

Label-Based Judgment in Comment Sections of Online Public Events

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Abstract: This paper examines the problem of label-based judgment in the comment sections of online public events. In many cases, users do not wait for full facts before making judgments. They use simple labels such as "liar," "victim," "bad person," or "attention seeker" to define the people involved. These labels often spread faster than careful explanation and can shape the direction of later discussion. The essay argues that label-based judgment is different from normal public criticism. Public criticism focuses on behavior, evidence, and responsibility, while label-based judgment turns a person into a fixed image before the event is fully clear. This process may damage reputation, increase online harassment, silence careful voices, and hide the deeper problems behind public events. The essay also discusses how platforms, media accounts, and users can reduce this problem by keeping comments closer to facts, avoiding unsupported claims, and leaving space for later correction.

Keywords: online public events; comment sections; label-based judgment; online moral trial; online harassment; public criticism

1. Introduction

Online public events often begin with a piece of news, a short video, a screenshot, or a personal statement. The event may involve a dispute, an accident, a public mistake, a conflict, or a moral question. After the event appears online, the comment section quickly becomes an important place for public reaction. Many users express anger, sympathy, doubt, or support there. These comments can shape how later viewers understand the event. The comment section is not only a place for personal opinion. In many online public events, it becomes

part of the event itself. Some users do not read the full report before forming a view. They may enter the event through hot comments. They may learn what attitude is "right" or "wrong" from the words that receive the most likes. In this sense, the comment section does not simply follow public opinion. It also helps produce public opinion. The problem is that many comment sections do not stay close to the facts. Some users make a quick judgment before the full situation is clear. They use simple labels to define the people involved. A person may be called a "liar," "victim," "bad person," "privileged person," "public enemy," or

“attention seeker.” Once such a label spreads, it can become more powerful than the facts themselves. Later information is often read through the label, not judged on its own.

This process can happen very fast. A few early comments may set the tone of the whole discussion. Later users may repeat the same words because they seem widely accepted. Some people may also avoid asking questions because they do not want to be attacked. As a result, the label becomes a shared answer. It tells users who should be blamed, who should be protected, and which side should be supported.

Label-based judgment is different from normal public criticism. Public criticism can question a person’s behavior, a public decision, or an unfair practice. It still needs evidence and room for correction. Label-based judgment often skips this step. It turns a complex event into a simple story of good and bad. It also turns the comment section into a fast moral court, where many users act as judges before the event is fully known.

2. The Meaning of Label-Based Judgment

Label-based judgment means that people use a simple label to judge a person or an event before the facts are clear (Becker). In the comment section of an online public event, many users do not spend much time checking the full story. They may see a short video, a title, a screenshot, or a few emotional comments. Then they quickly decide what kind of person the person involved is. The label may be about character, identity, motive, or guilt.

This kind of judgment often begins with strong words. A person may be called a “liar,” “victim,” “bad person,” “selfish person,” or “attention seeker.” These words look simple, but they carry a clear moral judgment. They do not only describe one action. They tell other users how this person should be understood. Once many users repeat the same label, the label starts to shape the whole discussion. Later users may accept it as if it were already proven.

The main problem is that the label often comes before evidence. Users may decide the meaning of

the event before they understand the details. They may also ignore facts that do not fit the label. For example, if someone is labeled as a “liar,” later explanations may be treated as excuses. If someone is labeled as a “victim,” doubtful details may be pushed aside. The label becomes a frame. People no longer look at the event itself, but look at the event through that frame.

Label-based judgment also changes the position of the person involved. The person is no longer seen as someone in a specific situation. They become a type of person. A single act may be used to judge their whole character. A short sentence may be used to explain their whole motive. A past detail may be pulled out to support the label. The comment section then stops asking what happened in this event. It begins to ask what kind of person this is.

This is why label-based judgment is not the same as ordinary evaluation. In daily life, people often make comments about others. They may say that one action is wrong, one response is careless, or one explanation is not enough. These comments can still be revised when new facts appear. Label-based judgment is much harder to revise. It fixes a person into a simple image and treats that image as the truth.

Label-based judgment is also different from normal public criticism. Normal criticism focuses on what a person has done. It looks at behavior, evidence, responsibility, and possible harm. It also allows new facts to change the judgment. Label-based judgment turns one action, one sentence, or one image into a fixed identity. It reduces a living person to a simple symbol (Goffman). After that, the person is no longer discussed as someone in a complex situation, but as a type of person that should be blamed, defended, or attacked.

This kind of judgment is especially common in online public events because many events are incomplete when they first appear. The first version of the story may come from only one side. The video may be cut. The screenshot may miss earlier words. The title may already guide emotion. In such a situation, a careful judgment should remain open.

Yet a label gives users a quick answer. It makes an uncertain event look finished.

In this sense, label-based judgment makes public discussion less careful. It gives users a quick answer, but it weakens their ability to think about details. It also makes disagreement harder. When a label becomes popular in a comment section, people who ask for more evidence may be seen as taking the wrong side. This makes the comment section look like a public trial, but the trial has no clear facts, no fair process, and no real chance for response.

3. Why Comment Sections Easily Produce Labels

Comment sections are easy places for labels to appear. An online public event often reaches users in a very short form. Many people do not read a full report. They may only see a title, a short video, a few screenshots, or several popular comments. The information is limited, but the emotional push is strong. In this situation, a simple label can give people a quick way to understand the event.

Many online public events are made up of fragments when they first appear. A short video may show only the most intense moment. It may not show what happened before or after. A screenshot may show only part of a conversation. It may hide the tone, the time, or the earlier conflict. A title may already contain a judgment. It may use words that guide users to feel anger or sympathy before they know the whole story. When users receive the event in this way, they are more likely to accept a simple label.

The speed of online discussion also matters. When an event becomes popular, comments appear very quickly. Users may feel that they need to take a position at once. They may not want to wait for more facts. A clear label can help them show their attitude in a few words. It can also help them stand with a group. Words such as “liar,” “victim,” “bully,” “rich person,” or “bad parent” are easy to understand and easy to repeat. These words travel faster than careful explanation.

The comment section also gives users a sense that judgment should be immediate. When many people are already commenting, waiting can feel

unnecessary. Some users may think that silence means indifference. Some may think that asking for more evidence means avoiding a moral position. Under this pressure, a quick label becomes a simple way to show that one has a clear attitude. It gives the user a place in the discussion.

The structure of the comment section makes this problem stronger. Hot comments are usually short, direct, and emotional. They are placed in a clear position where more people can see them. A calm comment may explain the uncertainty of the event, but it may not get much attention. A sharp label can attract likes and replies more easily. After it becomes a hot comment, it may guide later users to read the event in the same way.

Hot comments have a strong demonstration effect. Many users enter the comment section before they understand the whole event. They read the most visible comments and use them as a guide. If the top comments call someone a “liar,” later users may follow this direction. If the top comments call someone a “victim,” later users may treat doubt as an attack. The early comments do not only express opinions. They can set the tone of the whole comment area.

Platform interaction also helps labels spread. Likes, replies, reposts, and ranking systems make some comments more visible than others. A careful comment may be longer and less emotional. It may not receive quick support. A short label is easier to like, easier to reply to, and easier to turn into a shared joke or a shared attack. When a label receives many likes, it looks more credible. Users may mistake popularity for truth.

Group feeling also pushes labels forward. When many users use the same label, the label begins to look like public agreement. Later users may not check whether it is fair. They may think that so many people cannot be wrong. Some users may also avoid asking questions because they do not want to be attacked (Suler). When doubt becomes risky, the comment section becomes less open. People repeat the label because it is safer than questioning it.

This group pressure does not always appear as direct force. Sometimes it appears as tone. A

comment section may already have a strong mood. It may be full of anger, pity, or mockery. A user who wants to speak carefully may feel out of place. They may change their words to fit the mood. They may also choose not to speak. In this way, the comment section keeps the loudest and most certain voices, while softer voices become less visible.

Many public events also involve moral emotion. Users may feel anger toward harm, sympathy for suffering, or disgust toward unfair behavior. These emotions are normal. The problem appears when emotion becomes the only basis for judgment. A label can turn emotion into a fixed answer. It tells users who should be blamed and who should be protected. After that, the event may no longer be discussed through facts, but through anger, sympathy, and group pressure.

Platform traffic can also encourage this process. Some accounts choose titles and captions that lead users to judge before they know the full story. They may highlight conflict, pain, wealth, gender, occupation, or family background. These details are often enough to create a label. The comment section then continues the same direction. The more the label spreads, the more attention the event receives. Some media accounts also use words that make the event look complete before it is clear. Words such as “reversal,” “confirmed,” “exposed,” or “angry public” can push users to accept a ready-made view. These words are powerful because they reduce uncertainty. They make the user feel that the answer is already there. Once users enter the comment section with this feeling, they are more likely to repeat the label than to ask what is still unknown.

Comment sections also reward simple stories. A complex event may involve many people, several causes, and unclear responsibility. Yet a comment section often favors a story with clear roles. There is a wrongdoer, a victim, a hidden motive, and a final moral answer. Labels help create this story. They turn a messy event into something easier to share and easier to judge.

4. Common Forms of Label-Based Judgment

Label-based judgment appears in many forms in comment sections. The most common form is moral labeling. When an online public event touches anger, pity, unfairness, or conflict, users often use moral words to define the people involved. A person may be called a “bad person,” “shameless,” “cold-blooded,” or “heartless.” These words do not only describe behavior. They also judge the whole person. After such words spread, the discussion may move away from what happened and turn into a direct attack on character.

Moral labels are attractive because they make the event easy to understand. Users do not need to explain which behavior is wrong or why it caused harm. A label already gives the answer. It tells others that this person should be blamed. It also gives users a strong emotional position. The comment looks clear and powerful, even when the facts behind it are weak.

This kind of label can be unfair because a public event often contains many details. A person may have made a mistake, but the mistake may not prove that the person is evil. A response may be poor, but it may not show the person’s whole character. Moral labeling turns a specific act into a fixed moral identity. After that, the discussion becomes less about responsibility and more about punishment.

Identity labels are also common. In many online public events, users connect a person’s behavior with gender, class, region, job, education, age, or family background. For example, a person may be judged as a “rich person,” “rural person,” “local person,” “outsider,” “student,” “parent,” “teacher,” or “worker.” These labels seem to give the event a clear social meaning. Yet they may also make the discussion unfair. A single person’s behavior is treated as proof of a whole group’s problem. The event becomes a way to attack or defend a group, not a chance to understand the facts.

Identity labels often carry old prejudice. A person from a certain region may be judged through existing stereotypes. A person with a certain job may be treated as if they must have a fixed character. A

person from a better economic background may be seen as guilty more easily in some events. A person from a weaker position may be seen as innocent more easily in other events. These judgments may look like concern for fairness, but they can also replace evidence with group imagination.

Another form is motive labeling. Many users like to guess what a person really wants. They may say someone is “acting,” “seeking attention,” “selling misery,” “using public opinion,” or “playing the victim.” These comments often sound certain, but they may have little proof. Motive is hard to know from a short video or a few screenshots. When users treat a guessed motive as fact, the person involved loses the chance to explain. Any later response may be read as another kind of performance.

Motive labels are hard to remove because they can explain almost anything. If the person cries, users may say it is acting. If the person stays calm, users may say it shows no guilt. If the person speaks, users may say they are trying to guide public opinion. If the person stays silent, users may say they have no defense. In this way, the label becomes closed. It does not need proof, and it does not allow correction.

There are also guilt labels. Before official information or full evidence appears, some users already decide who is guilty. They may call someone a “criminal,” “scammer,” “abuser,” or “bully.” These words are very heavy. They can damage a person’s name even if the event later changes. In a comment section, such words can spread faster than corrections. A later update may not reach the same people who saw the early label. Guilt labels can be especially harmful because they sound like final judgment. They do not leave much room for process. In many public events, facts need time to be checked. Different sides may need to give evidence. The people involved may also need a chance to respond. When users use guilt labels too early, the comment section may create a punishment before the event is clear.

Some labels are made through comparison. Users may compare the person involved with a known public figure, a past scandal, or a familiar type of

“bad person.” This makes the event easier to understand, but it also removes many details. The person is no longer seen as someone in a specific event. They become part of an old story that users already know how to judge.

Comparison labels can make anger spread quickly. When users connect a new event with an old scandal, the old emotion returns. The person involved in the new event may then carry anger that does not fully belong to them. The comment section no longer looks at the event by itself. It uses the event as another proof of an old belief.

Another common form is camp labeling. This kind of label is not only used against the people involved in the event. It is also used against other users in the comment section. When someone asks for more facts, they may be called a person who is “defending the wrong side.” When someone questions a popular story, they may be called a “paid commenter,” “troublemaker,” or “water army.” When someone gives a different view, they may be treated as having a hidden purpose.

Camp labels control the space of discussion. They tell users which opinions are safe and which opinions are dangerous. After such labels appear, some users may stop asking questions. They may worry that a careful comment will be read as support for the wrong person. The result is that the comment section becomes less able to hold different views. It keeps the same attitude by pushing out doubt.

There are also result labels. In many public events, users like to use words that sound like a final result. They may say that the event has been “confirmed,” “reversed,” “exposed,” or “settled.” These words can be useful when facts are truly clear. The problem is that they are often used too early. A partial update may be treated as the whole truth. A new post may be treated as final proof. A rumor may be described as if it were already checked.

Result labels make the event look finished. Once users believe that the answer is already clear, they may lose interest in later details. If new information appears, they may reject it because it does not fit the

result label. In this way, result labels close the discussion before the facts have fully appeared.

These forms often mix together. A person may be given a moral label, an identity label, and a motive label at the same time. For example, users may say that someone is rich, selfish, and only pretending to be wronged. A user who questions this view may then be labeled as defending privilege. Once these labels are tied together, the event becomes a simple story. The facts may still be unclear, but the comment section already has a fixed answer.

5. The Logic Behind Online Moral Trial

Online moral trial often begins with a strong need for a clear answer. In many public events, the facts are not complete at the beginning. The people involved may have different versions of the story. The video may show only one part of the scene. Screenshots may miss the earlier or later context. Yet users still want to know who is right and who is wrong. A label gives them a simple answer before the event is fully clear.

This kind of answer is attractive because it reduces doubt. Doubt is tiring. It asks people to wait, compare information, and accept that they may not know enough. A label is much easier. If a person is called a "liar," then all later words from that person can be treated as lies. If a person is called a "victim," then doubts about that person may be seen as cruel. The label saves users from dealing with uncertainty. Many users do not like staying in an unclear position. Online public events often create discomfort because the story is unfinished. People may feel anger, fear, pity, or distrust, but they do not yet know where these feelings should go. A label gives these feelings a target. It tells users who should be blamed, who should be defended, and what kind of comment should be made. The unfinished event then becomes easier to bear.

Emotion also pushes moral trial forward. Many online public events touch anger, sympathy, fear, or a sense of unfairness. These feelings make people react quickly. When users feel angry, they may want someone to blame. When users feel sympathy, they may want someone to protect. Labels help emotion

find a target. The comment section then becomes a place where people release emotion through judgment.

This release can give users a strong sense of justice. Some users believe that harsh words show moral courage. They may think that a strong label proves they are standing on the right side. In this situation, careful speech may look weak. Waiting for more facts may look cold. Asking for evidence may look like protecting the person being blamed. The label then becomes not only an opinion, but also a sign of moral position.

Online moral trial also has a low cost. Users do not need to investigate the event. They do not need to meet the people involved. They do not need to face the harm caused by their words. A short comment can still make them feel that they have taken part in public justice. This low-cost participation is important. It gives users a sense of power without asking them to carry much responsibility.

The distance of online communication makes this easier. The person being judged is often only a name, a face, a voice, or a screenshot. Users may not think of this person as someone with a family, work, fear, and private life. When the person becomes a symbol, it becomes easier to attack. A label works well in this situation because it removes the details of the person. It turns the person into a target that can be blamed by many people at once.

Group pressure makes this process stronger. When many users repeat the same label, the label starts to look like the common view (Sunstein). Later users may follow it without checking the details. They may think that a large number of comments must mean the judgment is correct. Some users may also stay silent when they have doubts. They may worry that asking for more facts will be seen as defending the wrong side.

Group pressure also creates a feeling of safety. It is safer to repeat the popular label than to question it. A user who joins the dominant view may receive likes, agreement, and emotional support. A user who asks a careful question may receive attacks. The comment section then teaches users what kind of

speech is welcomed. Over time, people learn to use stronger labels and fewer doubts.

The reward system in comment sections also affects judgment. Strong comments often receive more likes and replies. A careful comment may say that the facts are still unclear, but this kind of comment may not attract much attention. A comment that gives a clear label can be easier to support. It gives users a direct place to stand. After it becomes popular, it can guide the tone of the whole discussion.

This reward system can make moral trial look natural. A user may not plan to attack anyone at the beginning. Yet after seeing which comments receive support, the user may adjust their own words. They may make the comment shorter, sharper, and more certain. They may remove hesitation because hesitation does not fit the mood of the comment section. The platform does not need to tell users what to say. The visible rewards already guide them.

Online moral trial also gives users a sense of participation. Many people feel that they are helping justice by blaming the person they see as wrong (Muir et al.). This feeling can be meaningful, especially when users believe that formal systems move too slowly or do not respond enough. Yet the comment section does not have a fair process. It does not check evidence in a stable way. It does not give the people involved a real chance to answer. It can punish someone in public before the basic facts are known.

This is why online moral trial can look like justice but work like pressure. It may begin from real anger. It may come from concern for harm or unfairness. Yet once it depends on labels, it can move away from the event itself. Users may stop asking what evidence exists. They may ask only whether the person fits the label. The more the person fits the label, the more punishment seems acceptable.

Another reason is that many public events are read as stories. Users often expect a clear plot. They want a victim, a wrongdoer, a hidden reason, and a final result. Labels help build this plot. A person who is called a "liar" becomes the wrongdoer. A person who is called a "victim" becomes the person who

must be protected. A person who asks questions becomes someone who is standing on the wrong side. The comment section then turns the event into a simple moral drama.

This story form is powerful because it is easy to remember and easy to share. A complex explanation may need time. It may include uncertainty, context, and different responsibilities. A simple label can travel in a few words. It can be repeated in replies, short posts, and jokes. The moral trial becomes stronger each time the label is repeated.

In this process, judgment becomes faster than understanding. The comment section may look active and powerful, but much of the discussion is built on repeated labels. Users do not always ask what really happened. They ask which side should be attacked and which side should be defended. Once this pattern forms, a public event is no longer treated as a complex matter. It becomes a simple moral story with fixed roles.

6. The Harm Caused by Label-Based Judgment

Label-based judgment can hurt the people involved in an online public event. A label may appear before the facts are clear, but it can still damage a person's name. Once many users call someone a "liar," "bad person," "bully," or "attention seeker," the label may stay even after new facts appear. People may remember the early judgment more than the later correction.

This harm is not only about reputation. It can also bring strong mental pressure (Vogels). The person involved may face insults, threats, mockery, or repeated questioning. Their family members, workplace, school, or personal life may also be pulled into the event. Some users may search for private information and spread it in the comment section. A public event then turns into pressure on a person's whole life.

The harm may spread beyond the person at the center of the event. Family members may be attacked because of their relationship with the person. Friends may be questioned because they once appeared in a photo or comment. A workplace or school may receive repeated messages from

strangers. People who have no direct role in the event may still be forced to answer for it. This makes the harm wider and harder to control.

Label-based judgment can also make the person lose the chance to explain. When a label has already become popular, any response may be read in a negative way. An apology may be called fake. Silence may be treated as guilt. Explanation may be seen as an excuse. In this situation, the person is placed in a position where almost every action can be used against them.

This creates a closed circle. The label decides how the response will be understood, and the response is then used to support the label. If the person gives many details, users may say the person is trying too hard. If the person gives few details, users may say the person is hiding something. If the person asks for privacy, users may say the person is afraid of being exposed. The label makes every possible response look wrong.

The harm may continue after the event loses public attention. Online labels can be saved, searched, and reposted. Even when the event is no longer discussed, old comments and screenshots may still affect the person. A short period of online anger can leave a long mark. The person may need to carry a public image that was formed in a few hours or a few days.

This kind of lasting harm is serious because online memory is uneven. Early labels may remain visible, while later explanations may be harder to find. The first version of an event can travel widely, but the corrected version may reach fewer people. Some users may only remember the label, not the final result. In this way, the person may still live under a judgment that is no longer supported by the facts.

Label-based judgment also harms the process of fact clarification. When a label becomes dominant, many users stop looking for new information. They believe that the answer is already clear. Reports, statements, and later updates may be read only to confirm the existing view. Information that does not fit the label may be rejected or mocked. The comment section then becomes less able to correct itself.

This can also affect how the event is handled. When public emotion becomes very strong, media accounts, platforms, institutions, or related parties may feel pressure to respond quickly. A quick response is sometimes needed, but it can also create problems. If the response is made mainly to calm anger, it may not follow a careful process. If action is taken only because the comment section demands punishment, the result may not be fair.

Label-based judgment also weakens public discussion. A comment section should help people share information, ask questions, and understand different sides of an event. When labels take over, users stop looking closely at facts. They repeat strong words and take sides. The discussion becomes louder, but not clearer.

This also hides the real problems behind the event. Some public events involve service rules, platform duties, school management, workplace pressure, family conflict, gender issues, or unequal access to resources. If users only attack one person with labels, these deeper problems may be ignored. The event becomes a fight about character, not a discussion about causes and responsibility.

For example, an event about a conflict between a consumer and a business may reveal problems in service rules or complaint handling. Yet the comment section may focus only on whether one person is “making trouble” or whether the other side is “bullying customers.” An event about a school dispute may involve management, communication, and protection of students. Yet comments may only attack a teacher, a parent, or a student with fixed labels. When this happens, the public loses the chance to discuss the real problem. Labels can also create new unfairness. When one person is treated as a symbol of a whole group, many unrelated people may be attacked. A single case may lead to hostile comments about a gender, region, job, class, or age group. This turns public discussion into group conflict. People no longer talk about what happened in the event. They use the event to support old prejudice.

This group harm is often hidden under the language of justice. Some users may believe that they are

criticizing unfairness, but their words may attack a whole group. A single person's behavior is used to prove that "this kind of person" cannot be trusted. The event then becomes a reason to repeat old bias. Such comments do not solve the event. They make the public space more hostile.

The spread of labels may also reduce trust in comment sections. Users who want to speak carefully may avoid joining the discussion. They may worry that a different view will bring attacks. People who have useful information may stay silent because the comment section is already too hostile. When careful voices leave, extreme comments become more visible.

This silence is a real loss. Public discussion needs people who can ask questions, provide context, and correct mistakes. It also needs people who can say that the facts are not yet clear. If these voices disappear, the comment section becomes more certain but less reliable. It may look like there is a strong common view, but that view may only be the result of pressure.

Label-based judgment can also shape the habits of ordinary users. If people see many public events handled through labels, they may become used to this way of thinking. They may expect every event to have a clear villain and a clear victim. They may lose patience with facts that are mixed, slow, or unclear. When this habit becomes common, public discussion becomes less able to deal with complex events.

The harm is also connected with fear. People who may become involved in public events may worry that a small mistake will be turned into a fixed public image. They may avoid explaining because explanation may attract more attacks. They may avoid defending themselves because defense may be treated as guilt. This fear can make people less willing to speak in public, even when they have something important to say.

Label-based judgment also changes the meaning of responsibility. Real responsibility needs evidence, context, and proportion. It should ask what happened, what harm was caused, and what kind of response is fair. Labels often skip these questions.

They move directly to blame. They may turn a mistake into a total denial of a person. They may also turn an unclear event into public punishment.

This makes the comment section harsh but not necessarily just. A harsh comment may feel powerful, but it may not help people understand the event. A repeated label may make users feel united, but it may also create harm that cannot be repaired. When labels replace facts, the comment section can hurt people, distort the event, and reduce the quality of public discussion at the same time.

7. The Boundary Between Public Criticism and Label-Based Judgment

Public criticism is a normal part of online discussion. When a public event causes harm, unfairness, or doubt, people have the right to ask questions. They can question a person's behavior, a company's rule, a school's decision, or a public response. This kind of criticism can help bring attention to problems that may be ignored. It can also push the people involved to give clearer explanations.

The key problem is not criticism itself. The problem is judgment without enough facts. In many comment sections, users do not only question what happened. They decide a person's character, motive, and guilt too early. They may use one sentence, one image, or one short video to define the whole person. At this point, criticism begins to move toward label-based judgment.

A useful boundary is whether the comment stays close to clear behavior. For example, saying "this response was improper" is different from saying "this person is evil." Saying "the explanation is not clear enough" is different from saying "this person must be lying." The first kind of comment leaves space for facts and later correction. The second kind fixes the person into a negative image.

This boundary matters because behavior can be discussed more fairly than character. A behavior can be described, checked, and compared with rules or common sense. Character is much harder to prove. When users judge character too early, they often move beyond what the evidence can support. A person may have acted poorly in one moment, but

this does not mean that every part of the person should be denied.

Another boundary is whether the comment is based on available evidence. Online public events often appear in pieces. A video may not show what happened before. A screenshot may not show the whole conversation. A post may contain only one side of the story. When the evidence is incomplete, criticism should be careful. It can point out doubt, but it should not turn doubt into a final answer.

A careful comment does not have to be weak. It can still be sharp. It can say that the current explanation is not convincing. It can say that a certain action has caused harm. It can ask the people involved to provide more information. The difference is that it does not pretend to know more than the evidence allows. It does not use anger to fill the gap left by missing facts.

The possibility of correction is another important line. Normal public criticism can change when new facts appear. If later evidence shows that the early judgment was wrong, the comment can be revised. Label-based judgment is often harder to change. Once a person is fixed as a "liar," "bad person," or "attention seeker," later facts may be rejected because they do not fit the label. The label becomes stronger than correction.

This is why comments should leave some space for uncertainty. In an online public event, early information is often unstable. A new video, a full record, or a later statement may change the meaning of the event. A fair comment should be able to accept this change. If a comment cannot be corrected by any new fact, then it is no longer a judgment based on evidence. It has become a fixed attitude.

The treatment of identity also matters. A person can be criticized for a clear action. Yet it is unfair to use gender, region, job, class, age, or family background as proof of guilt. These labels may make the comment look stronger, but they often move the discussion away from the event itself. They also bring harm to people who have nothing to do with the event.

Identity-based judgment can make public criticism lose its target. The issue may begin with one

person's behavior, but the comment section may turn it into an attack on a whole group. This is not a careful response to the event. It is a way of using the event to repeat old bias. A fair discussion should not treat one person as evidence against a group.

Public criticism should also allow response. The people involved may need time to explain, correct, or provide more details. Their explanation may be weak, false, or incomplete, but it still needs to be judged through content and evidence. If every response is already treated as an excuse, then the comment section is no longer discussing the event. It is only repeating a judgment that has already been made.

Allowing response does not mean accepting every explanation. Some explanations may indeed be false. Some apologies may be careless. Some statements may avoid real responsibility. Yet these problems should be judged by what the response says and what evidence supports it. The response should not be rejected only because the person has already been given a negative label.

The tone of criticism is also important. Strong criticism does not have to become personal attack. A comment can be sharp and still focus on facts. It can question responsibility without using insults. It can express anger without calling for harassment. When criticism turns into abuse, threat, or exposure of private information, it has crossed the basic line of public discussion.

There is also a question of proportion. Not every mistake should lead to total denial of a person. Not every unclear detail should become proof of guilt. Public criticism should match the seriousness of the action and the strength of the evidence. If the response is far heavier than what is known, the comment section may create a punishment that is not fair.

This boundary is especially important in events that are still changing. Early comments may have a strong effect on later views. If users use heavy labels too soon, they may push the event in a harmful direction. Later corrections may not repair the damage. A more careful comment may not be as

exciting, but it can reduce the chance of lasting harm.

The boundary can be seen in a simple way: public criticism deals with actions and responsibility, while label-based judgment fixes a person into a type. Public criticism asks what happened and who should answer for it. Label-based judgment decides who the person “really is” before the facts are clear.

8. Possible Ways to Reduce Label-Based Judgment

Reducing label-based judgment does not mean removing public criticism. People still need a place to express anger, doubt, and concern. The key is to stop quick labels from replacing facts. A comment section can be open, but it should not become a place where one label can decide a person’s whole image. Platforms have a direct role in this problem (Cyberspace Administration of China). They can reduce the visibility of comments that use clear insults, group attacks, or repeated personal labels (Cyberspace Administration of China, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, & National Radio and Television Administration). Some comments do not add information. They only repeat words such as “liar,” “scammer,” “shameless,” or “deserves it.” When these comments are pushed to the top, later users are more likely to follow the same tone. Platforms can make factual updates, source links, and balanced comments easier to see, especially when an event is still unclear.

The handling of harmful comments should also be more careful. Not all harmful comments are the same. Some comments are direct insults. Some spread private information. Some make unsupported claims. Some attack a whole group through one event. These comments should not be treated as ordinary disagreement. Platforms can deal with them in different ways, such as reducing their visibility, adding reminders, limiting repeated attacks, or removing serious abuse.

Platforms can also give clearer reminders before users post extreme comments. A simple reminder may ask users to avoid insults, private information, and unsupported claims. This does not stop users

from speaking. It only asks them to slow down before turning anger into attack. For public events that are changing quickly, platforms can add update marks or context notes, so users can see that earlier information may not be complete.

Event updates are important because many online public events change after the first wave of attention. Early information may be corrected. A longer video may appear. A statement may explain details that were missing before. A related party may provide new evidence. If users only see the early version, their judgment may stay with the early label. Platforms can help later updates reach users who have seen or shared the earlier information. This can reduce the gap between the first judgment and the later facts.

Hot comment ranking also needs attention. If the top comments are full of labels, the comment section will quickly move toward judgment. Platforms do not need to remove all strong opinions. Yet they can avoid making repeated insults and group attacks the most visible content. Comments that explain facts, add sources, or point out uncertainty should have more space. This can change the tone of discussion without closing the comment section.

Media accounts also need to be more careful. Many public events become heated because the title already pushes users toward judgment. Some titles highlight conflict, pain, wealth, gender, occupation, or family background to attract clicks. This makes users enter the comment section with a ready-made position. A better title should tell the basic facts and leave space for later information. It should not turn an uncertain event into a simple story of good and bad.

Words such as “confirmed,” “exposed,” “reversed,” or “the whole internet is angry” should be used carefully. These words can make users believe that the event already has a final answer. In many cases, the answer is not yet clear. If a media account uses such words too early, the comment section may begin from a fixed judgment. Later facts then have to fight against the first impression.

Short videos and posts should not cut an event into emotional pieces only for traffic. A few seconds of

video can easily make one person look guilty or innocent. A screenshot can hide the earlier part of a conversation. When media accounts choose only the most emotional detail, they help create labels. They should make clear what is known, what is not known, and where the information comes from.

Media accounts can also avoid using identity details when they are not needed. In some events, a person's gender, region, job, school, income, or family background may be relevant. In many other events, these details only help create labels. When such details are placed in the title or the first few lines, users may judge the person through identity before they understand the event. A more careful report should not use identity as a shortcut for moral judgment.

Users also have responsibility. Before posting a comment, users can separate three things: fact, feeling, and judgment. A fact is what can be checked. A feeling is anger, sympathy, doubt, or discomfort. A judgment is the opinion made after looking at the facts. Many harmful comments mix these three things together. People may feel angry and then treat that anger as proof. They may feel sympathy and then treat doubt as cruelty.

This habit can be practiced through small changes in wording. Instead of saying "he is a liar," a user can say "the current explanation does not match the known facts." Instead of saying "she is acting," a user can say "the motive cannot be confirmed from the current information." Instead of saying "this kind of person is always like this," a user can say "this behavior needs to be explained." These expressions can still be critical, but they stay closer to facts.

A better comment can still be direct. It can say "this behavior needs an explanation," "the current information is not enough," or "this response may cause harm." These comments are clear, but they do not turn the person into a fixed label. They leave space for new facts. They also make it easier for others to discuss the event without fear of being attacked.

Users should also avoid spreading private information. Even when a person seems wrong,

their family, phone number, address, school, workplace, and old photos should not become tools of punishment. Public discussion should stay around the event itself. Once private life is exposed, the harm often becomes much larger than the original event.

Users can also slow down before joining a popular judgment. When a comment section already has a strong mood, it is easy to repeat the same label. A short pause can help. The user can ask whether the event is complete, whether the source is clear, whether there are different versions, and whether the label says more than the evidence can support. These questions do not require professional knowledge. They only require basic care.

Disagreement should also be protected. A comment section cannot be healthy if every different view is treated as an attack. Users who ask for more facts should not be labeled as defending the wrong side. Users who question a popular story should not be called paid commenters without proof. When disagreement is allowed, the comment section has a better chance to correct mistakes.

A comment section needs emotion, but emotion should not decide everything. Anger may show that people care about harm. Sympathy may show that people care about the weak. Doubt may show that people care about fairness. These emotions can help public discussion, but they need facts as a limit. Once emotion becomes a label, it may create new harm.

A comment section needs disagreement, but disagreement should not depend on humiliation. People can question, criticize, and argue. They do not need to use labels to prove that they care about justice. Careful speech may look slower, but it protects the basic space for facts, response, and correction.

9. Conclusion

Label-based judgment in comment sections shows a common problem in online public discussion. Many users want to understand an event quickly, but the information they see is often limited. A short video, a title, a screenshot, or a few hot comments may not

show the full situation. When users use labels too early, the people involved are judged before the facts are clear.

This problem does not mean that public criticism should be weakened. Public criticism is needed when an event involves harm, unfairness, or unclear responsibility. The real issue is that criticism may lose its connection with facts. Once a person is fixed as a “liar,” “victim,” “bad person,” or “attention seeker,” later discussion often follows the label. New information may be ignored, and response may be treated as an excuse.

Label-based judgment also changes the comment section itself. It turns discussion into a fast moral trial. Users repeat strong words, take sides, and

attack people who ask for more evidence. The comment section becomes louder, but it becomes less careful. The real causes behind the event may be covered by anger and group pressure.

A better form of online discussion should stay close to clear behavior, available evidence, and public interest. People can criticize sharply, but they should avoid turning uncertain facts into fixed labels. They can express anger, but anger should not replace proof. They can support the weak, but support should not require blind judgment. Only in this way can comment sections remain a place for public discussion, not a place for quick and lasting harm.

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