

## **The Ethics of Relationship in the *Ta'aruf* Period in the Digital Age: The Perspective of *Qira'ah Mubadalah* on WhatsApp Application Users**

**Siti Darma Mar'atus Solihah<sup>1</sup>, Ihza Maulina**

<sup>1,2</sup>UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

Email: sdarmams@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>; maulinaihza@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

*Ta'aruf* is a process of personal recognition between men and women before heading to marriage. In general, the *ta'aruf process* is carried out after the proposal or *khitbah*. After the *khitbah* procession takes place, in Islamic social ethics, a man is not allowed to be alone (*seclusion*) with a woman who is betrothed. However, the change era going to digitization brings influence on social associations especially the *ta'aruf process*. Phenomenon *ta'aruf* method in the era of digitization This will be associated with the principles of deep *thought* building relational *mindset* of man and girl. The principle of *mubadalah* is initiated by Faqihuddin Abdul Qodir. In *mubadalah*, the principle of mutuality is especially important in the relationship between men and women. As for the meaning of 'mutual', that is, both give and receive between the two parties. Thus, this study aims to analyze the *ta'aruf method* in the digital era in *qira'ah mubadalah* on the relationship between men and women using the WhatsApp application. This research is a type of normative research in the category of qualitative research methods with a phenomenological approach. This means that the author examines and analyzes the phenomena that occur qualitatively. The results of this study include the identification of the development of the *ta'aruf method* and the impact of social ethics in the review of *Qira'ah Mubadalah* on the *ta'aruf process* of the digital era, especially for users of the WhatsApp application. *Qira'ah Mubadalah* can give a new *mindset* to every man and woman. In this study, the authors found a formulation of *the mindset of building relationships in the ta'aruf process* and its relevance when applied to the digital era using the WhatsApp application.

**Keywords:** digital, relationship, *qira'ah mubadalah*, *ta'aruf*

### **Introduction**

Humans were created with a natural tendency to be attracted to the opposite sex, therefore, Islam came up with the concept of marriage or marriage. Marriage is a way for someone, both men and women, in which in the marriage they feel valued, loved and protected, also share and give each other, get their rights and are not reluctant to carry out their obligations (Ali Muhtarom, 2018). The purpose of marriage is peace (*sakinah*) that is felt by both husband and wife, with a foundation of feelings and attitudes of love (*mawaddah*) and love (*rahmah*) (Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 2019). Meanwhile, according to Constitution no. 1 of 1974, the purpose of marriage is to form a happy and eternal family. For this reason, husband and wife need to help and complement each other, therefore, they can develop their personality to help and achieve spiritual and material well-being (Amir Syarifuddin, 2006). So, someone who is getting married has the hope that his household will be *sakinah mawaddah warahmah*, which means peaceful, full of love and affection.

It is better for someone who is going to get married to know each other (*ta'aruf*). The process begins with a sermon, namely a meeting between the woman and the man with the intention of asking permission to propose to the woman as his future wife. After the *khitbah*, the process of *ta'aruf* and *nadhrah* is continued according to the limits permitted by *syara'* in the hope that the marriage contract will be held soon. Islam makes proposals as a way to get to know each other's physical characteristics so that the couple feels at ease in married life. The implementation of *ta'aruf* has changed in the digitalization era, namely that the process of getting to know someone can be done through an online application as an intermediary in communication, such as using the WhatsApp application. This application has chat services, personal calling, and video calls, making it easier for couples to get to know each other.

In previous research, according to Rissa, the view is that the NU Bahtsul Masail Institute and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council have similarities in punishing the *ta'aruf* process in online media, namely that the law is permissible (Rissa Cangista Ngapriba, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Kamal Musthofa and Alvita Hikmatul Laily, the *ta'aruf* process in online media allows fraud cases to occur, such as the Muzz application, which contains fraudulent names, professions, marital status, religion, photos, and health (Kamal M & Alvita HL, 2022).. As for Ahmad Soleh Hasibuan, he said that from the perspective of *istishab*, the practice of online *ta'aruf* is legally permissible, and seen from the perspective of *masalah mursalah*, the practice of online *ta'aruf* also provides many benefits and conveniences for the general public (Ahmad Soleh Hasibuan, 2021).

This article has the same topic with previous research that has been mentioned by the authors above. It just article discusses the phenomenon of association in the *ta'aruf* period among users of the WhatsApp application in the digital era and is reviewed using the theory of *qira'ah mubadalah*. This article is also based on the subject's direct experience in *ta'aruf life*. Therefore, it is important to write this article in order to deepen the method of *ta'aruf* in the digital era in reviewing *qira'ah mubadalah* on the relationship between men and women who use the WhatsApp application.

### Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Based on the facts, the researcher wanted to dig up in-depth information on the association of informants who were undergoing a period of *ta'aruf* on users of the WhatsApp application . There are two sources of data used . First, primary data that can be obtained directly in the field through interviews . Both secondary data that can be obtained from journals and books that can be used as references that support the research theme. The subjects of this study consisted of twelve informants who were selected by *purposive sampling technique* based on criteria that matched the research (Sugiyono, 2009). The criteria for informants are men or women who have carried out the *khitbah* and are undergoing the *ta'aruf* period. Data collection techniques were carried out by interviews and observation. The data analysis used is *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA) by Smith, which examines how an individual interprets important life experiences in a natural setting (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, 33) .

## Results and Discussion

### The Phenomenon of Male and Female Association in the Ta’aruf Period in Whatsapp Application Users

In Islamic terms, ta’aruf is the process of getting to know someone closely, whether a friend or not. In the context of marriage, ta'aruf is an attempt to recognize a partner before marriage (Tihami, 2009, p. 22). Nowadays, the concept of ta'aruf with sharia boundaries is very rare to become a principle, especially among millennials in the digitalization era. which allows a person to interact with the opposite sex through smartphones (Ummu, 2009, 16). The development of technology and information in the digitalization era has affected communication between women and men to get to know each other through social media such as What's App without distance and time limitations. The term ta'aruf has undergone a shift in meaning, namely as a first step to getting to know two families who will match one of their family members (Amarsyahid, 2019, p. 16).

Based on data findings In this study, the average age of couples who have undergone the ta'arif process ranges from 23 to 27 years. The beginning of getting to know a potential partner varies greatly, namely getting to know the local environment, for example, the campus environment, tourist attractions, and social media. Every couple has reasons to get engaged first rather than get married right away, such as providing certainty of steps towards marriage, time to get to know each other, preparing wedding expenses, making commitments, encouragement from local customs, being self-satisfied, and getting to know each other's families



Figure 1 Percentage of WhatsApp Usage Intensity

Based on the diagram above, WhatsApp is the application that is always used for communicating, which is as much as 58.3%. The reason the informants used the WhatsApp application in Among them are easy-to-use, simple service features, being very up-to-date with the times, lots of very functional features, being a medium of communication when not together, and one of the efforts to get to know each other's potential partners. The frequently used features are: 83.3% use chat, 43.3% use telephone or video calls, and 16.7% optimize all features. Topics of discussion during the ta'aruf period included daily activities, future plans, humor, the world of work, an outpouring of problems faced, finances, wedding preparations, how to educate children, business, and getting to know each other's families.



Figure 2 Percentage of Online-Based Violence on WhatsApp

Look at the phenomenon of the ta'aruf period in the digital era for users of the Whatsapp application; it has very good implications, but the application also has a negative impact. Although in the online world, it is possible that online-based violence will occur when communicating with a partner. Based on the results of the study, 91.7% did not experience online violence, while 8.3% experienced online violence. One in twelve informants stated that while communicating using WhatsApp media, they had experienced online violence, such as speaking harshly in chat language, being intimidated, and sexual violence. This acknowledgment is not widely expressed openly because of the fear of victims of violence and the high embarrassment of relationship disgrace. Even though most WhatsApp has had a positive effect on informants, there is little possibility that WhatsApp can have a negative impact due to a lack of understanding of digital violence literacy (online-based violence).

### The Relations between Men and Women Perspective of Qira'ah Mubadalah

A man and a woman are created from the same element. However, some literature develops the belief that Siti Hawa As was created from the rib of Prophet Adam As. This belief is rooted in such a way that the verses of the Koran that do not speak of this matter are then interpreted by scholars with such a clear story about Siti Hawa that comes from the Prophet Adam. This kind of interpretation eventually gave birth to the notion that all women on earth were created from a man's rib. Even though in the literature of the Qur'an there are various sources of human creation, including humans created from the elements of water, land, and reproduction, These verses do not specifically mention men and do not deny women. Explicit statements in the Qur'an do not state that women are created from male body parts (Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 2019).

In Surah An-Nisa's Verse 1, there is one word that indicates that human beings are created from one essence, or '*nafsin wahidan*'. Based on the *qira'ah mubadalah* approach, this *nafsin wahidan* does not indicate one gender; in fact, it leads to gender neutrality. one essence. Nurjanah Ismail also discovered the fact that there are 295 places in the Qur'an that mention the word "nafsun" and none of them refer to the meaning of Prophet Adam, let alone men. Most of them mean two things, namely the soul (QS. Al-Maa'idah verse 32) and spirit (QS. Al-Fajr verse 27). With this, the meaning of '*nafsin wahidah*' can be interpreted as the essence of humanity or the same basic human essence (Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 2019).

Basically, this same human essence will later give birth to an understanding that men and women have the same responsibility as His creator, namely Allah SWT. This awareness will be awakened when men and women have complete spirituality, thereby encouraging them to act *ma'ruf* or full of kindness. Humans, both men and women, have the responsibility as 'khalifah fil ardh' (representatives of God on earth). That is, who became the caliph of Allah SWT. on earth have received the mandate and mandate to manage, manage, and prosper the earth and the universe and ensure that all goodness continues to be preserved and all kinds of evil are eliminated. With this, mutual relations between men and women will be easier to grow and cooperation between them will also be easier to develop. Simply put, the concept of the caliphate is almost the same as helping each other in doing good and helping each other fight evil ( *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* ) (Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 2019).

To uphold *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, men and women need to work together or support one another. *Mubadalah* views the relationship between men and women as one of cooperation and mutuality, not hegemony and discrimination that lead to violence. It is not permissible for men to dominate women, and vice versa. Both work together to create a better, just, and prosperous life. *Mubadalah* strongly supports the vision of Islam for women's humanity as a whole as well as for men as a whole (Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 2019).

### **The Phenomenon of Ta'aruf Period Interaction in Whatsapp Application Users Perspective of *Qira'ah Mubadalah***

Based on the results of the author's survey, the informants in this study were on average aged 23-27 years and had recently graduated from tertiary institutions. In general, anyone who is ready to take a relationship to a more serious level or plan to marry, every couple engages or proposes before their 30s. In this case, Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage has emphasized that the age limit for every citizen who will carry out a marriage is 19 years for both men and women. This law comes as a breath of fresh air for the rampant cases of early marriage in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, the number of early marriages is relatively high. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) for 2020, women aged 20–24 who were married before the age of 18 in 2018 are estimated to be around 1,220,900. Meanwhile, according to the data from the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN), early marriages among adolescents in their late teens to early 20s occur for customary reasons or pregnancies outside of marriage. The BKKBN also reports that more than 50 percent of early marriages end in divorce (Ajeng Quamila, 2021: hallosehat.com).

Based on the substance of the Law above, why do women have to marry after the age of 19th Because marriage at an early age for women is vulnerable to risks, both biological in nature, such as damage to the reproductive organs and young pregnancy, and psychological in nature, in the form of an inability to carry out reproductive functions well. In this case, Indonesia is listed as a country with a very high maternal mortality rate (Mardi, 2018). Another reason why women and men must marry after the age of 19 is because this law is expected to eliminate discrimination, provide better access for women, girls, and men to get education and access to information on employment, and provide opportunities for women's reproductive organs to be able to grow and develop properly (Baleg, 2019: dpr.go.id).

There are twelve informants that the authors found to be in compliance with state regulations regarding the age limit for marriage because the informants will carry out marriage plans after they are over 19 years old. This encouragement is influenced by educational factors and the local or community environment. Education as a place for someone to gain knowledge makes the informants have a broad view, so that each informant has various views after completing education and is not carried away by the community's habit of getting married without prior preparation. This is in line with the statements of the informants on the motivation or reason for choosing to get engaged before marrying their partners.

The reasons for the informants included: (1) the informant did not want to linger in courtship to avoid slander; (2) the fiancé was the beginning of the couple's preparation to start saving on wedding expenses; (3) establishing commitment or seriousness in the relationship; (4) the informant was not ready to get married immediately; (5) the fiancé was included in the customary local area so that the informants could maintain the honor of the family by getting engaged; (6) so that they could mature their psychology with a sharper context towards the marriage level; (7) establish common goals; and self-improvement and self-equipment. Various considerations that have been considered by the informant indicate that education does influence decision-making regarding marriage readiness.

The ta'aruf process functions to get to know each partner through communication and observing their association. According to the results of a survey conducted by the authors, as many as 91.7% did not experience online-based violence, while 8.3% had experienced online-based violence, such as speaking harshly in chat language, intimidating, and sexual violence. WhatsApp users may experience positive or negative impacts from their use. If the impact felt by the couple is positive, then the couple has used the WhatsApp application wisely as a medium of communication in the ta'aruf process. Meanwhile, if the impact felt is a bad one, the WhatsApp application users do not fully understand the concept of healthy male and female relations in carrying out ta'aruf in online media.

The existence of ta'aruf through digital media such as the WhatsApp application can make it easier to get to know one another by paying attention to ethics as Muslims. However, the drawback of ta'aruf through digital media is that there is no supervision unless supervised by Allah SWT, therefore its use is free according to the will of the WhatsApp account owner.

Therefore, the point of view of qira'ah mubadalah is very important to changing or building a mindset of equality relations that have been eroding throughout the ages. In Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's terms, mubadalah, is seen as a theory and method with a progressive paradigm, especially specifically for dignifying women in various dimensions of life and for solving social inequality in a wider scope. This concept is based on a reciprocal perspective that consciously places women and men as whole and equal human subjects without any party feeling to dominate or be dominated (Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 2019). Simply put, this theory is actually not a theory that tends to side with women only, while on the other hand it seems to discredit men.

However, this theory tries to make people aware that all of God's creations in this world seem monotonous and unethical if only one (male) perspective is looked at. The relationship between the two must really be based on partnership and cooperation so that there are efforts to mutually strengthen, complement, support and other mutual relationships in the

administration of life. That is, Islam does not make women fully pretend to be "underdeveloped" entities and rejects overly optimistic thoughts that position women "at the forefront" as the "single" determinant of their lives and must be above men (Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 2019).

Surah al-Hujurat verse 13 is one of the verses which reveals the manifestation of this theory. Three important points contained in the verse are the concepts of equality ( *musawah* ), knowing each other ( *ta'aruf* ), and glorification based on piety. These three concepts form a chain that is mutually continuous. Meaning, this verse emphasizes that every human being must build an equality and social reason by helping each other and getting to know each other in various dimensions of goodness, both parallel and simultaneous with the principle of piety and the vision of humanity.

It was narrated from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, he said that the Prophet Muhammad went out to pray the Eid al-Adha or Eid al-Fitr (doubt from narrators). On the way, he met several women. Then he said: "O woman! Give charity, because I see you become part of the inhabitants of hell." They asked: "What is the reason, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "You all curse a lot and are not grateful for your husband's kindness. I do not know of any woman who lacks sense and religion who can eliminate the mind of a patient man, other than one of you." They asked: "O Messenger of Allah, what is the meaning of our lack of reason and religion?" He replied: "is not the testimony of a woman equal to half the testimony of a man?". They replied: "aa". He continued his words: "That's the lack of reason, isn't it if a woman is menstruating, she doesn't pray and doesn't fast?" They replied: "Yes", he continued his words: "that's the lack of religion" (Narrated by Al-Bukhari)

This hadith is often interpreted textually where the difference between the quality of men's and women's reasoning in religious matters is one of the popular narratives. Many classical scholars strengthen their arguments by referring to the letter al-Baqarah verse 228, in which one of the phrases states that men do indeed have a higher degree than women as al-Asfahani views. Furthermore, al-Asfahani stated that this advantage is based on the level of reason, leadership and rights possessed by women as mentioned in the letter an-Nisa verse 34.1

From this hadith, women are often weakened by reasons of lack of reason and religion in undergoing the recognition process (*taaruf*). In fact, if it is interpreted in an absurd way, men also have the potential to lack reason and religion because they are shackled by their lust, so those who are *taaruf* but are not guided by religion then become a place for promiscuity.

Learning from the rampant cases of promiscuity in the *taaruf* process, the authors conclude that there are several efforts that need to be applied in acquaintanceship with the opposite sex or what is called *taaruf*. First, when you are not ready to get to know the opposite sex, try to build your mind without feeling and act casually by controlling your own emotions. Second, when you are faced with a situation as a social being socializing with the opposite sex, then think of this relationship as a partner or friend in a job. . Third, when you are ready to get to know the opposite sex, interact in ways that are *ma'ruf* (good) by maintaining each other's religion and honor.

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<sup>1</sup>Yulmitra Handayani and Mukhammad Nur Hadi, PROGRESSIVE INTERPRETATION OF WOMEN THEME HADITHS: A STUDY OF APPLICATIONS TO QIRA'AH MUBADALAH THEORY, HUMANISMA: Journal of Gender Studies, Vol. 04, No. 02, July – December 2020, p. 165.

Humans were created by Allah SWT into two types, namely male and female. Then Allah SWT ordered humans to pair up and give birth to offspring from them. As has been written in His word, QS. An-Nisa' (4) : 1 which means: "O people! Fear your Lord, who created you from one self (Adam), and (Allah) created his partner (Eve) from himself, and from both of them Allah multiplied many men and women. Fear Allah in whose name you ask one another and (maintain) family relationships. Indeed, Allah always protects and watches over you."

If read textually, the verse means that a man (Adam) is paired with a woman (Eve). Then Allah SWT breeds men and women from both of them. This verse can also be interpreted that women were created from the male part as a partner. However, if explored further, the verse does not clearly describe the creation of Adam and Eve.

Thus, women have the right over themselves to maintain their honor and men also vice versa. So that in building relations between men and women it should be done in a good way and maintain mutual respect. There is no more authority from men over what belongs to women, including their bodies or property, before their relationship is made lawful in Islam. Back to the context of QS. An-Nisa (4): 1, Allah SWT commands every man and woman to take care of each other, maintain honor until the offspring below them, and only to Allah SWT do they fear.

### Conclusion

The development of the current digitalization era also brings various social changes to society. For example, the ta'aruf process or the introduction period can be done through online media or communication intermediary applications. Often, the application used by several couples is the WhatsApp application. This application is a communication-based application, either through chatting, personal calling, or video calling. Communication between individuals becomes easy with the WhatsApp application's growing features. In this ta'aruf phenomenon, the WhatsApp application becomes an easy intermediary between women and men recognizing each other during the ta'aruf period. If it is related to the conditions of digitalization, the most ideal concept to apply is the practice of fiancé as a status, but in relationships between men and women, it is maintained in accordance with Islamic religious ethics in accordance with the principles taught in *mubadalah*. The government should also order every man and woman to take care of each other, maintain honor for the descendants below them, and only fear Allah SWT.

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