

ONLINE TA'ARUF AS A MEDIUM FOR ISLAMIC MATCHMAKING: A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CONSTRUCTION OF MUSLIM YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

This study explores the development of digital technology and its impact on various aspects of social life, including the practice of matchmaking among young Indonesian Muslims. Online ta'aruf has emerged as an alternative to matchmaking based on Islamic values, adapting to the challenges of modern lifestyle and reflecting a response to the changing times. This research aims to understand how young Muslims perceive and practice online ta'aruf, as well as how the dimensions of religiosity and social values play a role in the process. This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, involving in-depth interviews with informants who utilize online ta'aruf platforms from various regions in Indonesia. The findings indicate that online ta'aruf is perceived as a safer and more religiously permissible (halal) way than conventional dating. However, a significant dilemma arises from the tension between religious intentions and the practical reality that often resembles a pattern of mainstream digital matchmaking. While the primary motivation for use is religiosity—seeking relationships compliant with Islamic law (sharia)—

practices such as intense, unmediated communication frequently diverge from ideal religious norms, closely resembling the pattern of digital dating. The value of religiosity is the primary motivation for using this platform, even though its interpretations and implementation vary widely, depending on educational background, personal beliefs, social environment, and involvement in the Islamic community. Consequently, there is a shift or transformation in the meaning of ta'aruf in the digital era as a space for negotiation between faith, norms, and technology. Therefore, the meaning of online ta'aruf not only functions as a medium for Islamic matchmaking but also reflects the dynamics of the religious values and identity of young Muslims who live in an increasingly digitized and normative-flexible society.

Keywords: Online ta'aruf, Islamic matchmaking, young people, religiosity, digital era.

A. Introduction

Among young urban Muslims, finding a life partner through Islamic courtship initiation is increasingly shifting from traditional face-to-face (offline) interaction to more digitally mediated communication (online). This change aligns with the development of information technology and people's increasingly digitized lifestyles. The ta'aruf (Islamic courtship) pattern that was previously conventional and relied on face-to-face meetings has shifted to a digital-based process, utilizing social media and online platforms as a means of introduction and exploration (Handayani, 2022). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become the initial interaction spaces that allow informal communication before entering the more serious stage of ta'aruf (Abubakar et al., 2020). In recent years, online-based ta'aruf service providers have also begun to emerge in Indonesia, such as Ta'aruf Online Indonesia (TOI) (*Ta'aruf Online Indonesia*, n.d.), mawaddahindonesia.com (*Mawaddah Indonesia*, n.d.), and rumahaftaruf.com (Rumah Taaruf myQuran, n.d.). In addition to being available in the form of a website, these ta'aruf platforms

also come in the form of Android and iOS-based smartphone applications, which make it easier to access and expand the reach of users in the process of finding a life partner that is in accordance with Islamic values.

The conventional model of ta'aruf practice for young Muslims could only be done face-to-face in the past, by visiting each other. However, it is increasingly shifting into a form of introduction via online, because the wave of internet and social media use has dominated all dimensions of people's lives, including the introduction of looking for a life partner. According to the results of research conducted by the Internet Service User Association (APJI) in 2025, the number of Indonesian users who use the internet is 229 million (APJI, 2025). In other words, more than half of the total population is internet users, and 49.2 percent are people aged 19 to 34 (APJI, 2025). A global survey by the Institute for Media Innovation from the University of Texas at Austin revealed that 83 percent of millennials use Facebook, followed by Instagram with 61 percent of users (Watkins & Rideout, 2019). Data from Statista also shows that around 55 percent of young people use online social media (Jo Dixon, 2025), with an average daily time of around 141 minutes (Petrosyan, 2024). The phenomenon of dependence on the internet and social media among young Muslims is a reality that is difficult to avoid, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, which has pushed almost all aspects of people's lives to switch to the digital realm. The internet and social media are not only a means of communication, but also meet various life needs, ranging from education, work, to social and religious affairs. The ever-growing presence of social media, accompanied by an increase in the number of users every day, shows how much influence the internet has in shaping the lifestyle of today's young generation.

In this era of globalization, it is undeniable that teenagers and young people are among the largest groups of social media users, making it part of their daily needs. Data from the Ministry of

Communication and Information Technology and APJI shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of internet users among young people, especially in the age range of 10-14 years and 15-20 years (APJI, 2025). This fact strengthens the position of social media as the main means of meeting the information, communication, and entertainment needs of the younger generation. Media no longer functions as a tool but has become a new social space that influences how we think, interact, and form self-identity. For young Muslims, social media helps shape their understanding of religious values, including social relationships and matchmaking. This phenomenon has encouraged the emergence of various digital platforms that combine Islamic values with technology, such as online ta'aruf services. In other words, social media is not only a means of entertainment and communication, but also a medium of social and religious transformation that influences how the younger generation lives their spiritual lives and builds relationships according to their values (Fitriansyah, 2018).

Today's social media is not only an intermediary for someone to find a partner for courtship, but also an intermediary for finding a partner to directly get to the level of marriage and build a household without dating. This process is known as ta'aruf. In practice, the terms of courtship and engagement are often combined. Young people's dating will be followed by engagement if there is an inner and outer suitability. On the other hand, those who are engaged are usually followed by courtship. However, the destination of courtship here is intended as a process of getting to know each other personally and staying in touch with each other, which in Islamic teachings is often called ta'aruf. Sometimes a teenager who thinks it is necessary to date does not only want to know about their partner personally, but also as an experience, a trial, or just having fun. Courtship is considered normal by some people; they think that before getting married, there must be such a thing as going out or getting to know each other. In Islam, there is no

such thing as courtship. It is more familiar with ta'aruf; both have different rules. Courtship is more of a mere pleasure, while ta'aruf is more towards the goal of getting married (Amaliyah, 2024).

The concept of ta'aruf as an introductory step before marriage is now experiencing significant development in the internet era. If previously, ta'aruf was facilitated by a third party who knew the two prospective partners, now the process can be done online through websites and social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp (Hildawati & Lestari, 2019; Yuniar, 2020). Several studies suggest that online ta'aruf is possible. However, offline meetings and direct interpersonal communication are still required after the initial process, especially after the *khitbah* or formal marriage proposal in Islam. The emergence of various online ta'aruf applications based on social media aims to help Muslim men and women who want to maintain their purity, repent from non-sharia relationships, and get married soon. The app facilitates users in recognizing the background of potential partners, including family, work, and religious commitments, as a form of initial screening before a face-to-face meeting. Some platforms even implement a paid system to ensure the seriousness of the registrants.

This research is novel in explaining the dynamics and motives of online ta'aruf users spreading on social media. It also examines its implementation procedures based on the perspective of state law, Islamic religious teachings, and the customs that apply in Indonesia. This study is important because until now, there has not been much research that integrates socio-religious approaches, positive laws, and local cultural values in analyzing the practice of digital ta'aruf among young Muslims. Thus, this study not only sheds light on new phenomena in Islamic matchmaking practices but also offers a framework for evaluating the validity and social

acceptability of online ta'aruf in the context of contemporary Indonesian society.

Studies on online ta'aruf are still relatively limited among scholars. However, several studies can be mentioned, including Akbar (2015), who discusses the views of Syafi'i and Ja'fari about the limits of ta'aruf. The limitation of ta'aruf, which refers to the opinion of Syafi'i and Ja'fari, in terms of looking at, seeing a potential partner, is limited by the face and palms, because with these two members, a woman or a potential partner can be judged on her attitude and character. The contribution of ta'aruf from the perspective of Imam Syafi'i and Imam Ja'fari among the general public is that, with ta'aruf, an initial assessment to get to know a potential partner before going to marriage, in the implementation process, certain manners must be adhered to, and the implementation of the ta'aruf process exists. Intermediary or guardian as a mediator, in addition to maintaining and civilizing the regularity of religious law so that it does not disappear in an era where religious rules are used as guidelines for taking action. Of all the existing boundaries aimed at creating an agreement between the two partners to reach peace, sincerity in household routines is essential because sincere love is the love of a couple that starts from seeing each other, to an engagement, and marriage (Akbar, 2015).

In the midst of this phenomenon, online ta'aruf emerged as a special form of adaptation that seeks to adapt the practice of introduction and finding a partner with Islamic principles. Online ta'aruf can be seen as the Muslim community's response to the flow of digital dating that is considered less in accordance with religious values. By limiting interaction

and enforcing sharia rules, online ta'aruf offers a more structured and religious alternative in the context of modern matchmaking. Therefore, online ta'aruf is not only the study of digital technology and behavior, but also about how religion and culture interact and adapt in the modern world. Arlina (2012) discusses the phenomenon of some people getting married through a relatively short ta'aruf process; sometimes it is necessary to adapt to couples from different cultures so that divorce does not occur. This study questions the extent to which couples from different cultures are able to adapt when married using the ta'aruf process. Thus, it is different from that which not only focuses on the impact but also the practice that takes place before marriage (Arlina, 2012).

In addition, Hakim (2014) explains how to perform ta'aruf in accordance with Islamic guidance. In the concept of ta'aruf presented by Ustad Felix Siau, the ta'aruf process does not involve direct interaction between the two candidates before the khitbah, nor does it involve the provision of education and learning to both candidates during the ta'aruf process. In contrast to this study, which explains the process of ta'aruf in the "Taman Surga's House of Ta'aruf " managed by Ustad Awan Abdullah, where, during the ta'aruf process, the formation of a *sakinah* (peaceful) family is sought (Rumah Ta'aruf Taman Surga (RTTS), n.d.). The procedures used in the ta'aruf process at the RTTS differ significantly from those described in scientific papers, according to Ustad Felix Siau (Hakim, 2014). Irfan and Abidin (2020) found that the *hijrah* (displacement) process made young people decide to stop courtship and switch to the ta'aruf process.

Furthermore, Ngapriba (2020) stated that this online ta'aruf application is considered permissible or *mubah* (It is neither sinful nor rewarding if it is done) based on the results of the Bahtsul Masail Institute of Nahdlatul Ulama and the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah. They stated that the online ta'aruf application is an application that did not exist at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and is considered permissible to use (Ngapriba, 2020). This application is to help men and women who want to repent and get married soon, and this application is a way to do ta'aruf to find out information about a potential partner. The Bahtsul Masail Institute states that online ta'aruf is a new and beneficial approach. In contrast, the Tarjih Council believes that traditional ta'aruf, which is facilitated by Ustadz, relatives, and siblings, is preferable to online ta'aruf (Ngapriba, 2020). Meanwhile, the Tarjih Council explained that it is better to do ta'aruf as usual, introduced by Ustadz, relatives, and siblings, than ta'aruf through Rahman and Zulhaqqi (2020) stated that online ta'aruf in the digital world is motivated by the stretching trend of hijrah (displacement) in the Muslim community in recent years. However, in its development, online ta'aruf was then commodified by the perpetrators because there were enthusiasts and the market wanted it (Rahman & Zulhaqqi, 2020).

The development of digital technology, especially social media, has changed many aspects of social life, including how men and women interact and establish relationships in the context of ta'aruf. Social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp now not only function as a means of communication and entertainment, but also as a new platform for Muslims to carry out the ta'aruf process online.

Ta'aruf through social media offers easy access and flexibility in the process of finding a partner, especially for the younger generation who live in the digital era. Many accounts and special groups of ta'aruf have sprung up on social media to help their followers find a partner according to the criteria while prioritizing sharia values. For example, accounts such as *taaruf.co.id* and *@taaruf_nikah* actively provide online matchmaking services accompanied by da'wah and Islamic education content (Handayani, 2022).

In addition to ease of access, online ta'aruf on social media also allows for an initial, more controlled and open interaction, where potential partners can get to know each other through chat, video calls, or discussions supervised by a companion or ta'aruf account admin. This is different from conventional forms of dating, which are often unsupervised, so they are susceptible to behavior that is not in accordance with religious norms. However, online ta'aruf also faces various challenges. One of the main obstacles is the lack of depth of direct interaction, so that often prospective couples only know each other on the surface, based on information presented digitally. This condition can cause mismatches when meeting in person. In addition, the risk of identity manipulation and intentions that are not serious is also a challenge that must be watched out for in the practice of ta'aruf on social media (Gunawan & Arsyad, 2021).

The phenomenon of ta'aruf through social media is a form of desacralization of the digital space, where religious values are contextualized in modern platforms previously considered secular. It shows the creative and relevant adaptation of contemporary Muslim religiosity to the changing

times, especially among the younger generation familiar with digital technology. From the perspective of the sociology of religion, online ta'aruf reflects the existence of religious agency, which is an individual's effort to maintain and revive Islamic values amid the rapid currents of modernization and globalization. Through social media, users are able to reformulate traditional religious practices in a more flexible and personalized way. However, this adaptation cannot be separated from the risk of religious privatization, where ta'aruf interactions only occur between individuals without the involvement of the family or community that has been the guardian of social and spiritual norms in marriage. This has the potential to weaken the social and religious function of ta'aruf itself (Hambali et al., 2022).

Practically, ta'aruf social media opens new opportunities in Islamic matchmaking, especially for those who live in secular environments, the diaspora, or have limited social space. However, ethical and structured management is needed to achieve success and blessings in online ta'aruf, including adequate supervision, education, and mentoring. Therefore, ta'aruf through social media is not only a technological phenomenon, but also a contemporary phenomenon of religiosity that reflects how Muslims respond to the challenges and opportunities of the digital age. A more in-depth and multidisciplinary study is needed to understand this practice's social, psychological, and spiritual impact.

There are two kinds of roles in managing the ta'aruf account, namely the role of the account owner and the role of the account admin. The account owner is the person who created the ta'aruf account, so he has full rights to set all the

rules in the account they created. In contrast, the account admin is the person in charge of managing the account, such as uploading posts and replying to direct messages. Generally, managing an account requires operational costs such as fees for internet quota and fees for paying admin services (the person who manages the account). Therefore, everyone who wants to do ta'aruf through an Instagram account will be charged an administration fee, the amount of which is determined by the account owner, which will be discussed later (Hildawati & Lestari, 2019, p. 131).

The ta'aruf procedure on social media consists of two stages: the initial ta'aruf stage and the advanced ta'aruf stage. The initial stage consists of several steps, namely: conveying intentions to the admin, then the admin clarifying the intentions of prospective participants, paying the registration fee, following participants filling out personal information, and the admin uploading participant biodata. Afterward, participants wait for someone interested in their biodata and continue with ta'aruf. If it feels suitable, it can be continued to the next stage, namely communicating between parties until an application agreement is reached if both are sure to continue the process (Hildawati & Lestari, 2019, p. 138).

In the Indonesian legal system, the practice of ta'aruf, which is the introduction process before marriage according to Islamic teachings, is not explicitly regulated in the law. However, ta'aruf can be understood as part of the premarital process that aims to ensure the readiness and compatibility of the prospective partner. This process is socially and culturally relevant in Indonesian Muslim society, which upholds the principle of marriage as a sacred bond that is

not only personal, but also social and religious. Although it is not explicitly written in Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage (*Law No. 1 of 1974 Marriage Law*, n.d.), the principle of prudence in choosing a partner aligns with the spirit of ta'aruf.

Indonesia's positive law does not regulate ta'aruf specifically, but several provisions support a healthy and responsible premarital process. For example, Article 6 of the Marriage Law states that marriage must be based on the consent of both parties. This means that the process towards marriage should involve an introductory stage that allows both parties to reach consent consciously and without coercion. In this context, ta'aruf is a socio-religious mechanism that helps prospective couples openly and Islamically understand each other's values, vision of life, and backgrounds. In this case, the ta'aruf account manager who facilitates meetings between prospective spouses is actually carrying out a form of service. Therefore, this activity is subject to the provisions of Law No. 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection (*UU No. 8 Tahun 1999*, n.d.) and Law No. 7 of 2014 concerning Trade (*UU No. 7 Tahun 2014*, n.d.), especially related to transparency, responsibility of business actors, and the protection of users' personal data. Article 65 of the Trade Law requires online business actors to provide accurate, complete, and honest information about the products or services offered, including the legality and transaction mechanism.

As the popularity of online ta'aruf increases, legal risks such as identity fraud, harassment, or misuse of personal data also arise. In this context, the state provides protection through the ITE (Electronic Information and Transaction)

Law, which can be used for a digital violation in the online ta'aruf process. In addition, if there is abuse of a premarital relationship that causes psychological or material damage, the victim can demand legal liability, both civil and criminal. Therefore, online ta'aruf must be carried out with the principle of prudence and based on accountability from the account manager or platform. Ta'aruf in Islam actually has noble values such as honesty, politeness, and noble goals towards marriage. These values align with Indonesia's civil law principles that uphold free consent and responsibility in marriage. Therefore, even though it has not been explicitly regulated in the legislation, ta'aruf can be considered socially and religiously valid if it is carried out within the limits of the applicable law. In the long term, more specific regulations regarding online ta'aruf services may be needed to ensure that this practice is sharia-compliant while protected by national law.

B. Methods

This research is a qualitative research with a normative-empirical approach, which combines the study of religious and legal norms (normative) with observations of social practices that occur in society (empirical), especially related to online ta'aruf on social media (Keegan, 2009). The field research was conducted for six months in Jakarta, focusing on several Instagram accounts that provide ta'aruf services. Data were obtained from primary sources, namely in-depth interviews with Ustadz or religious teachers, ta'aruf account admins, and online ta'aruf participants; as well as secondary sources in the form of books, scientific journals, official

documents, and other relevant literature (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Sutton & Austin, 2015). The data collection technique used interviews and documentation studies. In contrast, the data analysis technique used was non-statistical descriptive qualitative analysis with an inductive approach, which aims to describe and interpret the patterns of meaning of empirical data, associated with a predetermined normative and theoretical framework (Galanis, 2018). Through this approach, the researcher seeks to understand in depth the origin, procedures, and implementation of online ta'aruf practices as a socio-religious phenomenon in the digital era (Sadat et al., 2025).

C. Results

The emergence of new trends and shifts in ta'aruf (introduction) is also influenced by the intense campaigns on social media, especially Instagram, about the dangers of courtship and the invitation to young married people. At the very least, the Instagram account of @indonesiatanpapacaran is one of the main generators of the movement. Initiated by La Ode Munafar since September 2015, Indonesia Without Dating (ITP, *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*) has become a movement that calls for the most significant anti-dating movement currently in Indonesia, with more than 1 million followers on Instagram (Rosyidah & Damastuti, 2023). Through its content uploads, ITP invites its followers to leave the courtship culture that causes moral decadence for the perpetrators and hastens them to switch to marriage. In fact, the movement then branched out and created a young marriage movement. The big narrative that was built from the movement was, "courtship is forbidden and dangerous, marriage is the solution."

1. Account Profiles for Online Ta'aruf

Online ta'aruf takes place not only on platforms specifically designed for this purpose but also on widely used social media such as Facebook and Instagram. Many users create special ta'aruf groups or accounts on Facebook, as well as ta'aruf accounts on Instagram. Instagram was chosen as the location for the study, with the ta'aruf account as the main focus. This choice was made because Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world, with Indonesia ranking in the top four countries for Instagram users. These ta'aruf accounts operate on Instagram and use WhatsApp as the main communication medium.

The taa'ruf account in this context is an Instagram account that functions as a medium or intermediary for people who want to find a partner in a ta'aruf way. To identify relevant accounts for analysis, the primary search term "ta'aruf" was employed on the social media platform. From the resulting accounts, a purposive sample was curated based on two key criteria: a large follower base and a high level of activity. Following this selection, formal permission was obtained from account administrators to collect data. The final sample comprised five prominent accounts, whose follower counts at the time of data collection were as follows: @taarufonline.id (48,900) (*Ta'aruf Online Indonesia (TOI) (@taarufonline.Id)*, 2025), @taaruf_nikah (189,000) (*CARI JODOH TAARUF (@taaruf_nikah)*, 2025), @taaruf.co.id (351,000) (*BISMILLAH, Temui Jodohmu (@taaruf.Co.Id)*, 2025), @@taaruf_yuuk(37,800) (*Taaruf_yuuk*, 2025), and @

rumah.taaruf (8,600) (*Rumah Taaruf myQuran (@rumah. Taaruf)*, 2025). Each has a similar procedure, although some are slightly different. One of them is application-based taarufonline.id, which requires the followers to download the ta’aruf application first and follow the procedure according to the instructions contained in the application.

There is also a community-based, namely Rumah Ta’aruf MyQuran, that you must join and become a community member first. Then you can do ta’aruf with the intermediary of the Rumah Ta’aruf MyQuran if the member is willing to do so. Some are done through Instagram and WhatsApp as further communication media, such as @taaruf.co.id and @taaruf_yuuk.

Table 1. *The data of @taaruf.co.id, @taaruf_yuuk, and @taaruf_nikah’s Instagram account*

Ta’aruf Account	Number of Participants	Number of Successful Marriages	Success Rate (%)	Uniqueness / Note
@taaruf.co.id	1.810	78	4,31%	More chat communication, less family involvement
@taaruf_yuuk	2.350	95	4,04%	Pre-ta’aruf consultation facilities
@taaruf_nikah	3.100	120	3,87%	The identity verification system is quite strict

Source: The author’s interpretation of data using online taa’ruf services

Online ta'aruf accounts such as @taaruf.co.id, @taaruf_yuuk, and @taaruf_nikah have the primary purpose of helping their followers who are interested in getting married to find a partner according to their criteria. However, in addition to the purpose of matchmaking, these accounts also carry out the function of da'wah and religious education through the various content they upload. Some of the characteristics of the content found on these accounts include da'wah posts that explain the procedures for establishing relationships between men and women according to Islamic law, as well as motivational posts specifically aimed at singles. It should be noted that the term "single" in the context of these accounts refers to individuals who are considered old enough to marry but have not yet found a partner. In addition, these accounts also contain several testimonials from followers who have successfully used their services as intermediaries in finding a life partner. The presence of these testimonials serves as social proof as well as a promotional medium that strengthens the credibility of the ta'aruf accounts.

2. Procedures of Online Ta'aruf on Various Social Media Platforms

Each online ta'aruf account has a different procedure. This difference is usually found in the communication process after participants express their interest in participants of the opposite sex. The initial steps to make a difference through social media accounts are generally the same: filling in your personal data in

the provided form. It is just that the place is different, for example, the @taaruf_nikah, @taaruf.co.id, and @taaruf_yuukaccounts that use DM (direct message) or Instagram messages as the first step for prospective participants to apply for this online ta'aruf. Then the Instagram admin will direct prospective participants to open the WhatsApp link, where in WhatsApp, there is a form that has been provided, and prospective participants are required to fill in their personal data according to the available form (Tiana, Revi, and Husna, personal communication, November 18 and 21, 2020).

Unlike the case with @taarufonline.id's account, @taarufonline.id uses Instagram only as a promotional platform and uses the application as a forum for prospective participants to register themselves. Prospective participants will be directed to download the @taarufonline.id's application, in which prospective participants will fill out a form containing personal data (Syifa, personal communication, November 19, 2020). After filling in the personal data, these accounts will ask prospective participants to pay an administrative fee, whose prices range from IDR 70,000 to IDR 200,000 (Tiana, Revi, Husna, and Syifa, personal communication, November 19, 2020). Furthermore, the community-based @rumahtaaruf account requires participants to join as members, and then they will be required to participate in ta'aruf studies or training groups. After participating in the training, members can choose whether to study at Rumah Ta'aruf MyQuran or in other ta'aruf media (Rumah Taaruf myQuran, n.d.). Account managers provide similar

reasons when asked about the fees. Syifa, one of the account managers, stated that:

The registration fee is held to screen potential participants who are serious about ta'aruf. They considered that potential participants who were not serious about the rules or just wanted to play games in finding a partner would usually object if asked to pay. Unlike the case with prospective participants who are serious about having a ritual, they will not object because they intend to find a partner to marry and build a household together (Syifa, personal communication, November 19, 2020).

After paying the administration fee, new prospective participants can be declared qualified and joined as participants. Next is the process of uploading the CV or personal data of the participants. In this step, each account has different procedures and conditions. The @taaruf_nikah's account leaves it to the participants how their personal data will be uploaded (Tiana, personal communication, November 19, 2020). She added that:

If the prospective participant is willing to upload their complete personal data with photos and personal contacts, then the admin will upload it according to the participant's request and willingness. However, suppose the participant is only willing to upload personal data without photos and personal contacts. In that case, the admin will upload a CV by blurring the participant's

photo and include the contact information of the participant's relatives to be contacted by participants interested in their CV (Tiana, personal communication, November 19, 2020).

The account admin who uses this system considers that the admin and the team do not deserve to be intermediaries until the ta'aruf process because they do not know the ta'aruf participants at all, and judges that people who know the participants are more suitable to be intermediaries in the ta'aruf process (Tiana, personal communication, November 19, 2020). It can be seen in the post and caption on the Instagram posts that the participants can choose how personal contacts or photos will be displayed. This is different from the @taaruf_yuuk, @taarufonline.id, and @taaruf.co.id's accounts, which prefer to keep the photos and personal contacts of participants secret until they are completely determined to the khitbah process. This account admin bridges and accompanies participants from the beginning to the khitbah process (Husna, Revi, and Syifa, personal communication, November 21, 2020). In the @taarufonline.id's application, participant photos will open automatically if interested participants want to continue to the meeting stage. The admins of these two accounts also monitor their communication. They are not allowed to have personal contact without an intermediary. The meeting process will also be arranged and accompanied by the team from the account. At @taarufonline.id, participants will meet at the domicile of female participants; male participants will come alone.

In contrast, female participants will be accompanied by their families or mahram, as well as a team from the @taarufonline.id account (Syifa, personal communication, November 21, 2020). These accounts keep the confidentiality of the participants' personal contacts and photos. After going through these processes, participants can take a step independently to determine whether to continue with the khitbah and then get married, or stop only until the meeting, or even stop while still in the process of asking and answering via chat before the meeting. The difference in the provisions in each of these accounts raises the question of whether participants who include personal contacts have an intense relationship without an intermediary or a mahram, which can still be called a ta'aruf process.

3. Motives and Purposes of Registering Online Ta'aruf Accounts

The purpose of making ta'aruf on social media is generally the same: helping singles immediately find a partner in the right way and path. Based on the results of an interview with one of the teams from the @taarufonline.id's account, Syifa said that, in the form of the @taarufonline.id's account as a medium for ta'aruf, she was inspired by her experiences while participating in routine religion studies, she said that:

I saw many sisters in the religion study who still do not have a partner and are afraid to choose a partner, considering that nowadays many men

are not serious and only want to make women girlfriends without intending to marry them. I took the initiative to create a forum that can be used as a bridge for brothers and sisters who still do not have a partner and are seriously looking for a partner to marry, not just to be a girlfriend (Syifa, personal communication, November 21, 2020).

Socially, online ta'aruf accounts are a form of social struggle in the public space. These accounts emerged in response to the dominance of matchmaking narratives and intersex relationships that were considered incompatible with Islamic values, such as the culture of free dating or dating apps that tended to be secular and commercial. Online ta'aruf accounts seek to strengthen the Muslim community's identity and morality amid modernity and globalization by providing sharia-based alternatives. It is a collective effort to defend and reproduce religious norms in the digital realm openly. From the economic side, managing online ta'aruf accounts is also inseparable from economic struggle. Many account managers are service business actors who take advantage of digital economy opportunities by offering services with religious and social added value. Revenue from registration fees and service packages allows for operational continuity, technology development, and the provision of more professional assistance or verification. In this context, online ta'aruf is a form of Islamic economy that combines religious values with modern market mechanisms and creates a source of livelihood for its managers. Thus, the motivation behind the emergence of online ta'aruf

accounts is not only about meeting religious needs, but also a form of social struggle against dominant narratives incompatible with sharia, as well as innovative economic efforts in the digital era.

4. Online Ta'aruf Versus Face-to-Face Ta'aruf

Even though there is currently an online ta'aruf, face-to-face (offline) ta'aruf is still in demand because each has advantages and disadvantages. In online ta'aruf, social media, such as Instagram and WhatsApp, simplify the process that must be passed because there are many potential partners, thereby increasing one's chances of finding a partner who best fits the criteria they want. However, in offline ta'aruf, data from parties wishing to perform ta'aruf is considered more valid than data from online ta'aruf parties because the candidate has a direct relationship with the intermediary. In addition, the intermediary is a person who is responsible for two people who want to perform ta'aruf. Therefore, before their biodata is exchanged, the intermediary will thoroughly check the relevant background and provide an objective assessment (Hildawati & Lestari, 2019, p. 140).

Online ta'aruf also has the potential to cause problems because personal data of participants, such as names, addresses, cellphone numbers, and also face photos can become public consumption because there is no guarantee that of the hundreds of thousands of followers of the ta'aruf account all are "good people," not even all followers are people who really want to

find a partner. Such personal information can create a “gap” for people to commit online crimes (cybercrime), which has become a trend in various countries, including Indonesia (Rifauddin & Halida, 2018, p. 99). In addition, at offline ta’aruf, intermediaries play an important role as facilitators between the two candidates because the entire process is the responsibility of the intermediary. The intermediary plays a critical role in guiding and overseeing the ta’aruf process, ensuring that it adheres to the principles of the Quran and Hadith. This involves several important guidelines: individuals should never be alone without the presence of a mahram; physical contact such as holding hands or hugging is prohibited; and conversations should be restricted to matters directly related to marriage. For instance, it is considered inappropriate to express personal feelings for potential partners, to exchange messages for non-marital purposes, or to engage in flirtatious behavior. Different from online ta’aruf, which in some cases is quite risky because it can open up interactions with the ta’aruf partner, some admins hand over the ta’aruf process directly to the candidates without assistance. Thus, the involvement of intermediaries in offline ta’aruf gives more security and peace of mind because it keeps the ta’aruf process in the corridor of sharia compared to online ta’aruf (Karim & Desiningrum, 2015, p. 46).

Online ta’aruf provides several important opportunities. These platforms facilitate a safer and more targeted dating process than free dating, especially in Muslim communities where the value of holiness and

marriage commitment is a top priority. In addition, online ta'aruf opens access for diaspora Muslims or those living in confined environments, thus expanding the possibility of finding a religious and culturally aligned partner. More than that, online ta'aruf also has the potential to be a means to reconstruct modern and adaptive Islamic marriage values, combining aspects of ethics, spirituality, and digital technology. This shows that social transformation is not always synonymous with value degradation but can be a renewal process. However, several significant challenges cannot be ignored. Empirical data show that the success rate of online ta'aruf is still relatively small. For example, based on interviews with the @ta'arufonline.id's account manager, out of 4,506 participants, only 102 reached the marriage stage. On the @ta'aruf.co.id's account, out of 1,810 participants, only 78 managed to get married (Syifa and Revi, personal communication, November 19 and 21, 2020). This figure indicates that most online ta'aruf participants fail to find a suitable partner.

The main factor influencing the low success rate is the lack of direct involvement and recommendations from third parties or family who personally know the potential partner. Participants tend to only know their potential partners based on personal data that is visible digitally, without adequate social verification. As a result, after going through the question-and-answer process via chat or face-to-face meetings, many feel that they are not suitable. This is different from conventional ta'aruf (offline), where prospective spouses are usually recommended by parties who already know both, so

the compatibility and success of marriage is relatively higher. Therefore, offline ta'aruf is still considered more effective in ensuring the harmony of couples in terms of personality and social background. In addition, other challenges that also arise are the lack of digital Islamic literacy among young users, the potential for identity manipulation, and the absence of assistance from families or Ustadz who have been acting as supervisors and advisors in the traditional ta'aruf process. The discussion also showed that online ta'aruf could not be separated from economic motives. These platforms operate as a service that charges a registration fee and offers a variety of subscription plans. This phenomenon is part of the Islamic economy that integrates sharia principles with modern market mechanisms. Thus, online ta'aruf is a new form of religious-based economic activity that deserves academic attention and clear regulations to maintain sharia and ethics.

D. Discussion

In the ever-growing digital era, online ta'aruf practice has become an interesting socio-religious phenomenon to study, especially related to the nature of religiosity and the dynamics of social interaction that accompany it. This discussion outlines how online ta'aruf represents the adaptation of Islamic values in modern technology, while highlighting the challenges and opportunities that arise in practice. Online ta'aruf can be seen as a manifestation of the religious agency of young Muslims facing the challenges of modern times. This process allows them to uphold Islamic principles, such as maintaining the

limits of interaction between the opposite sex and avoiding free dating, while taking advantage of the ease of technology to expand the network of introductions. In this case, online ta'aruf is not only a medium for matchmaking, but also a new space to live and negotiate religiosity contextually.

However, the discourse surrounding halal practices and sharia compliance in the context of online ta'aruf necessitates further critical analysis and study. Although normatively these platforms claim to operate within the corridor of sharia, field practice shows ambiguity in communication and the intensity of relationships that sometimes approach conventional forms of dating. This shows the need for a deeper understanding of the substance of religiosity in the digital context. As an alternative space, online ta'aruf provides several important opportunities. These platforms facilitate a safer and more targeted dating process than free dating, especially in Muslim communities where the value of holiness and marriage commitment is a top priority. In addition, online ta'aruf opens access for diaspora Muslims or those living in confined environments, thus expanding the possibility of finding a religious and culturally aligned partner. More than that, online ta'aruf also has the potential to be a means to reconstruct modern and adaptive Islamic marriage values, combining aspects of ethics, spirituality, and digital technology. This shows that social transformation is not always synonymous with value degradation but can be a renewal process.

The relation of matters relating to the conditions for a valid marriage with ta'aruf is that ta'aruf can try to minimize household damage in the future. It is hoped that the two potential partners who will go through the following

process previously understand each other and understand each other's background, status, religion, and identity. In this ta'aruf process, each party can still refuse if one of the parties is not pleased. This is because in the ta'aruf process, there has been no physical contact and no one has been harmed by both parties (Wulansari, 2018, p. 233). Ta'aruf itself is done with an intermediary or mediator. It can be done anywhere and, on any occasion, but still, the meeting has no immoral element. However, men and women can exchange information without feeling awkward. The mediator is neutral and may not hide any information that is considered important for the continuity of the relationship between the two parties before proceeding to the next stage (Hakim, 2014, p. 73).

The concept of ta'aruf, which involves intermediaries or mediators in the communication process both before and after this meeting, can be made a plus point from ta'aruf, both online and offline. The neutral role of the mediator can allow both parties to exchange information about themselves honestly and comfortably. The solid process without much small talk and wasting time can also be a plus point because both parties intend to be serious. The meeting held after the two were steady was also not carried out by the two parties alone. The meeting was carried out, accompanied by the mediator and the woman's family, to reduce the harm or bad possibilities that would occur if the two parties only met alone. The exchange of false information is also very unlikely to occur, so both parties are stable before proceeding to marriage.

Unlike matchmaking apps that are not ta'aruf-based, the absence of specific provisions and procedures in general

applications allows users to have complete freedom in undergoing the introduction process, without any supervision or clear sharia restrictions. This condition often causes various problems, including the increased risk of fraud due to a lack of commitment to get married. The most common form of fraud involves the use of fake identities, where, after establishing intense communication through online messages, one of the parties is suddenly reluctant to meet in person and even disappears without a trace. Furthermore, there are also cases where the introduction continues until marriage, but then it is revealed that the man still has a legal wife who was not previously known. This kind of situation not only causes conflicts in the household but also has legal implications and is even one of the reasons for the annulment of marriage in the Religious Court. In many cases, the annulment of the marriage occurs due to misunderstandings or non-transparent information between the two parties, which should be avoided through an introductory process in accordance with the principles of ta'aruf.

This phenomenon is clearly contrary to the conditions for the legality of marriage as stipulated in Law Number 1 of 1974 (*Law No. 1 of 1974 Marriage Law*, n.d.) concerning marriage, especially related to the principles of honesty and openness in the relationship between husband and wife. Therefore, brides-to-be who want to undergo the ta'aruf process must be more selective in choosing the media or platform used, considering the many online ta'aruf services circulating on various social media, with different standards and regulations. The selection of the correct and reliable media is a crucial step to maintain the integrity of the ta'aruf

process so that it remains within the sharia and state law corridor. These things are worrying about happening, and in fact, many marriage annulment cases in the Religious Courts have the same reason, namely, a misunderstanding of one of the parties after the marriage. This surely violates the legal requirements of marriage in the 1974 Marriage Law. Brothers and sisters who intend to ta'aruf must also choose the most appropriate media, considering the number of online ta'aruf services on various social media and with different conditions.

Furthermore, although the process differs from conventional buying and selling transactions, the registration fee system imposed on online ta'aruf accounts structurally has similarities with other digital-based trading practices. The difference lies in the type of product offered: not in the form of physical goods, but in Islamic matchmaking services that specifically carry religious values as the normative basis. This kind of digital-based economic activity in Indonesia has a clear legal basis, as stipulated in Law Number 7 of 2014 concerning Trade (*UU No. 7 Tahun 2014*, n.d.), which includes online and offline trading activities. More specifically, Article 65 of the law requires electronic commerce business actors to provide complete and correct information regarding identity, business legality, service specifications, prices, payment methods, and service delivery mechanisms to consumers (Situmeang, 2018, p. 13). Within this framework, registering fees by online ta'aruf accounts can be seen as a form of service business that is legally valid and administratively justified, if its transparency and accountability are maintained. The fees are generally allocated for the platform's operational

purposes, such as system management, account verification, content filtering, and user service support.

Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that these services have an economic motive, especially when those platforms set specific rates, offer premium service plans, or make it a sustainable form of business. In this case, online ta'aruf is an interesting example of how the values of religiosity negotiate with the logic of the digital market. This does not necessarily negate the Islamic value of the service but places it in the context of the "Islamic economy", where economic activities are carried out while still referring to sharia principles, while adapting to modern market mechanisms. More than just an economic transaction, online ta'aruf also shows a distinctive religious existence in the digital age, where generations of Muslims use technology for practical needs and to fulfill their spiritual and ethical aspirations. This platform is an alternative space to consciously express and strengthen religious identity, even when done through a medium that has been considered secular. In this context, online ta'aruf services are not just a medium for matchmaking, but also an arena for articulating religiosity based on personal choices, ethical reflection, and spiritual awareness that transforms in the digital era. Thus, online ta'aruf represents young Muslims' social and religious transformation and reflects the emergence of a new economic sector based on digital religious services. This phenomenon has become relevant to be studied further, not only from a legal and economic point of view, but also in the context of the shift in religious existence that the digital Muslim generation continues to negotiate in an effort to balance spiritual values with the demands of the times.

Although this ta'aruf is considered to be quite ideal in finding a serious partner for marriage, this ta'aruf cannot be the only way to make a *sakinah* (peace), *mawaddah* (love), and *warahmah* (affection) marriage happen. Ta'aruf, framed by Islamic law and its various rules, has not been accepted by the community, let alone made into a state regulation. People who make ta'aruf as a process before marriage have a movement called the anti-dating movement. One of the movers also comes from one of the ta'aruf accounts. This anti-dating movement argues that people who do not practice ta'aruf and choose courtship as a process of self-identification can damage the younger generation, especially for women, and have the potential to cause violence between men and women. According to the National Commission Against Violence Against Women's 2019 Annual Records, husband violence against wives ranks first in cases of violence against women, the same as in previous years, with 5,950 cases, followed by violence in courtship, which was 2,521 cases (Komnas Perempuan, 2025). The founder of the Indonesia without dating movement also argues that Indonesia without dating can only be realized if the state implements Islamic law and has targeted to abolish courtship and implement ta'aruf in Indonesia by 2024.

Attempts to abolish courtship and apply ta'aruf as the only way to find a partner in Indonesia are certainly not relevant to people in Indonesia who have various backgrounds. Ta'aruf is a good solution, but that does not mean that couples who do not meet through ta'aruf always bear negative results. It can be seen in the non-ta'aruf introduction process that a man and a woman can identify their potential partner through

discussion and chat and strengthen the inner connection between the two before heading to marriage. Ta'aruf does not need to be made into a movement or state regulation. For those interested in engaging in ta'aruf, this approach is preferable as it aligns clearly with the provisions of Islamic law. However, those who choose not to do ta'aruf are expected to get married in accordance with the provisions of the law.

The above explanation opens space for critical reflection on the change in the form and substance of religiosity in online ta'aruf practice. On the one hand, the emergence of digital ta'aruf platforms can be read as a creative response of young Muslims to the challenges of the times. Globalization limited social space, and the rise of promiscuity encourages them to seek a "middle" path that still upholds religious values but is also relevant to their digital lifestyle. It is a form of "religious agency", in which individuals seek to maintain their faith values in a previously secular space: cyberspace. Furthermore, online ta'aruf also shows how the relationship between religion and technology is not just instrumental but transformational. Religious practices are no longer based only on physical space and communal relationships, but are now being expanded into a more fluid, personal, and adaptive digital space. Thus, the fundamental questions are: "Is online ta'aruf legal according to the sharia?" and "How does the change in medium affect the meaning of religiosity in the practice?"

However, this analysis also highlights that "halal" or "sharia-compliant" claims in online ta'aruf do not necessarily guarantee full conformity with Islamic values. Many users feel that online ta'aruf is more "safe" than conventional

dating. However, in practice, they still experience private communication that is not fully supervised, even intense to a level that resembles a romantic relationship. This raises an important question: Is this digital piety, or is it merely symbolic and adaptive? The question “Is this a new form of religious expression or is it a distortion of traditional religious practice?” is essential. In the sociology of religion, such a phenomenon is known as a form of desacralization in the secular world, which is an effort to present religion in a realm that was not previously considered religious, such as social media or digital applications. In online ta’aruf, we see individual efforts to recontextualize religious values to stay alive in the digital space. However, it should be noted that not all forms of digital adaptation are substantially religious. When online ta’aruf is carried out without the principle of prudence, without the involvement of family or community, and is more likely to be based on personal selection, like dating apps, then this practice is prone to fall into the privatization of religion—religion becomes a personal matter, detached from broader social norms. At this point, online ta’aruf not only presents a new space for religious practice but also raises the ambiguity of norms previously firmly established in the Islamic tradition. This can enrich the dynamics of contemporary religiosity, but it also requires a clear ethical and legal framework to prevent abuse or commercialization contrary to its spiritual values.

In a socio-religious context, the online ta’aruf practice presents many significant opportunities for the young generation of Muslims in the digital age. First, it provides an alternative to matchmaking that is more in line with Islamic values, especially for those who want to avoid the culture of free

dating that is rife among young people. Second, online ta'aruf facilitates a relatively safer and more targeted introduction process, because it is based on a serious intention to get married and is often accompanied by a commitment to sharia. Third, the existence of this platform also opens a more inclusive space for the diaspora Muslim community or individuals who geographically and socially have difficulty finding a partner in their physical environment. Fourth, online ta'aruf has the potential to be a new means to reconstruct the understanding of Islamic marriage, with a more modern, adaptive, and reflective approach to the needs of the times. However, behind these opportunities, various challenges cannot be ignored. One of the main challenges is the low digital Islamic literacy among young users, which can cause the practice of ta'aruf to deviate from its original values and ethics. In addition, there are difficulties in distinguishing between sincere religious intentions and emotional impulses or personal desires that are not always in harmony with sharia principles. Another challenge is the potential for identity manipulation, fraud, and emotional exploitation in online communications that take place unsupervised. Finally, the absence of companions, such as Ustadz, guardians, or family, in the online ta'aruf process is also a serious problem, because it can eliminate the function of social and spiritual control that has been an important part of the ta'aruf tradition in Islam.

Thus, online ta'aruf cannot be immediately claimed as a form of "Islamic matchmaking or courtship" without critically evaluating the values and practices surrounding it. In the context of contemporary religiosity, it has the potential to become a legitimate religious expression if it is carried out

ethically, contextually, and still based on the basic principles of ta'aruf in Islam, such as openness, the involvement of companions or guardians, and a sincere intention to build a household. On the other hand, if the practice of online ta'aruf moves away from these principles, then it will only become a new packaging of the dating culture that claims to be Islamic, without having an authentic religious substance.

E. Conclusion

Online ta'aruf as an Islamic matchmaking medium represents the adaptation of Islamic values to the dynamics of the digital lives of young Muslims. In the midst of globalization and technological transformation, online ta'aruf is seen as a more "halal" and safe alternative to conventional dating, because it provides space to maintain sharia principles, expand the network of potential partners, and allow for a more reflective selection process. However, weaknesses still emerge, such as the potential for information bias, unaccompanied communication, and lack of control over deviations from the essence of traditional ta'aruf. This phenomenon also shows a gap in digital literacy and religious understanding that can distort values in practice. Therefore, there is a need for digital education based on Islamic values, assistance from religious or family leaders, and the development of platforms that are not only technological but also educational and provide premarital counseling. This research confirms that online ta'aruf is a new space for negotiation between faith, culture, and technology, reflecting the socio-religious transformation of the young generation of Muslims in the digital age.

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