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BEFORE YOU POST THAT COURT REEL: THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL LIMITS ON LAW STUDENTS' SOCIAL MEDIA

-Vani Jain

ABSTRACT

Social media has become a popular platform for law students to share their experiences and build professional networks. However, sharing courtroom experiences online raises concerns about privacy, confidentiality, and professional ethics. This blog highlights the importance of responsible social media use among law students and the need to respect court proceedings. It emphasizes that future lawyers must think carefully before posting legal content online and maintain the dignity and integrity of the legal profession.

INTRODUCTION: WHEN THE COURTROOM MEETS INSTAGRAM

Imagine this: You have just attended a court hearing during your internship. Excited by the experience, you take out your phone, edit a short reel with trending music, add the caption “*A day in the life of a future lawyer*”, and get ready to post it. It seems harmless, right? But before hitting that upload button, ask yourself: Is everything we experience in a courtroom meant to be shared on social media? In today's digital world, platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube have become popular spaces for law students to share their journeys, discuss judgments, and build professional networks. However, posting about the legal profession comes with responsibilities. A careless post can raise serious concerns about privacy, confidentiality, professional ethics, and respect for the justice system.

1. THE TEMPTATION TO TURN EVERY COURT VISIT INTO CONTENT

For law students, visiting a courtroom is an exciting experience. Watching advocates present arguments and observing the judicial process can be both inspiring and educational. Naturally, students may want to capture these moments and share them online. However, the problem arises when sharing an experience means revealing information that should remain private. A courtroom is not a content studio. Behind every case are real people dealing with personal, financial, family, or legal struggles. What appears to be an interesting reel to viewers may be a deeply sensitive matter for those involved. The desire to create engaging content should never overshadow the dignity of the people who come to court seeking justice.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE LEGAL LIMITS OF POSTING COURTROOM CONTENT

One of the most important lessons for law students is that being present in a courtroom does not automatically give them the right to record or publish everything they see.

In India, court proceedings are governed by specific rules and judicial directions concerning recording, broadcasting, and publication. The Supreme Court of India, for instance, has rules regulating the live streaming and recording of court proceedings, including restrictions on certain categories of cases. Proceedings involving children, sexual offences, family disputes, and other sensitive matters may also attract special privacy protections and reporting restrictions under applicable laws. Recording a hearing without checking the relevant rules or obtaining the required permission may lead to legal or disciplinary consequences. Even if a hearing is open to the public, recording or uploading it is not necessarily permitted. Before sharing any courtroom footage, students should understand the rules of the particular court and seek permission wherever required. A few seconds of viral content are never worth overlooking legal restrictions.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY: THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE IS NOT ALWAYS YOURS TO SHARE

Internships offer law students valuable opportunities to research cases, review legal documents, and observe client interactions. However, these experiences also come with an important responsibility: confidentiality. Imagine receiving a draft petition containing sensitive personal

information. You find an interesting detail and decide to share it on your Instagram story without mentioning the client's name. You might assume that the information is anonymous, but other details could still reveal the person's identity. Confidentiality goes beyond hiding names. It includes protecting client communications, case documents, legal strategies, and other sensitive information entrusted to a lawyer or law office. The Bar Council of India Rules recognise the importance of confidentiality in the legal profession. Although all professional obligations as enrolled advocates do not automatically bind students, they should respect their supervisors' instructions and the confidentiality owed to clients. A good intern understands that access to confidential information is a responsibility, not an opportunity to create social media content.

4. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION VS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Social media gives law students a platform to express their opinions, discuss legal developments, and question judicial decisions. However, freedom of expression also comes with legal and ethical responsibilities. Consider a student who posts a reel criticising a judge's decision in a pending case. While disagreement with judicial reasoning is a legitimate part of legal discussion, personal attacks, misleading claims, or comments that interfere with judicial proceedings can raise serious concerns. In India, the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, deals with certain forms of conduct that interfere with the administration of justice or undermine the authority of courts. At the same time, fair criticism of judicial decisions is not automatically contempt. The important distinction lies in how opinions are expressed. Students should focus on legal reasoning, support their arguments with reliable sources, and avoid turning meaningful criticism into personal attacks or sensational content. A well-researched legal opinion can encourage public understanding, while an uninformed viral post can spread confusion.

5. THE ETHICAL SIDE: JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN POST DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD

Not every inappropriate social media post is necessarily illegal. Sometimes, the bigger issue is ethics. Imagine a law student uploading a courtroom photograph with a caption making fun of a litigant's emotional reaction. The post might attract likes and humorous comments, but behind that moment could be someone experiencing one of the most difficult days of their life. Legal education

is not just about memorising statutes and studying judgments. It is also about developing empathy, integrity, and respect for people who interact with the justice system. Before posting courtroom-related content, students should ask themselves three simple questions:

- Would I be comfortable if the person involved in the case saw my post?
- Could this content reveal someone's private information or cause unnecessary harm?
- Does this post reflect the professional values I want to develop as a future lawyer?

Taking a moment to reflect can prevent unnecessary harm and help students make responsible decisions.

CONCLUSION: THINK BEFORE YOU POST

In an age where a thirty-second reel can reach thousands of people, the line between personal expression and professional responsibility can become surprisingly thin. Social media offers law students opportunities to learn, connect, and share their passion for the legal profession. However, a courtroom is not simply another backdrop for online content. It is a space built around justice, privacy, fairness, and the rights of real people. Before uploading that court reel, take a moment to consider the people behind the proceedings, the rules governing the courtroom, and the kind of legal professional you hope to become. Being a future lawyer is not just about knowing when to speak. It is also about knowing when to stay silent. Sometimes, the most professional post is the one you decide not to publish.