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# Trial By Social Media In The Enforcement Of Criminal Law: An Analysis Of The Impact Of Virality On Public Opinion In The Case Of Teacher Supriyani In South Konawe

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**Abstract:** The rise of social media has transformed the way public opinion is formed regarding criminal cases and given rise to the phenomenon of *'trial by social media'*, namely social judgement before the judicial process has reached a verdict. This study analyses the construction of virality, the influence of public opinion on perceptions of law enforcement, and the limits of social media's influence in the case of Teacher Supriyani in South Konawe, using a normative legal methodology with legislative and conceptual approaches and descriptive-qualitative analysis of legal materials and literature to examine the relationship between public scrutiny, institutional accountability, and fair-trial principles. Virality can broaden public attention and spur demands for accountability, but may also shape judgements based on unverified information, and its temporal relationship with institutional responses is insufficient to prove causation. The study emphasises the need for evidence-based law enforcement, proportional transparency, the protection of all parties' rights, and judicial independence. These findings imply that transparent law enforcement requires timely, proportionate and verifiable official communication, while independent law enforcement requires that decisions on investigation, detention, prosecution and adjudication remain grounded in evidence and legal authority rather than in the popularity of a narrative.

**Keywords:** *Trial by Social Media, Criminal Law, Teacher Supriyani*

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## 1. Introduction

Advances in information and communication technology have transformed how the public interacts with the criminal justice system. Social media disseminates case information rapidly, beyond geographical boundaries and conventional media (Papacharissi, 2002); (Berger & Milkman, 2012), and the public both obtains information and helps shape opinion about the parties involved. It thus operates as a digital public sphere that can strengthen the transparency and accountability of law enforcement institutions (Papacharissi, 2002); (Habermas, 2006), yet rapid dissemination can also form opinion before facts have been examined through legitimate legal mechanisms. 'Trial by social media' is therefore a significant issue in criminal law, as it highlights social judgement being passed on an individual before the judicial process reaches a verdict (Greer & McLaughlin, 2011); (Suprapto & Suhendar, 2025). Law enforcement must therefore maintain objectivity amid the torrent of information and public judgement, not only prove offences.

'Trial by social media' is closely linked to the framing of information (Entman, 1993); (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Because people interpret content through their own experiences, values and emotions, emphasis on certain aspects of a case shapes perceptions of who is right, who is to blame, and which institutions are responsible. Attention may shift from evidence to the dominant narrative, hardening

into demands that agencies act in line with public expectations. Public criticism is not in itself a threat to the judicial process; the fundamental issue is the boundary between legitimate public scrutiny and digital judgement that precedes the establishment of facts, so that freedom of expression remains protected without disregarding the rights of the parties in criminal cases.

The issue acquired concrete relevance in the case of Teacher Supriyani in South Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. Supriyani, a contract teacher at Baito State Primary School No. 4, faced legal proceedings in 2024 over alleged physical violence against a pupil, and the case drew widespread attention after she was remanded in custody in October 2024. Her contract status and the fact that the pupil's parent was a police officer became part of a public narrative on the protection of the teaching profession, power dynamics, and equality before the law (Law No. 14 of 2005) (Faisol, 2021); (Triwiyanto et al., 2023). Media coverage, professional organisations' support, and social media discussion turned an alleged offence into a public debate on justice and official accountability, yet narratives of power imbalance or injustice must be distinguished from proven legal facts. The case is therefore relevant for examining how viral content shapes public perceptions and the public's assessment of the criminal justice process.

This attention coincided with the suspension of her detention, an internal investigation into several police officers, an evaluation of the prosecution's handling of the case, and trial proceedings that ended in acquittal: on 25 November 2024, the Andoolo District Court, in Judgment No. 104/Pid.Sus/2024/PN Adl, ruled that Supriyani had not been proven beyond reasonable doubt to have committed the offence charged. These events raise the question of how virality, opinion pressure and institutional responses relate: attention can strengthen scrutiny and accountability, but can also create social pressure that affects perceived fairness. Temporal proximity between virality and institutional response does not, however, in itself prove causation; determining influence requires analysis of the chronology, the legal basis of authority, official statements, and legal considerations at every stage (Mpesau & Ruslan, 2026a). This study therefore does not assume that virality determined the outcome, but examines the relationship between public-opinion dynamics and the exercise of law enforcement authority.

From a criminal law perspective, 'trial by social media' must be analysed in light of the presumption of innocence, *due process of law*, equality before the law, and judicial independence. Article 8(1) of Law No. 48 of 2009 on Judicial Power provides that a person suspected, arrested, detained, prosecuted or brought before a court is presumed innocent until a judgement of guilt has attained the force of res judicata, while Article 24(1) of the 1945 Constitution guarantees judicial independence, so that guilt must rest on lawful procedure and evidence, not on public support or condemnation (Tyler, 2003); (Prasetyo & Herawati, 2022). At the same time, freedom of expression and public monitoring of law enforcement remain vital to democratic life (Article 28E(3) of the 1945 Constitution; Law No. 39 of 1999) (Elfaiz et al., 2025). The legal issue is ensuring that public scrutiny does not become pressure that shifts decision-making from facts and law towards social demands; this research thus distinguishes social media as social control from a space for informal judgement that may undermine the parties' rights and judicial integrity. The legal basis guaranteeing judicial independence amid virality is layered. First, Article 24(1) of the 1945 Constitution establishes judicial power as an independent power. Second, Article 3(1) of Law No. 48 of 2009 obliges judges to maintain judicial independence, while Article 3(2) prohibits interference in judicial affairs by parties outside judicial power, except as provided for in the Constitution (Borman, 2017; Busthami, 2017). Third, Article 28D(1) of the 1945 Constitution guarantees fair legal certainty and equal treatment before the law, reinforced by the presumption of innocence in Article 8(1) of Law No. 48 of 2009. Fourth, Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified through Law No. 12 of 2005, guarantees a fair

hearing before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal. Public criticism on social media thus remains protected under Article 28E(3), but pressure seeking to dictate a case's course or outcome contradicts the prohibition on interference; judicial independence is safeguarded by judges' obligation to decide solely on evidence and law, not by restricting public discourse.

This research, "Trial by Social Media in the Enforcement of Criminal Law: An Analysis of the Influence of Virality on Public Opinion in the Case of Teacher Supriyani in South Konawe", analyses three issues: how virality shapes public opinion, how that opinion influences the criminal justice process, and the normative limits of public influence needed to protect *due process of law* and the independence of the criminal justice system. Its novelty lies in linking digital narratives to institutional responses at successive stages of law enforcement, while distinguishing legitimate public scrutiny from social pressure that may affect officials' objectivity. Unlike studies treating virality as a communication phenomenon or social solidarity (Sudirman & Antony, 2023); (Yatnih, 2024), it focuses on legal implications for the exercise of authority, the parties' rights, and the legitimacy of the criminal justice process, separating verifiable facts from circulating perceptions. It is expected to contribute a conceptual framework for transparent, accountable law enforcement grounded in legal procedure and valid evidence. The research gap is threefold. First, previous studies have largely examined 'trial by media', 'no viral no justice' or the presumption of innocence as a communication phenomenon, a form of social solidarity, or a normative critique of press coverage (Greer & McLaughlin, 2011); (Sudirman & Antony, 2023); (Muammar, 2024); (Suprapto & Suhendar, 2025), without tracing a specific digital narrative against the successive stages of law enforcement: investigation, prosecution, detention and trial. Second, studies of social media's influence on law enforcement tend to infer influence from the temporal coincidence of public attention and institutional action (Yatnih, 2024); this study separates chronology from causality and specifies the evidence needed to establish influence. Third, the protection of children's identity and rights, and of the presumption of innocence for accused persons and officials, is rarely integrated into a single model of law enforcement that is both transparent and independent. This study seeks to fill these gaps.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study employs a normative legal research method (Marzuki, 2017) with a *statutory approach*, analysing legal principles and provisions on criminal law enforcement, the presumption of innocence, *due process of law*, the parties' rights, and judicial independence, and a *conceptual approach*, examining *'trial by social media'*, public-opinion formation, the virality of digital information, and the relationship between public scrutiny and the authority of law enforcement institutions. The Supriyani case in South Konawe is the focus for understanding these issues in a concrete context.

The legal materials comprise primary sources (legislation and court rulings) and secondary sources (books, journal articles, and publications on social media, public opinion, procedural justice (Mpesau & Ruslan, 2026b) and criminal law enforcement). Information on the case's development provides context for analysing virality and institutional responses, distinguishing verifiable facts from interpretations of influence. Data were collected through literature review and documentation and analysed descriptively and qualitatively against the conceptual framework to identify the limits of social media's influence and formulate a model of law enforcement balancing transparency, accountability, rights protection, and judicial independence. Legal materials were selected by explicit criteria. Primary sources were selected for (i) binding force and position in the hierarchy of Indonesian legislation, (ii) direct relevance to the presumption of innocence, due process of law, judicial independence, freedom of expression, and child protection, and (iii) validity and enforceability at the time of the events in 2024; the Andoolo

District Court Judgment No. 104/Pid.Sus/2024/PN Adl was included as the official judicial record. Secondary sources were selected for (i) publication in scholarly journals with a DOI or by recognised academic publishers, (ii) conceptual relevance to trial by social media, framing, virality, public opinion, procedural justice, and judicial independence, (iii) recency, prioritising 2017–2026 while retaining foundational works (Entman, 1993; Habermas, 2006; Tyler, 2003; Papacharissi, 2002), and (iv) author credibility and soundness of argument. News reports (including ANTARA) served only as chronological context and were checked against official statements and the judgment. Three groups of indicators distinguish legal facts, public opinion, and alleged social media influence. Legal facts: legislative texts and the Andoolo judgment; official statements of the police, prosecutor's office and Judicial Commission; and the dated procedural stages (report, designation of suspect, detention, suspension of detention, indictment, trial, verdict). Public opinion: issues emphasised in coverage and discussion (e.g. teacher protection, power imbalances, equality before the law), actors voicing support or criticism, and the time each narrative emerged. Alleged social media influence: whether an official statement or document cites public attention as a ground for an action, whether the action had an independent, identifiable legal basis, and whether the sequence of events remains consistent with such a link once other legal explanations are considered. Where these indicators are absent, temporal coincidence is treated as context, not proof of causation.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### *3.1 The Construction of Virality and the Formation of Public Opinion in the Case of Teacher Supriyani*

The virality of the Supriyani case shows that social media is not only a channel of information but also a space for constructing meaning and social judgement about the criminal justice process. The case became a public concern beyond the proof of an offence: Supriyani, a contract teacher, became the centre of debate on justice, the protection of the teaching profession (Faisol, 2021); (Triwiyanto et al., 2023), officials' objectivity, and potential power imbalances. As reports of her detention in October 2024 spread, the public questioned the fairness of the process faced by a contract teacher, and an individual case came to represent a broader law enforcement problem. A case's digital significance is thus determined not only by legal documents and trial evidence but also by how events are selected, presented and interpreted.

This process can be analysed through framing. (Entman, 2007) explains that framing selects aspects of reality to highlight, influencing how the public defines problems, identifies causes, makes moral judgements and envisages solutions (Entman, 1993); (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). In the Supriyani case, framing contract teachers as a vulnerable group facing the legal system has emotional appeal because it touches on public experiences of teachers' welfare, status inequality, and expectations of justice. The reporting parent's status as a police officer broadened discussion of conflicts of interest and the independence of case handling. The concern is that some information gains prominence while evidence, witness statements, procedures and legal considerations receive less, steering the public towards an interpretation before the facts are examined in court.

Digital communication lets a narrative be rapidly reproduced through posts, comments, screenshots, videos and reposts, with users acting as recipients, disseminators and interpreters at once. Emotionally charged narratives attract attention more easily because they evoke sympathy, anger, solidarity, or distrust of institutions (Brady et al., 2017). (Vosoughi et al., 2018) showed, in research on Twitter, that false information spreads further, faster, deeper and more widely than true information; this does not imply that the Supriyani narrative is false, but it highlights the importance of dissemination mechanisms in shaping perception

(Lazer et al., 2018). Teachers' professional organisations broadened the case into a collective concern about the protection of the teaching profession: an ANTARA report of 25 November 2024 noted that the Indonesian Teachers' Union (PGRI) took an interest in the case and linked Supriyani's acquittal to the struggle for legal protection for teachers. Virality can thus articulate broader social interests, though reach does not mean the whole public shares one view. Based on the literature and the chronology, at least five virality mechanisms shaped public perception. First, framing: emphasis on Supriyani's status as a contract teacher and the pupil's parent being a police officer foregrounded vulnerability and inequality (Entman, 1993, 2007). Second, emotional amplification: content evoking sympathy, anger or moral outrage spreads more readily (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Brady et al., 2017). Third, participatory reproduction: reposting, commenting and circulating screenshots and videos kept the case in circulation. Fourth, reinforcement within like-minded networks, where repeated exposure to similar narratives may lead to conclusions drawn from limited information (Cinelli et al., 2021). Fifth, institutional and professional amplification: mass media coverage and the support of teachers' organisations such as PGRI converted individual solidarity into a collective issue (Greer & McLaughlin, 2011). These mechanisms are analytical inferences from the literature and the documented chronology; they do not measure the actual reach or effect of specific posts.

Public opinion also formed through the interplay between digital narratives and observable legal milestones (the arrest, suspension of detention, hearings, scrutiny of the investigation, and verdict), each renewing attention and giving the public material to assess whether enforcement was fair. On 1 November 2024, for example, the Judicial Commission expressed concern about the conduct of the trial and stressed the importance of a fair, objective, professional process free from interference, showing that demands for objectivity also arise from institutional oversight, not only digital discourse (Law No. 48 of 2009) (Busthami, 2017). On 25 November 2024 the Andoolo District Court acquitted Supriyani; the public read the verdict variously, from restored justice for the teacher to the importance of sufficient evidence in criminal cases.

From a criminal law perspective, opinion formed through social media has two aspects. Virality can serve an oversight function by promoting transparency, holding officials to account, and widening public access to information on law enforcement (Papacharissi, 2002); (Sudirman & Antony, 2023). It becomes 'trial by social media' when opinions not yet based on thorough investigation are treated as a final verdict on guilt or innocence (Muammar, 2024), risking the presumption of innocence, the right to a fair trial, and the authorities' duty to decide on evidence and law (Sari, 2020); (Johansyah' & Roni, 2023). In the Supriyani case, criticism of case handling is legitimate participation but must be distinguished from unverified allegations against individuals or institutions, and the child's identity and interests must be protected (Law No. 35 of 2014), so that support for one party does not become the dissemination of personal information or attacks on the other. Virality can thus broaden scrutiny while creating pressure that may pre-empt the establishment of facts; claims of direct influence require analysis of social media content and a comparison of the digital timeline with official case documents. The risks of 'trial by social media' are as follows. For the presumption of innocence: first, repeated, emotionally framed narratives may lead the public to treat a person as guilty, or conversely innocent, before a court has examined the evidence, so that Article 8(1) of Law No. 48 of 2009 is displaced by social labelling; second, the slogan 'no viral, no justice' risks shifting the burden in practice, as a person must prove innocence in public before the legal process is complete; third, reputational and social harm from public condemnation may persist after an acquittal, as it may for officials accused in unverified allegations; fourth, intense public pressure may create a perception that investigators, prosecutors or judges act to satisfy public demands, undermining

confidence in the process's impartiality. For children's rights, the child involved risks having their identity disclosed or discoverable through details about the parties, contrary to the obligation to keep child victims' identities confidential in media reporting (Article 19(1) of Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System; Law No. 35 of 2014); the child may also suffer secondary victimisation, stigma and psychological pressure when their experience becomes a subject of public debate, and their interests may be overshadowed when the case is framed mainly as a conflict between a teacher and a police officer. Support for one party must therefore not come at the expense of child protection.

### *3.2 Trial by Social Media and the Shift in Public Perception of the Law Enforcement Process*

*'Trial by social media'* shows that social media has become a space for social judgement before the judicial process produces a binding decision. In the Supriyani case, public perception was shaped not only by legal facts but also by circulating narratives, the social identities of those involved, and emotional responses to information (Entman, 2007);(Brady et al., 2017).

This is the dynamic captured by *'trial by social media'*: the public forms judgements on guilt or innocence from information and opinions circulating digitally before the evidential process has concluded (Ponton, 2020); (Bari, 2014). Supriyani's status as a contract teacher was a key factor in public sympathy, particularly as the pupil's parent is a police officer, forming a narrative of social and institutional inequality that is not, however, automatically evidence of abuse of power or unequal treatment under the law; this still requires examination of the relevant facts and procedures.

Virality widens an issue's attention beyond its initial scope, and repeated dissemination of posts, coverage, comments and support reinforces a narrative, so that members of the public who do not follow the whole legal process may conclude from limited or emotionally framed information (Cinelli et al., 2021). This resonates with Greer and McLaughlin's account of *'trial by media'*, in which coverage and pressure shape public perceptions of the police and the judicial process (Greer & McLaughlin, 2011), (Greer & McLaughlin, 2012). Here, the focus on contract teachers' plight and alleged procedural injustice may shift the debate from whether the elements of an offence were met towards who is perceived as weaker and whether institutions acted fairly.

This shift has two consequences. First, public opinion can serve as social oversight of police authority (Habermas, 2006), driving demands for transparent, professional and lawful case handling, as the increased attention here occurred in tandem with the institutional developments noted above. Second, public opinion can become informal judgement when the public's assessment is treated as equivalent to evidentiary findings in court, so that a person is deemed guilty or not by the popularity of a narrative rather than by evidence and legal considerations (Yatnih, 2024); (Mpesau et al., 2026).

The main issue is thus not the existence of public opinion but the limits of its influence on law enforcement. The public may express views, criticise and hold institutions to account, but this is distinct from investigators' authority to designate suspects, prosecutors' to bring cases to court, and judges' to assess evidence. The presumption of innocence forbids treating anyone as proven guilty until a court so rules in accordance with the law (Article 8(1) of Law No. 48 of 2009) (Aziz, 2017), and *due process of law* demands lawful procedures that respect the parties' rights (Tyler, 2003); (Prasetyo & Herawati, 2022). The popularity of an opinion cannot replace the examination of evidence or serve as the sole basis for legal action.

The Andoolo District Court's Judgment No. 104/Pid.Sus/2024/PN Adl of 25 November 2024, which acquitted Supriyani for lack of proof beyond reasonable doubt, must be understood through standards of proof and legal considerations, not merely as validation of the social media narrative. Neither the acquittal nor the

temporal proximity between virality, institutional response and verdict proves that public opinion determined the outcome; this requires examining official documents, the grounds for the authorities' actions, and decision-making at every stage.

Based on the above, *'trial by social media'* in the Supriyani case highlights the tension between public scrutiny and the need to safeguard the independence of law enforcement. Viral content can enhance transparency and accountability but may also produce premature judgements that blur sympathy and legal proof, so institutional responses to public concern must undergo legal scrutiny covering jurisdiction (Aldin, Mpesau, & Ishak, 2026), procedural compliance, sufficiency of evidence, and protection of the parties' rights, so that public criticism remains democratic oversight without digital opinion substituting for the judicial process. Legitimacy rests on consistent application of the law, procedural justice, accountable transparency, and independent decision-making (Tyler, 2003), not on meeting viral demands.

### *3.3 The Impact of Virality on the Criminal Justice Process in the Case of Teacher Supriyani*

Virality in the Supriyani case shows that the criminal justice process does not take place in an isolated social sphere (Greer & McLaughlin, 2011): officials' actions are assessed not only against legal provisions but also through public scrutiny that heightens demands for transparency and accountability. Here, increased attention coincided with the suspension of detention, an internal police investigation, a prosecutorial evaluation, and a trial ending in acquittal, a sequence relevant to analysis but not in itself proof that social media directly caused every institutional action.

At the investigation stage, narratives about a contract teacher and a police-officer parent raised questions about positional imbalance, independence of case handling, and the authorities' objectivity in handling reports and determining legal status. From a criminal law perspective, such questions are addressed by examining the grounds for designating a suspect, the sufficiency of evidence, and compliance with criminal procedural law (Law No. 8 of 1981) (Johansyah' & Roni, 2023). Social status cannot justify concluding that the investigation lacked objectivity; conversely, an officer's status must not diminish the institution's obligation to ensure that all investigative actions are legally accountable (Nakamnanu, 2023).

Public attention is also linked to calls for legitimate oversight mechanisms to examine alleged official misconduct (Law No. 2 of 2002). The research document notes internal investigations into several police officers, including an ethics investigation into two officers over alleged bribe solicitation, which shows the relevance of internal oversight. Such investigations and media reports do not prove that a breach is established; viral content is better viewed as context amplifying attention on investigative accountability, while whether a breach occurred must rest on investigation results and verifiable evidence.

At the prosecution stage, public attention helps scrutinise how the Public Prosecutor's Office assesses case completeness and the continuation of proceedings, with demands that referral and prosecution rest on sufficient evidence and correct application of the law. Virality must not be a reason to discontinue proceedings merely to satisfy public demands, nor to continue prosecution merely to show institutional firmness; decisions must remain grounded in legal assessment of facts and evidence (Law No. 16 of 2004 as amended by Law No. 11 of 2021), not by alignment with the dominant narrative.

At the detention stage, public attention to Supriyani's condition intensified debate on the proportionality of authority and the rights of suspects or defendants (Prasetyo & Herawati, 2022). The suspension of detention is a key element in assessing institutional responses, but its temporal link to virality does not confirm that it was driven solely by public pressure; any assessment must consider the legal basis, conditions, and the competent authorities' decisions. Attention can prompt

demands for explanation but does not substitute for examining the legality of the authorities' actions.

At trial, the acquittal (Judgment No. 104/Pid.Sus/2024/PN Adl) is the outcome of a judicial process to be interpreted through the trial facts, the evidence, and the panel's legal considerations; public support or criticism cannot replace proof in court (Law No. 48 of 2009) (Negara & Susilo, 2025). It is therefore not automatically evidence that virality influenced the judges; any conclusion on influence over judicial independence requires specific evidence, not merely coincidence in timing.

Analytically, the impact of virality is two-sided: attention can strengthen oversight and push institutions to explain their actions, but opinion pressure is a risk if authorities decide by a narrative's popularity rather than by law and evidence; institutional responses must therefore undergo legal scrutiny so that criticism is weighed proportionately without becoming the sole basis for legal action.

In sum, virality is an important social factor in widening oversight of the police, the prosecutor's office and the courts, but this study cannot yet conclude that it directly determined the suspension of detention, internal police actions, prosecutorial evaluations, or judicial rulings; causation requires further analysis of official documents (Aldin, Mpesau, Dagani, et al., 2026), decision reasoning, and institutional statements. Success in law enforcement is measured not by compliance with public opinion but by consistent application of the law, respect for the parties' rights, procedural accountability, and judicial independence.

### *3.4 The Limits of Social Media's Influence on the Enforcement of Criminal Law: Reconstructing a Model of Law Enforcement Resilient to 'Trial by Social Media'*

Social media's influence must be bounded between public participation and institutional authority. It can serve as social control that promotes transparency, exposes alleged misconduct, and reinforces accountability (Sudirman & Antony, 2023), but becomes problematic when virality is treated as a measure of truth or a basis for determining guilt before the evidentiary process is complete. In the Supriyani case, virality broadened scrutiny to teacher protection, power dynamics, and official accountability, yet fostered judgement not always based on the full legal facts. The key limit is therefore the prohibition on substituting public pressure for evidentiary procedure and judicial authority.

Conceptually, *'trial by social media'* highlights the tension between freedom of expression and the state's obligation to guarantee a fair trial (Articles 28D(1) and 28E(3) of the 1945 Constitution; Law No. 12 of 2005) (Ponton, 2020). Digital judgements form from snippets and repeated narratives that do not reflect the full picture, unlike formal proceedings, which weigh evidence, legal provisions and procedure. (Greer & McLaughlin, 2011) explain how media attention pressures law enforcement institutions, a pressure that social media's rapid dissemination lets build through many users. Yet the number of comments or intensity of coverage cannot indicate the truth of an allegation: virality is a communicative and social phenomenon, whereas criminal guilt is a legal matter resolved on valid evidence.

A further limit concerns the presumption of innocence, *due process of law*, and equality before the law (Aziz, 2017); (Suprapto & Suhendar, 2025). A suspect cannot be treated as proven guilty because a narrative has wide support, and criticism of the authorities does not in itself prove their actions unlawful; alleged misconduct must be investigated through authorised mechanisms on verifiable evidence. Likewise, the Andoolo judgment reflects legal considerations and standards of proof, not merely public support for the defendant, and temporal proximity cannot establish causation; direct influence requires additional evidence such as official documents, institutional statements, or information showing how public pressure influenced specific actions.

On these parameters, a model of law enforcement resilient to *'trial by social media'* rests on four interrelated elements. First, evidence-based law enforcement: all decisions on investigation, inquiry, prosecution, detention and trial must rest on

authority, procedure and legally justifiable grounds. Second, proportionate institutional transparency: authorities explain case progress and the grounds for actions without disclosing information that could disrupt proceedings or infringe the parties' rights. Third, objective public oversight: criticism and reports are addressed through verifiable review mechanisms, not through punishment based on a narrative's popularity. Fourth, protection of the parties' rights, including the presumption of innocence for suspects or defendants, victims' right to protection, and the confidentiality of children's identities. These elements keep public pressure from undermining legal standards (Borman, 2017); (Busthami, 2017) while preventing institutional secrecy from being used to evade accountability.

Implementation also requires improving public digital legal literacy (Lazer et al., 2018) and strengthening institutional communication. The public needs to distinguish a report, the designation of a suspect, an indictment, the presentation of evidence, and a court judgment, so that procedural stages are not equated with a final conclusion on guilt. Officials should provide accurate, accessible and non-defensive information (Law No. 14 of 2008), since delayed responses fuel speculation while open communication within legal limits helps the public assess progress proportionately. Transparency does not, however, mean complying with every netizen demand. Literacy and institutional accountability must therefore be developed in tandem to reduce the risk of social judgement.

Resolving *'trial by social media'* requires not excessive restriction of public participation but a balance between social scrutiny and the independence of law enforcement. Virality serves a positive function when it encourages scrutiny of alleged misconduct, broadens access to legal representation, and raises awareness of the parties' rights, but only if public opinion is not treated as a substitute for evidence and a case's popularity does not ground differential legal treatment. In the Supriyani case, the key lesson is that public attention can drive accountability while assessments of criminal liability remain based on legal processes and rulings. A resilient model must treat public opinion as social control filtered through legality, *due process of law*, the presumption of innocence, equality before the law, and judicial independence, allowing participation without usurping judicial authority.

## 4. Conclusions

In the case of Teacher Supriyani in South Konawe, social media virality can shape public opinion, broaden scrutiny, and heighten demands for accountability, but opinion may become social judgement when unverified information is treated as fact before the evidentiary process is complete. Because temporal proximity does not in itself prove causation, influence must be assessed carefully, and the acquittal in Judgment No. 104/Pid.Sus/2024/PN Adl underlines the importance of standards of proof. Law enforcement resilient to *'trial by social media'* must therefore rest on evidence-based enforcement, proportionate transparency, objective public scrutiny, protection of all parties' rights, and respect for the presumption of innocence, *due process of law*, and judicial independence. This study has several limitations in proving the direct influence of virality on law enforcement decisions. First, its normative design rests on literature and documents, without systematic analysis of social media data such as post volume, engagement patterns or user networks, so the scale and direction of the digital narrative are not measured. Second, the chronology relies on published court records, official statements and media reports; the study had no access to internal case files, the reasoning of investigators and prosecutors, or the judges' deliberations, the evidence needed to show that public pressure actually influenced a decision. Third, temporal proximity cannot rule out other factors, such as mass media coverage, professional organisations, internal police oversight, and the strength of the evidence itself. Fourth, as a single case study, the findings are not statistically generalisable. Further research is needed to examine the relationship between virality and institutional responses on empirical evidence. First, time-stamped social media data (posts, engagement, spread across platforms) should

be compiled through content and network analysis and matched against the official chronology, including the dates of investigation, detention, suspension of detention, prosecution, and trial. Second, official documents and decision reasoning (case files, internal ethics examination results, prosecutorial evaluations, the court's legal considerations) should be analysed, with interviews of investigators, prosecutors, judges, and other stakeholders to establish whether public attention was considered. Third, comparative studies of viral and non-viral cases are needed to test whether institutional responses differ and whether any difference is explained by legal factors rather than public attention. Fourth, a mixed-methods design combining quantitative time-series analysis with qualitative legal analysis could test whether institutional actions change after peaks of public attention while controlling for legal and procedural variables. Finally, further research may evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed model and of digital legal literacy in reducing the risks of 'trial by social media'.

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