



## **PARTNER STANDARDIZATION IN THE TIKTOK ERA: AN ISLAMIC LEGAL CRITIQUE OF LOVE'S REDUCTION TO DIGITAL AESTHETICS**

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**Abstract:** In the modern digital world, TikTok has proved to be a formidable medium that not just entertains but also influences culture, perceptions of love, and romantic relationships. One of the main trends is the rise of standardized partners, in which ideas of companionship are increasingly built and judged through repetitive visual conventions, aesthetic criteria, and performance displays circulating on the site. This trend tends to simplify the meaning of love into surface-level terms that emphasize physical appearance, consumer symbols, and viral trends at the expense of the deeper aspects of affection, ethical commitment, and religious compatibility. This reductionism has profound consequences for youth, as it may create unattainable expectations, promote instability, and legitimize a culture of comparison that invalidates the authenticity of emotions. From the perspective of Islamic legal commentary, such developments call for serious thought. Islamic legal classics, such as the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions, prioritize moral excellence, religious piety, compatibility, and mutual respect as the core pillars for choosing a partner and marital stability. Prioritizing the aims of online aesthetics over such timeless values constitutes a marked shift away from Islamic values that aim to conserve human dignity and to advocate for a healthy family life that lasts. Through a qualitative and normative legal analysis, this paper explores the discord between TikTok-driven criteria for partner selection and the Islamic legal framework's principles of morality, religiousness, compatibility, and mutual respect. This study employs a normative qualitative (library) research approach under Islamic law and analyzes descriptively. The study finds that although TikTok facilitates a remaking of how people imagine love, it paradoxically renders the institution of marriage a trivial matter by turning the chosen ones into image commodities for consumption. Thus, this study highlights the need to shift the criteria for selecting a partner towards values that incorporate religion, morality, and deeper emotional realities, to augment the equilibrium between the trends of online culture on the one hand and the lofty goals of Islamic legal thought on the other.

**Keywords:** TikTok, Partner Standardization, Islamic Legal Critique, Digital Aesthetics, Love

**Abstrak:** TikTok kini bukan lagi sekadar platform hiburan biasa. Ia telah menjadi ruang pembentuk cara pandang anak muda terhadap budaya, cinta, dan hubungan romantis. Salah satu dampak yang paling kentara adalah munculnya standar pasangan yang seragam di mana orang mulai menilai hubungan berdasarkan tampilan visual, estetika, dan ekspresi yang terus diulang di media sosial. Fenomena ini perlahan-lahan menggeser makna cinta menjadi sesuatu yang dangkal, hanya sebatas penampilan fisik, simbol-simbol konsumtif, dan tren viral. Aspek yang lebih fundamental seperti kasih sayang tulus, komitmen moral, dan kesesuaian nilai-nilai agama justru terabaikan. Penyederhanaan makna cinta ini berdampak serius pada generasi muda. Ia menanamkan ekspektasi yang tidak realistis terhadap pasangan dan kestabilan emosi, serta menormalkan budaya membandingkan yang mengikis keaslian perasaan. Tren ini jelas menuntut refleksi kritis, terutama jika dilihat dari perspektif hukum dan etika Islam. Dalam ajaran Islam, baik di Al-Qur'an maupun Hadis, kriteria utama dalam memilih pasangan ditekankan pada akhlak baik, ketaatan beragama, kesepadan (*kafa'ah*), dan penghormatan timbal balik. Nilai-nilai ajaran Islam inilah sejatinya pondasi utama untuk membangun keluarga yang harmonis, adil, dan langgeng. Sayangnya, kita melihat pergeseran yang nyata: estetika digital dan citra online kini lebih diprioritaskan daripada prinsip moral dan spiritual agama. Fokusnya berbalik, dari yang semula bertujuan menjaga martabat manusia dan memperkuat ikatan keluarga, menjadi sekadar tontonan bagi publik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan metodologis kualitatif melalui studi pustaka dan pendekatan hukum Islam, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan analisis hukum,

penelitian ini membandingkan bagaimana anak muda memilih pasangan di budaya TikTok dengan kriteria dalam hukum Islam yang mengutamakan moralitas, agama, kesepadanan (*kafa'ah*), dan rasa hormat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meski TikTok menyediakan wadah baru untuk mengekspresikan dan membayangkan cinta, ironisnya platform ini justru merusak makna sakral pernikahan. Pasangan pun direduksi menjadi objek yang siap dikonsumsi publik. Oleh karena itu, studi ini menekankan betapa pentingnya mengubah cara pandang dalam memilih pendamping hidup. Kita harus bergeser dari sekadar melihat hal yang visual dan viral, menuju nilai-nilai yang mengintegrasikan agama, moralitas, dan kedalaman emosional. Tujuannya adalah menyeimbangkan dinamika budaya digital dengan tujuan luhur hukum Islam untuk kebaikan dan kemaslahatan seluruh umat manusia.

**Kata Kunci:** TikTok, Standardisasi Pasangan, Kritik Hukum Islam, Estetika Digital, Cinta

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## INTRODUCTION

The modern era, defined by exponential advances in information technology, has profoundly transformed the intellectual paradigms, behavioral patterns, and life strategies of younger generations, especially in interpersonal relationships, romantic involvement, and conjugal union. Digital technologies, particularly social networking sites, have gone beyond their initial role as mere entertainment channels and evolved into multifaceted sociocultural spaces where new mores, values, and behavioral expectations are developed and transmitted (Nosrati et al., 2023). These enable not just information exchange and artistic performance but also shape a shared sense of identity, lifestyle, and relational conduct. Here, TikTok has assumed a leading role, shaping modern social practices. As a short-form video platform, TikTok allows users to create and share attention-grabbing images that both reflect and shape current societal conventions in aesthetics, conduct, and interpersonal encounters (Meteray, 2024).

One interesting consequence arising from this platform is the so-called "standards of TikTok relationships", also known as partner standardization. This trend addresses the display of lovers through aesthetically edited schemas that emphasize performativity, visual appeal, and material semiotics. As a consequence, a consensus has developed such that the success and legitimacy of romantic unions now tend to depend predominantly on visual match, physical appeal, and the public display of socio-material indices. Selective choices of partner and relational validation, thus, increasingly tend to operate on a third-person perspective of online display and audience appreciation rather than on a measure of inherent moral, religious, or passion-based values. This phenomenon reflects a continuing transformation that reshapes how younger generations perceive love, intimacy, and marital commitment.

Reports of empirical evidence generated by Indonesian media note that the aesthetically driven criteria disseminated by TikTok create false expectations about conjugal unions. For instance, Aktual (2025) documents cases in which the aestheticized standards showcased on the platform have catalyzed familial disputes, sometimes

escalating to divorce. Similarly, Novi (2025), as cited in Sukabumi Jabar Ekspres, points out the psychosocial risks entailed by such digital norms, such as further-bred dissatisfaction, increased jealousy, and the loss of family emotional stability, as anticipated effects of such mediated culture practice. In addition, a Konde report by Ariyani (2024) notes that Generation Z members often rely on TikTok as a primary criterion for choosing a partner, while such criteria are superficial and, in practice, much less feasible in everyday relational contexts. Relatively, all such trends herald a shift in the conceptualization of love, from one oriented towards the religious, ethical, and emotional dimensions to one more grounded in fleeting, image-mediated, and commodified figures of love.

From a theoretical standpoint, this trend aligns with available evidence that critiques such intersections between social media practice and romantic belief (Langlais et al., 2024). For example, demonstrates that algorithmically generated information heightens a culture of comparison, which, in turn, takes a toll on relational pleasure and emotional stability between romantic couples. In a corresponding vein, Asy'ari and Amelia (2024) demonstrate that Generation Y members today are far more likely to prioritize consumerist lifestyles and image appeal over developing meaningful emotional or religious intimacy when choosing a partner. Notwithstanding such findings, scholarly examinations of TikTok's standardization-of-partnership phenomenon using Islamic juridical theory remain scarce. This scarcity is rather remarkable, considering that Islamic law provides a prescriptive, yet ethically sound, framework for assessing criteria for choosing a marital partner, entailing an association with overarching ends such as marriage, family continuity, and societal stability.

Islamic law stipulates specific, principled criteria for determining prospective marital partners suitable for contractual conjugal relationships. Classic references, such as the renowned hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, enumerate four primary considerations for a life partner: wealth, ancestry, physical appearance, and religious devotion. Significantly, the Prophet insisted that religious faith should have priority for such considerations, which, therefore, points out such ethical, spiritual aspects, rather than being at the center of conjugal relationships' decision (Amanda, 2024; Fathony et al., 2021; Nizar & Kumaini, 2024; Septi et al., 2024; Yantika et al., 2024). Complementing these criteria, the fiqh concept of *kafā'ah* (compatibility) underscores the need for equivalence between prospective spouses in terms of faith, moral character, and readiness to fulfill marital responsibilities (Maulana & Saepullah, 2024). Through the rule of compatibility, Islam endeavors towards creating conjugal relationships that are mutually harmonious, ethically informed, psychologically robust, and resilient over the long term.

In sharp contrast, TikTok's partner criteria place prime emphasis on physical attractiveness, material salience, and performance-based interaction, thus creating a fundamental cleavage with Islamic normative directives. While Islam places prime focus on the development of religious integrity, moral accountability, and ethical relational practice, the digital imagery of TikTok literally reduces love to a visualizable commodity, emphasizing superficial attractiveness at the expense of meaningful relational virtues. This disparity holds crucial consequences, not merely for individual relationship

processes, but also for sustaining wider kinship units and societal arrangements. With the foregoing background, this study seeks to address two interconnected questions. First, it explores how the advent of partner standardization on TikTok affects young individuals' thinking about love and expectations from conjugal relationships. Second, it examines how Islamic law, through its normative framework and ethically informed dispensation, constitutes a critical lens for reading and contesting the reduction of love to an aesthetically driven, virtual figuration.

These inquiries carry substantive weight, given that shifts within relational paradigms have a primordial impact on shaping the sustainability of the conjugal institution, which Islamic discourse considers a religion-sanctified institution. The need for this study is further strengthened by the recognition that TikTok is no fringe cultural entity but an inscribed element of everyday life for young individuals, both locally here in Indonesia and across the globe. Without critical examination, the partner criteria propagated on TikTok are likely to foster unrealistic relational hopes, attenuate mutual belief, jeopardise relational quality, and, consequently, undermine conjugal sustainability at the ultimate level. Islamic jurisprudence, on the other hand, constitutes a codified set of guiding principles endeavoured towards sustaining the integrity, continuity, and welfare of conjugal and kinship relations.

Through a systematic examination of the gaps between TikTok's visualized relational norms and Islamic law's ethical, spiritual, and moral proscription, this study aims to critically examine the standardization of partners on TikTok through the lens of Islamic jurisprudence, focusing on how Islamic ethical and legal frameworks can provide corrective guidance for contemporary digital relational practices. By highlighting this contrast, the research contributes to the discourse on sustaining moral integrity and social harmony within the context of evolving digital cultures.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Several recent studies have examined the phenomenon of partner standardization on TikTok and its influence on perceptions of romantic relationships, particularly among younger generations. A survey by Sipahutar (2025) examines TikTok's impact on Generation Z members' idealized partner specifications. This study is based on an extensive literature review covering local, international, and academic work published between 2020 and 2025. The central theme of the study is observing TikTok's couple-themed clips that create romantic expectations that are often unrealistic, projecting relationships as constantly jovial, visually stimulating, and unproblematic. Through the lens of social comparison theory, combined with social cognitive theory, Sipahutar clarifies how repeated exposure to idealized images of couples instigates upward social comparisons. These comparisons often leave people dissatisfied with themselves or their intimate relationships. The results show that reactions amongst Generation Z are diverse: some report being positively inspired, yet others have critical viewpoints and disdain for the unrealistic storytelling peddled by idealized images. Based on these findings, the study focuses on the need for media literacy, suggesting that equipping people with the

ability to discern online content critically helps them form romantic hopes grounded in personal principles rather than fleeting online constructs.

A study written by Hakim (2025) employs a qualitative method to explore TikTok's impact on marital expectations. Unlike the overriding focus on Generation Z, the study centers on the institutional aspect of marriage. According to the survey, the overwhelming majority of TikTok content frames marriages as overly romanticized, glamorous, and almost conflict-free, thereby creating high expectations that are difficult to meet in real life. These representations create psychological impacts, such as raised stress, anxiety, and prospective disappointments, within home contexts. Hakim points out that idealized portrayals of marriage on TikTok often omit the nuances of household relationships, such as financial disputes, emotional fluctuations, and marital misunderstandings between husbands and wives. The study points to the need for a critical consumption framework for online information, recommending public education programs to foster more realistic and resilient hopes for marriage that reflect the realities of real-life relational processes.

Although both studies have crucial findings applicable to the present research, they differ in scope and analytical framework. While Sipahutar primarily examines the psychological and social impacts of TikTok exposure on Generation Z, Hakim focuses on the heightened marital expectations and illusions of ideal marriages in household settings. While both offer crucial insights into how TikTok creates unrealistic criteria for romantic relationships, both have different focuses. These studies, however, are primarily descriptive and do not address the normative aspects of Islamic jurisprudence. Neither study addresses the ethical and legal frameworks that can address the moral and spiritual implications of digital relational practices.

Therefore, the debate on religious ethics and how *fiqh* principles affect relationship norms is still somewhat neglected in the past literature. This study seeks to fill that gap by offering a critical discussion of partner standardization on TikTok through the framework of Islamic jurisprudence. It aims to transcend descriptive analysis and advance a normative analysis grounded in the Quran, Hadith, and *fiqh*. This study offers a multidimensional perspective on comprehending digital cultures in relation to moral and spiritual values in Muslim societies, synthesizing socio-psychological findings with an Islamic legal critique.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, library-based approach, as normative analysis is central to Islamic legal inquiry, which relies on textual interpretation, doctrinal reasoning, and ethical evaluation rather than empirical measurement. This method is considered the best approach because the aim of this study is neither to collect empirical data nor to validate it through surveys, but rather to strategically reflect on the conceptual, cultural, and normative aspects of standardizing a partner in the era of TikTok. The main issue at hand is examining how TikTok, as a cultural medium, reconstructs the notion of love and the choice of a partner through virtual aesthetics, evaluating this shift through Islamic jurisprudence, and assessing it through ethical discourse. Accordingly, the study applies

qualitative content analysis and thematic interpretation to identify, code, and interpret recurrent patterns related to aesthetics, performativity, social comparison, and partner selection in the reviewed materials. This approach requires an interpretive research approach based on reflection, critical reflection, and comparisons rather than measurement or validation using numbers or surveys.

The utilization of library research for this work entails the planned gathering, assessment, and synthesis of diverse scholarly and informational sources. These comprise scholarly publications such as peer-reviewed journals, monographs, and recent studies on digital culture, media sociology, psychology of close relationships, and Islamic legal thought. Media reports, such as news and opinion pieces from Indonesian online media outlets Aktual, Sukabumi Jabar Ekspres, Poros Kalimantan, Konde, and Kumparan, are also used to capture recent societal debates and on-site experiences regarding TikTok partner specifications. Islamic legal sources, both classical and contemporary, are also applied, covering fiqh materials, hadiths, and recent scholarship on marriage, partner selection, and Islamic legal morality. The triangulation of these diverse knowledge bodies ensures a complete multidimensional examination of the topic.

The research follows a three-step approach. In the first step, sources are shortlisted from the literature based on thematic relevance, scholarly credibility, and their contribution toward discourses on TikTok's impact on partner expectations. In the second step, the materials are analyzed for content to identify the main arguments, conceptual frameworks, and hermeneutic discernments of the digitally driven reconstruction of love as an aesthetic. In the third step, the findings are opened up for comparative analysis, pitting TikTok's aesthetically driven standards against Islamic commandments that emphasize belief, ethical living, *kafā'ah* (compatibility), and respect for others. Through a synthesis of Islamic classics, modern scholarship, and media discourses, this work sheds light on the continued relevance of Islamic law in responding to contemporary cultural trends. The inclusion of normative, scholarly, and contextual materials enriches the analysis, ensuring the critique remains both academically rigorous and socially relevant.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Phenomenon of Partner Standardization on TikTok**

The rapid digitalization of the media landscape and TikTok's status as a significant platform have triggered big changes in how love and human relations are understood, as well as in the image of the perfect partner created by modern society, especially among younger generations. Historically, in the normative mode of Islamic law, an ideal lover is described in terms of qualities that go beyond the material and the superficial, including spiritual piety, righteousness, and a sense of obligation to God and family. This is because such a partner embodies attributes that help stabilize and sanctify married life, so that love and companionship have their basis in moral, spiritual, and emotional congruence. In contrast, social media products such as TikTok created a paradigm in which relational ideals were structured around visual attractiveness, aesthetics, and social approval. This dislocation is part of a wider cultural change in which love is no longer

imagined as a transcendent and sacred relationship but is redefined as a commercial spectacle, created, edited, and judged in digital and algorithmic terms.

TikTok, through its algorithm-driven *For You Page* (FYP), functions as a central mechanism in producing and reinforcing a new paradigm of romantic relationships. The platform's algorithmic processes select and present content that adheres to a remarkably homogeneous aesthetic, based on variables such as physically perfect bodies, beautiful facial features, luxurious lifestyles, and overt displays of romantic connection. Such curated images have driven the creation of what is informally referred to as the TikTok standard. This label has more than a cultural echo; it is the quintessential epistemological shift, redefining social perceptions of love and moving it away from spiritual and moral aspects toward performative, consumptive, and visually mediated values (Ningsih, 2025).

Empirical observations support the psychological effect of this phenomenon. Reporting in the field of digital communication indicates that by the beginning of 2025, online discussions about the TikTok standard increased significantly. More than 200 daily interactions on platform X (formerly Twitter) correlated this pattern with family life, societal expectations, and even divorce in severe cases. Over the course of a month, the topic was mentioned 399 times, reaching over 3.2 million users, with the vast majority of discussions having negative overtones. Such results highlight the fact that the partner standardization feature of TikTok is not just a passing entertainment fad; it is a socially embraced construct with a quantifiable impact on the stability and sustainability of family institutions (Aktual, 2025).

The phenomenon occurs in various and interconnected forms. First of all, it can create unrealistic expectations about a partner's physical appearance and way of life, because people assume that the people they are in a relationship with are not as attractive as the images they see on the service. These discrepancies tend to strain relationships and cause discontent. Secondly, it enhances social comparison behavior, as Festinger's social comparison theory holds, which posits that people compare themselves with others. In the TikTok setting, this mechanism is further enhanced, with algorithms constantly showing users highly perceived couples, trapping audiences in their own perceived insufficiency and dissatisfaction with relationships. Thirdly, there are social and peer influences that force people to conform their actions to viral trends, often against their own values or religious beliefs. The result is that many couples feel a need to share intimacy in virtual communities to gain social validation through likes, comments, or shares. Fourthly, these processes may go to extremes, such as increased conflict, domestic tension, or even divorce (Aktual, 2025; Novi, 2025).

The implication of the TikTok partner standardization is not only psychological but also philosophical and theological. Traditionally, love is perceived as a multidimensional concept, with emotional, spiritual, and moral components. But within this digitally mediated environment, love is seen more as a spectacle of performativity and visibility. Marriage in the Islamic tradition is based on love, grounded in transcendent values that govern mutual respect, affection, and mercy. This principle is clearly emphasized in the Quran: *"And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, those*

*are signs for a people who give thought.*" (QS. al-Rum: 21). The visualization of love and the aesthetic of algorithmically mediated forms of love desacralize and demystify the sacred and transformative nature of marital relationships, depriving relational bonds of their necessary ethical and spiritual content.

This phenomenon raises serious normative issues from an Islamic jurisprudential perspective. Islam also provides a set of criteria explicitly defining partner selection, highlighting religious devotion (*dīn*) and moral virtue as the significant factors. One of the most well-known hadiths of Prophet Muhammad SAW stipulates that a woman can be married for four reasons: wealth, lineage, beauty, and religion, with the Prophet insisting that religious piety must come first (Asmara & Sahara, 2022; Fathony et al., 2021). As a result, the TikTok worldview, with its physical appeal, lifestyle presentation, and computer-enhanced validation, is a direct contradiction of Islamic beliefs, causing an epistemological disturbance in which digital logic replaces long-standing shariah-based principles.

Also, the phenomenon can be analyzed within the framework of Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality, which holds that media images often give rise to a simulated reality that may be viewed as more real than real life itself. TikTok frequently displays romantic interaction fragments that are idealized, and because viewers do not see the whole relationship as it is, they mix the elements depicted on TikTok with real-life relationships. In practice, marriage is a complicated process that requires negotiation, compromise, and commitment. As a result, most people feel their relationships are inadequate because they are unable to recreate the well-constructed visual accounts presented on the platform (Andrea & Sari, 2025; Nosrati et al., 2023). It fosters the 'grass is greener' effect, in which people constantly believe that better partners are out there and that their current partner is always leaving them dissatisfied (Sipahutar et al., 2025).

Its effect is even more significant among Generation Z, who use TikTok the most. In this group, social media has become the first-line filter for partner criteria, and thus, digital aesthetics values are prioritized over religious, ethical, or moral ones. This disposition is likely to destroy the transcendental basis of interpersonal relationships in Muslim societies. The social implications are enormous: there is an increase in divorce rates among young couples, who feel dissatisfaction with marital relationships in the face of digital imagery, a deterioration of emotional and spiritual foundations in the family, and the transformation of marriage into an entertainment medium and a source of social acceptance. In the long run, these forces threaten to disrupt the social fabric, as family units are the main pillars that sustain society (Asy'ari & Amelia, 2024; Kelana, 2025; Meteray, 2024; Scothorne et al., 2025).

Thus, partner standardization on TikTok is the collision of the values of relationships rooted in sharia, as based on the ethical balance, spirituality, and moral responsibility, and on the algorithmic logic of digital media, which puts more emphasis on the spectacle, aesthetics, and popularity. To address this epistemological difference, there must be rigorous normative criticism grounded in Islamic law. Although in the face of Islam, aesthetics are not rejected, they are placed within a framework of ethics and spirituality, which rules out superficiality. In this respect, an Islamic review of the



TikTok standard is not only necessary to ensure personal and family integrity but also to strengthen traditional moral and religious principles of life in marriage.

### **The Evolution of the Concept of Love in the TikTok Era and Its Spiritual and Ethical Implications**

The rise of social media, TikTok being a vivid example, has radically altered the frames through which modern society understands and conceptualizes romantic relationships. This medium, representative of the current digital environment, serves not only as a space for social interaction but also as a knowledge-maker, shaping how love, intimacy, and partnership are understood. Whereas previous studies of digital media have primarily focused on their importance in the setting of partner standards, the current discussion requires exploration into the broader implications of this practice. In particular, an alarming epistemological transformation has occurred, the downgrading of love as a multidimensional experience into a measurable visual aesthetic, organized and judged by algorithmic processes. Love in this paradigm is no longer viewed as a spiritual and social medium of creating deep human connectivity but as a performative commodity to be consumed in the digital ecosystem.

In Islam, the definition of love extends beyond emotion; it is a gift of God and carries deep ethical, spiritual, and social aspects. This concept is clarified in the Quran through the following: *"And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, those are signs for a people who give thought."* (QS. al-Rum: 21). This verse confirms the idea that within the Islamic concept, love is a primary mechanism fostering tranquility (*sakinah*), affection (*mawaddah*), and mercy (*rahmah*) in marriage. Love is then not a short-lived or shallow experience but is a pillar of spiritual and social unity. It provides the ethical and emotional support needed to maintain a stable, ethically sound relationship.

This traditional understanding, however, has been transformed by the advent of social media platforms, particularly TikTok (Lasut & Kumois, 2023). Digital media are governed by logics of visibility, quantification, and participation, which transform the experience of intimate relations into metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and followers. It, in turn, reformulates love as an aesthetic act, with its worth depending on social confirmation rather than being intrinsically spiritual or morally necessary. Such a paradigm shift significantly devalues the essential content of love, rendering it a shallow spectacle and a performative act. The effects of such a diminution are interpersonal and social. Firstly, it violates the moral obligations inherent to human relationships, because relationships between people are more about public image than honest ethical behavior. Within the context of marriage, responsibility and commitment are divinely ordained duties within the consensual structure of Islam.

Second, love is drained of its own domain; what is supposed to be quiet and sacrosanct is made public to gain notoriety and favor among an outer circle. This publicity exposes the sacred aspects of love to decay and replaces the values of privacy and respect with the logic of digital exposure. Third, the monetization of love reduces it to a limited evaluation of visual consumption and social admission. Here, the scale of

relational success is measured by public attention, approval, or admiration, which makes love more of a transactional interaction than a sacred relationship (Harini, 2025; Kelana, 2025; Ningsih, 2025). These social changes come with psychological effects. Digital natives and Generation Z are especially affected, and phenomena such as the fear of missing out (FOMO) become apparent when their own relationships fail to live up to the idealized image of couples on the Internet. Motivates people to change their conduct, way of life, look, and even values to fit into what algorithms have chosen to dictate. The resulting stressors cause dissatisfaction and anxiety, and sometimes lead to impulsive actions and the end of relationships (Novi, 2025).

In the Islamic perspective, those consequences contradict principles such as *qana'ah*, the development of contentment and gratitude, and *sabr*, the ability to endure and bear with patience, which are meant to maintain marriage unity. The Prophet Muhammad SAW said: *"No servant is busied by anything better for him than patience and contentment of heart"* (HR. Ahmad & Nawawi, 2002). This prophetic advice stresses the need for emotional and spiritual balance in relationship situations, keeping love grounded in faith and moral principles rather than in transient social approval. The distillation of love into visual performance is also theoretically framed by Jean Baudrillard's social and media philosophy and his concept of hyperreality. Hyperreality refers to a condition in which simulations of reality, mediated and facilitated by technology, are perceived by viewers as more real than experience (Firmansyah et al., 2024). TikTok creates a hyperreal space of romantic interaction, where carefully selected, edited scenes of intimacy are presented to users as the standard by which they understand love. Thus, viewers come to expect forms of love that are not merely unrealistic but disconnected from the moral and spiritual aspects of the rightful relational life.

Islam recognizes authentic love through a partner's capacity to endure tribulations, show faithfulness, build a family based on faith, and uphold morality. Therefore, love is a moral and spiritual duty, which requires sacrifice, patience, and endurance (Prathama & Mahadwistha, 2024). Such changes also raise critical epistemological questions about the essence of emotional cognition in the digital age. As a unifying process, spiritual, emotional, and moral love is mediated by publicly available algorithms and metrics. The Islamic viewpoint of such measurement is intrinsically flawed because it fails to incorporate the worshipful and socially responsible aspects of love. The Quran supports this transcendent comprehension: *"As for those who believe and do good, the Most Compassionate will certainly bless them with genuine love"* (QS. Maryam: 96). This verse confirms that love in Islam has a transpersonal and ethical dimension which cannot be reduced to aesthetic and superficial manifestations.

In practice, exposure to partners' digitalized standards has psychological implications in modern marriages. Couples are prone to cognitive dissonance between algorithmically mediated expectation and lived experience, which results in relational tension, dissatisfaction, and emotional stress. Transforming love into an aesthetic act denies moral commitment and undermines effective communication; it degrades the values of fidelity and self-sacrifice, which form the core of healthy, long-lasting relationships. These trends do not resonate with Islamic teachings that promote the

development of harmonious (*sakinah*) families and the preservation of marital morals grounded in virtuous behavior. Therefore, conceptualizing love as a form of digital aesthetics poses enormous challenges to the Islamic perception of relational life. There is boundless freedom of expression on social media, but there is also a danger of commodifying emotional and spiritual experiences, which threatens to disrupt the ethical and moral basis of human communication.

The spiritual, ethical, and social aspects of love must thus be reinstated through systematic scholarly criticism and rigorous empirical research. It is of primary importance to stress the transcendental significance, social responsibility, and morality to counter the distorting nature of digital aesthetics and preserve the relevance of love in the modern social fabric. The Prophet Muhammad SAW said: *"None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother" or he said "for his neighbor, what he loves for himself"* (HR. Bukhari & Muslim, Nawawi 2002). This hadith implies that love should be grounded in spiritual, ethical, and social values rather than in superficial aesthetic standards. By reasserting the Islamic normative code of love, societies can develop a more moderate conception of love as a sacred, integrative process that binds people together across their spiritual, emotional, and social levels, and is not at all superficial within the digital spectacle.

### **Islamic Legal Critique of TikTok-Style Partner Standardization**

The modern trend of standardizing partners on social media, particularly on TikTok, has sparked significant changes in how modern societies imagine and practice romantic relationships. The design of TikTok as an algorithmic system that organizes content promotion based on metrics such as visual attractiveness and popularity has created a culture in which partners are primarily judged by physical appearance, lifestyle display, and aesthetic appeal. The technological mediation of romantic norms has far-reaching epistemological effects, turning love and intimate relationships into consumable visual artifacts rather than viewing them as significant, spiritually charged, and socially embedded. From an Islamic jurisprudential perspective, such developments warrant a stringent critique, focusing on the ethical, moral, and spiritual aspects of human relationality and the choice of life partners, with attention to the sociocultural and familial stability these aspects provide. In this context, the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* delivers a holistic foundation for understanding how Islamic law balances human desires with moral restraint. The principles of *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protection of religion), *ḥifẓ al-'ird* (protection of honor and dignity), and *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (protection of lineage and family) ('Āshūr, 2004; Fadli & Helmi, 2024; Syarif, 2023) are particularly relevant in countering the moral degradation caused by digital romantic culture. These objectives emphasize that relationships must preserve spiritual devotion, protect individual honor, and ensure the continuation of righteous family structures.

To begin with, moral and ethical uprightness is one of the main issues concerning the Islamic assessment of romantic behavior. The Islamic religion places a high value on ethical behavior (*adab*) and moral uprightness in every social interaction, and it explicitly involves courtship and the selection of spouses. The concepts of *ḥayā'* (modesty) and decorum are at the heart of this system, protecting the holiness of intimacies and avoiding

practices that are likely to create a state of *fitnah*, or moral disorder or social scandal. The TikTok form of standardization of partners, in which a couple regularly shows publicly exaggerated expressions of love, violates these principles. Not only do such representations degrade love into a spectacle, but they also compromise people's moral development, particularly when such performances impressionable viewers consume such performances. Young observers can be socialized to accept these kinds of behaviors as normative and therefore run the risk of learning to accept superficial, performative relational habits that place importance on public display rather than on sacred emotional and spiritual relationships. Through the lens of *ḥifẓ al-ʿird*, such exposure-based relationships are a violation of human dignity and modesty, which Islam seeks to safeguard as part of faith.

The centrality of *ḥayāʾ* in the moral and spiritual system of Islam was strengthened by the Prophet Muhammad SAW said: *"Indeed, faith has over sixty branches; the highest is the declaration of La ilaha illallah, and the lowest is removing harmful objects from the road, and modesty (ḥayāʾ) is part of faith"* (HR. Bukhari & Muslim, 2014). In this regard, over-the-top displays of romantic affections, as encouraged on TikTok, are clearly deviations from the normative moral code of Islam, going against the principal values of modesty and ethical behavior that are fundamental to holy relational affairs. Second, the issue of human dignity and honor (*karāmah*) is central to Islamic matrimonial ethics. The Islamic legal and moral philosophy values *dīn* (religious commitment) and *akhlāq* (ethical character) as the main factors of assessing a potential partner and places the physical attractiveness, wealth, or lifestyle in the background (Qatrunnada, 2023). From the perspective of *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, Islam seeks to ensure that marriages are built upon righteousness, trust, and ethical fidelity to preserve legitimate lineage and family stability. The TikTok culture of performative love, by contrast, risks trivializing marriage into a spectacle, thereby threatening the moral structure of the family and social continuity.

The trend on TikTok ignores superficiality. Limiting the choice of partners to visual appraisal excludes the spiritual and ethical aspects of relationships that underpin long-term unions. This focus on digital validation, such as likes, followers, or other measures of popularity, perpetuates an imbalanced conceptualization of relational success, replacing the sacred meaning of marriage as a divinely approved covenant. The Prophet Muhammad SAW emphasized the need for religious orientation in choosing a partner. It said: *"A woman is married for four things, i.e., her wealth, her family status, her beauty, and her religion. So you should marry the religious woman (otherwise) you will be losers"* (HR. Bukhari dan Muslim) (Amanda, 2024; Nizar & Kumaini, 2024; Septi et al., 2024; Yantika et al., 2024). In this way, the prioritization of digital aesthetics, propagated by TikTok, is in sharp contrast with the Islamic normative focus on honor, moral behavior, and spiritual purity as the main factors in marital suitability. This hadith reflects *ḥifẓ al-dīn* as a guiding principle, prioritizing faith as the ultimate criterion for selecting a spouse to preserve moral integrity and divine obedience within marital life.

Third, the implications for social and familial stability are also to be taken into consideration. The unrealistic, idealized images of relationship life promoted on TikTok

often convey a relationship free of conflict and problems, offering aesthetically pleasing visual experiences. These depictions create a significant discrepancy between users' expected and actual experiences in relationships, leading to dissatisfaction, dissonance, and reduced dedication to marital and family obligations. Under the Islamic jurisprudential approach, the notion of marriage is theorized as *mīthāqan ghalīẓan*, a firm, binding contract rather than a performative exchange, which may or may not be digitalized. Effective matrimony is a significant moral and spiritual accountability, requiring ethical behavior, sacrifice, patience, and uncompromising integrity to maintain a happy family (Acha, 2024; Chaniago, 2023; Musthofa & Subiono, 2020; Saaidah, 2022; Shalahuddin et al., 2023).

This meaning is supported by the Quran, which describes love as a spiritual and social relationship that brings peace, love, and mercy between spouses: *"And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, those are signs for a people who give thought."* (QS. al-Rum: 21). In the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, marriage fulfills multiple protections, preserving religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), safeguarding honor (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*), and continuing righteous progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*). Hence, digital trends that trivialize marital sanctity contradict the very objectives of Islamic law, which aim to protect moral and social order. Based on this, the demotion of love and marriage success to an aesthetic, digital scale will be at the expense of a collective understanding of the societal stability of the family and society, which should be rooted in moral, ethical, and spiritual values rather than empty visual representation.

Fourth, the Islamic framework for partner selection is comprehensive, encompassing spiritual, moral, psychological, social, and physical considerations. This holistic paradigm is undermined by TikTok-style standardization that unjustifiably emphasizes appearance, lifestyle, and online fame. The Islamic legal discussion recognizes that religious commitment and morality are grounded in the idea that a spouse will defend themselves, their home, and family against moral corruption. Physical and psychological health are also integral to marital stability and quality of life, whereas social compatibility and family background facilitate the transmission of ethical and moral values across generations. Physical attractiveness is not the primary factor, although it is recognized to improve affection, but it does not become a key indicator of the suitability of the relationship.

In addition, financial strength and the ability to provide material security also matter, as harmonious families require diligence, accountability, and divine blessings (Fathony et al., 2021). Based on this, the demotion of love and marriage success to an aesthetic, digital scale undermines a collective understanding of the societal stability of the family and community, which should be rooted in moral, ethical, and spiritual values rather than empty visual representation. Fifth, the legal and ethical implications of digital relational practices in Islam are profound. Publicly streamed displays of affection or partners adapting to viral TikTok standards can cause severe psychological and social effects. Online behaviors and practices that focus on publicity, likes, and interactions as indicators of relational success neglect moral, ethical, and social responsibilities, which

are the primary concerns of relational well-being. The importance of privacy, honor, and relational integrity, as well as the avoidance of behavior that can give rise to the concept of fitnah or moral decay, is emphasized in Islamic jurisprudence (Asih, 2024; Damayanty, 2024).

Digital actions that violate these principles should therefore be subjected to critical analysis and, where applicable, avoided to maintain the spiritual and moral integrity of relationships and to avoid undermining individual dignity through the demands of digital aestheticism. In this way, the TikTok phenomenon of the standardization of partners poses a radical threat to the Islamic idea of love, marriage, and the ethics of relations. These trends degrade love to superficial spectacle by privileging visual looks over digital notoriety, compromising the moral, ethical, and social values that are the foundation of a harmonious (*sakinah*) home. Islamic jurisprudence offers comprehensive, multidimensional guidance for selecting a partner, integrating spiritual, moral, social, psychological, and physical aspects to create a strong counter-narrative to shallow digital culture. These values confirm that, in Islam, love is not a form of careless amusement and showmanship; it is a spiritual, ethical, and social relationship between people that requires moral uprightness, ethical behavior, and social duty. By highlighting these dimensions, Islamic law provides a viable ethical approach to relational practice in digital societies today, thereby reducing the distortions caused by algorithmic partner selection and the commoditization of romantic interactions.

Table 1. Comparison between TikTok standards and Islamic standards  
in choosing a partner

Aspect	TikTok Standards	Islamic Standards
Basis of Evaluation	Partners are judged by physical appearance, luxurious lifestyle, and digital popularity displayed on social media.	Partners are evaluated on religion ( <i>dīn</i> ), moral character ( <i>akhlāq</i> ), and <i>kafā'ah</i> (moral and spiritual compatibility), which form the foundation of marital harmony.
Values and Ethics of Relationship	Relationships are oriented toward performative display and public exposure, often showcasing exaggerated affection for popularity.	Relationships are guided by <i>hayā'</i> (modesty), <i>adab</i> (ethics), and <i>karāmah</i> (dignity). Expressions of love are private and dignified.
Purpose of Relationship	Love is viewed as visual entertainment and social consumption, emphasizing pleasure and outward appearance.	Love is regarded as an act of worship and a sacred covenant ( <i>mīthāqan ghalīẓan</i> ) aimed at achieving <i>sakinah</i> , <i>mawaddah</i> , and <i>rahmah</i>
Social and Psychological Impact	Leads to unrealistic expectations, jealousy, and relationship dissatisfaction due to constant social comparison	Cultivates tranquility ( <i>sakinah</i> ) and moral resilience, encouraging patience, responsibility, and emotional balance

Principles of Partner Selection	Focuses on visual appeal, digital validation (likes, followers), and social status as measures of relational success	Emphasizes religion and moral integrity above all else, as the Prophet SAW said: "A woman is married for four things... You should marry the religious woman (otherwise) you will be losers".
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Source: Summarized by authors

The table above presents five main comparative areas, including the foundations of evaluation and ethical values, as well as relational objectives and social consequences. This comparison underlines the fact that Islam offers a moral and spiritual counter-narrative to the superficiality and hedonism of the digital relationship culture.

## CONCLUSION

The emergence of partner standardization on TikTok represents a significant transformation in how contemporary youth conceptualize and experience romantic relationships. This trend, enabled by its algorithm-driven mechanisms and image-centric, popular, consumer-symbol-driven content, has tilted the conceptualization of love towards a consumptive, performative axis, away from its erstwhile religious, ethical, and emotive traditions. Reducing love to visual appearances commodifies both individual perceptions of ideal lovers, on the one hand, and the sustainability of family institutions, on the other. Promotes elevated relational disputes, instigates false hopes, and might trigger chronic discontent due to the gap between ideal virtual presentations of lovers, on the one hand, and the experience of intimate relationships, on the other. From a religious legal view, the TikTok-fueled normalization of partner swapping contradicts original normative values. These values center on balance, mutual suitability (*kafā'ah*), ethical character (*akhlāq*), and religious devotion, with religious devotion serving as the overriding criterion for choosing a spousal companion. Love and marriage, according to Islam, are not just affective relationships but religious institutions charged with high ethical, religious, and social obligations. Reducing love to a visual or performance event erodes the core values of modesty (*adab*), honor, and domestic stability, which form integral pillars of contiguous, morally sound social existence for the Muslim populace.

The practical implications of this trend highlight the need for normative critique and formal Islamic education to help upcoming generations navigate the growing online relational world. Implications for redeploying spousal-selection principles should emphasize complementing religious devotion, ethical life, and emotional robustness, so that love remains a holy light connection between beings across the spiritual, societal, and emotional spheres. Overall, the Islamic critique of partner standardization a la TikTok transcends abstract discussion; it constitutes a prescription for reviving the transcendent and holistic dimensions of love and marriage while resisting the vacuity of modern online culture. In practice, this research proposes reinforcing Islamic digital literacy training, especially by instructing Muslim youth to critically analyze online content that represents relationships from ethical and religious perspectives. Discussions about digital morality,

*fiqh al-ma'umat* (jurisprudence of information), and responsible social media use should be introduced to educational institutions and community organizations to foster balanced moral thinking in the digital domain.

In addition, *fiqh*-based counseling interventions can be designed to help young Muslims balance digital social norms and Islamic marital ethics. These measures might be enacted through premarital counseling, youth mentoring, and workshops in mosques, with a focus on moral discernment and relational responsibility in digital culture. To guide future research, the empirical gap is how Muslim youths understand love, relationships, and marriage expectations in the social media era. To assess how exposure to digital aesthetics affects their value systems, quantitative and mixed-method research may be conducted, and the qualitative inquiry may examine the lived experiences of young Muslims who navigate between digital and spiritual ideas of intimacy. Would enable us to supplement the existing normative-legal findings with sociological and psychological evidence, thereby enriching the interdisciplinary perspective on Islamic ethics in the era of digital culture.

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