

DIGITAL TA'ARUF IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THEMATIC HADITH: RECONSTRUCTING THE ETHICS OF CHOOSING A PARTNER IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-06-2026

Revised : 17-07-2026

Accepted : 05-08-2026

KEYWORDS

digital ta'aruf;
thematic hadith;
ethics of choosing a
spouse;
social media;
virtual khalwat;

ABSTRACT

The development of digital technology and social media has transformed the practice of ta'aruf among contemporary Muslims into a phenomenon known as digital ta'aruf. This shift changes the process of seeking prospective spouses from family- or community-mediated introductions toward digitally mediated interactions. Although digital ta'aruf provides wider access and efficiency, it also raises ethical challenges, including limited guardian (wali) supervision, identity misrepresentation, virtual khalwat, and interactions beyond Islamic boundaries. This study aims to examine digital ta'aruf through a thematic hadith approach (maudhu'i) by analyzing Prophetic traditions related to spouse selection, nazhar, the role of the wali, the prohibition of khalwat, and commitment ethics in marriage. This qualitative library research employs takhrij and sharh approaches to analyze relevant hadiths supported by contemporary literature on digital ta'aruf and Islamic ethics. The findings reveal five ethical principles underlying digital ta'aruf: prioritizing religion and morality in spouse selection, purposeful nazhar, maintaining ethical interaction boundaries, active guardian involvement, and commitment integrity. This study contributes a novel reconstruction of Hadith-Based Digital Ta'aruf Ethics through three dimensions: value orientation, interaction governance, and social accountability. The study concludes that digital ta'aruf can be accepted as a contemporary practice when technological convenience remains guided by Prophetic ethical principles.

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INTRODUCTIONS

The rapid development of information and communication technology in the current digital era has brought significant changes in almost all aspects of human life, including marriage and the search for a life partner. Among the young generation of Indonesian Muslims, a phenomenon known as digital ta'aruf has emerged, referring to the process of getting acquainted with the intention of marriage through social media platforms, Islamic matchmaking applications, or other digital communication channels (Elysia, 2021).

Ta'aruf in the Islamic tradition literally means getting to know one another. In the context of marriage, it is understood as the process of introduction between prospective spouses conducted honorably, accompanied by the presence of a guardian, and directed toward a legitimate marital bond (Akbar, 2015). However, in the digital era, the meaning and practice of ta'aruf have undergone significant transformation. Various platforms now claim to provide Islamic ta'aruf services, ranging from Telegram ta'aruf groups and Instagram accounts facilitating introductions between

prospective spouses to Android and iOS applications specifically designed for Muslims seeking partners based on sharia principles (Handayani, 2022).

This phenomenon presents both opportunities and challenges that deserve critical examination. On the one hand, digital ta'aruf offers advantages over conventional introductions, including broader access to potential partners, greater time efficiency, and the ability to filter candidates based on religious commitment, educational background, and social characteristics (Hisan et al., 2025). On the other hand, digital ta'aruf also raises ethical concerns. Private interactions in digital spaces with limited supervision may encourage emotional dependency, create opportunities for virtual khalwat (seclusion), and diminish the role of guardians in the premarital process (Hasibuan, 2021).

The relevance of this phenomenon is further strengthened by the rapid growth of internet use in Indonesia. By 2024, internet users had reached approximately 221 million people, with the majority belonging to the 18–34 age group ((APJII), 2024). In this context of widespread digital penetration, digital ta'aruf has become increasingly common. Several studies indicate that many Indonesian Muslim couples initially became acquainted through social media before eventually marrying. Nevertheless, numerous cases also demonstrate that interactions initiated with the intention of ta'aruf gradually develop into relationships that deviate from Islamic ethical principles (Nisa, 2021).

Although previous studies have discussed digital ta'aruf from sociological, communication, technological, and contemporary Islamic perspectives, most of them primarily focus on user behavior, digital communication patterns, platform effectiveness, or the social dynamics of online matchmaking (Handayani, 2022; Nisa, 2021). These studies provide valuable insights into the phenomenon but pay limited attention to developing a comprehensive ethical framework grounded directly in the Prophetic traditions (hadith). Existing discussions generally refer to Islamic values in a normative manner without systematically examining the relevant hadiths through a thematic (maudhu'i) approach. Consequently, there remains a research gap concerning how hadith-based ethical principles can be reconstructed to address the unique challenges posed by digital interactions in contemporary ta'aruf practices.

From the normative perspective, Islam, through the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), provides comprehensive guidance concerning the ethics of choosing a spouse, the process of introduction, the role of guardians, and the preservation of dignity throughout the premarital stage. These hadiths regulate not only the technical aspects of marriage but also establish a moral framework that guides Muslims in selecting a spouse responsibly (Faquihuddin et al., 2026; Yusril et al., 2025). However, studies that explicitly integrate these hadiths with the contemporary phenomenon of digital ta'aruf remain scarce. Most existing research discusses either digital ta'aruf as a social phenomenon or hadiths on marriage ethics separately, without connecting the two into a coherent analytical framework.

This study seeks to address this gap by employing a thematic (maudhu'i) hadith approach to collect, classify, and analyze hadiths related to spouse selection and premarital interactions within the context of digital ta'aruf. The novelty of this research lies in the reconstruction of a hadith-based ethical framework that is specifically contextualized for digital matchmaking practices in the social media era. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of contemporary hadith studies by demonstrating the relevance of Prophetic guidance in responding to emerging digital social practices. Practically, it provides ethical guidelines for Muslim communities, digital ta'aruf platform developers, Islamic counselors, and policymakers in promoting digital premarital interactions that remain consistent with Islamic ethical principles.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative library research design, focusing on textual analysis of hadith literature and relevant scholarly works to examine the ethics of spouse selection in the context of digital ta'aruf (Elwahdiyah, 2026). The study adopted the thematic (maudhu'i) hadith approach, which systematically collects, classifies, and analyzes hadiths related to a specific theme in order to formulate a comprehensive understanding based on the Prophetic traditions.

The primary data consisted of hadiths related to the ethics of choosing a spouse, the procedure of nazhar (viewing a prospective spouse), the role of the guardian (wali), the prohibition of khalwat, and ethical interactions between men and women as documented in the Kutub al-Sittah. Secondary data included classical and contemporary works on hadith studies, books on sharh al-hadith, rijal al-hadith literature, scientific journal articles, and academic publications discussing digital ta'aruf, social media, and contemporary Islamic ethics.

The selection of hadiths followed purposive criteria. Only hadiths directly related to premarital ethics and spouse selection were included, while narrations unrelated to the research focus or lacking thematic relevance were excluded. The identification of hadiths was conducted through thematic keyword searches in the Kutub al-Sittah, followed by cross-referencing with classical hadith indexes and supporting literature to ensure comprehensive coverage of the topic.

The authenticity of each selected hadith was examined through the process of takhrij al-hadith, which involved tracing the original sources of the narrations, identifying their chains of transmission (isnad), and examining the judgments of recognized hadith scholars regarding their authenticity. The validity assessment referred to established classifications, including *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, and *ḍaʿīf*, while considering the continuity of the chain of narrators, the reliability (*ʿadālah*) and precision (*ḍabt*) of the transmitters, and the absence of hidden defects (*ʿillah*) or textual irregularities (*shudhūdh*). Hadith interpretation (*sharh*) was undertaken by comparing explanations from classical and contemporary commentaries to understand both the normative meaning and the contextual relevance of each narration.

Data analysis was conducted systematically through the stages of the thematic (*maudhuʿi*) method. First, the contemporary phenomenon of digital *taʿaruf* and its ethical challenges in the era of social media were identified through a review of relevant literature. Second, hadiths related to the research theme were collected, classified according to their thematic content, and verified through takhrij and authenticity assessment. Third, the selected hadiths were interpreted using a *sharh* approach to identify their ethical principles and conceptual relationships. Fourth, the findings were synthesized through thematic analysis to construct a coherent hadith-based ethical framework concerning spouse selection. Finally, the resulting framework was contextualized within contemporary digital *taʿaruf* practices to evaluate its relevance in addressing ethical challenges emerging from online premarital interactions.

Through these stages, the study integrates classical hadith scholarship with contemporary social realities, enabling a systematic reconstruction of Islamic ethical principles applicable to digital *taʿaruf* while maintaining methodological rigor and transparency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Ta'aruf as a Contemporary Social Phenomenon

Etymologically, *taʿaruf* derives from the Arabic root *ʿarafa* (عرف), meaning "to know" or "to become acquainted." In its reciprocal form (*tafaʿul*), *taʿaruf* refers to the process of mutual acquaintance between two parties (Akbar, 2015). Within the Islamic tradition, *taʿaruf* in the context of marriage is understood as a structured and ethically guided introduction between prospective spouses that is conducted under the supervision of a guardian (*wali*) or trusted intermediary and aims to assess religious commitment, moral character, and compatibility while preserving Islamic ethical boundaries (Madya, 2017). The rapid development of digital communication technologies has transformed this practice into what is now widely known as digital *taʿaruf*, in which introductions are mediated through social media, messaging platforms, or Islamic matchmaking applications. Rather than changing the religious objective of *taʿaruf*, digital technology has shifted the communication medium and interaction patterns through which it is conducted. Elysia, Chatra, and Arif explain that the internet has enabled Muslims to seek marriage partners without face-to-face meetings, thereby moving *taʿaruf* from a community-supervised process toward a more individualized and technology-mediated interaction (Elysia, 2021). This transformation is reflected in the growing popularity of Islamic matchmaking platforms such as the Rumaysho Matchmaking Bureau, Taaruf ID, Salams, and Hawaya (Setiawati, 2025). From the perspective of digital communication theory, this shift illustrates how digital media reshape interpersonal relationships by expanding communication across spatial and temporal boundaries while simultaneously reducing the regulatory role traditionally exercised by families and religious communities. Consequently, digital *taʿaruf* represents not merely a technological innovation but also a sociocultural transformation that redistributes authority over premarital interactions from collective supervision toward greater individual autonomy.

The increasing prevalence of digital *taʿaruf* in Indonesia is closely associated with the growing religiosity of young Muslims and the widespread adoption of digital technologies in everyday life. Nisa argues that the rise of halal digital matchmaking in Indonesia and Malaysia reflects the intersection between religious conservatism and contemporary communication technology, allowing digital platforms to function simultaneously as spaces for partner selection, religious expression, and the expansion of socio-religious networks (Nisa, 2021). This trend is further reinforced by the tendency of young adults to postpone marriage because of educational, professional, and economic considerations, encouraging many to seek more practical alternatives through digital platforms (Hildawati & Lestari, 2019). Nevertheless, these developments also generate significant ethical concerns. Unlike conventional *taʿaruf*, where interactions generally occur under the supervision of guardians or trusted third parties, digital communication frequently takes place through private messaging, voice calls, or video conferences without effective oversight (Handayani, 2022). From the perspective of digital media ethics, the technological neutrality of communication platforms does not imply ethical neutrality. Features such as anonymity, selective self-presentation, and algorithmically mediated interactions facilitate the construction of idealized digital identities while making it increasingly difficult to verify personal integrity, religious commitment, and

moral character. Consequently, trust within digital ta'aruf cannot rely solely on digital profiles but requires broader mechanisms of accountability and verification that extend beyond online communication.

Previous studies have provided important insights into digital ta'aruf from sociological, communication, and legal perspectives. (Elysia, 2021) emphasizes the transformation of ta'aruf practices through digital technology, Handayani (2022) examines the operational mechanisms of online matchmaking platforms, while (Hasibuan, 2021) discusses the phenomenon through the perspective of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, particularly regarding legal validity and the protection of personal dignity in digital interactions. Although these studies successfully explain the characteristics and challenges of digital ta'aruf, their discussions remain largely descriptive and tend to examine technological developments separately from the normative foundations of Islamic ethics. As a result, they have not yet developed a comprehensive ethical framework grounded systematically in the Prophetic traditions (hadith) that can respond to the unique characteristics of digital communication. This limitation demonstrates the need for a thematic (*maudhu'i*) analysis of hadith to reconstruct ethical principles that remain faithful to Islamic teachings while being responsive to contemporary digital realities. Accordingly, digital ta'aruf should be understood not merely as a new communication practice but as a contemporary religious phenomenon requiring the contextualization of hadith-based ethics to ensure that technological developments continue to serve the objectives of Islamic marriage rather than undermine them.

Hadith of the Criteria for Choosing a Spouse

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، عَنْ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي سَعِيدُ بْنُ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: تُنْكَحُ الْمَرْأَةُ لِأَرْبَعٍ: لِمَالِهَا، وَلِحَسَبِهَا، وَلِجَمَالِهَا، وَلِدِينِهَا، فَاظْفَرْ بِذَاتِ الدِّينِ، تَرِبْتُ يَدَاكَ

"Narrated to us Musaddad, narrated to us Yahyā, from 'Ubaidullāh, he said: He narrated to me Sa'īd bin Abī Sa'īd, from his father, from Abū Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), from the Prophet PBUH, he said: 'A woman is married for four things: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty, and her religion. Therefore, choose the one with religious commitment, and you will prosper.'"

This hadith constitutes one of the primary normative foundations concerning the ethics of spouse selection in Islam. Al-Nawawī, in his commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, explains that the hadith does not prohibit consideration of wealth, lineage, or physical attractiveness. Rather, it describes the common motivations underlying spouse selection while directing Muslims to prioritize religious commitment (*dīn*) because it serves as the moral foundation for building a stable and harmonious family. Thus, the prophetic instruction is not intended to negate other considerations but to establish a hierarchy of values in which religious and ethical qualities function as the principal criteria guiding marital decisions.

This ethical orientation becomes increasingly significant in the context of digital *ta'aruf*, where digital platforms tend to privilege visual representation and measurable personal attributes over moral character. User profiles generally emphasize photographs, educational background, occupation, economic status, and lifestyle, while qualities such as sincerity, integrity, and religious commitment are considerably more difficult to evaluate through online interaction alone. From the perspective of digital communication theory, this reflects the phenomenon of selective self-presentation, whereby individuals intentionally construct favorable online identities through the selective disclosure of personal information. Consequently, digital communication often creates an asymmetry between virtual representation and actual personal character, making the assessment of religious values more complex than in conventional face-to-face interactions.

Previous studies have similarly identified these challenges. Asmara and Sahara argue that religious commitment and moral character are the most difficult aspects to verify within digital *ta'aruf*, since online interactions frequently rely on self-reported information and curated digital profiles rather than observable behavior (Asmara, 2022). Their findings reinforce the importance of the Prophet's guidance, yet they primarily emphasize the practical difficulty of verification without explaining how the hadith itself provides an ethical framework for responding to such challenges. From the perspective of contemporary Islamic jurisprudence, this hadith should therefore be understood not merely as a recommendation to choose a religious spouse but also as a normative principle requiring that the process of evaluating religiosity be conducted through reliable and accountable mechanisms. In digital contexts, this may include involving families or trusted mediators, confirming religious and social backgrounds through credible references, and observing consistency between an individual's digital identity and real-life conduct before making marital decisions.

The relevance of this hadith extends beyond establishing the criteria for spouse selection; it also offers an ethical critique of the value system embedded within contemporary digital matchmaking platforms. Whereas digital platforms frequently encourage decisions based on algorithmic compatibility, visual attractiveness, and socioeconomic indicators,

the Prophetic tradition reorients the process toward moral integrity as the primary standard of evaluation. This finding suggests that ethical digital *ta'aruf* should not merely adopt digital technology as a communication medium but should also redesign the evaluation process so that religious commitment and moral character remain the central determinants of partner selection. In this respect, the hadith provides not only normative guidance for individual Muslims but also conceptual principles for developing digital *ta'aruf* practices that are consistent with the ethical objectives of Islamic marriage.

Hadith on the Procedure of *Nazhar* (Viewing a Prospective Spouse)

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَاحِدِ بْنُ زِيَادٍ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ دَاوُدَ بْنِ حُصَيْنٍ، عَنْ وَاqِدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بَغْيِي ابْنِ سَعْدٍ بْنِ مُعَاذٍ، عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «إِذَا خَطَبَ أَحَدُكُمْ الْمَرْأَةَ، فَإِنْ اسْتَطَاعَ أَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى مَا يَدْعُوهُ إِلَى نِكَاحِهَا فَلْيَفْعَلْ»

"Narrated to us Hannād, narrated to us 'Abdah, from Muḥammad bin Ishāq, from Dāwud bin al-Ḥuṣain, from Wāqid bin 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin Sa'd bin Mu'āz, from Jābir bin 'Abdullāh, he said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'If one of you proposes to a woman, then if he is able to see from her something that will encourage him to marry her, let him do so.'"

This hadith establishes the permissibility of *nazhar*, namely viewing a prospective spouse before marriage, as part of the decision-making process. Classical scholars generally agree that *nazhar* is permissible provided that it is performed with the sincere intention of marriage, remains within the ethical limits prescribed by Islamic law, and is not motivated by mere curiosity or personal pleasure. Ibn Qudāmah, in *al-Mughnī*, explains that *nazhar* is prescribed to ensure that marriage is founded upon informed judgment and realistic expectations rather than imagination or uncertainty (Ibn Qudāmah, 1997). Accordingly, *nazhar* should be understood as an ethical instrument for responsible marital decision-making rather than unrestricted visual observation.

The application of this principle has become increasingly complex in the context of digital *ta'aruf*, where the initial process of acquaintance frequently begins through photographs, videos, or online profiles. Unlike conventional *nazhar*, which involves direct observation within a supervised environment, digital *nazhar* is mediated by technological platforms that enable users to edit photographs, curate personal information, and selectively display desirable aspects of themselves. From the perspective of digital communication theory, this phenomenon reflects the concept of impression management, whereby individuals consciously construct favorable online identities in order to influence others' perceptions. Consequently, digital representations cannot always be assumed to reflect authentic personal characteristics, creating a significant ethical challenge for Muslims seeking to assess compatibility through online interactions.

Previous studies have documented both the opportunities and limitations of this development. Handayani's study of the Rumaysho Matchmaking Bureau demonstrates that well-managed Islamic matchmaking platforms attempt to operationalize the principle of *nazhar* by providing structured opportunities for prospective spouses to become acquainted while involving mediators and applying clear screening procedures. Such mechanisms help ensure that the process remains directed toward marriage rather than unrestricted social interaction (Handayani, 2022). The study primarily focuses on the operational aspects of the platform and gives limited attention to how the Prophetic concept of *nazhar* should be reinterpreted in response to the characteristics of digital communication. Consequently, an important question remains regarding the extent to which viewing digital profiles can fulfill the ethical objectives intended by the hadith.

From the perspective of contemporary fiqh, the permissibility of digital *nazhar* should therefore be understood within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly the protection of lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) and personal dignity (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*). Digital media may function as a preliminary means of introduction, but they cannot fully replace direct observation conducted in an accountable and supervised setting. Ethical assessment requires not only visual familiarity but also the verification of personal integrity, religious commitment, and social character through interactions involving trusted family members or mediators. Accordingly, digital *nazhar* should be regarded as the initial stage of acquaintance rather than the sole basis for making marital decisions.

This analysis demonstrates that the hadith provides broader ethical guidance than merely permitting prospective spouses to see one another. Instead, it establishes a principle of purpose-oriented and accountable observation, in which visual access serves the objective of making informed and responsible marital decisions. In contrast, contemporary digital culture often encourages prolonged profile browsing, repeated viewing of personal photographs, and passive online surveillance without genuine commitment to marriage. Such practices shift *nazhar* from a purposeful religious act into a form of digital consumption that is inconsistent with the ethical objectives of the hadith. Therefore, the reconstruction of digital *ta'aruf* ethics proposed in this study emphasizes that digital *nazhar* should be conducted with a clear intention of

marriage, supported by identity verification and family involvement, and followed by direct, ethically supervised interaction before any final marital commitment is made.

Hadith on the Prohibition of *Khalwat*

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، وَأَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، وَزُهَيْرُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ، قَالُوا: حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ بْنُ عُيَيْنَةَ، عَنْ عَمْرِو، عَنْ أَبِي مَعْبُدٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَخْطُبُ، يَقُولُ: لَا يَخْلُوتُ رَجُلٌ بِامْرَأَةٍ، وَلَا تُسَافِرُ امْرَأَةٌ إِلَّا وَمَعَهَا مُحْرَمٌ

"Narrated to us Qutaibah bin Sa'īd, Abū Bakr bin Abī Shaybah, and Zuhair ibn Ḥarb, they said: Sufyān bin 'Uyainah narrated to us, from 'Amr, from Abū Ma'bad, from Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with them), that he heard the Prophet (PBUH) delivering a sermon in which he said: 'A man must not be alone with a woman who is not his mahram, and a woman must not travel except in the company of her mahram.'"

This hadith constitutes one of the fundamental ethical principles governing interactions between unrelated men and women in Islam. Classical scholars interpret the prohibition of *khalwat* not merely as a legal restriction on physical seclusion but as a preventive measure (*sadd al-dharā'i'*) intended to eliminate circumstances that may lead to moral misconduct or compromise personal dignity. Al-Nawawī explains that the presence of a third party serves as an ethical safeguard by minimizing opportunities for temptation, suspicion, and social harm. Accordingly, the prohibition should be understood within its broader objective of preserving honor (*hifẓ al-'ird*) and protecting both individuals and society from situations that may gradually develop into unethical relationships.

The ethical implications of this hadith have become increasingly relevant in the era of digital communication, where private interaction no longer requires physical proximity. Instant messaging applications, encrypted chats, voice calls, and video conferencing enable prolonged one-to-one communication between non-*mahram* individuals without any form of social supervision. From the perspective of digital communication theory, these technologies create a condition known as online interpersonal intimacy, in which frequent and emotionally intensive communication accelerates interpersonal closeness despite the absence of physical meetings. Such interactions often foster emotional dependence and psychological attachment that may influence subsequent behavior in ways comparable to conventional face-to-face relationships. Consequently, while digital communication eliminates physical seclusion, it may simultaneously generate a new form of relational privacy that raises ethical concerns analogous to those addressed by the hadith.

Contemporary scholars have responded to this phenomenon by extending the ethical objectives of the prohibition of *khalwat* to digital environments. Yusuf al-Qaradhāwī argues that private digital communication between unrelated men and women may be categorized as virtual *khalwat* when it creates conditions conducive to emotional intimacy and removes meaningful social accountability (al-Qaradhāwī, 2009). This interpretation reflects a contextual application of the hadith, emphasizing that Islamic legal reasoning should consider not only the physical form of interaction but also its ethical consequences. Likewise, Setiawati's study of Taaruf ID, Salams, and Hawaya demonstrates that although these platforms attempt to incorporate Islamic principles into their operational systems, challenges related to user authenticity, private communication, and compliance with religious ethics remain unresolved (Setiawati, 2025). However, the study primarily evaluates platform governance and does not explicitly explain how the Prophetic prohibition of *khalwat* can function as a normative framework for regulating digital communication itself.

From the perspective of digital media ethics, the issue extends beyond whether communication occurs privately; it concerns how technological design shapes patterns of interaction. Digital platforms encourage continuous communication through instant notifications, unlimited messaging, multimedia sharing, and algorithmic recommendations that sustain user engagement. These features often normalize prolonged private conversations that gradually shift from purposeful premarital discussions to emotional companionship. Thus, the ethical challenge lies not in the technology itself but in the communication practices it facilitates. This observation supports the contemporary fiqh principle that legal rulings should consider the changing forms of human interaction while preserving the higher objectives (*maqāṣid*) of Islamic law.

Accordingly, the contribution of this hadith to the reconstruction of digital *ta'aruf* ethics extends beyond prohibiting physical seclusion. Rather, it establishes the broader principle of ethical accountability in interpersonal communication, whereby interactions between prospective spouses should remain transparent, purposeful, and subject to appropriate social supervision. In practical terms, this principle encourages the involvement of guardians, trusted mediators, or platform-based supervision during the *ta'aruf* process, while limiting unnecessary private communication that may foster emotional dependency before marriage. Therefore, the concept of *virtual khalwat* should not be understood

as a literal extension of classical terminology but as a contextual application of the Prophetic objective to preserve dignity, emotional well-being, and moral responsibility within contemporary digital communication environments.

Hadith on the Role of the Guardian (*Wali*) in Marriage

حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ أَبِي عُمَرَ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ ابْنِ جُرَيْجٍ، عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ مُوسَى، عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ، عَنْ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: أَيُّمَا امْرَأَةٍ نَكَحْتُ بِغَيْرِ إِذْنٍ وَلِيِّهَا فَنِكَاحُهَا بَاطِلٌ، فَنِكَاحُهَا بَاطِلٌ، فَنِكَاحُهَا بَاطِلٌ

"Ibn Abī 'Umar narrated to us, Sufyān narrated to us, from Ibn Jurayj, from Sulaymān ibn Mūsā, from al-Zuhrī, from 'Urwah, from 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'Any woman who marries without the permission of her guardian, then her marriage is invalid, her marriage is invalid, her marriage is invalid.'"

This hadith establishes the central position of the *wali* as an essential component of the Islamic marriage process. The Prophet's repetition of the phrase *"her marriage is invalid"* three times emphasizes the significance of guardianship in protecting the legitimacy of marriage and safeguarding the interests of the prospective spouses. Al-Tirmidhī classified this narration as *ḥasan*, and the majority of classical jurists regard it as a principal textual basis for the requirement of a guardian in marriage. From the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, the function of the *wali* extends beyond granting legal consent; it also encompasses providing guidance, protecting the welfare of the bride, and ensuring that the marriage process is conducted in accordance with Islamic ethical principles.

The significance of this hadith becomes increasingly apparent in the context of digital *ta'aruf*, where communication technologies enable prospective spouses to establish prolonged private interactions without the knowledge or participation of their families. Digital platforms facilitate direct communication from the earliest stages of acquaintance, often encouraging individuals to delay family involvement until emotional attachment has already developed. From the perspective of digital communication theory, this reflects the broader process of disintermediation, in which digital technologies reduce or eliminate the traditional intermediaries that previously regulated interpersonal communication. While disintermediation may increase efficiency and personal autonomy, it also weakens social mechanisms that provide accountability, advice, and ethical oversight. Consequently, the diminished role of the *wali* in digital *ta'aruf* should not be understood merely as a procedural change but as a transformation in the governance of interpersonal relationships.

Previous studies have identified similar tendencies. Nugroho's research on online matchmaking platforms demonstrates that platforms with higher rates of successful marriages generally incorporate administrators or mediators who supervise communication and facilitate interaction between prospective spouses (Nugroho, 2021). These findings indicate that sustainable digital *ta'aruf* depends not only on technological efficiency but also on the presence of trusted third parties who help maintain transparency and accountability throughout the process. Nevertheless, Nugroho primarily evaluates platform management and does not explicitly relate these mediation mechanisms to the normative role of the *wali* as established in the Prophetic traditions. Consequently, the ethical function of guardianship remains insufficiently conceptualized within existing studies of digital matchmaking.

From the perspective of contemporary fiqh, the role of the *wali* should not be reduced to a formal requirement fulfilled only at the marriage contract (*akad nikah*). Instead, the objectives underlying guardianship should be understood within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly the protection of lineage (*hifẓ al-nasl*), dignity (*hifẓ al-'ird*), and family stability. In digital environments, these objectives require guardians to participate not only in granting consent but also in supervising the ethical conduct of the *ta'aruf* process, verifying the credibility of prospective spouses, and assisting families in making informed marital decisions. Such an interpretation reflects the adaptive character of Islamic law, whereby enduring ethical principles remain applicable despite changes in communication technologies and social practices.

This hadith contributes a broader conceptual principle to the reconstruction of digital *ta'aruf* ethics, namely participatory and accountable guardianship. Rather than viewing the *wali* solely as a legal authority whose role begins immediately before the marriage contract, this study argues that guardianship should function as an ongoing process of ethical guidance from the earliest stages of digital communication. The involvement of the *wali* or other trusted mediators promotes transparency, reduces the risk of identity deception and emotional manipulation, and reinforces the collective responsibility of families in the marriage process. Therefore, the Prophetic teaching on guardianship remains highly relevant for contemporary digital *ta'aruf*, not because it resists technological change, but because it offers an ethical governance framework capable of balancing individual autonomy with social responsibility in digital communication.

Hadith Prohibiting Proposing Over Someone Else's Proposal

حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: لَا يَخْطُبُ الرَّجُلُ عَلَى خُطْبَةِ أَخِيهِ حَتَّى يَنْكِحَ أَوْ يَتْرَكَ

"Narrated to us Ādam, narrated to us Shu'bah, narrated to us Muḥammad bin Ziyād, he said: I heard Abū Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet PBUH, he said: 'Let no one propose over the proposal of his brother until he marries or leaves her.'"

This hadith contains an ethical principle regarding respect for an ongoing marriage process and the protection of the dignity and feelings of all parties involved. The prohibition against proposing over another person's proposal does not merely regulate the technical issue of marriage proposals but reflects broader values of honesty, commitment, and social responsibility. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī in *Fath al-Bārī* explains that this prohibition aims to prevent conflict, hostility, and harm caused by interference in an established relationship process. In the context of digital *ta'aruf*, this principle becomes increasingly relevant because digital platforms provide opportunities for users to communicate with multiple prospective partners simultaneously. The ease of accessing many profiles and initiating conversations may encourage a transactional approach to partner selection, where individuals are treated as interchangeable choices rather than as parties involved in a morally responsible process.

From the perspective of digital communication ethics, this phenomenon is related to the characteristics of online relationship formation, particularly the abundance of choices and the reduction of social accountability. Digital matchmaking platforms often operate through mechanisms similar to online marketplaces, where users can compare, select, and discontinue interactions with potential partners with minimal social consequences. Rahman and Zulhaqqi highlight that poorly regulated online *ta'aruf* practices may lead to the commodification of partner selection, in which individuals are perceived as objects of preference rather than persons with dignity and emotional rights (Rahman & Zulhaqqi, 2020). This condition demonstrates that the prophetic prohibition is not only concerned with preventing direct competition over another person's proposal but also with preventing unethical relationship practices that emerge from excessive individual freedom in digital spaces. Therefore, the ethical value of this hadith can serve as a corrective principle against the consumer-oriented logic that may influence contemporary digital matchmaking.

Accordingly, this hadith contributes an important principle to the reconstruction of digital *ta'aruf* ethics, namely commitment integrity and relational responsibility. Digital *ta'aruf* should not be conducted through unrestricted exploration of multiple candidates without transparency, but through a process based on honesty regarding personal status, intentions, and levels of commitment. Although digital platforms provide wider opportunities for finding a spouse, their use must remain guided by ethical boundaries that protect the dignity of all participants. In this sense, the prophetic guidance regarding proposals functions as a framework for developing responsible digital interaction, ensuring that technological convenience does not transform marriage preparation into a competitive marketplace detached from Islamic moral values.

Reconstruction of Digital Ta'aruf Ethics in the Perspective of Hadith

The reconstruction of digital *ta'aruf* ethics from the perspective of hadith is based on five interconnected ethical principles derived from the thematic analysis (*maudhu'i*) of the Prophetic traditions: (1) the priority of religion and morality in spouse selection, (2) purposeful and accountable digital *nazhar*, (3) ethical boundaries in interaction to prevent virtual *khalwat*, (4) active involvement of guardians (*wali*), and (5) integrity of commitment in the marriage introduction process. These principles indicate that digital *ta'aruf* cannot be understood merely as the use of technology for finding a spouse, but as a contemporary Islamic practice that requires ethical adaptation. The hadith concerning spouse criteria narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim emphasizes that religious commitment (*dīn*) must become the primary consideration beyond wealth, lineage, and physical appearance (Al Rosyid & Hidayah, 2023; Ihromi & Fiqri, 2026). In digital environments, this principle challenges the tendency of matchmaking platforms to prioritize visual and material representations, while religious character and morality remain difficult to verify through online profiles alone (Asmara, 2022). Therefore, digital *ta'aruf* requires deeper verification through meaningful interaction, trusted references, and consistency between digital identity and actual behavior. Likewise, the principle of *nazhar* demonstrates that viewing a prospective spouse through digital media is not absolutely prohibited as long as it is directed toward serious marriage intentions and accompanied by awareness of the limitations of online representation (Parhani, 2018).

The second dimension of this ethical reconstruction concerns interaction governance and social accountability. The prohibition of *khalwat* in the hadith narrated by Ibn 'Abbās and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim provides an

ethical foundation for regulating private communication between non-*mahram* individuals in digital spaces. Contemporary studies indicate that intensive private conversations through direct messages, telephone calls, or video calls may create conditions similar to physical seclusion because they encourage emotional dependence and reduce external supervision (Umamah, 2024; Yuniardi et al., 2025). Therefore, ethical digital *ta'aruf* requires limitations regarding the frequency, content, and purpose of communication so that interaction remains oriented toward marriage rather than uncontrolled emotional attachment. Furthermore, the hadith regarding the role of the *wali* demonstrates that guardianship should not be understood merely as a formal requirement at the marriage contract stage but as an ongoing mechanism of protection and guidance. Previous studies show that digital matchmaking processes with mediators or administrators tend to provide stronger accountability and direction (Kasim & Sumanto, 2025; Prabowo et al., 2024). In addition, the prohibition of proposing over another person's proposal provides the principle of commitment integrity by preventing the commodification of partner selection, a risk that may emerge when digital platforms enable users to interact with multiple candidates simultaneously without transparency (Rahman & Zulhaqqi, 2020).

Based on these findings, this study proposes a conceptual model of Hadith-Based Digital Ta'aruf Ethics consisting of three interconnected dimensions: value orientation, interaction governance, and social accountability. Value orientation places religion and morality as the foundation for evaluating prospective spouses; interaction governance regulates digital communication, *nazhar*, and emotional engagement within Islamic ethical boundaries; while social accountability emphasizes the involvement of guardians, mediators, and trusted communities in maintaining transparency and responsibility throughout the process. Theoretically, this model contributes to contemporary hadith studies by demonstrating how Prophetic traditions can be contextualized to address new forms of digital social interaction without losing their normative foundations. Practically, it provides an ethical framework for Muslim communities, digital matchmaking platforms, Islamic counselors, and technology developers to create *ta'aruf* practices that combine technological convenience with Islamic values of dignity, responsibility, and moral accountability.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that digital ta'aruf is not merely a technological adaptation of conventional spouse selection but a contemporary Islamic social practice that requires an ethical framework based on Prophetic guidance. Through a thematic (*maudhu'i*) analysis of relevant hadiths, this research identifies five fundamental principles that construct the ethics of digital ta'aruf: the priority of religion and morality in selecting a spouse, purposeful and accountable *nazhar*, the prevention of virtual *khalwat*, active involvement of the *wali*, and integrity of commitment throughout the marriage introduction process. These findings indicate that the legitimacy of digital ta'aruf does not depend solely on the use of Islamic labels or digital platforms, but on the extent to which the process maintains the ethical objectives embedded in the hadiths of the Prophet PBUH.

This study contributes to the development of thematic hadith studies by demonstrating how classical Prophetic traditions can be contextualized to address emerging digital social phenomena. The findings show that hadith-based ethics remain dynamic and applicable when interpreted through their broader moral objectives, rather than being limited to their historical context. The proposed model of Hadith-Based Digital Ta'aruf Ethics, which integrates value orientation, interaction governance, and social accountability, provides a conceptual framework for understanding how Islamic ethical principles can guide contemporary digital interactions. Practically, this framework may serve as a reference for digital ta'aruf platform developers, Islamic counselors, families, and Muslim communities in designing and practicing matchmaking processes that balance technological convenience with religious responsibility, transparency, and protection of personal dignity.

This study has several limitations. First, it is a library-based qualitative study that focuses primarily on hadith texts and related literature, without examining empirical experiences of users of digital ta'aruf platforms. Second, the discussion is centered on the Indonesian Muslim context, so further studies may explore comparative perspectives across different Muslim societies with varying cultural and technological environments. Future research may also employ field studies, interviews, or digital ethnography to examine how the proposed ethical framework is implemented in actual digital ta'aruf practices and how platform designs can better accommodate Islamic ethical principles. Such studies would further strengthen the relationship between hadith scholarship, digital communication studies, and contemporary Islamic social practices.

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