case, it can be seen from the role of social media in building public opinion on the legal case. Public participation in commenting, sharing information, and expressing opinions on social media has become significant. Discussions in the digital space create dynamics of public opinion that affect public perception of the case. How the public on social media responds and shapes their views on FS reflects the extent to which public opinion can influence the attitudes and actions of law enforcement officials in handling the case.¹⁴

⁹ Cahyono, "The Influence of Social Media on Social Change in Indonesia."

¹⁰ S H Pasolang Pasapan, *Morals and Law: Legal Philosophy Perspective, Legal Practice and Viral Cases* (Nas Media Pustaka, 2023).

¹¹ Latipah Nasution, "The right to freedom of opinion and expression in public space in the digital age," *Is* 4, no. 3 (2020): 37–48, <https://doi.org/10.15408/adalah.v4i3.16200>.

¹² Cahyono, "The Influence of Social Media on Social Change in Indonesia."

¹³ Anggita Nur Fadilla et al., "The Dynamics of Social and Political Change in the Digital Era: The Influence of Social Media and Community Participation," *ARIMA: Journal of Social and Humanities* 1, no. 3 (2024): 17–23.

¹⁴ Deti Fitriani dkk., "Partisipasi Masyarakat dalam Proses Demokrasi di Indonesia: Analisis Peran Teknologi dan Media Sosial," *Advanced In Social Humanities Research* 1, no. 4 (2023): 362–71, <https://doi.org/10.46799/adv.v1i4.43>.

It is important to understand how information on social media about FS can create certain narratives that may influence the judicial process and final verdict. The impact of public opinion created on social media can create additional pressure on law enforcement officials, and ethical questions arise about the extent to which these opinions can affect fairness and truth in law enforcement. From the example of the viral case above, it can be seen that there is an effect of public control over law enforcement in Indonesia. The effect of public control emerged as a force that had a significant impact on the dynamics of the judiciary. Cases that get wide attention on social media are often the subject of sharp public attention. Public participation on social media creates pressure on law enforcement officials, forces transparency, and triggers a quick response. With a wide range of information and the ability to communicate directly, public control on social media can be a game-changer in law enforcement.¹⁵

The impact of public control can be seen from the quick reaction of law enforcement officials to demands or concerns that arise on social media. Authorities often feel the need to provide clarification, explain the steps taken, or even show transparency in the investigation of a case. This reflects the adaptation of law enforcement officials to public expectations formed on social media. Public control, in this case, is an instrument that motivates law enforcement officials to act more proactively and openly, in line with the spirit of accountability.¹⁶ A similar study that discusses public opinion on social media in viral cases in Indonesia has been conducted. For example, research conducted by Anggita Nur Fadilla, et al¹⁷, Supratman,¹⁸ and Nandi Abdallah Pahlevi.¹⁹ However, the research they conducted was more inclined to the dynamic aspects of social and legal changes resulting from the emergence of social media. This study looks at how social media shapes people's views on the law and how law enforcement can adapt to this dynamic. Public participation in building opinions on social media as an effort to oversee law enforcement against viral cases is a dynamic that further enriches the law enforcement process. With technological advances and information disclosure, the public has an increasingly active role in voicing their views, concerns, and expectations regarding a legal case. In an increasingly connected society, social media provides a platform that allows individuals to participate in public dialogue, creating collective pressure and scrutiny of law enforcement officials. In an effort to oversee law enforcement against viral cases, public participation in

¹⁵ Joko Riskiyono, *Pengaruh partisipasi dan pengawasan publik dalam pembentukan undang-undang* (Publica Indonesia Utama, 2022).

¹⁶ Bayu Lesmana Taruna, "Public Examination as Control in Law Enforcement in Ptun," *Legality Journal* 5, no. 01 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.33756/jelta.v5i01.872>.

¹⁷ Fadilla et al., "The Dynamics of Social and Political Change in the Digital Era: The Influence of Social Media and Community Participation."

¹⁸ Nandi Abdallah Pahlevi, *The Influence of Social Media and Mass Movements on Judges*.

¹⁹ Supratman, "The use of social media by digital natives."

social media has become a modern form of social control that can enrich perspectives, bring new facts, and show concerns that may be missed by the authorities.

Method

The type of research in this study is *library research* with a focus on literature analysis and research related to public opinion on social media in viral cases in Indonesia. To uncover and describe a fact and data about public opinion on social media related to viral cases in Indonesia, this study uses a qualitative-descriptive research approach.²⁰ This method is used to generate descriptive data in the form of written words from the data source and the object observed.²¹

Descriptive qualitative research is carried out by collecting and processing data obtained from digital data on social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Youtube, then the data is used to describe the phenomenon of public opinion on social media in viral cases in Indonesia. In the analysis stage, the researcher seeks to uncover and analyze phenomena related to public opinion on social media in viral cases in Indonesia in two main focuses, namely, *first*, public participation in building opinions on social media as an effort to oversee law enforcement against viral cases; *Second*, public opinion on social media plays a role in the formation of legal decisions in viral cases. The limitation of the problem of viral cases in this study is law enforcement of the Ferdy Sambo case. Furthermore, it is seen to what extent this participation can be considered as a form of constructive escort to law enforcement and in the context of cases that have received attention on social media.

Results and Discussion

Trends in Public Enthusiasm on Social Media in Responding to Viral Cases

Public participation in responding to viral cases on social media shows a new phenomenon in the relationship between law, public opinion, and the digital space.²² The public's enthusiasm in responding to major cases, such as the Ferdy Sambo case, confirms that social media is now an arena for active public participation. In the legal context, the theory of public participation shows that the easier it is for people to access information, the stronger their role in providing views on a legal issue, even though this form of participation is often informal and spontaneous.²³ Social media now serves as an important

²⁰ Djama'an Satori and Aan Komariah, *Qualitative Research Methodology* (Remaja Rosdakarya, 2014), 25.

²¹ Lexy J. Moleong, *Qualitative Research Methodology* (Remaja Rosdakarya, 1998), 3.

²² Dede Al Mustaqim et al., "The Role of Social Media as a Means of Netizen Participation in Realizing Justice and Accountability in Law Enforcement in Indonesia," *Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 1, no. 1 (2024): 53–66, <https://doi.org/10.56916/jmrd.v1i1.655>.

²³ Riskiyono, *The Influence of Public Participation and Supervision in Law Formation*.

tool in shaping public opinion.²⁴ Before the digital age, public participation was more limited to formal forums, such as courts or conventional media. However, the development of social media has allowed the public to directly engage in discussions regarding legal and policy issues. They not only observe, but also actively contribute, either through comments, online petitions, or campaigns on social media. This transformation gives society a wider space to oversee and criticize the legal system, making transparency and openness the main demands.²⁵

The Ferdy Sambo case provides a clear example of how public participation on social media can affect the legal process. The public is actively involved in monitoring the development of this case, with many calls on social media demanding transparency and justice. This is where public participation comes into play; Through social media, the public exerts significant moral pressure on law enforcement officials to act in accordance with the principles of justice. This phenomenon suggests that collective voices in the digital space can influence the course of legal proceedings, even if such participation is informal.²⁶ The data findings presented by Ismail Fahmi in the emprit drone platform show several fluctuations in news trends, starting from before FS was designated as a suspect until he was sentenced by a panel of judges.²⁷ The trend of news and conversation experienced a significant increase on August 9, 2022, after the designation of FS as a suspect in the shooting of Brigadier J. This increase was also accompanied by an increase in positive public sentiment towards the institution of the National Police.

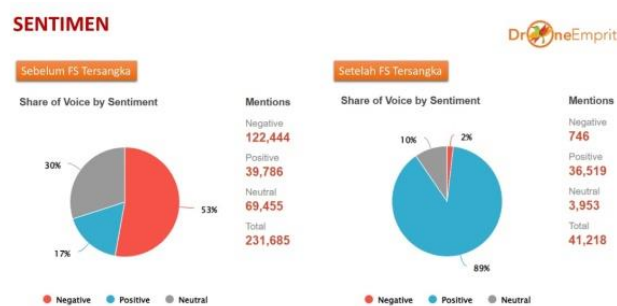


Figure 1. Public Sentiment on the Ferdy Sambo Case.

²⁴ Al Mustaqim et al., "The Role of Social Media as a Means of Netizens' Participation in Realizing Justice and Law Enforcement Accountability in Indonesia."

²⁵ Fitriani dkk., "Partisipasi Masyarakat dalam Proses Demokrasi di Indonesia: Analisis Peran Teknologi dan Media Sosial."

²⁶ Rila Kusumaningsih, "The role of the media in influencing public opinion on Law and justice," *JISHUM: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2024): 27–40, <https://doi.org/10.57248/jishum.v3i1.459>.

²⁷ Ismail Fahmi, *Drone Emprit Academic: Software for social media monitoring and analytics* (2022).

Prior to the designation of FS as a suspect, the atmosphere in the conversation room of netizens and the mass media was dominated by doubts about various irregularities in this case. The statement of Brigadier J's family lawyer also sparked speculation in the public, including suspicion of the possibility of a false scenario. Some of the public's doubts include the alleged concealment of information by the National Police, suspicions of the involvement of many police in this case (which was later responded to with the mutation of 25 police members, including 3 Brigadier Generals), and uncertainty about whether the National Police can solve this case. This situation creates a decrease in the level of trust and an increase in negative sentiment towards the National Police, reflected in the high level of negative sentiment in the period from July 11 to August 9 at 17.59 WIB (122,365 mentions).²⁸ A significant change occurred on August 9 at 18.40 WIB, after the National Police Chief announced FS as a suspect. Public sentiment towards the National Police has drastically changed to positive. The public appreciates and believes that the National Police, together with the National Police Chief, can investigate this case properly. However, along with these changes, the public began to question the attitude of members of the House of Representatives who seemed to have minimal responses, some were even considered to support the FS. Some people also tried to associate this case with the KM 50 FPI incident, considering the involvement of FS in the incident. The institutions of Kompolnas and Komnas HAM are also in the spotlight because they are considered too quick to express opinions that tend to support FS.²⁹

From the exposure of netizens' sentiments above, it can be seen that social media plays a significant role in influencing public opinion on the FS case. However, the sentence imposed on FS was not in accordance with the expectations of the public when the panel of judges granted FS's appeal from the previous death penalty to a life sentence.³⁰

The Ferdy Sambo case is also an important example of how the power of social media and public participation can influence the course of the legal process, especially in uncovering the truth behind the murder case of Brigadier Joshua. At first, this case was covered up with a scenario prepared by Ferdy Sambo and related parties to hide the real facts. However, the active participation of netizens on social media is the main key in dismantling the engineering carried out. When the news of Brigadier Joshua's death began to appear in the media, many netizens felt that there was an anomaly and began to question

²⁸ Ismail Fahmi, *Drone Emprit Academic: Software for social media monitoring and analytics*.

²⁹ Rahmawati Latief, "Aktivisme Siber dan Gerakan Sosial Baru di Twitter: Analisis Wacana Kasus Penembakan Brigadir Polisi Nofriansyah Yosua Hutabarat," *Jambura Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 1, no. 1 (2023): 28–41.

³⁰ Norbertus Arya Dwiangga Martiar Susana Rita Kumalasanti, Irma Tambunan, Dian Dewi Purnamasari, "Supreme Court Decision Collapses Trust," *Kompas.Id*, 2023.

the official narrative conveyed by the police.³¹ The public, through platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, began to dig up more information and spread various theories and analyses based on the evidence that emerged gradually. Public sentiment at the time was dominated by doubts about the version issued by the police, in which Brigadier Joshua's death was initially claimed to be the result of a shootout. Netizens then used their collective power to demand clarity and justice. Hashtags such as #JusticeForJoshua and #BongkarFaktaBrigadirJ went viral, prompting more attention from the mainstream media and ultimately forcing authorities to review the case in a more transparent manner.³²

The power of public opinion driven by netizens shows that digital participation has a real impact in ensuring that justice can be upheld. With increasing pressure from the public, various institutions began to respond, including the police who finally named Ferdy Sambo and his colleagues as suspects in the murder of Brigadier Joshua. Social media, in this case, serves as a public space where everyone can express their opinions and mobilize support, creating social pressures that are difficult for authorities to ignore.³³ The speed of information that spreads on social media also accelerates the disclosure of new evidence which then becomes the basis in the investigation process. Netizens often share CCTV footage, forensic reports, and other information that shows that there is an engineering behind Brigadier Joshua's death. In fact, several investigative journalists and public figures were involved in this discussion, adding credibility to the narrative built on social media. This active participation not only helps uncover the truth, but also highlights how the police initially failed to carry out their duties transparently and accurately.³⁴

This case also shows how the community can play a role as an informal supervisor in the law enforcement process. The public constantly monitoring the development of cases and putting pressure on the authorities indirectly forces law enforcement officials to act more transparently and accountably. In this context, the role of netizens as '*watchdogs*' or informal supervisors is very important to prevent legal engineering efforts that can occur behind the scenes. Social media has become an effective tool to voice injustice and demand accountability from the authorities.³⁵ Public sentiment towards the Ferdy Sambo case

³¹ "Chronology of the Murder of Brigadier J, National Police Chief: Shooting on the Orders of Ferdy Sambo."

³² Primus Givari Pandji Anom dan Yenni Yuniati, "Analisis Framing Pemberitaan Ferdy Sambo Terkait Kasus Tewasnya Brigadir J," *Jurnal Riset Jurnalistik dan Media Digital*, 2023, 139–44, <https://doi.org/10.29313/jrjmd.v3i2.3020>.

³³ Diani Riski Diani, "THE EFFECT OF THE USE OF TWITTER SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE TWITTER@NARASINEWSROOM ACCOUNT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FERDY SAMBO CASE," preprint, National University of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023.

³⁴ Nandi Abdallah Pahlevi, *Pengaruh Media Sosial dan Gerakan Massa Terhadap Hakim*, 110.

³⁵ Susilo Adi Purwantoro et al., "Social media: The role and work in the development of national insights," *Journal of Lemhannas RI* 9, no. 4 (2021): 55–79, <https://doi.org/10.55960/jlri.v9i4.416>.

continues to grow along with the revelation of various new facts. When Ferdy Sambo was finally put on trial, the community not only demanded that the perpetrator be punished according to his actions, but also wanted reform in the police institution. Many netizens voiced concern that this case was just the tip of the iceberg of many other cases that may have been fabricated or covered up. They urged that this case be a turning point for the reform of the legal system and the police in Indonesia, so that justice can be upheld without any intervention or engineering.³⁶

On the other hand, although most of the netizens' sentiments are negative towards Sambo and his colleagues, there is also a small group that shows sympathy. They argue that the justice system should not be based solely on public pressure, but should adhere to fair and objective legal principles. However, this group remains a minority, given the magnitude of public pressure demanding severe punishment for Ferdy Sambo and other perpetrators.³⁷ Public participation through social media in this case also shows how the digital era has changed the dynamics in the legal process. If previously the legal process was entirely in the hands of the authorities and the mainstream media, now the public has direct access to participate and oversee the course of the case. It is this power of public participation that ultimately puts great pressure on law enforcement agencies to act faster and more transparently, until this case is finally fully revealed.³⁸

In the end, the virality of the Ferdy Sambo case on social media and the active participation of netizens in demanding justice are proof that the public has great power in influencing the course of the legal process. Social media, with all its dynamics, has become a new space where justice is fought, not only by law enforcement officials, but also by the wider community. This case serves as an important lesson in how technology and digital participation can be effective tools to ensure transparency and accountability in legal processes. Public participation on social media reflects a larger transformation in the way the public engages in the legal process.³⁹ If in the past community involvement was passive, now it has become more active, with wider access to information and discussion. The concept of public participation in the law states that the involvement of the community in the legal process is an important part of democracy. However, this participation does not

³⁶ Ismail Fahmi, *Drone Emprit Academic: Software for social media monitoring and analytics*.

³⁷ Rafiku Rahman, "Framing Analysis of Ferdy Sambo's News on Viva Online Media. co. id and seconds. com," *Journal of Communication Literature* 6, no. 2 (2023): 278–93, <https://doi.org/10.32509/pustakom.v6i2.2726>.

³⁸ Salvatore Simarmata, "Media baru, ruang publik baru, dan transformasi komunikasi politik di Indonesia," *Jurnal Interact* 3, no. 2 (2014): 18–36.

³⁹ Fitriani et al., "Community Participation in the Democratic Process in Indonesia: An Analysis of the Role of Technology and Social Media."

only involve physical presence, but also activities in cyberspace, where social media becomes a space for the public to voice their views.⁴⁰

The impact of intense public participation on social media is also seen in the pressure exerted on law enforcement. In viral cases, such as Ferdy Sambo, public pressure through social media often influences decisions taken by law enforcement. Although this public participation does not have formal legal force, the moral pressure resulting from public opinion on social media is often a factor that affects the course of the legal process. This shows the role of social media as a powerful tool in mobilizing public opinion and supervising the performance of law enforcement. The theory of public participation in the law emphasizes the importance of community involvement as part of control over the legal system. This participation, if done well, can provide effective supervision of law enforcement officials. However, one of the biggest challenges of participation on social media is the spread of inaccurate information or hoaxes. In viral cases, there are often distortions of facts that can steer public opinion in the wrong direction. This distortion has the potential to lead to misunderstandings about the actual legal process.⁴¹

In addition, social media has also functioned as an unofficial public watchdog. In major cases, such as Ferdy Sambo's, the public often acts as a "people's court" that judges the course of the legal process for itself. This phenomenon shows that social media has changed the way people participate in the legal system. The public is no longer just waiting for the results of legal institutions, but is involved in shaping perceptions and opinions related to these cases.⁴² The mobilization of public opinion on social media often leads to real pressure on law enforcement. In the case of Ferdy Sambo, public mobilization through petitions and online campaigns demanded transparent justice. This mobilization is not only limited to discussions, but also involves concrete actions, such as gathering broad support from the community. Social media has expanded the reach of public participation, allowing them to play a greater role in overseeing and influencing the course of legal proceedings.

On social media, the narrative that is formed is often somewhere between facts and opinions. The discussions that take place in viral cases are often filled with speculation and inaccurate information. This poses a major challenge for the legal system, as public opinion formed on social media often does not correspond to legal reality. As a result, the dominant narrative on social media can deviate far from the facts that actually occur in the legal

⁴⁰ Adira Cahya et al., "In-Depth Analysis of the Vina Murder Case: A Review of the Legal Process, Community Response, and Implications for Justice Enforcement in Indonesia," *Journal of Innovative Learning Circle* 5, no. 7 (2024).

⁴¹ Al Mustaqim dkk., "Peran Media Sosial Sebagai Sarana Partisipasi Warganet Dalam Mewujudkan Keadilan dan Akuntabilitas Penegakan Hukum di Indonesia."

⁴² Juleha Juleha et al., "The Role of Social Media in the Dynamics of Public Opinion and Political Participation in the Digital Era," *Concept: Journal of Social Humanities and Education* 3, no. 1 (2024): 38–45, <https://doi.org/10.55606/concept.v3i1.951>.

process.⁴³ The virality of a case on social media is also a determining factor in how the case is handled by law enforcement. Cases that go viral tend to get greater attention, even priority, compared to other cases that don't get public attention. This creates a distortion in law enforcement, where virality becomes the primary determinant in the allocation of legal attention and resources, rather than the seriousness of the case itself.⁴⁴ Excessive public participation on social media can have negative implications for the legal process. When formed public opinion is too dominant, there is a risk that law enforcement will feel pressured to meet the demands of the public, even though doing so may be contrary to applicable legal principles. This can undermine substantive justice in the legal system, where decisions taken are influenced more by public pressure than by valid legal evidence and procedures.

Public opinion formed through social media often influences the perception of judges in handling major cases. Although in theory judges should be neutral, in practice pressure from strong public opinion can affect the way they view a case, especially in cases that receive great public attention. This shows that social media not only influences law enforcement, but also influences the course of trials and judges' decisions.⁴⁵ In the context of viral cases, social media influencers often play an important role in shaping public opinion. With a large following, they have the power to direct opinion and build a dominant narrative. This is evident in the case of Ferdy Sambo, where many influencers used their platforms to mobilize public opinion and demand transparency and justice from the legal system. This phenomenon shows how social media has expanded the role of public participation in legal proceedings.⁴⁶ *Trial by social media* is a real threat to a fair and objective legal process. When public opinion formed on social media is too strong, there is a risk that legal processes that should be based on valid evidence and procedures will be distorted by pressure from the public. This phenomenon shows that while public participation through social media has many benefits, it also poses a major challenge to fair law enforcement.⁴⁷

⁴³ Isnani Kurnia Putri et al., "Virality and Law: The Impact of Social Media on Law Enforcement in the Case of the Murder of Vina and Eky in Cirebon," *Journal of Recorded Footprint* 2, no. 1 (2024): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13377824>.

⁴⁴ Muammar Muammar, "Handling Viral Crimes: A Reduction to the Principle of Virality," *PATTIMURA Legal Journal* 2, no. 1 (2023): 19–29, <https://doi.org/10.47268/pela.v2i1.8362>.

⁴⁵ Muammar, "Handling Viral Crimes: A Reduction to the Principle of Legality to the Principle of Virality."

⁴⁶ Ade Faulina et al., "The role of buzzers and the construction of viral messages in the process of forming public opinion in new media," *JRTI (Indonesian Journal of Action Research)* 7, no. 1 (2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.29210/30031390000>.

⁴⁷ Firman Akbar dan Ali Rizky, "INTERVENSI NETIZEN DALAM PROSES DAN PENEGAKAN HUKUM DI INDONESIA," *Journal Publicuho* 7, no. 3 (2024): 1402–18, <https://doi.org/10.35817/publicuho.v7i3.498>.

Public Sentiment in Building Opinions on Social Media on Viral Cases

The analysis of public sentiment towards viral cases such as Ferdy Sambo can be understood in the context of the theory of public participation in the law. This theory emphasizes the importance of community involvement in the legal process as a form of democracy and strengthening the legitimacy of the law itself. Public sentiment, recorded through social media and surveys, illustrates how the public is not only passive spectators, but also actively influences perceptions of justice and the ongoing legal process. Public involvement in the form of tweets, comments, and opinions on social media shows the existence of collective aspirations that can directly or indirectly pressure policymakers and legal institutions to act according to public expectations. In the case of Ferdy Sambo, a sentiment analysis conducted on 1720 tweets by netizens on Twitter showed that the majority of people had neutral sentiments towards this case, with 1094 tweets classified as neutral, while 325 tweets were positive and 301 were negative.⁴⁸ This shows that despite the high public awareness of the case, many people tend to take a wait-and-see attitude regarding law enforcement.⁴⁹ This neutral sentiment can also reflect uncertainty or skepticism about the ongoing legal process, where the public is not yet fully convinced of the results that will be obtained. However, the existence of 301 negative tweets shows that there are some people who criticize the legal process or feel that there is an injustice in this case, especially related to Ferdy Sambo's social status as a high-ranking official in the police.⁵⁰

A survey conducted by LSI also shows that there is active participation of the public in determining their views on the appropriate punishment for Ferdy Sambo. Most respondents, around 50.9%, supported the death penalty for Sambo, while 27.4% supported a life sentence.⁵¹ This figure shows the desire of the community to enforce firm and harsh justice against criminals who have positions of power. Through this survey, the public indirectly voiced their views to legal institutions regarding the punishment they felt was appropriate, which showed that there was public pressure for the legal process to run in accordance with the moral expectations of the community.⁵² Public sentiment regarding the deserving sentence for Ferdy Sambo can be seen as a clear representation of how the public articulates their sense of justice, especially in major cases involving serious violations by those in power. Public sentiment reflected in the LSI survey shows that the majority of the public, around 50.9%, support the death penalty for Ferdy Sambo. This view reflects a

⁴⁸ Diani, "THE EFFECT OF THE USE OF TWITTER SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE TWITTER@NARASINEWSROOM ACCOUNT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FERDY SAMBO CASE."

⁴⁹ M Wildan, "Negative sentiment of netizens in the second comment column. com against the news of the Ferdy Sambo case," *LETTER* 22, no. 1 (2023): 26–39.

⁵⁰ "Drone Emprit Beberkan Kepercayaan Publik pada Polisi Terkait Kasus Pembunuhan Vina dan Eky."

⁵¹ "LSI Survey: 50.9 Percent of Respondents Say Ferdy Sambo Deserves the Death Penalty."

⁵² Rahman, "Framing Analysis of Ferdy Sambo's News in Viva Online Media. co. id and seconds. com."

strong demand from the public that the punishment given truly reflects the seriousness of the crime committed, especially in the case of murder that is considered to betray public responsibility and trust, considering Sambo's position as a law enforcement officer.⁵³

This support for the death penalty is, in many ways, reflective of the public's desire to uphold harsh justice and not tolerate lawlessness by those in power. This negative sentiment towards Ferdy Sambo reflects the deep disappointment and public anger at the act of betrayal of trust committed by someone in his position. In the context of retributive justice, where punishment is expected to be commensurate with the crime committed, many people see the death penalty as a form of justice that is appropriate for someone who has committed such a great moral and legal violation.⁵⁴ However, on the other hand, there are also groups of people who show more moderate or positive sentiments regarding the punishment that Sambo deserves. As many as 27.4% of respondents supported a life sentence. This view indicates that although society wants severe punishment, not all of them support the death penalty as a solution. Those in favor of life imprisonment tend to view the reform aspect of the law enforcement system as more likely to provide a deterrent effect without eliminating opportunities for offenders to repent or reflect on their actions for the rest of their lives.

Proponents of life imprisonment can also see the sentence as a more humane form of justice, where severe sentences are still handed down without having to take someone's life. This positive sentiment is based on the principle that even if Sambo is guilty, justice does not have to be interpreted as the total destruction of life. They may also consider the moral and human rights aspects in their view, in which every human being, no matter how great his faults, has the right to live. These differences of view, both in favor of the death penalty and in favor of life imprisonment, reflect the complexity of public sentiment in cases involving lawlessness by the authorities. Those who support the death penalty see this punishment as absolute and final justice, while those who support life imprisonment are more inclined to a more reformatory and progressive approach to the functioning of the law. These two views highlight fundamental differences in the way society interprets the concept of justice and the role of punishment in enforcing it.⁵⁵

In addition, neutral public sentiment, as reflected in surveys and analysis of social media tweets, is also worth considering. Some people choose not to give unequivocal support to any of the punishments, indicating doubts or uncertainties about what is actually

⁵³ Lu Sudirman, "Peran Media Sosial Sebagai Alat Pencapaian Suara Keadilan Dalam Penegakan Hukum Di Indonesia: No Viral No Justice," *Paulus Law Journal* 5, no. 1 (2023): 16–40.

⁵⁴ Neng Rani Nabawiyah, "Juridical Analysis of the Execution of Ferdy Sambo's Death Penalty Sentence Associated with Law Number 1 of 2023 concerning the Criminal Code," preprint, Nusa Putra University, 2023.

⁵⁵ Sinar Surya Prabu Al Amin dkk., "Analisis Sentimen Masyarakat Terhadap Penanganan Kasus Penembakan Brigadir J Dengan Algoritma Naïve Bayes," *JATI (Jurnal Mahasiswa Teknik Informatika)* 7, no. 4 (2023): 2519–26, <https://doi.org/10.36040/jati.v7i4.7126>.

considered the ideal justice in this case. This neutral sentiment may arise due to the complexity of the case or uncertainty regarding how the next legal process will proceed. Those who have a neutral view may be waiting for the outcome of the judicial system and do not want to rush into taking a stand.⁵⁶ However, this neutral sentiment can also reflect a deeper distrust of the legal system itself. Some people may be skeptical that the sentences handed down, whether death sentences or life imprisonment, can truly reflect justice. In this context, neutral sentiment can be seen as an expression of broader dissatisfaction or disillusionment with the integrity and independence of the legal system. This is in line with analysis that shows that most people feel that justice can only be served if the punishment given is in accordance with their moral and social expectations. The growing public sentiment on social media also shows that there is strong pressure on the judiciary to provide sentences that are in line with public expectations.⁵⁷ Social media has become an effective tool for expressing public opinion and influencing legal processes, although on the other hand it can also trigger sharp polarization of opinions. The active participation of the community in responding to these cases shows how justice is seen as the result of a participatory process involving public opinion, not just decisions from judicial institutions alone.

In fact, public opinion did not stop after the Ferdy Sambo case was decided by the court. The public is still responding and giving sentiments to the legal efforts made by Ferdy Sambo, et al up to the cassation stage at the Supreme Court.⁵⁸ The Supreme Court's decision to annul Ferdy Sambo's death sentence and replace it with a life sentence sparked a complex public reaction. For most people, this decision is considered a form of compromise that does not satisfy their sense of justice, given the gravity of the crime committed by Sambo. Some people who previously supported the death penalty were disappointed that the harsher punishment was seen as the only way to provide a deterrent effect and restore public trust in law enforcement officials. This disappointment is reflected in public sentiment on social media which shows an increase in criticism of the Supreme Court's decision.⁵⁹ On the other hand, there are also some people who feel that this Supreme Court decision is more in line with human rights principles. Those who oppose the death penalty argue that the sentence of life imprisonment is severe enough and allows Sambo to serve his sentence without having to lose his life. In this view, the Supreme Court's decision is considered a more humane step, but still provides significant punishment. Proponents of

⁵⁶ Wildan, "Negative sentiment of netizens in the second comment column. com against the news of the Ferdy Sambo case."

⁵⁷ "Summary of the Entire Chronology of the Ferdy Sambo Case, from the Death Penalty to Life - Ayo Bandung - Page 2."

⁵⁸ "Cassation Rejected, Supreme Court Annuls Ferdy Sambo's Death Sentence for Life."

⁵⁹ "Netizens Continue to Voice the Death Sentence for Ferdy Sambo, Is It Fair Enough? - NETIZENS OH NETIZENS."

this sentence generally see that life sentences still provide justice in a way that does not conflict with moral principles and human rights.

However, despite the opinion in favor of the Supreme Court's decision, public sentiment as a whole remains polarized. Many felt that a lighter sentence did not provide enough sense of justice for the victims and Brigadier Joshua's family. This polarization reflects how society assesses law enforcement not only from a legalistic perspective, but also from a moral and social aspect. For most people, lighter sentences are considered to hurt the values of justice that have been expected to be upheld, especially in cases that are in the national spotlight like this. This dissatisfaction was also reflected in the public response on social media, where criticism of the Supreme Court intensified after the cassation ruling was announced.⁶⁰ Many consider that this decision can weaken public trust in the legal system, because it is considered that it does not provide harsh enough punishments for the perpetrators of serious violations. This negative public sentiment indicates a broader crisis of trust in the judiciary, where the public feels that the legal system is not always on the side of true justice. On the other hand, there are also those who argue that the Supreme Court's decision must be respected as part of the applicable legal process. Those who support this decision emphasize the importance of respecting the independence of the judiciary and entrusting law enforcement to mechanisms already regulated by the constitution. This positive sentiment shows the belief that although the Supreme Court's decision may not satisfy all parties, the legal system must still run with the existing principles.⁶¹

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study shows that public participation in building opinions on social media on viral cases in Indonesia has a significant role in influencing the course of the law enforcement process. Based on two main research questions, it can be concluded that public participation in social media serves not only as a space to voice opinions but also as an informal mechanism to oversee law enforcement. First, in the context of public participation in building opinions on social media as an effort to oversee law enforcement against viral cases, the results of the study show that the community plays an active role in creating and disseminating narratives that aim to demand transparency, accountability, and justice. This participation is often manifested through uploads, comments, and hashtags that go viral on social media, encouraging broad public discussion.

Second, regarding how public opinion on social media plays a role in the formation of legal decisions in viral cases, it was found that public opinion has the power to influence

⁶⁰ Ismail Fahmi, *Drone Emprit Academic: Software for social media monitoring and analytics*.

⁶¹ Hayat Hayat, "Justice as a Principle of the State of Law: A Theoretical Review in the Concept of Democracy," *PADJADJARAN Journal of Law* 2, no. 2 (2015).

the dynamics of the legal process, although it does not directly determine the outcome. Public participation through social media can be considered a form of constructive escort to law enforcement, where public opinion functions as a tool of social control that not only supervises the legal process but also influences the direction and legitimacy of legal decisions. However, it should be noted that while public opinion can exert influence, the legal process must still be based on objective and independent legal principles so as not to be distorted by social or political pressures.

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Law under Algorithmic Pressure: A Critical Review of Viral Cases and Digital Public
Opinion

Muhammad Ali Murtadlo and Wahyu Saputra
