

DIGITAL TAARUF AND THE MEDIATION OF ISLAMIC MARRIAGE LAW: MAQASID AL-SYARĪ'AH, SADD AL-DHARĪ'A, AND NETWORKED RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY ON INSTAGRAM

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Abstract

The shift of Islamic marriage practices to social media has given rise to a form of religiously mediated matchmaking whose legal status has yet to be adequately examined. This study analyses digital taaruf on the Instagram account (@taarufpadang) as a contemporary expression of Islamic family law: how do online intermediaries (wasith) facilitate sharia-compliant matchmaking whilst upholding its fiqh requirements? In response to public concerns that uncontrolled premarital interactions erode the moral boundaries of young Muslims in Padang, this platform positions itself as a trustworthy alternative. The research employs a juridical-empirical method with a qualitative case study—comprising interviews, observations and document analysis—interpreted through the framework of Indonesian Islamic family law, as well as the principles of maqāsid al-syarī'ah, sadd al-dharī'ah and networked religious authorities. The findings suggest that these accounts' structure interactions to prevent khalwat, whilst simultaneously shifting the authority to mediate from guardians and traditional kinship networks to digital administrators. Digital taaruf represents a tangible yet ambivalent reconfiguration of fiqh—extending the maqāsid to the online sphere, yet raising new questions about authority, accountability and the limits of permissible digital interaction.

Keywords: digital taaruf; Islamic family law; maqasid al-sharia; networked religious authority; digital mediation

Abstrak

Migrasi praktik pernikahan Islam ke media sosial melahirkan bentuk perijodohan termediasi agama yang status hukumnya masih kurang dikaji. Penelitian ini menganalisis taaruf digital pada akun Instagram (@taarufpadang) sebagai ekspresi kontemporer hukum keluarga Islam: bagaimana perantara daring (*wasith*) memfasilitasi perijodohan *syar'i* sekaligus menjaga syarat fikihnya? Menanggapi kekhawatiran masyarakat bahwa interaksi pranikah tak terkontrol mengikis batas moral muda Muslim Padang, platform ini memosisikan diri sebagai alternatif amanah. Penelitian menggunakan metode yuridis-empiris dengan studi kasus kualitatif—wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen—dibaca melalui kerangka hukum keluarga Islam Indonesia serta *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*, *sadd al-dharī'ah*, dan otoritas keagamaan berjejaring. Temuan menunjukkan akun tersebut menata interaksi untuk mencegah *khalwat*, sekaligus memindahkan otoritas mediasi dari wali dan kekerabatan tradisional ke administrator digital. *Taaruf* digital merupakan rekonfigurasi fikih yang nyata sekaligus ambivalen—memperluas *maqāsid* ke ruang daring, namun memunculkan pertanyaan baru tentang otoritas, akuntabilitas, dan batas interaksi digital yang dibolehkan.

Kata Kunci: *taaruf* digital; hukum keluarga Islam; *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*; otoritas keagamaan berjejaring; mediasi digital

INTRODUCTION

The wave of modernization driven by globalization and the penetration of information technology has become a major catalyst for social transformation in Indonesia's major cities. This phenomenon has universally altered the patterns of intergenerational relationships among young people, where social interactions are no longer entirely constrained by conventional boundaries. Digital technology and urban lifestyles create a more fluid social space, allowing global popular cultural values to easily enter and influence how young people build their interpersonal relationships (Luhuringbudi et al., 2025). This transformation ultimately demands sociological adaptation that often clashes with long-established traditional values.

In the city of Padang, these dynamics have created a sharp cultural paradox, particularly for communities that firmly adhere to the philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*. This philosophy constitutes the fundamental identity of Minangkabau society, affirming that customs do not stand alone but must be rooted in Islamic law, which derives directly from the Qur'an as the absolute guide to life. As a socio-religious constitution, this principle creates an inseparable reciprocal relationship, in which the noble values of local culture serve as the vessel, while God's law becomes the spirit that animates every action of the community.

In practice, this principle demands that every aspect of life—including mechanisms of social interaction and marriage rituals—be consistently filtered through religious moral standards to preserve individual dignity and collective blessings. The existence of this philosophy makes Minangkabau a unique entity, where cultural integrity is measured by the extent to which these traditions reflect obedience to Allah SWT, while simultaneously serving as the last line of defence against the onslaught of contradictory foreign values (Amin, 2022).

As a region that places Islamic Sharia as the primary foundation for its actions, the pressure of contemporary social norms is beginning to erode the traditional boundaries of interaction between the sexes. This situation reflects a shift in moral standards through the decentralization of norms, where religious values—which previously served as collective social control in the public sphere—are now shifting toward the subjective private sphere. Consequently, mechanisms of self-control are weakening, leading to a redefinition of behavioural standards amid the tension between religious ideals and the realities of modern social interaction.

As a manifestation of this shift in values, the prevalence of dating culture among Muslim youth in Padang has evolved into a pattern of premarital interaction that is considered normal, even though sociologically it leads to moral degradation and violations of Sharia law. This phenomenon is empirically confirmed by the proliferation of young couples found in public spaces without a valid legal status. This situation ultimately creates an urgent need for social surveillance and regulatory enforcement by relevant authorities to maintain social order (Fatima & Siddiqui, 2021; Kanth et al., 2024; Saharso et al., 2023).

Table 1.
Data on dating in public spaces

Figure	Description	Link
 Pacaran di Tempat Gelap, 6 Pasang Muda-mudi di Padang Digerebek Satpol PP	Officers patrolling the Batu Grib area, Padang Beach, and the sidewalk on Khatib Sulaiman Street found a young couple sitting in a poorly lit area.	https://www.radarsumbar.com/baca/42353/pacaran-di-tempat-gelap-6-pasang-muda-mudi-di-padang-digerebek-satpol-pp/
 Asyik Bermesraan di Tempat Umum, Sepasang Remaja di Padang Diamankan Satpol PP	A couple of teenagers were caught making out in public and were apprehended by personnel from the Padang Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP).	https://sakato.co.id/asyik-bermesraan-di-tempat-umum-sepasang-remaja-di-padang-diamankan-satpol-pp/

Miris! Razia Satpol PP Padang Dapati Dua Pria Remaja dengan Satu Perempuan dalam Kamar Penginapan Kiki Julianti • Selasa, 16 Jul 2024 14:08 WIB 14:08 	The Padang Municipal Police Unit (Satpol) secured a number of teenage couples during a raid on boarding houses and hotels.	https://katasumber.com/miris-razia-satpol-pp-padang-dapati-dua-pria-remaja-dengan-satu-perempuan-dalam-kamar-penginapan/
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(Source: news media, 2026)

This points to a vulnerability within the Islamic family law system at the grassroots level, where the boundaries of *khalwat* are beginning to blur under the unchecked influence of modernity. Sociological realities in Padang confirm this trend: enforcement raids by the Satpol PP caught seven unmarried couples at budget hotels and inns, some even holding alcohol parties. This transformation of social values is no longer confined to private settings but has become evident in public and sacred spaces alike. A report from April 2026 documented public outrage over a couple embracing at the Grand Mosque of West Sumatra—a symbol of regional religiosity—reflecting eroding respect for *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* norms (Lechkar, 2022).

This situation is aggravated by frequent vigilante raids in high-risk locales such as Sungai Bangek, Padang Beach, and areas around places of worship, which are often misused for illicit encounters. The erosion of normative controls increases susceptibility to criminality and more serious legal breaches. Weak self-regulation and inadequate supervision of secluded cross-sex interactions have catalysed extortion schemes by individuals impersonating officials and legal proceedings concerning dissemination of indecent material arising from unhealthy relationships. These observations indicate that, absent adaptive mediation mechanisms and effective social controls, moral decline will persistently threaten family and community integrity in Padang, demonstrating that unrestrained interaction constitutes not only a social problem but a tangible risk to lineage and honour under *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (Alfarid et al., 2022; Amin, 2022; Tovalini & Hanoselina, 2022).

This condition is crucial because free interaction often exceeds religious ethical boundaries, while Islam offers a solution for meeting without violating privacy or honour. Islam has provided a way out in assessing this situation through the mechanism of *taaruf*, which is a form of protection for the purity and honour of the ummah from the snares of sin (Huda et al., 2025; Jati, 2023; Metriadi et al., 2025). This step is taken in the spirit of the Qur'an in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, which commands humans to get to know one another (*lita'arafu*), which in the context of premarital relationships is interpreted as getting to know each other's character and background in a respectful manner (Aziz et al., 2025; Hs et al., 2021).

According to *Tafsir Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah* (Markaz Ta'dzhim al-Qur'an, supervised by Sheikh Prof. Dr. Imad Zuhair Hafidz, Islamic University of Madinah), this verse explains that after instructing believers to uphold brotherhood and reconcile fighting groups, while prohibiting insulting, mocking, resentment, fault-finding, and gossiping, Allah reminds them of their shared lineage, reinforced by spiritual brotherhood in faith. He created humanity from one man, Adam, and one woman, Eve, so that none should feel superior in lineage; through reproduction, humanity became nations, then tribes and family groups, fostering mutual recognition. Indeed, the most noble before Allah are those of the highest piety, for He is All-Knowing of His servants' affairs (Mandala & Putri, 2022).

Taaruf is more than a social option; it is a religious practice intended to safeguard individuals from adultery and ensure that the union aligns with Allah's guidance. In Minangkabau, this *sharia* principle has long been embedded in a cultural tradition placing the family at the centre of matchmaking, beginning with *maresek*—an initial inquiry by a senior female emissary assessing compatibility without direct interaction between individuals. The matrilineal system is evident in *maminang*, where the woman's family visits the man's home to formally propose, bringing betel nut in a *carano*. In Pariaman and coastal regions, this is reinforced by the *bajapuik/manjapuik*

marapulai procession, with the *mamak* (mother's brother) and respected women mediating to ensure the introduction remains within customary and religious bounds.

However, over time, this communal, face-to-face method of *taaruf* has begun to transform through digital channels in response to changing patterns of interaction in modern society. The emergence of the @taarufpadang account represents this shift in mediation tools, increasingly leveraging social media platforms. The account appears to take over the role of traditional matchmakers in the initial exploratory stage, but with wider and more efficient reach for the younger generation in Padang. This digital transformation brings new challenges in harmonising the sacred values of traditional *taaruf* with the ease of access in cyberspace, shifting the mechanism of introduction from the domestic family sphere to the digital public sphere (Sumarno et al., 2022).

This shift in medium has raised fundamental legal issues regarding the status of the @taarufpadang account as a non-formal institution within the contemporary Islamic legal system. The focus of this study is on determining the extent to which such digital mechanisms can guarantee the protection of individual rights, the validity of prospective partners' data, and their effectiveness in preventing the negative impacts of a culture of casual dating. It is crucial to examine this matter to ensure that the noble intention of facilitating *taaruf* does not become entangled in legal uncertainty (*gharar*) regarding information, but rather remains grounded in the principles of transparency and legal certainty that provide tangible benefits to the broader public (Juswandi et al., 2023; Supriadi et al., 2022).

In addressing this issue, this study uses regulatory parameters sourced from the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) and the rules of *fiqh munakahat*. Normatively, Articles 12 and 13 of the KHI have regulated the mechanism of betrothal (*khitbah*), but have not specifically touched on the realm of digital. This is where the legal argument stands, that the efforts of the @taarufpadang account are a form of implementation of the *sadd ad-dzarî'ah* principle (closing the path to destruction), where the admin acts as a legal filter to ensure that the *nadzor* stage (seeing the prospective spouse) is carried out in accordance with religious guidelines without any *khalwat*. Furthermore, the principle of “*The best of people are those who are most beneficial to others*” (HR. Ath-Thabari), which is the basis of this account's spirit, must be translated into legally accountable operational standards in order to realize the benefit of the *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

To address this matter, the study applies regulatory standards drawn from the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) and principles of *fiqh munaqahat*. From a normative perspective, the procedure for engagement (*khitbah*) is stipulated in Article 12 of the KHI, which provides:

“An engagement may be proposed to a woman who is still a virgin or to a widow whose iddah period has ended.”

Furthermore, Article 13 of the KHI stipulates the legal consequences of such a proposal as follows:

“(1) A proposal does not give rise to legal consequences, and the parties are free to terminate the engagement; (2) The termination of the engagement by either the man or the woman does not result in onerous legal consequences, unless there is a written agreement or a prevailing custom.”

Although Articles 12 and 13 of the KHI regulate the procedures and legal implications of engagement, these provisions are conventional in nature and do not specifically address the realm of digital intermediaries or patterns of interaction via electronic media, which are now widespread (Aziz, 2024; Taman et al., 2025). This is where the legal argument stands, that the efforts of the @taarufpadang account are a form of implementation of the *sadd ad-dzarî'ah* principle (closing the path to destruction), where the admin acts as a legal filter to ensure that the *nadzor* stage (seeing the prospective spouse) is carried out in accordance with religious guidelines without any *khalwat*. Furthermore, the principle of “*The best of people is those who are most beneficial to others*” (HR. Ath-Thabari), which is the basis of this account's spirit, must be translated into legally accountable operational standards to realize the benefit of the *rahmatan lil 'alamin* community (Nasrullah, 2021).

Previous research on online *taaruf* has tended to focus on the competitive use of technology. As research conducted by Harun et al. and Khaer et al. shows, in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the use of technology is a way to save time and space by making work easier (Harun et al., 2021; Khaer et al., 2025). Furthermore, online *taaruf* is also linked to the analysis of the validity of Islamic values as reviewed through *maqasid al-shari'ah*. As demonstrated by the research conducted by Shalihin et al. and Syahrini et al. the study aimed to develop, validate, and analyse knowledge of the *maqasid al-sharia* (Shalihin et al., 2024; Syahrini et al., 2024). Many studies are also more controversial about online *taaruf* being linked to the use of religion to mobilize profits. Research conducted by Handayani, Husniya, and Zuhriyah shows that the proliferation of religious content on social media—particularly content produced and disseminated by conservative groups—tends to commodify the practice of *taaruf* (Handayani, 2022; Husniya & Zuhriyah, 2024). From existing studies, it appears that the analysis of measuring online *ta'aruf* services is based on the spirit of Islamic values that provide the main benefit of helping Muslims find a spouse in a Sharia-compliant manner.

Accordingly, this research seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of the ways in which the Islamic values and sense of social responsibility advocated by the @*taarufpadang* account are realized within a secure and structured mediation framework. The author argues that the existence of this platform is not just a technological trend, but a contemporary family law solution that urgently needs to be developed. In addition, this paper proposes a tangible contribution by offering recommendations for incorporating both legal and ethical education about *taaruf* into every post on the platform. This approach would transform @*taarufpadang* from simply a space for introductions into a hub for family law literacy, thereby helping to reinforce the strength and resilience of Muslim families in Padang, beginning even before marriage.

To comprehensively examine the effectiveness and legality of this mechanism, this study employs *sadd ad-dzari'ah* and *maqasid al-shari'ah* as its primary analytical framework to assess the extent to which this digital platform promotes the public good. Conceptually, *sadd ad-dzari'ah* is a preventive measure in Islamic law aimed at blocking pathways that could potentially lead to harm (*mafsadah*) (Hafis et al., 2024), based on the legal logic that an act fundamentally *mubah* (permissible) may become prohibited where there is a strong likelihood of leading to a *haram* act. In the context of a marriage proposal (*khitbah*), this principle functions as a protective barrier ensuring that interaction between prospective partners does not lead to *khalwat* (being alone together) or behaviour bordering on adultery. *Sadd ad-dzari'ah* is thus theoretically positioned as a methodology for safeguarding honour (*hifdz al-'irdh*), ensuring that the purity of intention in *khitbah* is not tainted by methods violating the boundaries of sharia.

The concept of *sadd ad-dzari'ah* is implemented through the role of the @*taarufpadang* account as a legal filter mitigating the risk of moral deviation in the digital age. This approach is crucial, as empirical evidence in Padang shows that the normalisation of dating culture has eroded traditional boundaries aligned with the philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*. Concrete evidence lies in the admin's operational mechanism as a *wasith* (mediator) who restricts unsupervised direct interaction and regulates the *nadzor* (viewing of prospective partners) stage to ensure it remains within the bounds of Islamic law (Ashurov & Mutafyan, 2025). In conclusion, the application of *sadd ad-dzari'ah* by this digital platform transforms social media accounts into informal legal instruments that close loopholes for harm while offering preventive solutions to strengthen Muslim family resilience amid the tide of modernity.

Second, this research also employs the *maqasid al-shari'ah* theory as an underlying teleological framework. This ensures that the implementation of Islamic law is always directed toward promoting human well-being (*maslahah*) and averting potential harm (*mafsadah*). This is because Islamic law does not emerge in a vacuum but has a fundamental purpose to preserve the five essential elements of life (*al-daruriyyat al-khamsah*) (Tohari et al., 2022). In the premarital context, this principle legitimizes the notion that all forms of social interaction must be evaluated based on their contribution to the protection of religious and humanitarian values. Thus, *maqasid al-shari'ah* is not merely an abstract concept, but a critical evaluation standard for assessing whether a social phenomenon—such as the shift in dating culture in the city of Padang—remains within the bounds of Sharia protection or has deviated toward moral corruption (Alias et al., 2024;

Shihan et al., 2023).

In the operational dimension, this theory treats the @taarufpadang account as an instrument of protection against the variables *hifdz al-din* (Preserving the Faith) and *hifdz al-nasl* (Preserving the Lineage). The rationale for these variables is crucial given the prevalence of dating culture in public spaces, which empirically threatens the purity of lineage and individual honour (*al-'irdh*) (Zailani et al., 2022). Their effectiveness can be analysed through the digital mediation mechanisms implemented, whereby the admin acts as a legal filter preventing seclusion (*khalwat*) and ensuring the validity of personal data to avoid fraud (*gharar*). In conclusion, applying this theory addresses the extent to which such digital platforms can guarantee the protection of individual rights and human dignity, while serving as a contemporary legal solution capable of reducing the risk of adultery amid the tide of modernisation in urban society.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study establishes the Instagram account @taarufpadang as the main unit of analysis or material object in this legal study. The selection of this account is based on its role as a non-formal institution that performs the function of digital matchmaking mediation in the city of Padang, which legally intersects with the *khitbah* stage in Islamic Family Law. Thus, this unit of analysis is representative of how Sharia values are implemented in modern premarital legal practices (Maala, 2021).

The research design is a juridical-empirical legal study with a case study (*field research*) approach (Rambe, 2025; Utami et al., 2024). This method is used to examine the effectiveness of Islamic law regarding *taaruf* and the prevention of immorality in its practice in society through social media. The researcher not only examines legal texts normatively, but also looks at how these laws interact in reality in the operations of @taarufpadang. Therefore, this design allows the researcher to dissect the gap or harmony between the limits of sharia regarding *khalwat* and the reality of digital interactions managed by the admin.

This legal-empirical research draws upon both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered firsthand from key informants, specifically the @taarufpadang admin, to reveal aspects of accountability and the legal procedures in use. Secondary data was sourced from digital materials, such as Instagram highlights and posts. These sources collectively provide concrete evidence of the *taaruf* process and include success stories that serve as legal facts in practice (Chin & Zeiler, 2021). The integration of these data types strengthens the scientific validity and evidentiary value of the findings.

Data were collected through desk reviews of regulatory and profile documents, social media observation, and in-depth interviews based on structured guidelines (Alade et al., 2024; Taherdoost, 2021), triangulating ideal *taaruf* legal norms with practical implementation by the platform. This included analysing educational content and administrative requirements for participants to ensure no elements of fraud (*gharar*) in the mediated information, with this combination of techniques ensuring systematic field data collection addressing the legal issues raised. Data were analysed using a qualitative approach, involving data reduction, descriptive and analytical presentation, and conclusion-drawing, with emphasis on ensuring alignment between @taarufpadang's mediation practices and the foundational principles of Islamic Family Law.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Transformation of Matchmaking Institutions in the City of Padang

From a sociocultural perspective, the city of Padang serves as a hub where Islamic values have taken deep root through the philosophy of *ABS-SBK*. This philosophy positions Islamic law as both the source and the goal of all traditional social behaviour. However, the wave of globalization and the penetration of urban lifestyles have led to a decentralization of norms among the younger generation, where traditional boundaries are beginning to erode due to the normalization of dating culture. This moral degradation creates an urgent need for adaptive social control

mechanisms capable of bridging religious ideals with the realities of modern interaction (Akmal & Suhaimi, 2025; Rambe & Darma, 2026; Rejeki, 2025). It is within this context that the emergence of digital mediation through the Instagram account *@taarufpadang* offers a strategic solution as a non-formal institution that facilitates the search for a partner without violating Sharia boundaries.

This transition from conventional to digital methods presents a striking sociological contrast between traditional Minangkabau matchmaking practices and contemporary mechanisms. In the traditional system, processes such as *maresek*, *maminang*, and *bajapuik* in the Pariaman region offer the key advantage of highly layered social validation. The involvement of Mamak and senior women as emissaries ensures communal transparency regarding lineage, background, and character, thereby virtually eliminating the risk of identity fraud. However, its weakness lies in its highly closed nature and its limitation to the scope of physical kinship, which is often perceived as too rigid and slow by the highly mobile urban youth. In contrast, the *@taarufpadang* phenomenon offers advantages in the form of bureaucratic efficiency, a broader range of participants—as evidenced by more than 1,600 participants—as well as better-protected privacy in the early stages of introduction.

Although superior in terms of accessibility, this digital model has vulnerabilities regarding the validity of primary data when compared to direct observations by traditional elders. This is where *@taarufpadang* has adapted by implementing strict protocols, in which administrators act as *wasith* (intermediaries) who manage the exchange of structured profiles to minimize the risk of fraud. System integrity is maintained through professional policies prohibiting direct meetings between administrators and participants to avoid slander, a digital adaptation of the messenger's role in the *maresek* tradition. The account's success in facilitating 160 couples through to marriage demonstrates that while the medium has shifted, the essence of protecting personal dignity remains a priority. The presence of *@taarufpadang* is ultimately not merely a social media trend, but a tangible manifestation of socio-religious responsibility in harmonizing technological convenience with the steadfast principles of ABS-SBK for the resilience of Muslim families in the modern era.

The Manifestation of the Value of Khairunnas in the Digital *Taaruf* System

From a normative standpoint, the engagement phase (*khitbah*) represents the first step toward the sanctity of marriage within Indonesia's Islamic family law system, as established in Article 12 of the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI). In the context of family law, this provision serves not just as an administrative requirement, but as a mechanism to guarantee the legal status of the prospective bride. It clearly stipulates that a marriage proposal may only be made to a woman who is unmarried or to a widow whose iddah period has concluded. Such a regulation functions as a safeguard to prevent potential legal conflicts and to uphold the dignity of lineage, which lies at the heart of *maqasid al-shari'ah*. By ensuring that the intended bride is legally eligible, the KHI establishes legal certainty from the outset, reducing the risk of future disputes (Hududillah et al., 2025; Ilma, 2025).

Furthermore, Article 13 of the Islamic Family Law (KHI) establishes crucial legal boundaries regarding the consequences of an engagement, stating that an engagement does not create legally binding effects as does a marriage contract. Through an analysis of Islamic family law, this provision reflects the principle of freedom of will (*ibahah*) and the protection of the parties' best interests, so that an engagement is viewed as a promise or moral commitment that still allows both parties to reconsider their readiness without any onerous legal burden. However, the existence of paragraph (2) in this article provides an exception regarding a "written agreement" or "customary practice" (*urf*), which sociologically indicates that Islamic family law in Indonesia highly values local wisdom. This means that although engagement is not legally binding in formal-procedural terms, material and moral damages arising from unilateral cancellation are still protected by law through customary law mechanisms or private agreements recognized by the state (Doni & Hanani, 2025; Imron et al., 2024; Ridoi et al., 2025). Figure 2 shows the procedures for participating in the online *taaruf* program on the *@taarufpadang* account.

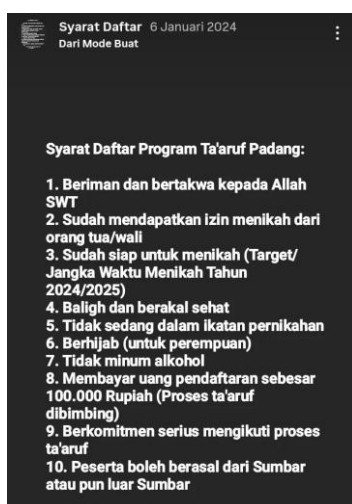


Figure 2.
Requirements for enrolling
in the program (Source:
Instagram account
@taarufpadang, 2024)

This argument is also based on the results of interviews conducted with key informants;

“After each participant introduces themselves, they proceed to the photo exchange stage—this part is up to the participants. We do not force anyone who is unwilling to exchange photos. The decision is left to the participants, whether they still want to continue the *ta’aruf* process without exchanging photos or not.”

After completing this stage, the session continues with a question-and-answer session opened by the admin, with 3 questions for each participant;

“We are opening a question-and-answer session, where each participant will have the opportunity to ask three questions in one session—the number of question-and-answer sessions is unlimited, depending on the number of questions from participants. If there are still questions from participants, then the question-and-answer session will continue. If there are no more questions from participants, then we will proceed to the next stage. Keep in mind that we are only here to monitor the operational process.”

Based on the results of the study, it is clear that the @taarufpadang account is not just an information platform, but acts as a *Wasith* or intermediary in the *khitbah* (*marriage proposal*) process, which has an important position in Islamic Family Law. As stated by the informant:

“We strictly limit ourselves to being intermediaries who guide the *taaruf* process administratively and sharia-compliantly without meeting the participants directly in order to avoid slander and maintain the objectivity of the mediation. This policy is a form of our integrity in maintaining the purity of our intentions and the professionalism of our services, so that offline interactions are not carried out at all during the introduction process. The only exception is if the process has progressed to the stage of a legal marriage; only then do we attend the invitation as a form of friendship and to witness the final result of the noble commitment that the participants have fought for.”

From the perspective of marriage jurisprudence, the existence of a mediator or *wasith* plays a vital role in minimizing the element of *gharar* (uncertainty or deception) regarding the identity of prospective spouses, which often occurs in anonymous interactions on social media. Verification through a structured data entry mechanism that includes physical criteria, educational background, and marriage vision is a concrete effort to ensure the validity of the legal subject. Thus, the position of the admin as an intermediary becomes a guarantor that the data exchanged has a level of accuracy that can be accounted for before the parties are bound by a deeper commitment (Shoarian & Jafari, 2021).

An in-depth legal analysis shows that the admin's actions in screening participants and facilitating the exchange of personal data are a concrete implementation of the principle of *al-amanah* in Islamic contract law (Herijanto, 2022). Researchers argue that this role is crucial as a form of legal protection, especially for women who, sociologically speaking, are often the most vulnerable to harm in a culture of dating without commitment. With this mediation, women's rights to obtain accurate and honest information before proceeding to the *nadzor* stage are fully protected. This is philosophically in line with the *maqashid syariah* in the framework of *Hifz al-'Ird* (preserving honour) and *hifz an-nasl* (preserving the purity of lineage), so that the transformation of conventional *taaruf* to the digital realm on the @taarufpadang account has strong legal legitimacy as a solution for protecting Muslim families in the modern era (Ibnudin et al., 2025; Wanto et al., 2021).

The Role of Informal Mediators from the Perspective of Islamic Family Law

Normatively, the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), through Articles 12 and 13, has established the legal framework regarding the engagement (*khitbah*) as the gateway to marriage. However, upon closer examination, the legal text in Article 12, which governs the subject of the proposal, as well as Article 13, which addresses its legal consequences, remains trapped within a conventional-traditional paradigm (Damayanti & Putra, 2025). These regulations do not address the existence of informal mediators operating through digital platforms, who now play a crucial role as *wasith* (intermediaries). In the sociocultural context of Padang City, the presence of the @*taarufpadang* account actually fills a void in institutional roles not yet covered by the KHI. This regulatory gap in the digital sphere poses a serious challenge, as anonymous and virtual intermediary mechanisms require higher accountability standards than mere moral commitment, as implied in Article 13(1).

An analysis of @*taarufpadang*'s role as a digital mediator can be strengthened by applying the theory of *sadd ad-dzari'ah* (blocking the path to harm). From the perspective of Islamic family law, unsupervised free interaction constitutes a *dzari'ah* (intermediary) that, empirically in Padang, has triggered *khalwat* (seclusion) and moral decay (Al Ghefira et al., 2025; Damanik et al., 2024). This is where @*taarufpadang* functions as a preventive legal instrument; it serves to block that path by providing a controlled mediation channel. The account administrator acts as a legal filter that verifies compliance with the criteria of Article 12 of the KHI—ensuring the administrative status of virginity or a widow's *iddah* period—before further interaction takes place. Without an accountable mediator, digital platforms risk becoming new avenues for identity fraud (*gharar*) or privacy violations (Harlan, 2026; Kadir, 2025). Therefore, the practices carried out by this account are not merely a technological trend, but a form of *sadd ad-dzari'ah* implementation that transforms the conventional concept of *khitbah* into an adaptive interaction model for the Society 5.0 era.

Furthermore, the need for accountable operational standards for these informal mediators is an urgent requirement to mitigate the impact of Article 13(2) of the Islamic Family Law (KHI). Given that the termination of a betrothal does not entail legal consequences unless there is a written agreement, digital mediators must be able to formulate private agreements or codes of conduct that are legally and religiously accountable (Nurunnisa et al., 2023). Thus, the existence of these digital mediators not only serves as a meeting point but transforms into a contemporary arbitration institution that strengthens the resilience of Muslim families through data validation and the protection of individual dignity, in accordance with the spirit of progressive Islamic family law that remains rooted in the principle of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*.

Implementation of the *Sadd ad-Dzari'ah* Principle in *Taaruf* Mediation

Islam as a comprehensive religion does not only rely on primary arguments that are final in nature, but also accommodates methods of reasoning such as *sadd ad-dzari'ah* to respond to contemporary legal dynamics. The urgency of this method arises as a crucial instrument when the explicit texts of the Qur'an and Hadith require contextualization of intermediaries (*wasilah*) that can lead to harm (*mafsadah*) or benefit (*maslahah*). Imam asy-Syathibi in al-Muwâfaqât explains that although there is debate among the madhhabs, the majority of scholars, such as the Maliki and Hanbali circles, agree that this method is a credible argument for analysing the law of a means (Wasilah et al., 2024). Therefore, the application of this method in reviewing the phenomenon of digital *taaruf* is very relevant in determining the legal status of an intermediary medium in maintaining the greater goals of the Sharia.

Legally, the success of the @*taarufpadang* account in facilitating 160 marriages out of 1,600 participants is a concrete manifestation of the applicability of the *sadd ad-dzari'ah* principle in breaking the chain of harm. The use of this method is based on the legal logic that any action that is outwardly permissible but consistently leads to unlawful acts must be regulated or prohibited. @*taarufpadang* effectively eliminates the opportunity for *khalwat* and unlimited interaction commonly found in the dating culture in Padang through a strict mediation system. The existence of this platform is not merely a technological innovation, but a legal effort to prevent moral damage at the grassroots level by providing safe and controlled means.

The main legal emphasis in this study lies on the legitimacy of the process that requires the presence of a mediator as a preventive measure against adultery (preventive justice). The fundamental reason for this provision is to ensure that every interaction between participants, from the exchange of biodata to the *nadzor* stage, remains within the corridor of valid Islamic family law. In practice, it shows that the systematic *taaruf* process on this account has successfully transformed unruly interactions into structured and socially responsible relationships. In conclusion, the implementation of the value “*The best human beings are those who are most beneficial to others*” by the admin @*taarufpadang* not only has a social dimension, but also has strong legal benefits in protecting the honour of the ummah and ensuring that every step towards marriage is approved by Allah SWT (Saiman & Mahadzir, 2024).

Limitations of Digital Mediation: Private Communication Beyond the Administrator’s Reach

The internal *Standard Operating Procedure* (SOP) of @*taarufpadang* explicitly prohibits participants from conducting private direct messaging (DM) outside the supervised group channel, stipulating that all participant discussions prior to the *khitbah* stage must be conducted exclusively within the group, and that administrators reserve the right to revoke the membership of any participant found chatting privately outside it. The SOP further imposes a three-session ban on participants who withdraw without notice, and a permanent ban for participants who are proven to have deceived others. These provisions reflect a genuine institutional recognition that unsupervised private communication between non-mahram participants poses a real risk—referred to in this study as *digital khalwat*—that is, the transposition of the classical Islamic concept of seclusion (*uzlah*) into a digital communication environment where concealment is structural rather than spatial.

However, a structural analysis of these prohibitions reveals critical and inevitable limitations. The key phrase “*if participants are caught*” in the SOP exposes a fundamental vulnerability in the rule-enforcement architecture: as the WhatsApp group administrator, @*taarufpadang* lacks the technical capacity to monitor direct messages exchanged between participants outside the monitored group. There is no algorithmic monitoring, no access to private message histories, and no warning mechanisms. Figure 3 illustrates the wide-open space of *Digital Khalwat*.



Figure 3.
Digital Khalwat in Private
DM (Source: Illustration by
the authors, 2026)

This structural gap raises a fundamental legal question that has not yet been fully addressed in the existing literature: Is the presence of a digital administrator in a legally supervised group chat equivalent to the physical presence of a mahram or a trustworthy witness, as required by classical *fiqh* to prevent *khalwat*? Proponents of the digital mediator model—including the studies by Supriadi et al. 2022 and Nasrullah 2021—argue that the functional purpose of the mahram requirement is to prevent concealment and ensure transparent, supervised interactions; based on this purposive interpretation, a digital administrator who actively manages and monitors message exchanges fulfills the spirit of that requirement.

This position aligns with the preventive logic of *sadd ad-dzari'ah*: the platform closes the door to unsupervised interactions during the sessions it manages. However, a conflicting jurisprudential argument challenges this analogy on definitional grounds. Classical *khalwat* is defined by *uzlah*—concealment from the view and awareness of others. Private direct messages (DMs), by virtue of their technical architecture, actually fulfill this condition: the content is visible only to the two communicating parties and is structurally inaccessible to any third party, including administrators. Unlike physical *mahrams* who can hear, observe, and intervene in real time, digital administrators have absolutely no access to the content of direct messages (DMs) exchanged outside of groups. Based on this analysis, the platform’s design actually creates—rather than closes off—space for *uzlah*: monitored group sessions end, while unmonitored private channels remain open by default. From the perspective of *sadd ad-dzari'ah*, this in itself constitutes a *dhari'ah* (path to harm) embedded in the platform’s design—something that cannot

be addressed solely through normative prohibitions but requires architectural and regulatory interventions (Hafis et al., 2024).

This critique does not invalidate the @*taarufpadang* model; rather, it identifies the upper limit of what self-regulated digital mediation can achieve without external reinforcement. The SOP's explicit acknowledgment of these risks demonstrates ethical responsibility; the inability to enforce them technically reveals the structural limits of self-regulation as a governance mechanism. These limitations point to two necessary interventions: first, technical enhancements to the SOP by the platform itself—such as restricting all pre-engagement communications to verified group channels and requiring participants to formally acknowledge these restrictions as a binding condition of membership; and second, formal regulatory oversight by the state, which alone possesses the authority and law enforcement capacity to establish binding minimum standards for digital *taaruf* mediators.

Integration of Legal Education in the Digital Transformation of *Taaruf*

The @*taarufpadang* platform positions itself not merely as a matchmaking intermediary but as an instrument of preventive family law education—a strategic function transforming social media into a channel for pre-marital legal literacy (Demchenko et al., 2021). This claim is grounded in an empirical gap: cognitive preparedness regarding post-marital rights and obligations is frequently neglected in premarital interaction, and its absence correlates with heightened household vulnerability and dispute risk. By producing educational content foregrounding Islamic family law—epitomised in the platform's framing of *taaruf* as a *sharia*-sanctioned alternative to casual dating—and embedding practical legal infographics into participant profile posts and highlight features, @*taarufpadang* directly addresses this gap. The material covers Articles 77–84 of the KHI on spousal rights and obligations, KUA marriage registration procedures, prenuptial agreements, and the legal consequences of engagement annulment under Article 13 of the KHI, reflecting the spirit of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* and, if systematically realised, aligning the platform's operation with the government's objective of reducing divorce rates through pre-marital preparedness (Najib, 2023).

However, the capacity of this educational mission to be *institutionally integrated* into the digital transformation of *taaruf*—rather than remaining a voluntary gesture dependent on administrator initiative—is directly constrained by the platform's legal standing. Despite the existence of the internal SOP, @*taarufpadang* operates without any binding legal standard under Indonesian positive law (Salsabila, 2025). The SOP cannot be enforced by any external authority; its obligations bind participants morally, not legally. This structural void means that the educational commitments the platform makes to its 1,600+ participants carry no institutional guarantee—they are aspirations, not obligations.

This void is compounded by the complete absence of formal recognition by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (the Office of Religious Affairs). Government Regulation No. 9/1975 and the KHI were formulated without anticipation of digital *taaruf* platforms, and no subsequent *Permenag* or *Perdirjen Bimas Islam* has established minimum operational standards for this category of institution. This regulatory silence is not inevitable: the issuance of Circular Letter No. 06/2020 by Bimas Islam establishing emergency digital procedures for *nikah* administration during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that regulatory adaptation to digital Islamic family law practices is institutionally feasible. Its absence with respect to digital *taaruf* platforms reflects a gap in regulatory attention rather than a gap in authority.

The governance deficit extends to personal data protection. The data collected by @*taarufpadang*—names, addresses, photographs, religious background, employment status, and marital history—constitutes sensitive personal data under Article 4 of Law No. 27/2022 on Personal Data Protection (UU PDP). Data controllers under this law bear positive obligations: to obtain informed consent, specify data retention periods, implement security measures, and facilitate data subject rights. Because digital *taaruf* platforms operate in a regulatory grey zone unrecognized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, these obligations remain effectively unenforced by any competent supervisory authority—leaving participants, particularly women, without the protections Indonesian positive law nominally guarantees them (Harlan, 2026; Kadir, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study reinforces the fundamental idea that the widening gap between the local philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* and the cultural reality surrounding dating in the city of Padang calls for a strategic and adaptive legal response. This study emphasizes that digital *taaruf* is not merely following a technological trend, but rather an inevitable transformation within Islamic Family Law to bridge religious ideals with the complexities of modern social interactions. The findings of this legal-empirical analysis answer the research questions by demonstrating that the Instagram account *@taarufpadang* functions as an effective and legitimate non-formal institution. By acting as a trusted *wasith* (mediator), the account successfully applies the principle of *sadd ad-dzari'ah* to preventively block paths leading to moral decay (*khalwat* and adultery).

This study also reveals significant structural limitations in governance. Although *@taarufpadang*'s SOP demonstrates a sincere ethical intent to prohibit unsupervised private interaction, its enforcement architecture is technically unenforceable—relying on participants' good faith rather than structural prevention. These findings highlight a two-fold governance deficit: the platform's internal self-regulatory mechanisms cannot, alone, close the architectural loopholes for digital seclusion, and the absence of formal state oversight leaves participants unprotected under the mandatory accountability framework of Indonesian positive law. The study's scope is also limited to the premarital mediation process, primarily reflecting administrators' perspectives as the main informants; future research should examine postmarital dynamics, family resilience, and the long-term outcomes of couples formed through such platforms.

In light of these findings, this study proposes three *de lege ferenda* recommendations for the formal governance of digital *taaruf* in Indonesia. First, the Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance should promulgate a binding Director-General regulation establishing minimum operational standards for digital *taaruf* platforms, including mandatory group-only communications prior to *khitbah*, data-handling procedures, and formal complaint mechanisms, referencing Circular Letter No. 06/2020. Second, the Ministry of Religious Affairs must integrate verified digital *taaruf* mediators into the *Simkah* (Marriage Management Information System), subjecting them to the same institutional accountability required of KUA-registered marriage officers and thereby bringing their practices under state oversight. Third, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, in coordination with the National Commission on Personal Data Protection, should issue technical guidelines confirming digital *taaruf* platforms fall under Personal Data Protection Act No. 27/2022, defining data-controller obligations and compliance verification mechanisms. Collectively, these three steps will transform digital *taaruf* from an ethically driven but legally unaccountable practice into an officially recognized and state-regulated component of the legal governance architecture for Islamic family law in Indonesia—thereby ensuring that the *maqasid* of preserving lineage and honor are protected not only by institutional good faith, but also by enforceable law.

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