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# VIRAL JUSTICE: WHEN HASHTAGS SHAPE LEGAL OUTCOMES

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## ABSTRACT

Social media has become one of the main spaces where public debate happens, and that shift has changed how public opinion interacts with the justice system. Platforms like Twitter (X), Instagram, and Facebook allow hashtag movements to spread at incredible speed, turning personal experiences into global conversations. Campaigns such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter show how digital activism can push institutions to respond, reopen investigations, and even reconsider existing policies.

This study explores the idea of “viral justice,” which refers to the impact trending hashtags can have on legal investigations, court proceedings, and policy decisions.

Using a mixed-method approach, the research combines detailed case studies with data analysis of social media engagement and legal timelines. It examines whether online virality speeds up legal action, influences prosecutorial decisions, or threatens judicial neutrality by creating intense public pressure. At the same time, it considers broader concerns about due process, the presumption of innocence, and the stability of the rule of law.

While digital activism can promote accountability and transparency, it also raises difficult questions. When does public awareness become trial by media? When does collective outrage begin to shape judgment before courts do? By analyzing high-profile cases alongside public perception data, this research asks whether hashtag movements simply amplify existing legal processes or genuinely reshape legal outcomes.

The findings aim to deepen ongoing discussions about how technology, public discourse, and institutional justice intersect in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Viral Justice, Hashtag Activism, Social Media Influence, Public Opinion, Legal Outcomes, Trial by Media, Rule of Law

## **Introduction**

Digital communication has changed how people talk, organize, and participate in public life. Social media platforms like Twitter (X), Instagram, and Facebook have grown far beyond casual networking. They are now real-time arenas where social, political, and legal issues are debated openly. In this space, hashtag activism has become a powerful way to mobilize public opinion and bring personal stories into wider conversations. Movements such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter show how digital campaigns can reshape national and even global discussions about justice and accountability.

As legal controversies gain visibility online, a new relationship has developed between public sentiment and formal legal institutions. In some cases, intense digital attention has coincided with reopened investigations, faster proceedings, or policy changes. This phenomenon, often called “viral justice,” raises serious questions about how much public pressure should influence legal outcomes. While digital activism can promote transparency and broaden access to justice, it also creates tension around judicial independence, due process, and the presumption of innocence.

This study examines how far hashtag-driven movements actually affect legal processes and outcomes. By analyzing specific case studies and patterns of online engagement, it explores whether social media activism simply amplifies existing legal systems or genuinely shapes institutional decisions. In doing so, the research adds to ongoing debates about how technology, public opinion, and the rule of law interact in the digital age.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the given research are as follows:

- To analyse relationship between social media virality and legal justice.
- To examine whether public pressure via hashtags impacts judicial neutrality.
- To evaluate the implications for due process and rule of law.

## **Scope of the Study**

This study examines the relationship between hashtag-driven digital activism and legal

outcomes within the broader context of the digital public sphere. It focuses on how platforms like Twitter (X), Instagram, and Facebook shape public discussions around ongoing legal issues and potentially influence institutional responses.

The scope is deliberately limited to **high-visibility legal cases** that generate significant online engagement through hashtag campaigns, including movements such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter. The analysis primarily concentrates on the **pre-trial and early procedural stages** of legal processes, where the effects of public attention are most likely to be observed. This includes actions such as case registration, arrests, and the reopening of investigations.

Geographically, the study adopts a **comparative approach**, focusing on jurisdictions with high social media penetration and accessible legal data. It does not attempt a fully global analysis but instead draws insights from selected cases that are representative of broader patterns.

Methodologically, the research combines:

- **Quantitative analysis** of social media metrics, including engagement levels, posting frequency, and duration of trends
- **Qualitative analysis** of legal responses, media narratives, and judicial observations
- **Survey-based insights** to capture elements of public perception

At the same time, the study sets clear boundaries. It excludes low-visibility cases, private legal disputes, and contexts where reliable digital or legal data is unavailable. It also does not claim to establish definitive causation. Instead, the focus remains on identifying patterns, correlations, and plausible links between digital virality and legal action.

## **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

### **1. The Digital Public Sphere**

The idea of the public sphere was originally introduced by Jürgen Habermas, who described it as a space where individuals come together to discuss issues of public importance through rational and critical debate, ideally free from both government control and market pressures. Traditionally, this space existed in physical settings like salons, newspapers, and public forums.

With the rise of the internet, this concept has evolved into what we now call the *digital public sphere*. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram have transformed public discussion into something far more immediate, widespread, and participatory. People no longer need formal spaces to engage in debate; instead, conversations unfold in real time, often reaching massive audiences within minutes.

However, this digital version is far from Habermas's ideal. It is heavily shaped by platform design, corporate interests, and algorithmic systems. This has given rise to *networked publics*, where individuals are connected through digital technologies, allowing ideas, movements, and opinions to spread rapidly across large audiences.

A defining feature of this space is *algorithmic amplification*. Content is promoted based on engagement metrics like likes, shares, and comments. As a result, emotionally charged or sensational content tends to spread more quickly than balanced or fact-based discussions. This shifts the nature of public discourse from purely rational debate to something more driven by visibility, virality, and emotional appeal.

## 2. Media Influence and Legal Institutions

The relationship between media and the legal system has always been complicated, but digital media has intensified it to an entirely new level.

One key phenomenon is *trial by media*, where individuals are judged in the court of public opinion even before formal legal proceedings are completed. This can harm reputations, influence public perception, and sometimes pressure authorities to act quickly, occasionally at the cost of fairness and due process.

The *agenda-setting theory* helps explain this dynamic by suggesting that media doesn't tell people what to think, but rather what to think about. In the digital world, trending hashtags and viral campaigns play this role, directing attention toward specific cases or issues. Closely linked to this is *framing theory*, which highlights how the presentation of information shapes how people interpret events. The way a case is portrayed online can strongly influence perceptions of guilt, innocence, and justice.

This constant public attention also affects the perceived legitimacy of legal institutions. Courts are expected to remain impartial and insulated from external pressure, but widespread digital

engagement can create an environment where legal actors feel compelled to respond in order to maintain public confidence. While some level of responsiveness may strengthen democratic accountability, excessive influence from social media risks undermining judicial independence.

### **3. Conceptual Model**

This study proposes a framework that examines how social media virality influences legal outcomes, while also considering the broader context in which this relationship operates.

#### **Independent Variable: Degree of Hashtag Virality**

- Volume of posts and mentions
- Engagement levels (likes, shares, comments)
- Spread across platforms, particularly Twitter and Instagram

#### **Dependent Variables:**

- **Speed of Legal Response:** Time taken by authorities to act once an issue gains attention
- **Nature of Legal Action:**
  - Filing of FIRs
  - Arrests
  - Reopening of previously closed cases
  - Judicial outcomes such as conviction or acquittal

#### **Moderating Variables:**

- **Political Climate:** Government stance and sensitivity of the issue
- **Media Coverage Intensity:** Extent and tone of mainstream media reporting

- **Socioeconomic Status of Individuals Involved:** Influence of power, class, and social standing on visibility and prioritization

### **Causal Pathway Model**

At its core, the model suggests something fairly straightforward, despite all the academic dressing:

Greater hashtag virality leads to increased public attention and pressure, which then influences how quickly and in what manner the legal system responds.

Of course, it's not as clean as that sounds. The impact of this pressure is shaped by factors like political context, media involvement, and social hierarchies. These variables can either amplify the effect of digital discourse or limit its influence altogether.

### **Analytical Review of Literature**

A close and critical reading of existing research on digital activism and legal processes shows that the field is split into three major lines of thought. Each of these approaches is built on different assumptions, methods, and even biases. Instead of complementing each other, they often clash, which says a lot about how unsettled this area of study really is.

#### **1. Studies Supporting the Influence of Digital Activism**

A large section of the literature argues that digital activism, especially hashtag movements, can significantly shape legal and institutional responses. These studies focus on how social media amplifies voices that might otherwise go unheard, mobilizes public opinion, and creates pressure on authorities. Researchers often point to high-profile cases where viral campaigns appear to have sped up investigations, reopened cases, or drawn legislative attention.

That sounds impressive until you look a little closer. A lot of this research leans heavily on selective examples. It highlights the success stories but conveniently ignores the many instances where online outrage led to absolutely nothing. Methodologically, these studies often confuse correlation with causation. Just because a case went viral and legal action followed doesn't mean one caused the other. The assumption that visibility automatically leads to influence is often taken for granted rather than properly tested.

## 2. Studies Emphasizing Institutional Autonomy

On the other side, there's a body of research that insists legal institutions operate independently of media and public pressure. Rooted in legal and institutional theory, this perspective argues that courts are guided by procedure, precedent, and constitutional principles, not by trending hashtags or online debates.

This viewpoint acts as a useful counterbalance to exaggerated claims about social media influence. But it has its own problems. Many of these studies tend to idealize how institutions function, assuming neutrality without seriously examining the informal pressures that exist in real-world contexts. They often rely more on theoretical claims than empirical evidence. Even worse, some of them seem stuck in a pre-digital mindset, barely engaging with how algorithm-driven visibility and online discourse have changed the landscape.

## 3. Empirical Gaps in Measuring Legal Outcome Shifts

A third group of studies takes a more cautious route, focusing on how difficult it is to actually measure the impact of digital activism on legal outcomes. These researchers acknowledge that isolating variables like hashtag virality, media framing, and institutional response is far from simple.

The main issue here is the lack of clear and consistent measurement tools. Terms like "legal impact" and "public pressure" are often used loosely, without proper definition. There's also a noticeable absence of large-scale, data-driven studies that track patterns across multiple cases or regions. Most research is limited in scope and time frame, which makes it hard to draw broader conclusions.

## Contradictions and Methodological Weaknesses

When you step back, the contradictions across these strands become pretty obvious:

- **Causation vs. Coincidence:** Some studies claim digital activism directly drives legal action, while others dismiss it as irrelevant. The truth is still unresolved.
- **Normative vs. Empirical Approaches:** Institutional studies lean heavily on theory, while activism-focused research relies on real-world cases but often lacks

methodological rigor.

- **Selective Evidence:** Both sides tend to cherry-pick examples that support their arguments and ignore those that don't. Not exactly the gold standard of objectivity.

Across the board, the literature struggles with a few recurring methodological issues:

- Overdependence on single-case studies
- Lack of comparative and long-term research designs
- Minimal use of digital analytics alongside legal data
- Weak interdisciplinary integration between law, media studies, and data science

## **Synthesis**

Put together, the field looks fragmented and somewhat confused. There's clear interest in understanding how digital activism interacts with legal systems, but the research so far doesn't quite deliver a solid, unified explanation. Instead, it offers competing narratives, each with its own blind spots.

What's missing is a more balanced and methodologically sound approach. Future research needs to combine measurable digital engagement data with systematic analysis of legal outcomes. Until then, a lot of conclusions in this field will remain somewhere between educated guesswork and ideological preference.

## **Research Design and Hypothesis Testing**

### **1. Research Design**

This study uses an explanatory mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine how digital activism interacts with legal outcomes. The goal is not just to identify surface-level patterns, but to explore whether there is a meaningful causal relationship between hashtag virality and institutional responses.

The quantitative component focuses on measuring hashtag virality using indicators such as the number of posts, levels of engagement (likes, shares, comments), and the extent of cross-

platform spread. These metrics are then compared with observable legal outcomes, particularly the speed of procedural actions like FIR registration, hearings, or judicial orders.

Alongside this, the qualitative component relies on comparative case analysis. This allows for a deeper understanding of individual cases by examining how media narratives, public sentiment, and institutional behavior interact in real-world situations. In other words, instead of blindly trusting numbers to tell the whole story, the study actually looks at what was happening behind them.

By combining both approaches, the design balances analytical precision with contextual understanding, addressing the usual shortcomings of studies that rely only on statistics or only on theory.

## **2. Hypotheses**

The study is guided by three key hypotheses, each targeting a different aspect of the relationship between digital activism and the legal system:

### **H1: Higher hashtag virality is associated with faster procedural action.**

This hypothesis examines whether increased digital visibility leads to quicker institutional responses. It is measured by comparing the time gap between when an issue emerges and when legal action is initiated.

### **H2: Cases with sustained digital engagement are more likely to trigger institutional response than comparable non-viral cases.**

Here, the focus shifts from short bursts of attention to consistent online engagement. The idea is to test whether prolonged public scrutiny increases the likelihood of legal intervention.

### **H3: High levels of online polarization reduce perceived judicial neutrality.**

This hypothesis moves beyond procedural outcomes and looks at institutional legitimacy. It explores whether highly divided and emotionally charged online discourse affects public trust in the impartiality of the judiciary.

Together, these hypotheses move beyond a one-dimensional analysis by addressing three

distinct dimensions: speed, probability, and perception.

### **3. Case Selection Criteria**

Cases are selected using a purposive sampling strategy, which means they are chosen deliberately based on their relevance to the research objectives rather than randomly.

The selection is based on the following criteria:

- **High-visibility digital campaigns:**

Cases that gained significant attention on social media, such as movements like #MeToo, are included to represent strong instances of digital activism.

- **Comparative non-viral cases:**

For each high-visibility case, a similar case with minimal or no online attention is selected. These cases are matched based on factors like the nature of the offense, socio-legal context, and jurisdiction, allowing for a meaningful comparison.

- **Temporal alignment:**

Cases are chosen from similar time periods to ensure that broader legal or political changes do not distort the analysis.

- **Data availability:**

Only cases with sufficient publicly available data on both digital engagement and legal proceedings are included, ensuring the study remains grounded in verifiable information.

### **Analytical Rationale**

This research design tries to address a problem that a lot of existing studies conveniently sidestep: the difference between noise and actual influence. By combining measurable data with comparative analysis, it becomes easier to see whether digital activism genuinely affects legal processes or merely appears alongside them.

It's not flawless, because nothing in social science ever is. But at least it makes an effort to test its assumptions instead of treating every trending hashtag like it just rewrote the Constitution overnight.

## **Data Collection and Operationalization**

### **1. Quantitative Data Collection**

The quantitative part of this study focuses on identifying measurable links between digital activity and legal processes using clearly defined indicators.

#### **Timeline Analysis**

Each case is mapped through a sequence of key events, including:

- Date of the incident
- Beginning of hashtag virality
- Initiation of legal action (such as FIR registration, arrest, or court proceedings)

From this, a central variable is derived: the **time lag** between these stages, measured in days. This makes it possible to compare how quickly legal systems respond across different cases.

#### **Engagement Metrics**

To quantify digital activism, platform-based indicators are used, including:

- Number of posts or tweets using a specific hashtag
- Shares, re-tweets, and comments
- Estimated reach and impressions

These metrics are combined to create a **Virality Index**, which standardizes levels of online activity and allows comparisons across cases that may differ widely in scale.

## **2. Qualitative Data Collection**

Since human institutions are not robots running on clean data sets, the study also uses qualitative methods to understand how and why responses occur.

### **Judicial Observations**

Court judgments, remarks, and procedural orders are analyzed to identify any references to public opinion, urgency, or media influence. This helps assess whether digital discourse indirectly shapes judicial behavior.

### **Media Discourse Analysis**

News reports, editorials, and online narratives are examined to understand how cases are framed. The tone, language, and prominence of coverage provide insight into how public perception is constructed.

### **Expert Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with legal professionals, journalists, and academics. These conversations offer grounded perspectives on whether and how digital activism influences legal processes in practice.

## **3. Operational Definitions**

This is the part where the research either becomes credible or quietly falls apart, so the key concepts are defined as precisely as possible.

### **Acceleration**

Acceleration is defined as a measurable reduction in the time between incident reporting and legal action when compared to similar non-viral cases.

In plain terms: if the system suddenly moves faster than usual, something likely pushed it.

### **Pressure**

Pressure refers to the intensity and persistence of digital engagement. It is measured through:

- **Peak virality:** the highest level of engagement within a short period
- **Sustained attention:** continued activity over time

This captures both how strong and how prolonged public attention is.

### **Legal Impact**

Legal impact is defined as observable changes in legal processes or outcomes that can be linked to external influence. These include:

- Initiation or reopening of cases
- Speed of procedural steps
- Shifts in prosecutorial or judicial behavior

Importantly, impact is limited to measurable institutional changes, not just online visibility or outrage that burns bright for a day and disappears without consequence.

### **Data Analysis Strategy**

The data analysis strategy combines quantitative and qualitative methods to test the hypotheses and strengthen the reliability of findings through triangulation. Each method tackles a different aspect of the research problem, while also compensating for the weaknesses of the others. In other words, instead of trusting one approach blindly, the study forces them to check each other's work.

#### **1. Correlation and Regression Analysis**

The quantitative analysis begins with correlation techniques to examine the relationship between hashtag virality and legal response variables. Key relationships include:

- Virality Index and the time taken for procedural action
- Sustained digital engagement and the likelihood of institutional response

However, correlation alone only tells you that two things move together, not why. To address

this, regression analysis is used to:

- Estimate the predictive effect of digital engagement on legal outcomes
- Control for confounding factors such as case type, jurisdiction, and socio-political context

This step adds a layer of analytical rigor, reducing the risk of drawing conclusions based on coincidence rather than actual influence.

## **2. Comparative Case Timeline Mapping**

A comparative timeline mapping approach is used to track and analyze the sequence of events across different cases. Each case is broken down into key milestones:

- Occurrence of the incident
- Peak period of hashtag virality
- Legal actions such as FIR registration, arrests, hearings, and judgments

By comparing timelines of viral and non-viral cases, this method helps identify whether legal processes accelerate, remain unaffected, or even slow down under digital attention. It also brings out inconsistencies, especially in cases where intense online engagement fails to produce any tangible legal response, which is exactly the kind of detail that tends to disappear in more convenient analyses.

## **3. Thematic Coding for Judicial Reasoning**

The qualitative component focuses on thematic coding of judicial texts, including court observations, judgments, and procedural remarks. A structured coding framework is used to identify recurring patterns, such as:

- References to public opinion or media coverage
- Expressions of urgency or sensitivity
- Explicit assertions of judicial independence

This approach allows the study to examine whether judicial reasoning reflects awareness of external pressures, rather than assuming courts are either completely influenced or entirely insulated.

#### **4. Triangulation to Validate Findings**

To strengthen the validity of the results, the study uses methodological triangulation by integrating insights from multiple sources:

- Quantitative statistical analysis
- Comparative case timelines
- Qualitative thematic findings
- Expert interviews

The idea is simple but often ignored: no single method is reliable enough on its own. When different approaches point to similar conclusions, the findings become more credible. When they don't, it reveals complexity rather than failure, suggesting that the relationship between digital activism and legal processes cannot be reduced to a single, neat explanation.

### **Normative and Constitutional Implications**

#### **1. Impact on Due Process**

Due process is grounded in the idea that legal outcomes should result from structured procedures, evidence, and impartial decision-making, not from urgency or shifting public sentiment. Digital activism complicates this by introducing a parallel system of pressure that can compress timelines and create expectations of immediate action.

This creates a tension between consistency and responsiveness. Legal institutions may feel pushed to act quickly, but speed carries the risk of cutting corners. The real challenge is maintaining procedural integrity even when public attention turns intense and impatient.

#### **2. Presumption of Innocence**

The presumption of innocence exists to ensure that individuals are not treated as guilty before

a court reaches a decision. Digital environments, however, tend to operate on a much faster and less restrained timeline.

Public narratives often form early, sometimes assigning blame or moral judgment long before any legal evaluation takes place. This effectively shifts part of the decision-making space into the public domain, where reputational consequences can occur independently of formal findings.

What emerges is a clear gap between legal standards and public perception, and the two don't always bother to agree with each other.

### **3. Institutional Independence**

Judicial independence depends on courts being free from external pressures, including those from media and public opinion. Digital platforms, however, have expanded both the scale and intensity of scrutiny, placing legal institutions under constant observation.

While formal legal procedures remain unchanged, the environment surrounding them has become far more reactive and visible. Courts may still operate independently in principle, but they now do so within an ecosystem where public engagement is immediate and persistent.

This doesn't automatically undermine independence, but it does make the idea of complete insulation feel slightly unrealistic.

### **4. Democratic Accountability vs. Public Pressure**

Digital activism can be seen as a form of expanded democratic participation. It allows more people to engage with legal issues, highlight overlooked cases, and demand accountability from institutions.

At the same time, large-scale online mobilization can generate intense pressure, shaping how cases are perceived and what outcomes are expected. The line between accountability and influence starts to blur.

What results is an ongoing tension: legal processes are expected to remain fair and independent, yet they unfold within a space where public visibility, opinion, and reaction are constant. Balancing these forces is less about choosing one over the other and more about managing their

coexistence without letting either dominate completely.

## **Limitations and Methodological Constraints**

### **1. Proving Causation**

One of the biggest challenges in this study is establishing a clear cause-and-effect relationship between digital activism and legal outcomes. Statistical tools like correlation and regression can show patterns and associations, but they stop short of proving that one thing directly causes the other.

Legal processes are influenced by a messy mix of factors, including political climate, institutional priorities, media coverage, and the specifics of each case. So even when a strong relationship appears between hashtag virality and legal action, it's entirely possible that other variables are doing the heavy lifting behind the scenes.

### **2. Algorithmic Opacity**

Another major limitation comes from the black-box nature of social media algorithms. Visibility online isn't just about how many people care about an issue, it's also about how platforms decide to distribute content.

These algorithms are proprietary, opaque, and about as transparent as a brick wall. This makes it difficult to determine why some cases go viral while others, equally significant, barely register.

As a result, what the study measures as "public pressure" may not be entirely organic. It could partly reflect algorithmic amplification rather than genuine, widespread engagement. That complicates things, because now you're not just studying people, you're also dealing with invisible systems quietly deciding what people get to see.

### **3. Selection Bias toward Sensational Cases**

The study's focus on high-visibility cases introduces an unavoidable bias. The cases that gain traction online are often those that are emotionally charged, dramatic, or socially resonant. In other words, they were already likely to attract attention, with or without digital activism.

This creates two main issues:

- The findings may not apply to everyday legal cases that don't attract public attention
- The relationship between virality and legal response may be influenced by the nature of the case itself, not just the digital activity surrounding it

Even with the inclusion of comparable non-viral cases, this bias is difficult to fully eliminate. After all, the absence of visibility isn't neutral either, it can reflect deeper social, cultural, or media-driven dynamics.

## **Conclusion**

### **1. Synthesis of Empirical Findings**

The findings of this study point to a conditional, rather than absolute, relationship between digital activism and legal processes. Quantitative analysis shows that higher hashtag virality often aligns with faster procedural actions, especially in the initial stages of legal response. Similarly, sustained digital engagement tends to increase the chances of institutional attention, suggesting that visibility can play a role in shaping what gets noticed and acted upon.

That said, the relationship is far from consistent. Comparative case analysis highlights several instances where significant online traction produces little to no meaningful legal outcome. Qualitative insights add another layer of complexity, revealing that while courts may occasionally acknowledge public sensitivity, they continue to emphasize procedural integrity and institutional independence.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that digital activism does not operate as a direct driver of legal outcomes. Instead, it acts more like an amplifier, influencing the context in which legal decisions are made rather than determining those decisions outright.

### **2. Viral Justice: Structural Shift or Episodic Anomaly**

The idea of "viral justice" sounds dramatic enough to sell headlines, but the findings don't fully support it as a complete transformation of legal systems. What emerges instead is something more nuanced and, frankly, less cinematic.

There are signs of gradual structural change. Legal institutions today operate in an environment where digital discourse is unavoidable, and complete insulation from public opinion is no longer realistic. At the same time, the effects of digital activism remain inconsistent and heavily dependent on specific circumstances.

In practice, viral justice behaves more like a situational force than a systemic one. It becomes influential under certain conditions, particularly when cases carry strong emotional appeal, attract media attention, and generate sustained public engagement. Outside of those conditions, its impact is much less predictable.

So no, the legal system hasn't been quietly replaced by trending hashtags. It's just being watched more closely than ever, which is not quite the same thing.

### **3. Policy and Regulatory Implications**

The study points toward the need for a balanced and realistic policy approach that recognizes both the potential and the risks of digital activism:

- **Strengthening Procedural Safeguards**

Legal institutions must ensure that faster responses do not come at the cost of due process. Speed should not replace consistency or fairness.

- **Guidelines on Media and Digital Conduct**

There is a growing need for clearer frameworks governing media reporting and online discourse in ongoing cases, particularly to limit prejudicial narratives before trial.

- **Transparency and Accountability Mechanisms**

Greater transparency in procedural timelines and decision-making can reduce speculation and help maintain public trust.

- **Platform Responsibility**

Social media platforms need to take greater responsibility for how content related to legal cases is amplified, especially in situations involving misinformation or extreme

polarization.

### **Closing Reflection**

The idea that a hashtag can bend the arc of justice makes for a great story. Reality is less dramatic and far less cooperative.

Digital activism can draw attention, sometimes accelerate responses, and occasionally reshape public narratives. But it does not override the structural logic of legal systems, no matter how loudly the internet insists otherwise.

At the same time, ignoring the digital sphere would be equally misguided. Its influence is real, just uneven, unpredictable, and deeply dependent on context.

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