

DIVORCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON HOUSEHOLD UNITY FROM A SHARIA LAW PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The development of social media in the digital era has significantly influenced the dynamics of household life, particularly marital relationships. Besides functioning as a communication medium, social media may also contribute to household conflicts that can lead to divorce when used improperly. This study aims to analyze the impact of social media on household integrity and divorce from the perspective of Sharia law in Indonesia. The research employed a qualitative approach using normative legal methods, supported by an analysis of ten divorce decisions issued by Religious Courts in Indonesia between 2020 and 2024, as well as relevant literature concerning Islamic family law and digital communication. Data were analyzed through a content analysis approach to identify forms of social media-related conflict and their legal implications. The findings indicate that social media contributed to marital disputes through digital jealousy, excessive online interactions with third parties, emotional infidelity, lack of transparency in online activities, and communication breakdowns between spouses. Several court decisions revealed that social media-related conflicts often served as triggering factors that intensified ongoing domestic disputes and ultimately resulted in divorce. From the perspective of Sharia law, these practices contradict the principles of *mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf, hifz al-'irdh*, and the objectives of marriage in Islam, which emphasize the creation of a *sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah* family. The study highlights the importance of strengthening digital literacy based on Islamic values and developing adaptive approaches within Islamic family law to address the challenges posed by social media in contemporary marital life.

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INTRODUCTIONS

The rapid development of digital technology over the last two decades has transformed various aspects of human life, including patterns of communication within families. The emergence of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok has created new forms of interaction that transcend spatial and temporal boundaries. In family life, these platforms facilitate communication and emotional connection between spouses;

however, they also introduce new challenges that may affect marital stability when used without adequate self-control and ethical awareness (Maulina et al., 2025).

Recent studies have highlighted the complex relationship between social media use and marital relationships. Everett et al. (2025) found that social media can strengthen emotional bonds between couples while simultaneously increasing the risk of misunderstandings due to the limitations of text-based communication. Likewise, Ullah et al. (2025) reported that excessive engagement with social media may reduce the quality of direct interpersonal communication between spouses. Other studies have identified digital jealousy, emotional attachment to third parties, and hidden online activities as factors that contribute to marital tension and conflict (Rahmawati & Anwar, 2023; Shahfiqah, 2025).

In Indonesia, the influence of social media on household relationships has also become increasingly visible in divorce cases handled by Religious Courts. Ahmad and Lestari (2021) observed that digital interactions involving third parties often trigger repeated disputes that eventually lead to marital breakdown. Furthermore, the tendency of spouses to disclose domestic conflicts on social media has created additional challenges, as public exposure of private disputes may intensify conflict and hinder reconciliation efforts (Sari & Munir, 2024). These developments indicate that social media has become an important contemporary factor affecting family resilience and marital continuity.

From the perspective of Islamic law, marriage is a sacred contract aimed at establishing a family characterized by *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*. The preservation of family harmony is closely related to Islamic principles such as *mu'āsyarah bil ma'rūf*, *hifz al-'irdh*, honesty, mutual respect, and responsibility between spouses (Zahrah, 2019). Consequently, social media practices that generate distrust, emotional infidelity, or public exposure of family disputes may conflict with these principles and undermine the objectives of marriage in Islam. In the framework of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, maintaining family honor and protecting social relationships constitute essential values that must be preserved in both physical and digital interactions (Fauzan, 2022).

Although previous studies have examined the relationship between social media and marital conflict, most of them focus on sociological, psychological, or communication aspects. Existing research generally discusses the negative impacts of social media on family relationships, digital jealousy, or online infidelity, but rarely analyzes these phenomena comprehensively through the perspective of Sharia law while simultaneously examining how such issues are reflected in Religious Court divorce decisions in Indonesia. As a result, there remains limited understanding of how contemporary digital behavior intersects with Islamic legal principles governing family integrity and divorce.

This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the impact of social media on household integrity and divorce through the perspective of Sharia law, supported by an examination of Religious Court decisions and relevant Islamic legal doctrines. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of contemporary digital-social phenomena with normative Islamic legal analysis and judicial practice. By combining these perspectives, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how social media influences marital relationships and how Islamic family law may respond to emerging challenges in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using normative legal research methods. The normative legal approach was chosen to examine the concepts of household integrity, divorce, and the use of social media from the perspective of Sharia law and Indonesian positive law. The research focuses on legal norms, legal principles, and judicial considerations relevant to the influence of social media on marital relationships and divorce in Indonesia.

This research applies three approaches commonly used in normative legal studies: the statute approach, conceptual approach, and case approach. The statute approach is used to analyze legal provisions governing marriage and divorce, including Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, the Compilation of Islamic Law, and other relevant regulations. The conceptual approach is employed to examine key concepts related to the study, such as marital integrity, divorce, social media ethics, *mu'āsyarah bil ma'rūf*, *hifz al-'irdh*, and *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. These concepts provide the theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between digital behavior and family stability within Islamic law.

In addition, this study utilizes a case approach through the examination of selected Religious Court decisions in Indonesia in which social media-related issues were identified as factors contributing to marital conflict and divorce. The analysis focuses on judicial reasoning, legal considerations, and the application of Islamic family law principles in resolving disputes involving digital interactions. Through this approach, the study seeks to identify patterns in how courts address the growing influence of social media on household relationships.

The sources of data consist of primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials include statutory regulations and Religious Court decisions related to divorce cases. Secondary legal materials comprise books, scientific journal articles, and previous studies discussing Islamic family law, divorce, digital communication, and social media. Tertiary legal materials, such as legal dictionaries and encyclopedias, are used to support the interpretation of legal concepts and terminology.

Data collection was conducted through library research and document analysis. Legal documents, court decisions, scholarly publications, and other relevant literature were systematically reviewed to obtain comprehensive information related to the research problem. To ensure the relevance of the discussion to contemporary developments, priority was given to academic publications and legal materials published within the last ten years.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive-analytical techniques. The analysis was carried out by identifying legal norms and judicial considerations, interpreting them through the perspective of Sharia law, and relating them to contemporary issues arising from social media use in marital relationships. The study employed a deductive method of reasoning, drawing conclusions from general principles of Islamic law and national law to specific issues concerning household integrity and divorce in the digital era. Through this analytical framework, the research formulates legal implications and recommendations for strengthening family resilience amid the rapid expansion of digital communication technologies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Research results indicate that social media plays a significant role in divorce dynamics in Indonesia, particularly as a trigger for domestic conflict that leads to marital dissolution. Based on an analysis of Religious Court decisions and literature findings, social media is not always the primary cause of divorce, but rather serves as a catalyst that accelerates latent conflict in the household. This situation indicates that divorce in the digital era cannot be separated from changes in communication and interaction patterns between husband and wife.

In Indonesian religious court practice, conflicts related to social media generally arise in the form of digital jealousy, disputes resulting from hidden communication, and allegations of online infidelity. Religious Court judges in several decisions have considered social media activity as part of the facts of the trial, particularly when the conflict results in a loss of domestic harmony and the failure to achieve the goals of marriage as mandated by the Marriage Law and the Compilation of Islamic Law. From a Sharia law perspective, domestic conflict triggered by social media is closely related to violations of the principle of *mu'āsyarah bil ma'rūf*, namely the obligation of husband and wife to treat each other with kindness, honesty, and responsibility. Digital interactions involving lies, concealment of communications, or emotional closeness with others are considered contrary to the values of honesty and trustworthiness in Islamic households.

The study also shows that digital jealousy is the most dominant form of conflict. Social media allows extensive access to a partner's private life, thus fueling excessive suspicion. Under Islamic law, disproportionate jealousy can undermine marital harmony if not accompanied by thoughtful *tabayyun* (reconciliation), or clarification. When such jealousy escalates into persistent quarrels, this condition can meet the sharia-compliant grounds for divorce due to the lack of harmony in living together. Emotional infidelity through social media was also a significant finding in this study. Virtual relationships that don't involve physical contact are often considered trivial by those involved, but from a Sharia legal perspective, emotional attachment that goes beyond the bounds of fidelity violates the principle of *hifz al-'irdh*, or the protection of family honor. This type of infidelity has been proven to cause psychological trauma and undermine trust within a marriage, making it a compelling reason for divorce.

The phenomenon of airing marital conflict on social media also has significant legal and social implications. In Islam, exposing a spouse's faults in public contradicts the principle of *sitr* and the recommendation to resolve conflicts privately. This practice not only worsens marital relations but also complicates the *ishlah* (reconciliation) process, which should be prioritized before divorce. From a child protection perspective, research shows that domestic conflict triggered and publicized through social media negatively impacts children's psychological well-being. Children often become indirect victims of parental conflict, especially when the disputes are accessible to the wider social environment. Within the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* (laws of Islamic law), the protection of offspring (*hifz al-nasl*) is a primary objective that must be considered in every divorce decision.

In the context of Indonesian positive law, social media has not been explicitly regulated as a factor in divorce, but judicial practice demonstrates that digital activity can be used as evidence and as a consideration by judges. This demonstrates the development of the law adapting to social change, although clearer guidelines are still needed regarding the ethical assessment and limitations of social media use in the household. Despite numerous negative impacts, this study also found that social media has positive potential for maintaining marital integrity when used wisely. Social media can be an effective means of communication, a medium for religious education, and a space for sharing Islamic family values. Couples with good digital literacy and religious understanding tend to be able to use social media to strengthen their relationships, rather than the opposite.

This study confirms that divorce issues in the digital era are not solely caused by technology, but rather by weak self-control, media ethics, and understanding of sharia values in domestic life. Sharia law, through the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* approach, provides a relevant normative framework to guide social media use so as not to undermine the goals of marriage. Strengthening premarital and postmarital education that incorporates digital literacy aspects based on Islamic values is necessary. Religious institutions, the state, and religious courts have a strategic role in providing married couples with an understanding of social media ethics and its impact on marital integrity. Social media represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the resilience of Muslim households in Indonesia. An adaptive, contextual, and welfare-oriented approach to Sharia law is the main key in responding to the phenomenon of divorce in the digital era.

Discussion

The development of social media has brought about fundamental changes in marital relationships in Indonesia. Social media not only serves as a means of communication but also creates new interactive spaces that influence how couples build trust, manage emotions, and resolve conflict. High levels of social media use have the potential to exacerbate domestic conflict, especially when not accompanied by adequate digital literacy and communication ethics (Hanafi et al, 2025).

The results of this study indicate that social media often acts as a trigger for latent conflict that already exists in the household. Conflicts that initially are personal and limited can escalate into prolonged disputes due to digital interactions involving third parties. This finding aligns with research by Sobri et al, (2025) and Nadriana et al, (2024) which states that social media accelerates the escalation of domestic conflict, although it is not the sole cause of divorce. In religious court practice in Indonesia, social media is increasingly emerging as a factor behind divorce proceedings. Digital evidence such as text messages, screenshots of conversations, and social media posts are often presented in court as indications of a breakdown in marital harmony. Ahmad & Lestari (2021) emphasize that judges consider social media as part of the evidence in court as long as it contributes to the breakdown of marital relations.

One dominant form of conflict is digital jealousy. Social media allows couples to openly access each other's online activities, fueling excessive suspicion. Rahmawati & Anwar (2023) found that digital jealousy often stems from subjective interpretations of online interactions that may not necessarily constitute infidelity. In this context, social media increases the potential for misunderstanding due to the lack of direct clarification.

In addition to jealousy, emotional infidelity through social media is a growing phenomenon. Virtual relationships that begin as casual communication can develop into emotional attachments that transcend the boundaries of domestic ethics. Research by Shahfiqah (2025) and Ullah et al, (2025) shows that emotional infidelity has the same serious psychological impact as physical infidelity because it damages a couple's trust and emotional

stability. From a Sharia legal perspective, this phenomenon contradicts the principle of *hifz al-'irdh*, or the protection of family honor. Islam emphasizes the importance of maintaining fidelity and honesty in marital relationships. Fauzan (2022) emphasize that digital behavior that leads to emotional betrayal can be viewed as a violation of Sharia values, although it does not necessarily result in a violation of positive law.

Another phenomenon that exacerbates domestic conflict is the tendency to expose private issues to the digital public sphere. Posts containing complaints, sarcasm, or revealing a partner's shame often escalate conflict and narrow the chances of reconciliation. Sari & Munir (2024) and Everett et al (2025) state that conflicts publicized on social media tend to be difficult to resolve peacefully due to the social pressures they face online.

The impact of domestic conflict triggered by social media is felt not only by couples but also by children. Children are potentially exposed to psychological stress due to parental conflict that is widely shared in the digital space. Fitriani (2021) and Hakim & Yusuf (2022) revealed that publicly exposed family conflict increases the risk of emotional distress in children and affects their psychosocial development. From a communication perspective, social media has also changed the interaction patterns of husbands and wives. Face-to-face communication, rich in emotional expression, is often replaced by text messages that lack nuance. Misinterpretation of digital messages often triggers avoidable conflicts. Nashir (2020) and Fauzi (2023) emphasized that communication in Islam demands empathy, clarity, and responsibility, which are often diminished in digital communication.

This study also found that social media does not always negatively impact household integrity. Social media can be a means of strengthening relationships when used wisely. Religious content, family discussions, and healthy long-distance communication can strengthen emotional bonds between couples. These findings align with Pratama & Hidayah (2025) and Hanafi et al (2025) who demonstrated the positive contribution of social media to harmony in Muslim households. Therefore, the main problem lies not with the technology itself, but rather with patterns of social media use within the household. Lack of digital literacy and media ethics are key factors that increase the risk of conflict. Odunlami et al, (2024) and Nadriana et al, (2024) emphasize that self-control and ethical awareness determine whether social media strengthens or damages family relationships.

The Sharia legal approach through the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* (laws) provides a relevant normative framework for responding to these challenges. The principles of *hifz al-'irdh* (lawful conduct), *hifz al-nasl* (lawful conduct), and *mu'āsyarah bil ma'rūf* (property and welfare) place family protection as the primary objective of Islamic law. Zahrah (2019) emphasize that all behavior, including digital interactions, must be directed toward maintaining the family's well-being. In the context of Indonesian positive law, there are no specific regulations governing digital behavior within the household. However, judicial practice demonstrates legal adaptation to technological developments. Usada & Akbar (2025) note that judges are increasingly open to assessing digital evidence as long as it is relevant to marital discord, while still adhering to the principle of prudence.

These findings demonstrate the need to integrate Islamic-based digital literacy into premarital and postmarital education. Such education is crucial for equipping couples with an understanding of social media ethics and its impact on marital life. Nelli et al, (2024) emphasized that strengthening religious values and social awareness plays a crucial role in reducing divorce rates. Social media presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the resilience of Muslim households in Indonesia. A contextual approach to Sharia law, supported by adaptive positive law and adequate digital literacy, is key to maintaining household integrity in the ever-evolving digital era.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media has become an important factor influencing household stability in the digital era. The analysis indicates that social media contributes to marital conflict primarily through digital jealousy, emotional attachment to third parties, lack of transparency in online interactions, and communication patterns that weaken trust between spouses. The examination of Religious Court decisions further shows that social media-related issues often function as conflict accelerators that intensify existing marital problems and eventually contribute to divorce. From the perspective of Sharia law, these practices are inconsistent with the principles of *mu'āsyarah bil ma'rūf*, *amanah*, *hifz al-'irdh*, and the objectives of marriage aimed at establishing a *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* family.

The findings of this study have several practical implications. For Muslim families, strengthening digital ethics, transparency in online activities, and effective communication between spouses is essential to maintaining marital harmony. For religious institutions and Islamic counselors, digital literacy based on Islamic values should be incorporated into premarital education and family counseling programs. Meanwhile, Religious Courts may consider developing a more contextual understanding of social media-related conflicts in divorce cases, particularly in assessing the role of digital interactions in the deterioration of marital relationships.

This study is limited by its reliance on normative legal analysis and documentary sources, particularly legal literature and Religious Court decisions, without incorporating interviews or field-based perspectives from judges, counselors, or divorced couples. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ empirical methods, such as interviews or case studies, to obtain a deeper understanding of how social media influences marital relationships and divorce practices in contemporary Muslim society. Such studies would enrich the development of Islamic family law in responding to the challenges posed by digital technology.

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