AL-MAWARID JURNAL

ONLINE *TA'ĀRUF*, DIGITAL VISUALIZATION, AND THE LIMITS OF VIEWING *'AWRAH*: A HADITH-BASED REINTERPRETATION IN ISLAMIC LAW WITHIN THE DIGITAL BETROTHAL PROCESS

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Abstract

Purpose - *This study was motivated by the prevalence of online ta'āruf practices that rely on the exchange of photos and visualizations of women's bodies, giving rise to debates about the limits of viewing the 'awrah in Islamic law. This study aims to analyze this permissibility through a reinterpretation of the hadiths on khiṭbah and to formulate normative and ethical boundaries for viewing women's 'awrah that are relevant to the characteristics of digital media in online ta'āruf practices.*

Method - *This qualitative study used a normative-contextual approach. Primary data were sourced from the Instagram social media account @taaruf. co.id as an online ta'āruf service provider and khiṭbah hadiths. Secondary data included fiqh literature, hadith commentary, and contemporary studies on digital ethics and online Ta' aruf. Data analysis was conducted through tracing the 'illat (legal rationale), contextual reading, and normative-ethical analysis of online ta' aruf practices.*

Findings - *This study found a new form of online ta'āruf practice characterized by repeated visual exchanges, image storage, and visual consumption that is not always accompanied by a clear commitment to marriage. The reinterpretation of the khiṭbah hadiths was carried out by repositioning the 'illat of the permissibility of seeing, from mere visual permissibility to a limited means for making the decision to marry and preventing future regret. Based on this repositioning, this study formulates normative boundaries for viewing women's 'awrah that emphasize the connection between permissibility and the goal of marriage. This study reformulates the ethics of viewing women's 'awrah in online ta'āruf, which includes respect for women's karāmah, moral responsibility, goal orientation, and self-control in the digital space.*

Contribution/limitations of the study – This study contributes to the development of contemporary Islamic legal ethics by offering a relational ethical framework for users and online ta'āruf platforms, although it is still limited to normative studies and requires reinforcement through further empirical research.

Originality/Value – *This study offers a new paradigm for interpreting the regulations on kafā'ah and the prohibition of interfaith marriage in the KHI as an effort to preserve Sharia values in marriage in the contemporary era.*

Keywords: *Kafā'ah; Compilation of Islamic Law; Maqāṣid al-Usrah; Interfaith Marriage.*

Abstrak

Tujuan *- Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh maraknya praktik ta'āruf online yang mengandalkan pertukaran foto dan visualisasi tubuh perempuan, sehingga menimbulkan perdebatan mengenai batas kebolehan melihat 'awrah dalam hukum Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis kebolehan tersebut melalui reinterpretasi hadis-hadis khiṭbah serta merumuskan batasan normatif dan etika melihat 'awrah perempuan yang relevan dengan karakteristik media digital dalam praktik ta'āruf online.*

Metode *- Penelitian ini kualitatif dengan pendekatan normatif-kontekstual. Data primer bersumber dari akun media sosial Instagram @taaruf.co.id sebagai penyedia layanan ta'āruf online serta hadis-hadis khiṭbah. Data sekunder meliputi literatur fikih, syarah hadis, dan kajian kontemporer tentang etika digital dan ta'āruf online. Analisis data dilakukan melalui penelusuran 'illat hukum, pembacaan kontekstual, dan analisis normatif-etis terhadap praktik ta'āruf online.*

Temuan *- Penelitian ini menemukan adanya bentuk baru praktik ta'āruf online yang ditandai dengan pertukaran visual berulang, penyimpanan gambar, dan konsumsi visual yang tidak selalu diiringi kejelasan komitmen menuju pernikahan. Reinterpretasi hadis-hadis khiṭbah dilakukan dengan mereposisi 'illat kebolehan melihat, dari sekadar kebolehan visual menjadi sarana terbatas untuk pengambilan keputusan menikah dan pencegahan penyesalan. Berdasarkan reposisi tersebut, penelitian ini merumuskan batasan normatif melihat 'awrah perempuan yang menegaskan keterikatan kebolehan pada tujuan pernikahan. Penelitian ini mereformulasi etika melihat 'awrah perempuan dalam ta'āruf online yang mencakup penghormatan terhadap karāmah perempuan, tanggung jawab moral, orientasi tujuan, dan pengendalian diri dalam ruang digital.*

Kontribusi/Batasan Penelitian *– Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan etika hukum Islam kontemporer melalui tawaran kerangka etika relasional bagi pengguna dan platform ta'āruf online, meskipun masih terbatas pada kajian normatif dan memerlukan penguatan melalui penelitian empiris lanjutan.*

Kata kunci: *Kafā'ah; Kompilasi Hukum Islam; Maqāṣid al-Usrah; Pernikahan Antar agama.*

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, the practice of *ta'āruf* (introduction between men and women in Islam) as a pre-marital stage in Muslim society has undergone significant transformation in line with the development of digital technology. In the classical model, *ta'āruf* and *khiṭbah* are conducted in a limited manner, both spatially, temporally, and socially. In the contemporary context, however, the process is increasingly mediated by online platforms such as Muslim matchmaking applications, social media, and instant messaging services (Lo & Aziz, 2009), more commonly known as online *ta'āruf*. This change in medium has not only shifted the way prospective couples get to know each other but also changed the rhythm of interaction, the form of communication, and the ethical

and legal risks that accompany it. Thus, online *ta'āruf* is not merely a technical phenomenon but a new socio-religious practice that demands a more contextual normative reading (Muslim et al., 2024).

Globally, the practice of online *ta'āruf* has developed in various forms in different Muslim countries and diaspora communities worldwide. In several Middle Eastern and South Asian countries, Muslim matchmaking platforms are designed with features such as guardian assistance, sharia mediators, or restrictions on visual communication to maintain compliance with Islamic values (Al-Dawood et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2025). Meanwhile, in Southeast Asia and Muslim minority communities in the West, online *ta'āruf* often intersects

with the culture of modern dating apps that emphasize self-visualization through photos and videos (Nisa, 2021). These variations indicate ongoing negotiations between religious norms, local culture, and the logic of digital platforms (Hasan, 2021). In this context, a global debate has arisen regarding the extent to which premarital visual interaction can be ethically justified according to Islamic law, especially when digital media allows for the reproduction, storage, and dissemination of visuals that are difficult to control (Bairi et al., 2025).

One of the central issues in the practice of online *ta'āruf* is the question of the limits of viewing a woman's *'awrah* during the *khiṭbah* process. In the treasury of *fiqh* and hadith, most scholars allow prospective spouses to see each other in the context of *ta'āruf*, as it is seen as a means to achieve sharia objectives, particularly the preservation of lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) and the creation of household harmony. However, this permissibility has always been framed by the principle of prudence, such as the rule of *darʾ al-mafāsid muqaddam ʿalā jalb al-maṣāliḥ* (rejecting harm takes precedence over accepting benefits) and the principle of proportionality, namely, permissibility to the extent necessary for making a decision to marry (Umamah, 2024). Thus, classical

discourse never viewed the act of looking as a value-free action but rather as an ethical practice subject to certain intentions, contexts, and limitations (Ghufrani et al., 2024).

The Prophet's hadiths relating to the command to lower the gaze and the prohibition of looking at the *'awrah* serve as norms for controlling lust as well as protecting individual honor and social order. On the other hand, there are also hadiths that give limited legitimacy to prospective husbands looking at the women they intend to marry, as long as it promotes the realization of the purpose of marriage. The wording of these hadiths is general; therefore, classical scholars often synthesized the text and objectives of the law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*) to determine the limits of the *'awrah* and the ethics of looking in the context of *khiṭbah* (Chandra et al., 2023). This synthesis resulted in normative principles, such as the prohibition of excessive visual exploration, prevention of *khalwah*, and the obligation to maintain the intentions and honor of the woman.

The transformation of *ta'āruf* into the digital realm presents new challenges to these principles. Online platforms provide technological affordances in the form of high accessibility, asynchronous communication, the ability to record and reproduce visuals, and the

potential for virality that was unknown in the classical *ta'āruf* model (Saleh et al., 2025). These conditions enable virtual *khalwah* (being alone together without a marriage bond), prolonged staring through video calls, and the misuse of visual recordings without consent. The risks that arise are not only individual but also structural, given that digital traces that are difficult to erase can have a long-term impact on women's honor and dignity (Azmy, 2024). Therefore, the classical interpretation of "seeing as far as necessary" needs to be reexamined, considering the different characteristics of digital media and the accompanying social consequences.

Based on this reality, a reinterpretation of the hadiths regarding the limits of seeing the *'awrah* in *khiṭbah* is an urgent necessity, not to change the wording or authority of the text, but to reaffirm its normative purpose in a new context. This reinterpretation aims to formulate a proportional online *ta'āruf* ethic, maintain women's dignity, and respond to the specific risks of digital media. By considering online *ta'āruf* as a contemporary global phenomenon and hadith as a normative ethical foundation, this study attempts to bridge the study of hadith and *fiqh* with a sociotechnical analysis of the digital platforms.

The reinterpretation of hadiths on the limits of seeing the *'awrah* in *khiṭbah* as the basis for reformulating the limits of online *ta'āruf* is a very interesting issue to study. Many studies have been conducted, which are generally divided into two major categories. First, *fiqh* and hadith studies on the limits of seeing the *'awrah* in the context of *khiṭbah*, which focus on *nash* analysis, differences in *madhhab*, and the formulation of classical and contemporary normative laws (Akbar, 2015; Khulqi et al., 2023; Pratama & Adly, 2026; Sakka et al., 2025). The literature in this stream tends to focus on the normative legitimacy of seeing a prospective spouse, legal rationality (*ta'līl al-aḥkām*), and the Shariah restrictions formulated within the classical *fiqh* framework. However, it is still limited in elaborating on the implications of the shift in the medium of interaction from physical to digital space. Second, sociotechnical studies on online matchmaking practices among Muslims have reviewed the role of digital platforms, visual features, and public moral dynamics in shaping modern *ta'āruf* patterns (Abubakar et al., 2020; Al Rabea et al., 2023; Bairi et al., 2025; Saifullah, 2018). However, these sociotechnical approaches tend to stop at phenomenological descriptions and social analysis, without linking them deeply to the normative framework of

hadith and Islamic legal discourse on *khiṭbah*.

Based on these two streams of literature, relatively few studies have systematically integrated the two streams, particularly by translating the technical characteristics of digital platforms into a specific and operational hermeneutic framework for hadith. Consequently, the restrictions on viewing the *'awrah* discussed in classical fiqh literature are often applied analogically, without considering the epistemic transformations brought about by repetitive, documented, and infinitely reproducible digital visualization. Thus, this study attempts to formulate an operational online *ta'āruf* ethic based on *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* to bridge the discourse of classical hadith with the practical challenges of contemporary digital premarital interaction.

This study aims to answer the main question: how can the Prophet's hadiths about the limits of seeing the *'awrah* in the *khiṭbah* process be understood and reinterpreted in the context of online *ta'āruf* practices mediated by digital platforms? In addition, this study raises a derivative question regarding the ethical principles that can be formulated from these hadiths to protect women's dignity and prevent *mafsadah* in digital premarital interactions. This study

aims to analyze hadiths regarding the limits of seeing the *'awrah* during the *khiṭbah* and reinterpret them in the context of contemporary online *ta'āruf* practices. The main focus of this study is not merely to determine what is permissible or impermissible, but to formulate ethical and proportionality principles that protect women's dignity in digital interactions prior to marriage. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of contextual Hadith studies and digital Islamic ethics. Practically, the findings of this research are expected to serve as a normative reference for the global Muslim community, as well as for Islamic law academics and practitioners, in formulating guidelines or policies related to online *ta'āruf* practices that are in line with the values of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical library research method. This study used two types of primary data sources. First, normative sources in the form of the Prophet's hadiths explicitly or implicitly discuss the procedures for seeing prospective spouses in the *khiṭbah* process, especially those related to the limits of the *'awrah*. These hadiths were traced from *mu'tabar* hadith books, such as *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim, Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Sunan al-Tirmiżī, Musnad Aḥmad, and

other relevant hadith works. Second, phenomenological primary sources in the form of descriptions of contemporary online *taʿāruf* practices were obtained from the Instagram social media account @taaruf.co.id as an online *taʿāruf* service provider. This data were treated as a textual representation of the global online *taʿāruf* phenomenon. Secondary data include international journal articles, documents, official guidelines from Muslim taʿāruf platforms, and other relevant sources. Data were collected through a documentation study by searching, inventorying, and classifying all sources based on their relevance to the research focus.

Data analysis was performed in several stages. First, the characteristics of online *taʿāruf* practices were mapped based on phenomenological library data, especially those related to visual aspects, online interaction patterns, and the ethical risks of digital media. Second, the identification and selection of hadiths relevant to the theme of seeing the *ʿawrah* in *the khiṭbah*. Third, the analysis of the meaning of the hadith using a thematic (*mawḍūʿī*) approach, considering the context of the narration and the legal objectives (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*) behind it. Fourth, a reinterpretation process is conducted by combining the normative findings from the hadith with the characteristics of the digital medium to formulate ethical principles and proportional

boundaries in online *taʿāruf* practices. The final stage is to draw inductive conclusions to produce contextual and operational normative formulations, particularly to protect women's dignity in digital premarital interactions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Online *Taʿāruf* and the Risk of Violating the Prohibition on Viewing the *ʿAwrah* in *Fiqh*

The practice of *taʿāruf* in society is commonly understood as a process of getting to know a potential spouse in accordance with Islamic law, without crossing the boundaries of Sharia. Classical fiqh literature agrees that in *taʿāruf*, men and women are prohibited from engaging in free association or being alone together without a mahram. Interactions between unmarried men and women are limited by ethical and normative provisions that emphasize the prohibition of being alone (*khalwah*) without the presence of a mahram and the obligation to guard one's gaze to prevent potential moral violations. In this framework, controlling one's gaze is positioned not merely as an ethical recommendation but as a preventive mechanism for maintaining honor and avoiding behavior that could lead to adultery in both physical and symbolic dimensions. In addition, ethics in *taʿāruf* also involve the role of a guardian or intermediary (*ustadz*/teacher) who knows the personalities of the two prospective spouses, so that the process is supervised and the information

disclosed is more accurate. This is in line with Hildawati and Lestari's observation that offline *ta'āruf* is safer because the intermediary knows both prospective spouses personally, so the process is less prone to misinformation (Hildawati & Lestari, 2019).

The construction of *ta'āruf* in this traditional context shows that the dimensions of ethics and social control are an inherent part of the practice of *ta'āruf*. Limited interaction, clear objectives, and normative supervision are the main characteristics that distinguish *ta'āruf* from other forms of informal relationships between men and women. This practice of *ta'āruf* has a strong normative basis in *fiqh*, where one of the most important aspects is the restriction on seeing the *'awrah* of a prospective wife. The consensus among scholars is that the suitor may only see the face and palms of the prospective wife without lustful intent. The Hanafi and Maliki schools of thought allow this as long as it does not arouse lust, while the Shafi'i and Hanbali schools emphasize the prohibition of looking at her unless there is a *shar'i* need. The general prohibition of being alone (*khalwah*) without a *mahram* is also emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad: "It is not lawful for a man to be alone with a woman unless accompanied by a *mahram*" (Muharani, 2025). Thus, the classical fiqh framework outlines *ta'āruf* as a regulated and supervised process that avoids *khalwat* and maintains modesty.

Imam al-Nawawī in Syarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim also emphasizes that the permissibility of seeing a prospective spouse in the khiṭbah process must be placed within the framework of necessity (*ḥājah*) and legitimate objectives, and must not open the door to *khalwah* or interactions that exceed the limits of Islamic etiquette. A similar view is expressed by al-Ghazālī in Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn, which emphasizes the importance of guarding one's gaze and controlling interactions between men and women as part of Islamic social ethics, including in the pre-marital context. Thus, *ta'āruf* in classical *fiqh* cannot be separated from the principles of caution (*iḥtiyāṭ*) and self-control to maintain the greater good. This framework then becomes an important starting point for understanding how changes in the medium and patterns of interaction in the digital era have the potential to shift the basic principles of *ta'āruf* as understood in classical *fiqh* and the social practices of Muslim communities (Juswandi et al., 2023).

However, with the development of information technology, the practice of *ta'āruf* in Muslim communities has undergone significant changes. Currently, *ta'āruf* is no longer limited to face-to-face meetings. As noted by Rahim et al., almost all aspects of life, including *ta'āruf*, "are regulated with the help of technology. Now, *ta'āruf* can be done through social media such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, websites, and others." Similarly,

Akmaliah mentions the rise of special * taʻāruf* applications or social media accounts (e.g., Taaruf ID, Hijrah Taaruf, Taʻāruf Online Indonesia, and Taʻāruf Indo Instagram accounts) designed to facilitate the process of finding a "halal" partner in the digital age (Akmaliah, 2024).

Figure 1. Transformation of Traditional Taʻāruf to Online/Digital *Taʻāruf*

Source: Conceived by the author and generated by AI

Based on Figure 1, it can be seen that the transformation of * taʻāruf* reflects a paradigm shift in which taʻāruf can now begin and take place through online platforms, replacing the primary role of physical meetings. This change in medium is not merely technical in nature but also has paradigmatic implications for how individuals understand and experience *taʻāruf*. In the practice of online *taʻāruf*, interactions between men and women no longer depend entirely on the presence of guardians, family, or community members as social supervisors. Communication can take place privately, intensely, and continuously without space and time constraints, so that the control mechanisms inherent in

traditional taʻāruf practices are decontextualized. This condition shows a shift from *taʻāruf* as a social-communal practice to a more personal and individualistic relationship (Juswandi et al., 2023).

The practice of online *taʻāruf* is mediated by digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Previous studies have identified various forms of behavior that have the potential to be problematic from a normative perspective if not handled within a clear ethical framework. This thematic analysis summarizes the findings of the various studies as follows: *First*, the commodification of the *taʻāruf* process. Several online taʻāruf accounts on Instagram not only facilitate the process of introducing prospective partners but are also involved in commodification practices, treating *taʻāruf* as a paid service with various additional offers (e.g., registration fees, paid modules, premarital classes, and service packages) that can shift the focus from sharia objectives to commercial objectives (Maliki et al., 2025). Such practices can obscure the intention of worship, which is the essence of *taʻāruf* in Islam (Rahman & Zulhaqqi, 2020).

Second, gharar and the risk of fraud are discussed. Other studies show that the use of online *taʻāruf* applications/platforms can give rise to gharar, namely uncertainty and the risk of identity and content fraud, which, according to studies, can have an impact on the validity of intentions and sharia

prudence. These findings are linked to case studies of specific applications that show the possibility of user data manipulation and expectations that are not in accordance with Sharia norms (Musthofa & Laily, 2022). *Third*, there has been a rise in private interactions without social supervision. Several studies describe how online *ta'āruf* on social media has developed into intense private interactions without the involvement of third parties, guardians, or companions, thereby weakening the social control mandated by traditional *Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh)*. Although these findings are in the general context of *ta'āruf* studies, they are relevant for identifying behaviors that have the potential to violate Sharia norms because private interactions risk triggering slander or undesirable behavior (Hasibuan, 2021).

Fourth, there is a shift in purpose or motives. Several studies mention how the motives of users in online *ta'āruf* can shift from the goal of marriage to simply exploring identity, entertainment, or seeking social attention. This not only diminishes the meaning of *ta'āruf* but also creates behavior that is contrary to the intentions promoted in Islam as a serious process leading to marriage (Saputri & Putri, 2023). *Fifth*, exploitation of privacy and identity. Users often face data security and privacy risks, including the potential misuse of photos, personal data, or false identities, which can negatively impact the honor of women. This type of analysis is not yet

widespread in Islamic *ta'āruf* studies, but studies on perceptions of security in matchmaking groups indicate that this is a real problem in the digital space (Dorazahi et al., 2025). Based on the analysis of various sources, the forms of behavior that potentially violate Sharia law are summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Forms of Online *Ta'āruf* Behavior

No	Behavior	Key Indicators	Practice Media
1	The commodification of online *ta'āruf*	Paid services, premium packages, monetization of religious symbols	Instagram account @taaruf.co.id
2	Gharar and risk of fraud	Fictitious information, uncertainty of the process	Online Application 'Muzz'
3	Intensity of privacy	Private communication without supervision	Online application 'Tinder'
4	Shift in interaction motives	Use of dating app media	Online application 'Tinder'
5	Privacy and identity challenges	Data risks, photo misuse	Online application 'Facebook'

Source: compiled by the author

Table 1 shows how the paradigm has shifted in the practice of online *ta'āruf*. However, in the author's opinion, this not only represents a shift in the medium of premarital interaction but also changes the normative relationship structure between men and women. In this context, the activities of seeing, assessing, and choosing a prospective partner are no longer incidental, as in conventional khiṭbah practices, but have become a repetitive and systematic process facilitated by digital platforms. The visualization of women through photos, videos, or online calls places the activity of seeing the *'awrah* at the center of the *ta'āruf* process, not as an exception limited by sharia requirements, but as the main mechanism for selecting a partner. This shows that normative restrictions on the permissibility of viewing prospective partners have shifted from the principle of prudence to practices that tend to be permissive and oriented towards personal preferences. This finding is in line with other research findings that dating technology and digital matchmaking shape patterns of partner selection based on visual images and identity curation, which in turn influence the construction of morality and relational expectations in contemporary Muslim communities (Campbell, 2013).

Furthermore, the intensity and repetition of visual activities in online *ta'āruf* create normative consequences that are not covered by the classical Islamic legal framework, which was developed in the context of direct and limited interactions. When viewing a woman's *'awrah* is done repeatedly, stored, and even consumed by more than one party over a long period, the relationship between shar'i permissibility and potential ethical violations becomes increasingly blurred. In this situation, the hadiths about khiṭbah cannot be read literally as legitimizing the viewing of a prospective spouse, but must be placed within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, specifically the protection of honor (*ḥifẓ al-'irḍ*) and the prevention of the objectification of women's bodies. Thus, the practice of online *ta'āruf* requires the formulation of new boundaries regarding viewing women's *'awrah* that consider not only the status of the woman as a "prospective spouse," but also the medium, intensity, and relational impact of such visual practices.

Limitations on Viewing the *'Awrah* in the *Khiṭbah* Process Based on Hadith Provisions

Khiṭbah (marriage proposal) according to the language comes from the root word *khaṭaba, yakhṭubu, khaṭban, wa khiṭban*, which means proposal. According to Islamic terminology, *khiṭbah* is a request made by a man to a woman to marry her. Typically, the man comes to the woman and her family to ask for the blessing of the woman's family. In Indonesian, *the khiṭbah* is synonymous with the term meminang.

Linguistically, meminang comes from the word "pinang or meminang," which is synonymous with proposing, commonly referred to as *"khiṭbah."* Etymologically, meminang or proposing means asking a woman to become a wife (for oneself or for someone else) (Ali & Fatimah, 2025). Wahbah Zuhaili says that *khiṭbah* is a statement made by a man to a woman that he wants to marry her, either directly to the woman or to her guardian. This statement can be made directly by the man or through a representative of the guardian. Sayyid Sabiq briefly defines *khiṭbah* as a request to hold a marriage between two people with clear mediation. This proposal is a Sharia law that must be carried out before holding a wedding so that the two prospective bride and groom can get to know each other (Anton et al., 2024).

The purpose of khiṭbah is not only to get to know the person who will become one's life partner, but also to ensure that the marriage will form a family that is *a sakinah*, *mawaddah,* and *rahmah*. This process also involves asking for permission from the woman's family to obtain her parents' blessings. Through *khiṭbah*, the relationship between the two families who will undergo the marriage process can strengthen the preparation and implementation of marriage. In addition, *khiṭbah* also serves as an intermediary for men to get to know the woman they are going to marry more closely, including her traits, character,

and family background (Mustakim & Kholipah, 2022).

The concept of *khiṭbah* in Islam is not just a tradition but also has a legal and ethical basis, as explained in the Qur'an, hadith, and the views of scholars. The basis of the Qur'anic text on *khiṭbah* is mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 235, which reads as follows:

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُم بِهِۦ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ ٱلنِّسَآءِ أَوْ أَكْنَنتُمْ فِىٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَلِمَ ٱللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُونَهُنَّ وَلَٰكِن لَّا تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًّا إِلَّآ أَن تَقُولُواْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا وَلَا تَعْزِمُواْ عُقْدَةَ ٱلنِّكَاحِ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ ٱلْكِتَٰبُ أَجَلَهُۥ وَٱعْلَمُوٓاْ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِىٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ فَٱحْذَرُوهُ وَٱعْلَمُوٓاْ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

Meaning: "There is no sin in proposing to women with hints or hiding (your desire to marry them) in your hearts. Allah knows that you will mention them, so do not make a secret marriage promise with them, except to say to them a kind word (indirectly)."(QS. Al-Baqarah: 235).

Indeed, there are many references in the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet that discuss betrothal. However, there is no clear and direct command or prohibition against betrothal, as there is a clear command to marry in both the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet. Therefore, in determining the law, there is no opinion among scholars that makes it obligatory, in the sense that it is permissible. However, Ibn Rushd, quoting Imam Daud Al Zhahiriy, said that the law of betrothal is obligatory. This scholar based his opinion on the hadiths of the Prophet, which describe

that betrothal (*khiṭbah*) was an act and tradition practiced by the Prophet (Nizar, 2020).

In the khiṭbah process, there are rules that must be obeyed, such as the prohibition of proposing to a woman who has already been proposed to by another man, the obligation to maintain manners in social interactions, and the freedom for women to accept or reject the proposal. One of the conditions that men who propose must pay attention to is the restriction on seeing the *'awrah*. This restriction is necessary so that the khiṭbah process remains within the corridor of Sharia and does not become a medium for men to see what is forbidden for them to see (Hartono et al., 2025). In the matter of *khiṭbah*, the scholars made istinbāṭ from the Hadith of the Prophet, which reads:

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «إِذَا خَطَبَ أَحَدُكُمُ الْمَرْأَةَ، فَإِنِ اسْتَطَاعَ أَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى مَا يَدْعُوهُ إِلَى نِكَاحِهَا فَلْيَفْعَلْ»، قَالَ: فَخَطَبْتُ جَارِيَةً فَكُنْتُ أَتَخَبَّأُ لَهَا حَتَّى رَأَيْتُ مِنْهَا مَا دَعَانِي إِلَى نِكَاحِهَا وَتَزَوُّجِهَا فَتَزَوَّجْتُهَا

Meaning: From Jabir bin Abdullah, that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "When one of you intends to propose to a woman, and he sees something that encourages him to marry her, then do so." Jabir bin Abdullah said, "I once proposed to a woman. I hid myself from her until I could see something in her that encouraged me to marry her." (Narrated by Abu Dawud)

In another hadith, the permissibility of seeing the *'awrah* during the khiṭbah process is also explained in the narrations of An-Nasa'i and Muslim as follows:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: كُنْتُ عِنْدَ النَّبِيّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَأَتَاهُ رَجُلٌ فَأَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّهُ تَزَوَّجَ امْرَأَةً مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ، فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «أَنَظَرْتَ إِلَيْهَا؟»، قَالَ: لَا، قَالَ: «فَاذْهَبْ فَانْظُرْ إِلَيْهَا، فَإِنَّ فِي أَعْيُنِ الْأَنْصَارِ شَيْئًا»

Meaning: From Abu Hurairah, he said: A man came to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and told him that he was going to marry a woman from the Ansar, so the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said to him, "Have you seen her?" And he said, "No." The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Go and see her, for indeed there is something in the eyes of the Ansar woman." (Reported by An-Nasaʾī and Muslim).

In one hadith, it is narrated that Mughirah ibn Shu'bah wanted to propose to a girl from the Ansar. He then confided in the Prophet. He asked, "Have you seen her?" He replied, "Not yet." The Prophet said, "Go and see her, for indeed this will preserve love and harmony between you two." He then followed the Prophet's command to see the girl and marry her. He admitted that he loved and honored his wife. In another hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

انظر اليها فانه أحرى أن يؤدم بينكما

Meaning: "Look at your prospective wife, because it will invite the permanence of your relationship" (HR. Tirmidzi & Nasa'i).

Indirectly, the restrictions on looking at women are also explained in the hadith narrated by Bukhari as follows:

حَدَّثَنَا مُعَلًّى، حَدَّثَنَا وُهَيْبٌ، عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ لَهَا: " أُرِيتُكِ فِي المَنَامِ مَرَّتَيْنِ، أَرَى أَنَّكِ فِي سَرَقَةٍ مِنْ حَرِيرٍ، وَيَقُولُ: هَذِهِ امْرَأَتُكَ، فَاكْشِفْ عَنْهَا، فَإِذَا هِيَ أَنْتِ، فَأَقُولُ: إِنْ يَكُ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ يُمْضِهِ"

Meaning: Musaddad reported from Hammad bin Zaid, from Hisyam, from his father, that Aisha said, "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said to me, 'I saw you in my dream, and angels came and brought you wrapped in a piece of silk cloth. He then said, 'This is your wife.' I then uncovered the cloth covering your face, and it was you.' I then said, 'If this is the decree of Allah, then it will happen!'" (HR. Bukhari).

Based on the provisions regarding the limits of seeing a woman's *'awrah* in the above hadith about *khiṭbah*, Ibn Hazm in his book Al-Muhalla states that anyone who intends to marry a woman, whether she is free or a slave, is allowed to see her, whether she is aware of it or not, and to see both the visible and hidden parts of her body. Thus, a man is allowed to see the woman he is proposing to, including the covered parts of her body, even without her

knowledge (Jannah, 2021). In his book, Ash-Shana' ani expands on this view by stating that this law also applies to women. This means that a woman is allowed to see all parts of the body of the man she is going to marry (Khulqi et al., 2023).

Imam Shafi'i's concept is that men are not allowed to see women except for their faces and palms because everything else is considered private. Viewing in the context of marriage can be interpreted as looking at a prospective partner with the aim of getting to know each other so that there will be no regrets between the two once the marriage takes place. Islam permits viewing women specifically in the case of marriage proposals based on the words of the Prophet to a companion who wanted to propose to a woman to look at her first: "Look at her, for she is better for maintaining the love between you two" (Bairuha, 2023).

Meanwhile, according to Imam Ja'far Shadiq (son of Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir), as quoted by Mas'adah bin Ziyad when he was asked about jewelry that is permissible to display, the imam replied: "the face and palms." This jewelry refers to body parts that can be seen and are considered 'awrah. Muffaddhal bin Umar asked Imam Ja' far about a woman who died on a journey, and there were no *mahram* men or women to bathe her. The Imam replied: "The parts of the body that must be bathed should be washed, but her body should not be touched, and the beauty that Allah has

commanded to be covered should not be exposed." *Mufaddhal* asked again. "How?" The Imam replied: "First, wash the inside of the palms, then the face and the outside of the hands." From this story, it can be understood that the parts of the body that are not required to be covered or the parts of the body that are permissible to be seen are the face and palms (Akbar, 2015).

Meanwhile, according to the al-Ẓāhiriyyah group, a man who wants to marry a woman is allowed to see the woman to the extent that is visible and not visible. Meanwhile, the following statement explains that it is permissible to see all parts of the body of the woman he wants to marry, that a man who wants to marry a woman is encouraged to see her first, and it is not mentioned which parts may and may not be seen during the khiṭbah process: Therefore, the al-Ẓāhiriyyah group states that it is permissible for a man to see all parts of the body of the woman he is proposing to, because there are no restrictions mentioned in the hadiths about *khiṭbah*. This is in accordance with the method used by this group, namely, the al-Ẓāhiriyyah method (Nizar, 2020).

Reinterpretation of Hadiths on the Limits of Viewing the *'Awrah* in the Context of Online *Ta'āruf*

Hadiths on the permissibility of viewing women during the *khiṭbah* process arose in the context of limited direct interaction, both in terms of space, time, and intensity. One example can be seen in the hadith narrated by Jabir bin Abdullah, which arose in the context of direct marriage proposals in the social environment of Medina, where the prospective husband would see the woman he intended to marry physically and momentarily, without the use of visual technology, documentation, and in a controlled social space (Winarko, 2025). In this context, the act of seeing does not stand as an end in itself, but rather as an incidental means of ensuring compatibility before making a decision to marry. There is no mechanism for visual storage, unlimited repetition, or distribution of views to other parties (Azra et al., 2025). Therefore, the permissibility of seeing in the *khiṭbah* hadith must be understood as a practice bound by concrete situations and controlled social relations, not as a general legitimization of visual exposure to prospective partners.

In contrast, in the practice of online *ta'āruf*, the process of seeing is mediated by digital technology that allows visualization to be carried out repeatedly, intensely, and independently of the direct control of the person being viewed. Photos, videos, and visual communication features not only extend the duration of viewing but also transform it into an experience that can be stored, repeated, and even compared with other prospective partners. This shift shows that digital media does not simply replace face-to-face interaction but rather forms a new pattern of relationships that is qualitatively

different from the context of classical *khiṭbah* (Adawiyah & Dwiningtyas, 2016). Therefore, the application of the hadith regarding the permissibility of seeing a woman's *'awrah* in the practice of online *ta'āruf* cannot be done literally but requires a contextual reading that considers the changes in medium, intensity, and ethical impact of such visual practices.

One effort to contextualize the hadith on seeing a woman's *'awrah* so that it is relevant to contemporary reality is by repositioning the 'illat. Hadiths about the permissibility of seeing women in the *khiṭbah* process, as narrated by Jabir bin Abdullah, Abu Hurairah, and Mughirah ibn Syu'bah, consistently show that the Prophet's command to "see" a prospective spouse is always associated with a specific purpose, not the act of seeing itself. Expressions such as "to encourage him to marry her" and "to strengthen love and harmony" emphasize that the 'illat of permissibility lies in ensuring compatibility to prevent regret after marriage, not in the legitimacy of freely viewing the prospective spouse's body (Kodri & Afrizal, 2023). Even in the hadith of Abu Hurairah about the Ansar woman, the recommendation to see arises as a response to concerns about certain physical factors that could affect marital harmony, so that the permissibility of seeing functions as a means of clarification that is preventive, not consumptive (Yoseph et al., 2026).

When this 'illat framework is applied to the practice of online *ta'āruf*, there appears to be a significant shift between the *shar'i* purpose of the hadith and the reality of contemporary practice. Visualization in online *ta'āruf* often does not stop at the need to ensure compatibility, but develops into a repetitive activity that opens up space for comparison, objectification, and even visual consumption without a clear commitment to marriage. In this context, the permissibility of seeing, which was originally intended to prevent *mafsadat*, has the potential to give rise to new *mafsadat*, especially concerning women's honor and privacy. Therefore, it is important to reposition the *'illat* of the hadith by placing the objectives of preventing regret and protecting honor (*ḥifẓ al-'irḍ*) as the main parameters (Ghummiah et al., 2025). As long as the practice of seeing in online *ta'āruf* is no longer in line with these objectives, its permissibility cannot be understood absolutely, but must be limited in accordance with the *maslahat* (public interest) intended by the hadiths on *khiṭbah* (Hartono, Rachmadani, Batriani, et al., 2025).

A similar affirmation of purpose is also evident in the hadith of Mughirah ibn Syu'bah, when the Prophet recommended that he see the woman he was going to marry on the grounds that "it will better preserve love and harmony between you two." The wording of this hadith explicitly links the act of seeing with post-marital

benefits, namely, the continuity of the relationship and harmony in the household. This means that the permissibility of seeing does not stand as an individual right of the prospective husband but rather as an instrument to achieve a greater relational goal. If this permissibility leads to excessive visual practices, opens up unlimited space for comparison, or delays commitment, then such practices fall outside the *'illat* intended by the hadith. Therefore, when the context of online *ta'āruf* makes viewing a repetitive activity that does not always lead to marriage, the permissibility of viewing a woman's *'awrah* needs to be repositioned based on its suitability with the shar'i purpose of the hadith, namely the prevention of regret and the preservation of honor (*ḥifẓ al-'irḍ*), not merely the status of "prospective spouse" (Alhafiz et al., 2025).

Based on a contextual reading of the *khiṭbah* hadiths and the repositioning of the *'illat* of the permissibility of seeing a woman's *'awrah*, the normative boundaries in the practice of online *ta'āruf* need to be reformulated to remain in line with the shar'i objectives intended by the hadith. The permissibility of seeing in *khiṭbah* is intended to ensure the compatibility of prospective spouses to prevent regret and maintain the continuity of the marriage relationship. Therefore, in the context of online *ta'āruf*, the permissibility of seeing can only be justified as long as the activity still functions as a means of decision-making towards marriage, not as a stand-alone visual consumption. When viewing becomes a repetitive, exploratory activity detached from a clear commitment, the practice exceeds the grounds for permissibility established by the hadiths on *khiṭbah* (Supriadi et al., 2021).

On this basis, new normative boundaries can be formulated by considering the digital medium as a legal factor that influences permissibility. The visualization of prospective partners in online *ta'āruf* should be limited to the extent necessary to recognize identity and physical condition in a reasonable manner, without opening up space for storage, repetition, or distribution of visuals that have the potential to demean women. In addition, the permissibility of viewing cannot be separated from the existence of serious intentions towards marriage and the clarity of the stages of the *ta'āruf* process itself. As long as these prerequisites are not met, the permissibility of seeing a woman's *'awrah* in online ta'āruf is no longer within the corridor of *maslahat* (public interest) as intended by the hadith, but has the potential to cause *mafsadat* (harm) that is contrary to the principle of protecting honor (*ḥifẓ al-'irḍ*) in Islamic law.

Reformulating Ethics in Viewing Women's *'Awrah* in Online *Ta'āruf* Practices

Online *ta'āruf* practices, as described in the previous discussion, not only provide a new medium for pre-marital introductions but also form a pattern of visual relationships that is fundamentally different from conventional *khiṭbah*. The visualization of prospective partners through social media accounts, *ta'āruf* applications, and online communication features makes the act of seeing a repetitive, curated process that is often detached from the clear stages leading to marriage. In this context, visual relationships are no longer incidental and limited but have become the main mechanism for assessing, selecting, and comparing prospective partners. This shift places women in a vulnerable position as objects of continuous visual assessment, so that the relationships that are built are not entirely equal and have the potential to obscure the dimension of honor that should be maintained in the *khiṭbah* process (Saleh et al., 2025).

Ethical challenges arise when visual relationships in online *ta'āruf* are no longer controlled by Sharia objectives as formulated in the reinterpretation of *khiṭbah* hadiths, namely the prevention of regret and the protection of honor. The high intensity of viewing, accompanied by the possibility of visual storage and distribution, widens the gap between normative permissibility and the moral responsibility of those

involved in *ta'āruf* (Muzakki, 2025). Under such conditions, viewing activities not only have implications for the individuals involved but also shape a new visual culture that tends to normalize the objectification of women's bodies in digital spaces. Therefore, the shift in visual relations in online *ta'āruf* must be read as an ethical issue arising from the interaction between digital media, social practices, and reinterpreted normative boundaries, not merely as a neutral technological consequence.

Based on the reinterpretation of the *khiṭbah* hadiths, which place the permissibility of seeing as a means to achieve the goal of marriage and maintain honor, the ethics of seeing women's *'awrah* in the practice of online *ta'āruf* must be built on several principles. The principle of ethics in viewing women's *'awrah* in the practice of online *ta'āruf* must first be based on respect for human *karāmah*. The reinterpretation of the *khiṭbah* hadiths shows that the permissibility of seeing was never intended to reduce women to visual objects, but rather as a limited means to ensure the compatibility of prospective spouses for the sake of a lasting marriage (Nugraha et al., 2022). In the context of online ta'āruf, the principle of *karāmah* is crucial because the visualization of women is often produced and consumed through media that allows for repetition, storage, and assessment without the presence of social relations that protect the dignity

of the subject being viewed (Falah et al., 2024). Therefore, the ethics of viewing women's *'awrah* cannot be separated from the awareness that every visual representation has implications for personal honor and the position of women as dignified subjects in the *ta'āruf* process.

The second principle, which is no less important, is the moral responsibility of the viewer, especially men, as the main actors in the practice of online *ta'āruf* visuals. Based on the repositioning of *'illat* hadith, the permissibility of viewing is not a free individual right but a moral mandate bound to certain sharia objectives. In digital practice, this moral responsibility requires awareness of not taking advantage of the ease of technology as a space for visual exploration that exceeds the needs of an acquaintance. Every act of viewing, saving, or repeating the visualization of a prospective partner must be understood as an act with ethical consequences, especially when done without a clear commitment to marriage (Sugimoto & Muflih, 2025). Thus, the ethics of viewing women's *'awrah* in online *ta'āruf* requires the internalization of responsibility, not just compliance with formal normative boundaries.

Furthermore, awareness of the goal of marriage is an ethical principle that distinguishes online *ta'āruf* practices in line with Islamic values from those that merely exploit religious labels. The hadiths on *khiṭbah* consistently associate the act of viewing with the orientation of

the decision to marry and the prevention of regret, not with visual satisfaction or aesthetic preferences. In the context of online *ta'āruf*, this awareness of purpose serves as an ethical marker that limits the intensity and duration of the visual interaction. When the activity of seeing is no longer directed towards serious decision-making but becomes a protracted process without clarity, the practice has ethically shifted from the purpose intended by the hadith (Muhajirin & Patricia, 2022). Therefore, the ethics of viewing women's *'awrah* demand sincerity of intention and consistency of purpose, not merely claims of procedural piety.

The last principle is self-control (*ghadd al-baṣar*), which must be reinterpreted in the digital context. While in the classical context *ghadd al-baṣar* relates to physically restraining one's gaze, in online *ta'āruf*, self-control includes the ability to limit visual access, even though technology allows for unlimited openness. Digital self-control includes the willingness not to explore visuals excessively, not to store or disseminate representations of women's bodies, and to maintain an ethical distance between normative permissibility and personal desires (Rosyada et al., 2024). Thus, the ethics of viewing women's *'awrah* in online *ta'āruf* practices do not stop at regulating what can be seen, but demand moral maturity in managing one's gaze amid an increasingly permissive visual culture.

The ethical implications of viewing women's *'awrah* in online ta'āruf practices are not only attached to individual users but also to the systems and platforms that mediate these interactions. For users, especially men, the reinterpretation of hadith and the formulation of normative boundaries emphasize that the act of viewing is a moral responsibility that must be carried out with full awareness of the purpose of marriage and the protection of women's honor (Ma'mun & Maliki, 2023). Users can no longer hide behind the excuse of normative permissibility alone but are required to actively control their visual behavior in terms of the intensity, duration, and form of interaction (Rahmawati & Rahmiaji, 2021). In this context, the ethics of viewing women's *'awrah* serve as an internal mechanism that restrains visual practices to remain in line with Sharia objectives and not get caught up in the logic of digital visual consumption.

Conversely, online *ta'āruf* platforms play a strategic role in shaping visual culture and ethical relationships between users. Platforms cannot be positioned as neutral mediums because feature design, algorithms, and visual policies directly influence how users see and are seen. Therefore, the findings of this study imply the need for platform involvement in internalizing the formulated ethical principles, for example, by limiting visual exposure, regulating access to image or video content, and providing mediation mechanisms that encourage seriousness in the goal of marriage. Thus, the ethics of viewing women's *'awrah* is not only an individual responsibility but also part of the structural responsibility of the platform.

Furthermore, the integration of user responsibility and the role of the platform shows that the ethics of online *ta'āruf* need to be understood as a reciprocal relationship between moral subjects and digital systems. When users are equipped with ethical awareness without adequate platform structure support, *ta'āruf* practices risk falling back into the patterns of visual objectification. Conversely, platform regulation without the internalization of ethical values by users also has the potential to give rise to superficial formal compliance. Therefore, the theoretical contribution of this study lies in offering a relational ethical framework in which normative boundaries, ethical principles, and platform design are positioned as mutually supportive elements in maintaining women's dignity and the purpose of marriage in online *ta'āruf* practices.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the permissibility of viewing women's *'awrah* cannot be understood as a free and ahistorical visual license, but rather as a limited permissibility bound to the purpose of marriage and the protection of women's dignity. In the digital

context, the shift in medium from face-to-face encounters to online visual representations has shifted the meaning of seeing, thus demanding a normative reading that is more sensitive to ethical implications. The findings of this study indicate that the main problem in online *ta'āruf* practices is not the absence of arguments for permissibility but rather the weak internalization of the ethical principles that accompany this permissibility. Thus, the ethics of viewing women's *'awrah* must be understood as a relational normative construct connecting sharia objectives, individual moral responsibility, and the dynamics of digital technology.

This study shows that the challenges of contemporary Islamic law cannot be adequately addressed by reiterating the boundaries of *halal* and *haram*; rather, they require a shift in focus to the management of behavior and the design of systems that shape the social practices of the *ummah*. Therefore, the recommendations from this study are directed at two areas simultaneously. First, for users of online *ta'āruf*, it is necessary to strengthen digital ethics literacy based on Sharia values so that normative permissibility is not misused as a justification for visual objectification. Second, for online *ta'āruf* platform providers, this study recommends the development of designs and policies that limit visual exploitation and encourage seriousness in pursuing a marriage. With this approach, online *ta'āruf* will not only function as a technological tool but also as an ethical space that is in line with the principles of justice and respect for women's dignity.

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