

The Shift in Divorce Patterns among Muslim Families in Gorontalo

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Abstract

In Gorontalo, over 600 divorce rulings were issued in 2022, with the majority stemming from a weakening of marital commitment. This study investigates the evolving divorce patterns among Muslim families in Gorontalo, highlighting two key shifts. First are attitudinal shifts, where social media platforms are frequently misused as instruments of online infidelity. Second are behavioral shifts, where marriage is increasingly perceived as a temporary and negotiable bond, no longer anchored firmly in religious and moral values. Employing a qualitative, field-based approach, this research draws upon direct observations and in-depth interviews with divorced or divorcing Muslim couples. An empirical framework is used to explore the socio-cultural and technological dynamics shaping divorce, with a particular emphasis on judicial data from the Gorontalo Religious Court. Findings reveal a substantial transformation in the patterns of divorce driven by two interrelated forces. First, the pervasive presence of social media has accelerated the internalization of materialistic and consumerist ideals, which in turn erode moral consciousness and reshape both attitudes and behaviors within the marital relationship. Second, social media has contributed to a transformation in divorce typology—from traditionally talaq-based divorces (initiated by husbands) to a rise in contested divorces (initiated by wives). This shift reflects changing power dynamics and an emerging trend in which women increasingly claim their legal agency to terminate marriages they perceive as dissatisfying or unjust.

I. Introduction

Divorce is a legal termination of the marital bond between a husband and wife, signifying the end of mutual responsibilities and cohabitation.¹ According to Erna Karim, divorce occurs when couples fail to fulfill their respective roles within the household, resulting in a breakdown of marital stability that is then formalized through legal channels.² This breakdown often stems from fundamental differences in values or principles, with each partner insisting on their own desires without compromise, ultimately undermining family unity. Divorce, therefore, is not merely a legal event, but a social and emotional rupture with long-term consequences for all involved.³

In traditional societies, marriage is regarded as a sacred and enduring institution, strongly rooted in religious, cultural, and moral obligations. Although religious teachings generally emphasize the sanctity and permanence of marriage, none explicitly forbid divorce altogether.⁴ Instead, divorce is allowed under specific conditions and is viewed as a last resort when reconciliation is no longer possible. The assumption that "every religion must prohibit divorce" is an oversimplification that does not account for theological nuances. In Islamic jurisprudence, for example, divorce (ṭalāq) is permitted but discouraged unless necessary. Thus, while divorce is not ideal, it is a recognized solution to irreparable marital discord.⁵

In contemporary society, particularly in the digital age, social media has introduced profound changes to the dynamics of marriage and family life.⁶ As Ogburn observed, modernization often leads to the erosion of traditional family functions, shifting interpersonal interactions from communal and value-based toward individualistic and technology-mediated forms. This technological mediation can both facilitate and undermine relationships.⁷ Studies by Vaughan and Hawari documented a significant increase in divorce cases in Jakarta, attributing a large proportion to infidelity—90% of which were perpetrated by husbands. Interestingly, 80% of divorce suits were initiated by wives, suggesting a rising sense of agency among women in confronting marital dissatisfaction.⁸

¹ Agoes Dariyo, "Understanding the Psychology of Divorce in Family Life," *Journal of Psychology* 2, no. 2 (2004): 94-100.

² T.O Ihromi, *Bunga Rampai Sosiologi Keluarga* (Jakarta: Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 1999).

³ Paul R. Amato, "The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62, no. 4 (November 2, 2000): 1269–87, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.01269.x>.

⁴ Save M. Dogun, *Family Psychology: The Role of the Father in the Family* (Jakarta: PT. Rineka Cipta, 2002).

⁵ William Goode, *The Family* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 1995).

⁶ Khoiruddin Khoiruddin, *Family Sociology* (Yogyakarta: Liberty, 2008).

⁷ H. Khairuddin, *Family Sociology* (Yogyakarta: Nur Cahaya, 1985).

⁸ Dono Baswardono, *Polygamy is Cheating* (Yogyakarta: Galangpress, 2007).

These national trends are mirrored in local contexts such as Gorontalo, where in 2022 more than 600 divorce rulings were issued by the Religious Court. The primary causes in this region include the weakening of marital commitment and the misuse of social media.⁹ Based on preliminary observations, three main shifts are observable among Muslim families in Gorontalo: (1) Attitudinal shifts, as seen in the increasing use of social media platforms for online infidelity and secretive communication; (2) Behavioral shifts, with marriage increasingly seen not as a sacred covenant but as a flexible, dissolvable agreement;¹⁰ and (3) Lifestyle shifts, where couples publicly display their private lives on social media, diminishing the boundary between public and intimate spaces. These shifts contribute to the normalization of divorce as a solution rather than a social taboo.¹¹

Moreover, social media does not merely act as a medium—it creates an entirely new social environment that influences how individuals perceive relationships, privacy, and autonomy. The constant exposure to idealized lifestyles, comparison culture, and digital flirtation erodes trust and intensifies dissatisfaction in marriage. The platform's design encourages validation-seeking behavior, which can alienate partners and foster emotional distance. In many cases, couples report that online interactions eventually lead to real-world infidelity, emotional detachment, or public humiliation—factors that accelerate the decision to divorce.

These phenomena reflect a broader transformation in the institution of marriage and the evolving expectations of spouses in the digital era. However, despite the prevalence of these patterns, there is a notable lack of scholarly research focusing specifically on Muslim families in Gorontalo. The intersection of religion, culture, and digital technology remains underexplored, especially in regional settings outside Indonesia's major urban centers. This article aims to fill that gap by examining how social media contributes to shifting divorce patterns among Muslim families in Gorontalo, offering a culturally grounded analysis of a rapidly changing social reality

2. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative field research design with an empirical approach, allowing researchers to directly explore and deeply describe patterns of divorce among Muslim couples in Gorontalo. Field research was chosen to capture the complexity of marital issues in their natural social context, especially within the local religious and cultural setting. Data were collected using three techniques:

⁹ This data is obtained from the directory of Supreme Court decisions in 2022

¹⁰ I Wayan Gde Wiryawan and Dewi Bunga, "The Legal Protection of Atypical Workers in Industry 4.0 in Indonesia," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 8, no. 2 (2020): 31–40, <https://doi.org/10.33102/mjssl.v8i2>.

¹¹ Sunarto Kamanto, *Introduction to Sociology* (Jakarta: University of Indonesia Faculty of Economics Publishing, 2004), 65.

observation, interviews, and documentation. Observational data were obtained by closely examining the behavior and interaction patterns of 20 Muslim couples residing in Gorontalo City. These couples were selected purposively based on their involvement in recent divorce processes, ensuring that the data reflected firsthand experiences of marital dissolution. While the sample size may appear small, in qualitative research, depth of insight is prioritized over breadth, and the number was deemed sufficient to reach data saturation.¹²

In-depth, unstructured interviews were conducted with 20 individuals—10 husbands and 10 wives—who had experienced or were undergoing divorce. Interview questions were guided by key thematic concerns but remained flexible, allowing respondents to speak openly about their experiences. This method enabled the researcher to uncover subjective perceptions and contextual factors influencing divorce. Documentation was also used to support and contextualize primary data. Researchers collected official records of divorce rulings issued by the Religious Court (Pengadilan Agama) of Gorontalo City in 2022. These documents provided insight into formal grounds for divorce and legal proceedings, serving as a secondary source to validate interview findings.

To analyze the data, researchers employed thematic analysis, involving a multi-stage process of open coding, categorization, and theme development. Interview transcripts and field notes were systematically coded to identify recurring patterns and significant themes related to attitudinal, behavioral, and lifestyle shifts within marriages. This process allowed for the emergence of grounded theoretical insights rather than imposing preconceived categories. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study applied triangulation by cross-checking information from interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with selected participants to verify the accuracy and resonance of the interpretations. The research conclusion follows a deductive reasoning pattern, moving from general patterns observed in the field toward specific implications for the study of divorce in Muslim families.

3. Results and Discussion

Law No. 1/1974 Article 38 states that a marriage can be dissolved due to (a) death, (b) divorce, and (c) a court decision. The dissolution of marriage due to the death of one of the parties does not cause many problems because the dissolution of marriage here is not due to the mutual will or desire of one of the parties, but due to the will of God.¹³ However, the discussion that requires a detailed explanation is related to the breakdown of the marriage relationship caused by divorce and court decisions. Although divorce is a private matter, government intervention is still necessary, to avoid arbitrary actions, especially on the part of the husband, and to

¹² Ifit Novita Sari, Lilla Puji Lestari, and Dedy Wijaya Kusuma, *Qualitative Research Methods* (Malang: Unisma Press, 2022).

¹³ Wasman Wasman and Wardah Nuroniyah, *Islamic Marriage Law in Indonesia Comparison of Fiqh and Positive Law* (Yogyakarta: CV. Mitra Utama, 2011).

avoid underhand divorce. For the sake of legal certainty, divorce must go through a court institution.¹⁴

Reasons for Divorce

Regarding a contested divorce or khulu', the divorce petition must be filed by the wife or her attorney with the Religious Court whose jurisdiction covers the plaintiff's place of residence, unless the wife leaves the common residence without the husband's permission. A contested divorce may only be filed if it is accompanied by valid reasons, such as the husband leaving his wife for two consecutive years without her permission without valid reasons or the husband apostatizing and not fulfilling his obligations to his wife, while the wife fears that he will violate Allah's law. In this case, the wife is not obliged to treat her husband properly and she has the right to khulu'. The explanation of khulu' is found in article 148 KHI.¹⁵

Looking at the reasons for divorce, the results of this study are related to the reasons for divorce due to infidelity (syiqaq). This can be shown from the results of the decision of the Gorontalo City Religious Court in 2022 that the divorce case occurred due to infidelity. Interestingly, this affair was through social media in the form of (Wa&Fb). Seen in the copy of the decision of the contested divorce with Decision No. 642/Pdt.G/2022/PA. Gtlo. below:

That the Defendant now has another woman who is known to the Plaintiff through social media, namely Facebook; That the Defendant had a relationship with another woman named Santi, and that the Plaintiff often found her text messages through BBM on the Defendant's mobile phone;

The content of this posita shows that the divorce occurred because of the wife's discovery that her husband had an affair with another woman through social media. Dono Baswardano¹⁶ mentions that infidelity is a combination of three factors. First, there is failure, individualized in the relationship. Second, tension, curiosity, increased self-esteem, image improvement, falling in love. Third, the commercialization of sex, exposure to infidelity, lies learned during adolescence because of our inability to speak honestly about sexual matters.

¹⁴ Emma Fulu and Stephanie Miedema, "Globalization and Changing Family Relations: Family Violence and Women's Resistance in Asian Muslim Societies," *Sex Roles* 74, no. 11-12 (May 17, 2016): 480-94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-015-0540-7>.

¹⁵ Article 148 states that: (1) A wife who files for divorce by way of khulu' submits a petition to the Religious court having jurisdiction over her place of residence along with the reason or reasons. (2) the Religious court shall no later than one month summon the wife and her husband to be heard by each other. (3) at the hearing the Religious court shall explain the consequences of khulu and give advice. (4) After both parties have agreed on the amount of the iwadl or ransom, the religious court shall issue a decision on the permission for the husband to pronounce his divorce before the religious court. No appeal or cassation can be lodged against this decision. (5) Further settlement shall be made as provided for in Article 131(5). (6) in the event that no agreement can be reached on the amount of the ransom or iwadl, the religious court shall examine and decide as an ordinary case.

¹⁶ Baswardono, *Polygamy is Cheating*.

From when the above factors seem quite reasonable as a trigger for the fracture of the husband-wife relationship, especially facilitated by the support of social media. This is what the author found from the case of E.L.¹⁷ She argues that the weaknesses in the husband and wife relationship that trigger problems are differences in understanding, husbands who are not committed, dishonest, and spend more time playing cellphones. Furthermore, E.L. mentioned that some of the above problems triggered the presence of oddities in her husband, such as being quiet, often brooding alone and even frequent midnight calls.

What E.L. experienced is relevant to Dono Baswardono's findings¹⁸ that social media can foster online cheating, which is different from face-to-face cheating. With this reality, the abuse of social media should be addressed as soon as possible because it can threaten the integrity of a husband and wife. More clearly can be seen in the copy of the decision of the gugat divorce No. 218/Pdt.G/2022/PA. Gtlo. Below.

Plaintiff and Defendant are:

The Plaintiff once caught the Defendant with his mistress named XXX; the Plaintiff overheard the Defendant talking intimately on his cell phone with another woman;

From this verdict, it cannot be denied that there has been a shift in the pattern of divorce in Gorontalo Muslim families. If in the past economic disparity was a vital reason for divorce, it is different from the current phenomenon, where the presence of mobile phones is a medium that contributes to the motivation for divorce. In his idea, Richard E. Porter¹⁹ emphasizes the changes that occur in couples due to social media related to honest behavior, it began to be uprooted from the lives of married couples, social media has conditioned husbands and wives to often behave dishonestly and like to lie when they communicate and interact through social media.

Researcher interview with respondent I.R²⁰ that;

The problem that added to the disintegration of our household relationship was that my husband was too preoccupied with Facebook, he even continued that it was not uncommon for my husband to come home in the morning, after staying up all night with social media, when confirmed my husband was angry and high-pitched, this was done many times and until finally a woman I did not know called and claimed she was an affair of my husband.

¹⁷ Interview with EP, as a respondent in this study, on April 19, 2022, at Dotoro warkop in Limboto.

¹⁸ Baswardono, 65.

¹⁹ Anang Wahid Cahyono, "Islamic Family Law and Social Transformation: A Study on Marriage, Divorce, and Inheritance in the Sharia System," *Berajah Journal* 4, no. 7 (October 31, 2024): 1421–30, <https://doi.org/10.47353/BJ.V4I7.448>.

²⁰ Interview with Indrawati Matalauni, as a respondent in this research, on May 07, 2022, in Tilihuwa Village, Tinelo Neighborhood II. Limboto sub-district, Gorontalo.

If we follow Rini Darmastuti's thinking, the above incident is *human nature*, which is a character possessed by humans that is manifested in everyday life, which is inseparable from the cultural background and various activities they live in. So with the presence of social media that always accompanies in every human activity, without realizing it, human behavior has also changed. The nature of eastern society, which is friendly, humble and polite, has changed into an open, outspoken and what it is, and makes oneself the center of all activities. So it is not uncommon that what appears is the character of winning alone, and without caring about the surrounding environment.²¹ Seeing the inequality of the reasons for divorce above, here the husband's existence is more often misusing social media as a tool to facilitate contact with other women (having an affair).

Grounds for Divorce

According to Law No. 1/1974 divorce must be done in front of a court session, this law explains in article 39 that: 1) Divorce can only be carried out in front of a court session after the court concerned has tried and failed to reconcile the two parties. 2) There must be sufficient grounds for divorce that the husband and wife will not live together as husband and wife. 3) The procedure for divorce before a court session is regulated in its own laws and regulations.²²

When referring to the grounds for divorce, the same thing can be found in the grounds for divorce, namely the existence of quarrels (*syiqaq*) in the husband and wife's household. Just as the reason for divorce is the presence of a third person, the same applies to divorce. Interestingly, social media plays a role in divorce, in real terms, the author found that there was no significant difference between husband and wife in filing for divorce. The biggest motivation for husbands to divorce is because their wives have cheated on them.

When the author interviewed several divorce respondents, they gave the reason that their households had been infidelity committed by their wives. As in decision No. 584/Pdt.G/2022/PA. Gtl0. divorce below, this reason is the main basis for a husband to divorce.²³

The Respondent was jealous of the Applicant who was opening a social media account via Facebook and saw the Applicant's profile picture still with the former Applicant;

From this verdict, it is not only husbands who often abuse the existence of social media. Wives also often abuse social media to have affairs with other men. As

²¹ Kenneth Colburn, Phylis Lan Lin, and Mary Candace Moore, "Gender and the Divorce Experience," *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 17, no. 3-4 (May 7, 1992): 87–108, https://doi.org/10.1300/J087v17n03_06.

²² Fatimah Al-Saud, "Analyzing the Impact of Islamic Family Law Reform on Divorce Rates," *Maqsha: Journal of Islamic Jurisprudence* 1, no. 1 (2024): 22-31, <https://www.pdpijournals.org/index.php/jij/article/view/13>.

²³PA Gorontalo 2022 decision data in this study.

the author's interview with respondent M.RC,²⁴ He argued that, the presence of a third person in a household was triggered by the wife increasingly closing herself and rarely communicating openly, always saying the word separation if there are frequent problems in the household, feeling insufficient with the income earned by the husband, always hiding cellphones and keeping cellphones from being left behind. Furthermore, M.RC said that these problems also increased with the suspicion of his friends because they often caught his wife alone with other men while making out, and this was done many times.

The presence of social media has unwittingly brought about changes in values and attitudes.²⁵ Social media can change a wife's behavior in domestic life. A wife who previously saw husband and wife relationships as a personal experience between spouses, but now has experienced a change in openness and has become a shared experience with those who are close friends and close friends. Like what the testimony of experience conveyed by U.H,²⁶ , whom the author interviewed, he mentioned that currently the existence of cellphones can make it easier for a wife to connect with anyone anytime and anywhere. It can be seen in the direct quote from the interview results below.

"In the past, the quarrel that occurred between Elma as my ex's daughter and Uden as my son, because my son Uden was addicted to drinking alcoholic beverages until he got drunk, this was done continuously. With this problem, Elma, my ex's daughter, often confided in her close friend Uden, via cellphone, and she told him what she was experiencing with her husband, so unexpectedly with the frequent confiding she did with her close friend Uden, they had an affair and married under the hand."

The reason for divorce above is as confirmed by Richard E. Porter²⁷ that, social media has changed the values adopted by families. There are many social values instilled by cultures that have been replaced with social values from other cultures. For example, the social values built by our culture that sees family matters as taboo and very confidential have now been replaced by a new culture that is more open to anyone. Even the values that teach us to respect our parents have begun to shift with other values, that parents are no longer the only place as a solutive mediation for household problems but the existence of close friends is considered sufficient to represent and replace the existence of parents.

²⁴Interview with M.RC, as a respondent in this research, on May 31, 2022, in North Heledulaa, North City, Gorontalo City.

²⁵ Gavin Willis Jones, "Muslim and Non-Muslim Divorce Trends in Southeast Asia in the 21st Century," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 51, no. 3 (September 2023): 137–45, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajss.2023.04.004>.

²⁶Interview with UH, as a respondent in this research, on July 28, 2021, in Kayumerah village, Limboto sub-district, Gorontalo district.

²⁷ Soekanto Soerjono, *Family Sociology (About the Family, Adolescents and Children)* (Jakarta: PT. Rineka Cipta, 2009).

Rini Darmastuti,²⁸ in her research said, social media also brings changes in the attitude or behavior of couples. One of the changes in attitude that occurs is a change in communication. During this time the family has a good attitude when communicating, friendly attitude, polite, humble. But the presence of social media has slowly changed this communication principle, communication becomes blunt, and wants to win alone. Meanwhile, for husband and wife, it results in changes in attitudes and actions, the existence of social media makes married couples rarely communicate directly but change it to communication through social media. Interestingly, the media is used as the center of all activities, for example, a husband spends more time with his cellphone, as well as his wife is more cool with chatting through cyberspace.

From some of the analysis that the authors do, both wives and husbands both have reasons related to emotional or sexual in committing infidelity. There is no difference between the two, wives cheat for sexual reasons and husbands cheat for emotional motives and vice versa. This is evident from the research that the author conducted when conducting interviews with respondents, they answered according to the fact that the sexual factor is the main dominance of a husband or wife having an affair, because that is what they experience.

This fact shows that on the one hand social media has a very good role and impact on married couples. But on the other hand, it has a negative role and impact on married couples. The interesting thing from the Gorontalo PA decision data is that infidelity through social media is a trigger for divorce, with the reason being that they found intimate chats on the cellphone, both the wife's cellphone and the husband's cellphone with another woman or another man.²⁹ This compares to around 40% of divorce divorces occurring due to infidelity committed by a wife through social media. Meanwhile, about 60% of divorce cases occur due to infidelity committed by the husband, with social media.³⁰

If you look at this percentage, then divorce due to infidelity through social media is more common in gugat divorce than divorce. This indicates that infidelity is more likely to be committed by a husband than by a wife. According to a judge

²⁸ Elvinaro Ardianto, *Communication 2.0 Theorization and Implications* (Yogyakarta: Mata Padi Pressindo, 2011).

²⁹Data on Religious Court decisions, where the reduction of this analysis is based on the results of verification and interviews with respondents who have received the results of their divorce decisions. They mention the above reasons as the main trigger for their choice of divorce, if you pay close attention to the results of the divorce decision, the reason for divorce has begun to shift to the rise of infidelity via cellphone.

³⁰This comparison is based on the results of the author's verification of 200 samples of PA Gorontalo decision data, accompanied by the results of the author's interviews with husbands and wives who stated that it was likely that the divorce was triggered by the main reason being the presence of a third person. Likewise, the results of the author's interview with the PA Judge who gave a comparison of this matter, on Monday, July 25, 2022. At 11:00 a.m.

at PAGorontalo³¹, cases filed by both husbands and wives most often include the reason that their wives have found intimate relationships with other men through social media, as well as the wife's reason that her husband has found intimate chats with other women on social media. Furthermore, this is sometimes not the main trigger of the reason for divorce but from most of these reasons it becomes the main cause of divorce, social media is a scourge that is quite feared today if it is not used on positive things.

From the results of verification of decision data and unstructured interviews, it shows that the unfaithful behavior of a husband or a wife consciously or unconsciously has adverse implications for their home life, such as loss of trust because they feel they will be betrayed, and other feelings of anxiety. Disappointments caused by husbands such as infidelity, profanity become a worrying specter for a wife. In principle, social media is not a determining factor for divorce in domestic life. However, social media is a tool that contributes to the ease of husbands or wives in committing infidelity, resulting in divorce. As confirmed by the respondents the author interviewed, including, Ad, Im, Ep, Yulan, Anti, Wr, Uden and Yun, Ym and Era, they emphasized that basically the most vital reason for divorce is the presence of a third person. It is possible that social media has changed the pattern of divorce in Gorontalo Muslim families, with the reason that social media plays a major role in the presence of a third person in a married couple, which leads to divorce.

Discussion

Technological advances seem to be very diverse, and cover almost all sectors of life, both communication and information. In communication, the presence of cellphones has overcome distance and time because it facilitates communication between husband and wife and parents with their children. The development of social media has great relevance and influence on family life, especially regarding changes in family attitudes.³²

Social media has a direct impact on users' lifestyles, attitudes and behaviors. As it has become an integral part of daily life, people around the world use social media to get entertainment and interact with others, or share photos and videos. Social media also promotes a sense of belonging and positive attitudes among users, encourages creativity, is easily accessible, and fulfills people's need to build relationships with others. Social science experts describe the style or characteristics of changes in the thinking of Muslim families that are developing in the present and future as characterized by several dominant and objective

³¹The respondent in this case is a Gorontalo PA Judge who decides many divorce cases relating to the reasons for infidelity by either the husband or wife in the divorce case filed. This interview was conducted on July 25, 2022. At 11:00 a.m. In PA Kota.

³² Agus Salim, *Social Change (Sketches of Theory Reflections on Indonesian Case Methodology)* (Yogyakarta: PT. Tiara Wacana, 2002).

trends, including: *First*, there is a technologization of life due to the *scientific revolution*. Here, a technological family is created, characterized by the standardization of work and changes in values, namely the increasingly dominant considerations of efficiency and productivity, here Muslim couples are trapped in materialist interests. *Second*, the tendency of family behavior that is increasingly functional, characterized by patterns of social relations seen from the point of view of usefulness and importance. Here, the existence of a husband or wife is determined by how far he is useful for his family. As theorized by Talcott Parsons, the change from *personal* and *emotional* relationships to *effective and neutral* relationships. *Third*, the Muslim family has become information-intensive, and an individual's existence is determined by how much he or she has mastered technology.³³

This unintentional influence makes social media a trigger for divorce, in some countries the effects of modernization are considered a cause of increased marital disruption. Family stability is disrupted by the fulfillment of personal needs and the increasing awareness of gender equality. The impact of industrialization on marital life that has hit western countries has also occurred in eastern countries, such as Indonesia.³⁴ Despite their different histories and levels of economic development, these countries share similar experiences of economic development and are equally exposed to gender equality issues. The increase in divorce rates in Indonesia since 2001 and significantly in 2007 seems to be inseparable from the influence of information globalization that brings gender equality issues and the influx of new cultures. Industrialization, women's economic independence, and the use of new media that facilitate access to information, build networks of friends or communities, and share information, are believed to encourage an increase in divorce rates. In terms of the social shift of the family, the impression obtained suggests the shadow of the influence of a typical modernization ideology. ³⁵*Firstly*, there is a common assumption that Muslim families are merely passive participants who accept external influences in the process of social change in which they are involved, thus becoming families that are uprooted from their local cultural roots. *Second*, it is characterized by a tendency to underestimate the inner dynamics driven by *endogenous* structures and values (local culture).

Indonesia is a patriarchal country, and the rise in contested divorces (divorces filed by wives) is an interesting phenomenon. Patriarchal culture subordinates women to men, and the decision-maker in the family is the husband. The

³³ Said Agil Husin Al-Munawwar, *Intellectual Generation Agenda: An Endeavor to Build a Civil Society* (Jakarta: Pena Madina, 2003).

³⁴ Manijeh Daneshpour, "Muslim Families and Family Therapy," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 24, no. 3 (July 8, 1998): 355–68, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.1998.tb01090.x>.

³⁵ Fakir Al Gharaibeh and M. Rezaul Islam, "Divorce in the Families of the UAE: A Comprehensive Review of Trends, Determinants, and Consequences," *Marriage & Family Review* 60, no. 4 (May 18, 2024): 187–209, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2024.2332696>.

increase in contested divorces can be said to be a form of women's awareness of their rights.³⁶ Women's rights awareness and women's economic independence have encouraged Indonesian women to make fundamental decisions in their lives. Several studies show that divorce and widowhood are no longer considered taboo and shameful for women. Changes in the view of divorce and widowhood have resulted in a shift in the pattern of divorce from divorce, which is usually carried out by men, to contested divorce by women. It is evident from the case of this research, from the data of PA Gorontalo's decision in 2022.

Ahead of a divorce, a wife usually posts a lot about their home life on social media. The language tends to support divorce on the grounds of inner peace, with widowhood *emoticons* as a matter of course. The reasons that often lead to divorce are disharmony, and infidelity. In some studies divorce often occurs due to the influence of information globalization.³⁷ Their openness when active on social media and looking for friends who experience the same thing makes a wife more confident to make a divorce decision. Some find their close friends and establish more intensive personal communication that helps them during the divorce process.³⁸

Another factor that triggers divorce is infidelity through social media, whether committed by the husband or wife. The use of social media provides a great opportunity to build relationships with other people, including personal relationships. There are two types of infidelity, (1) infidelity committed by a husband that causes jealousy, resulting in continuous arguments, which leads to divorce, (2) infidelity committed as an escape from household conflicts, and strengthens the decision to initiate a divorce because there is already another man.³⁹

Muslim family problems are always evolving and changing with the times.⁴⁰ The dynamic-flexible relevance of social media to the family has a major role in shifting divorce patterns. This is shown by the reason for divorce filed by the wife, the trigger when she discovered the husband's infidelity through social media. This is ironic because just proving with the media that a husband has had an affair is the reason for divorce. Another shift is the use of social media, information accessed through social media makes a wife psychologically have the power to file for divorce. Their relationships with friends on social media who have experienced divorce increase their confidence to live without their

³⁶ Fuad Kauma, *Guiding Wives to Accompany Husbands* (Yogyakarta: Mitra Pustaka, 2003).

³⁷ Muhamad Ismail, Robitho Alam Hadi Faisal, and Zainur Zainur, "Marriage and Divorce in Islamic Law: Sociological Implications for Modern Muslim Societies," *Journal of Islamic Law El Madani* 4, no. 1 (February 11, 2025): 25–37, <https://doi.org/10.55438/jile.v4i1.142>.

³⁸ Muhammad ibn Idri al-Shafi'i, *Al-Shafi'i's Risala: Treatise on the Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Islamic Texts Society, 1997).

³⁹ Pujito Pujito, *Islamic Law, Dynamics of Community Development Revealing the Shifting Behavior of the Santri* (Yogyakarta: Mitra Pustaka, 2012).

⁴⁰ Bhader Johan Nasution and Sri Warjiyati, *Islamic Civil Law* (Bandung: Mandar Maju, 1977).

husbands. Information accessed from various media about divorce cases has led to the assumption that divorce is no longer a taboo.⁴¹ When there is conflict in the household, women are no longer afraid or worried about initiating a divorce. So, it can be said that social media plays a role in shifting the pattern of divorce in Gorontalo from *ceraai talak* (divorce by the husband) to *ceraai gugat* (women filing for divorce).

The perception of Muslim couples about morals is getting duller, it cannot be denied that thanks to technology, the materialistic and consumeristic culture has developed in such a way as to make Muslim families locked in a cage, borrowing Bertrand Russell's phrase.⁴² Modern civilization that is supported by technological sophistication is actually a civilization that tries to forget or even kill God as reported by F. Nietzsche.⁴³

The future of family life is still open, if you make religion the key to family life, because the family *is* required to be a *way of life* said Whitehead,⁴⁴ as a *way of life* together which is felt in certain spiritual and emotional approaches, certain guidelines in the form of values. In connection with this, the existence of family life often forgets that the world is actually constantly evolving. While in every development there are certainly changes so that religion must be able to accommodate the changes in the Muslim family.

Faced with this gray atmosphere, the Qur'an warns in Qs 59: 19.

Meaning: Do not be like those who forget Allah, so that Allah makes them forget themselves. They are the wrongdoers.

Forgetting the source of creation not only causes the Muslim spouse to be uprooted from his cultural roots, but furthermore will be uprooted from the roots of his humanity. The Qur'an names them as *fasiq*, those who deliberately use their faculties wrongly. Islam enlightens Muslim family life to make the 21st century a friendly century, so the basis of balance (*equilibrium*) needs to be realized immediately. Social media, which is currently at its peak, needs to be oriented towards transcendental moral goals, not oriented to expel God. The act of expelling God in family life is a ridiculous act that will only give birth to life uncertainty.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that social media not only influences divorce patterns among Muslim families in Gorontalo, but also fosters a broader cultural shift marked by uncontrolled digital engagement. The findings reveal two dominant factors behind

⁴¹ Amir Nuruddin and Azhari Akmal Tarigan, *Islamic Civil Law in Indonesia: A Critical Study of the Development of Islamic Law from Jurisprudence* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2004).

⁴² Armahedi Mahzar, *Formulating the Islamic Paradigm of Science and Technology: The Revolution of Islamic Integralism* (Bandung: Mizan Library, 2004).

⁴³ Amin Abdullah, *Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, & Transdisciplinary (Methods of Religious Studies & Islamic Studies in the Contemporary Era)* (Yogyakarta: IB Pustaka, 2020).

⁴⁴ Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Kemoderenan*, p. 126.

this shift: (1) the growing internalization of materialistic and consumerist values facilitated by social media, which has contributed to the erosion of moral awareness and commitment in marriage; and (2) the transformation of divorce typologies—from male-initiated (cerai talak) to increasingly female-initiated divorces (cerai gugat), reflecting changing power dynamics and rising female legal agency. These shifts call for strategic attention from policymakers and practitioners. Religious leaders, educators, and local authorities should collaborate to promote digital literacy programs that focus on healthy family communication, responsible social media use, and moral development in the digital era. Furthermore, marriage counseling services and premarital education should be expanded to address contemporary challenges posed by social media and cultural change. For future research, a more comprehensive investigation is recommended—beyond the current focus on divorce patterns. Studies should examine related factors such as age at marriage, educational background, and socioeconomic conditions of Muslim couples. Applying alternative research approaches—such as socio-legal, phenomenological, or psychological frameworks—will provide deeper insights into the complex nature of marital breakdown in modern Muslim societies. These multidisciplinary perspectives can enrich policy recommendations and guide more holistic interventions.

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