

The Role of Mediators in Digital Infidelity Disputes: A Study of the Position of Social Media Evidence in Mediation

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Article history:

Received in revised form: 09 May 2026

Acceptance date: 22 June 2026

Available online: 14 July 2026

Keywords:

Mediation; Non-Litigation; Domestic Conflict; Infidelity; Social Media.

How to Cite:

Hidayah, N. F., Arifah, S. N., Putri, M. R. I., & Sururie, R. W. (2026). The Role of Mediators in Digital Infidelity Disputes: A Study of the Position of Social Media Evidence in Mediation. *Al-Risalah Jurnal Ilmu Syariah Dan Hukum*, 26(2).

<https://doi.org/10.24252/al-risalah.v26i2.67756>

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of mediators in resolving domestic disputes arising from infidelity based on social media evidence and to examine the position of such evidence in the mediation process. The research method used is an empirical juridical approach with a qualitative approach. Data were obtained through interviews with mediators and supported by a study of relevant laws and literature. The collected data were analyzed descriptively qualitatively to understand mediation practices and the use of social media evidence in resolving domestic disputes. The results of the study indicate that mediation has urgency as a more humane non-litigation mechanism in resolving domestic conflicts, especially those triggered by digital infidelity. In this context, social media evidence is recognized as valid electronic evidence in litigation, but in mediation it functions as a means of conflict clarification, not as an instrument of proving guilt. The mediator's role becomes increasingly complex because it must be able to manage the emotions of the parties, maintain neutrality, and place digital evidence proportionally. This study found that the success of mediation in cases of infidelity tends to be low due to high emotional conflict, a strong desire for divorce, and the absence of the parties. This study recommends strengthening mediator competencies, particularly in digital literacy and psychological approaches, to increase the effectiveness of mediation in the digital era.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, social media has become an integral part of daily life, not only for individuals but also for families. Social media, which originally functioned as a means of communication, entertainment, and self-expression, can now also be a space for marital conflicts. Interaction through WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and other digital platforms often raises new problems in marital relationships, especially when social media is used to establish communication that exceeds the limits of reasonableness with third parties.¹ In the context of family law, these conditions can trigger disputes, loss of trust, and even divorce. In the context of the household, this phenomenon triggers the emergence of the term *digital divorce* (digital divorce) which refers to the increase in disputes and household resolutions due to the unwise use of social media.² One form of conflict that is quite prominent in this context is infidelity on social media. Unlike conventional infidelity, digital *infidelity* occurs when a person carries out emotional relationships and close interactions with parties outside of marriage through digital platforms.³

Empirically, divorce cases in Indonesia are still relatively high. Data from the Central Statistics Agency records the category "number of divorces by province and factors causing divorce" as one of the official statistical data in the field of population and migration in 2024.⁴ In various public reports based on BPS data, the factor of disputes and quarrels continues to be the dominant cause of divorce in Indonesia. This suggests that divorce is not always triggered by a single event, but is often an accumulation of conflict, poor communication, loss of trust, and the couple's failure to resolve domestic issues amicably.⁵ In this context, allegations or evidence of infidelity through social media can

¹ Chesa Wastalsjideri and Hasnuldi Miaz, "The Influence of Social Media on the Divorce Rate and Its Relevance to the Principle of Good Faith in Civil Law," *Civil Law Journal* Vol. 4, no. 1 (2026): 34–42.

² Beby Sendy, Yossie Rossanty, and Muhammad Fadhiil Hawawari, "The Impact of Technology and Social Media on Marriage and Divorce: A Study in Besilam Village, Langkat Regency," *Journal of Social Interactions and Humanities* 3, no. 3 (November 29, 2024): 277–86, <https://doi.org/10.55927/JSIH.V3I3.12471>.

³ Irum S. Abbasi and Jayson L. Dibble, "Social Media Addiction, Infidelity-Related Behaviors, and Relationship Satisfaction: Statistical Moderation Requires Careful Interpretation," *Family Journal*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807251358821>; WEBSITE:WEBSITE:SAGE;WGROU:STRING:PUBLICATI ON; Agung Pramudita, Rohmat, and Syeh Sarip Hadaiyatullah, "Analysis of Islamic Family Law on Divorce Due to Infidelity on Social Media," *Al-Ahwal Al-Syakhsyiyah: Journal of Family Law and Islamic Justice* Vol. 7, no. 1 (2026): 60–74, <https://doi.org/10.15575/as.v7i1.54658>.

⁴ Central Statistics Agency, "Number of Divorces by Province and Factors Causing Divorce (Cases)," n.d.

⁵ Ahmad Fakhri Rabbani et al., "Analysis of the Influence of Domestic Conflict, Unemployment and Poverty on Divorce Rates in West Java in 2020-2024," *Journal of Macroeconomics and Social Development* 2, no. 4 (June 7, 2025): 11, <https://doi.org/10.47134/JMSD.V2I4.708>.

be a trigger that accelerates household rifts because it concerns emotional, moral, psychological, and legal aspects.

In judicial practice, social media has also begun to appear as part of proof in domestic cases. The Directory of Supreme Court Decisions shows that there is a divorce case that contains the evidence that one of the parties committed an affair and this is known through social media or "social media". Normatively, the recognition of electronic evidence has gained a legal basis through the Electronic Information and Transaction Law, which states that it is a valid legal evidence and an extension of legal evidence according to procedural law in Indonesia.⁶

The reality of domestic conflicts that occur a lot on social media then brings implications for the dispute resolution system in the context of family law in Indonesia.⁷ Traditionally, domestic disputes that are primarily internal in nature often lead to litigation through divorce lawsuits in court. This approach to litigation generally exacerbates the rift in the relationship due to its public nature.⁸ Based on these circumstances, it can be concluded that domestic conflicts as evidenced on social media are a complex socio-legal phenomenon that not only concerns moral and psychological issues, but also has an impact on the family legal system.

Based on a search of the previous literature (*state of the art*), there are several relevant studies. First, according to Baidowi in his journal research, social media can trigger domestic conflicts through several mechanisms, including: digital jealousy, communication dysfunction between husband and wife, and privacy violations manifested in inappropriate uploads, private messages, or online interactions. This study shows that the problem is not just a technical problem of the use of digital devices, but is rooted in complex social and psychological phenomena.⁹ Second, the negative impact of social media on household harmony is also supported by other research showing that domestic conflicts are often rooted in the use of social media applications that open up opportunities for interaction with third parties, abuse of private features, or even the publication of internal family affairs into digital public spaces. In a case study in the

⁶ Republic of Indonesia, "Law Of The Republic Of Indonesia Number 11 Of 2008" (2008).

⁷ Zainul Majdi, "The Role of Mediation in Divorce Dispute Resolution in the Perspective of Islamic Family Law," *Journal of Community Development* Vol. 6, no. 1 (2025): 268–75.

⁸ Febby Ansah Tri Pamungkas and Musleh Harry, "Mediation as a Pillar of Family Resilience in Domestic Dispute Resolution," *KARTIKA: Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2025): 1424–33; Ana Martínez-Pampliega et al., "Lawyer-Client Relationship in Divorce Proceedings: Development and Validation of a New Instrument," *Frontiers in Psychology* 15 (August 22, 2024): 1444321, <https://doi.org/10.3389/FPSYG.2024.1444321/TEXT>.

⁹ Ahmad Dahlan Baidowi, "Digital Divorce: The Role of Social Media in the Fracture of Households in the Age of Technology" 3 (2025): 26–33.

Religious Court, it is not uncommon for a judge to reveal that in some divorce decisions, domestic conflicts are triggered by infidelity that can be proven on social media or mobile phones, which influences the couple's decision to separate.¹⁰ Third, research on the dynamics of family conflicts in the digital era confirms that social media can accelerate the escalation of conflicts that can actually be resolved internally. The article found that uncontrolled use of social media can result in misunderstanding, jealousy, and *digital neglect*, where one party focuses more on virtual interactions than maintaining a real relationship with their partner. This dependence on social media changes family communication patterns from initially personal to communicative through digital devices, so that it can cause misinterpretations that worsen conflicts.¹¹

Based on the analysis of the previous research, it was found that most of the research still focuses on social media as a triggering factor for domestic conflict and divorce, as well as its impact on family harmony. These studies have successfully shed light on the relationship between social media use, digital jealousy, communication dysfunction, and increased risk of divorce. However, studies that specifically discuss the role of mediators in handling domestic disputes due to digital infidelity are still very limited. In addition, previous research has placed more social media evidence as evidence in the divorce litigation process, while studies on the function and use of electronic evidence in the family mediation process have not received adequate attention. In fact, in the practice of mediation in Religious Courts, social media evidence often serves not only as a means of proof, but also as a factor that influences emotions, bargaining positions, levels of trust, and willingness of the parties to achieve peace. Another limitation is the lack of empirical research that examines the experience and perspective of mediators in dealing with digital evidence-based infidelity cases. As a result, there is no comprehensive explanation of how mediators maintain neutrality, manage emotional conflicts, and place electronic evidence proportionately in the family dispute mediation process.

Based on this gap, this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing mediation practices in domestic disputes due to digital infidelity based on the perspective of mediators and family law frameworks in Indonesia. The focus of the research is not only directed at the existence of social media evidence as electronic evidence, but also at how effectively mediators manage conflicts, maintain neutrality, build communication, direct parties to a fair settlement, and place digital evidence proportionately in the mediation process.

¹⁰ Ahmad Muthi', "The Phenomenon of the Negative Impact of Social Media on Household Harmony; Case Study at the Kediri City Religious Court," *UDD* 3 (2021): 126–46.

¹¹ Miftakur Rohman, "The Dynamics of Family Conflict in the Digital Era; The Influence of Social Media on Family Relationships" 04 (n.d.): 911–29.

Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of family law studies and alternative dispute resolution, as well as practical contributions for mediators, religious courts, advocates, and the community in resolving domestic conflicts in the digital era.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of understanding of the role of mediators in dealing with family disputes based on digital evidence in the era of information technology. This study not only examines the position of social media evidence in domestic conflicts, but also reconstructs the function of electronic evidence in the mediation process, which is not solely as an instrument of proving error, but as a means of identifying the root of conflict and facilitating dialogue between parties. In addition, this study offers a conceptualization of the need for mediator competencies in the digital era, which includes the ability to manage emotional conflicts due to digital infidelity, literacy of electronic evidence, and communication strategies to rebuild dialogue spaces in family disputes. Thus, this research contributes to the development of the concept of family dispute mediation in the digital era (*digital mediation within family disputes*) from the perspective of Indonesian family law.

METHODS

This study uses an empirical legal research method with a socio-legal approach. This approach was used to analyze how legal provisions regarding mediation are applied in the practice of resolving domestic disputes arising from social media-based infidelity. The research not only examines the applicable legal norms, but also examines the reality of its implementation through the experience and views of the mediators involved in the mediation process.

The research data consists of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through an interview with one of the mediators who has a lot of experience handling divorce cases and domestic disputes related to infidelity as well as the use of social media evidence in the mediation process. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained through literature studies of laws and regulations, court decisions, books, scientific journals, and other literature relevant to mediation, marriage, divorce, and electronic evidence.

This research uses a *statutory approach*, a *conceptual approach*, and a *case approach*. The legislative approach is used to review legal provisions related to mediation, marriage, divorce, and electronic evidence, such as PERMA Number 1 of 2016 concerning Mediation Procedures in Court, the Marriage Law, the Compilation of Islamic Law, and the Electronic Information and Transaction Law. The conceptual approach is used to

understand the concept of mediation, the role of mediators, dispute resolution, and the position of social media evidence in domestic conflicts, while the case approach is used to analyze the application of these provisions in family dispute resolution practices. All data obtained were analyzed qualitative-descriptive through the process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The analysis was carried out by linking the findings of the interview results with the mediator and the applicable legal provisions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of the mediator in facilitating communication, maintaining neutrality, and managing the use of social media evidence in the resolution of domestic disputes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Concept and Urgency of Mediation in Domestic Dispute Resolution

Mediation is one of the alternative dispute resolution methods that places the parties as the main actors in the conflict resolution process.¹² In contrast to the litigation route that leads to a judge's decision, mediation prioritizes dialogue, deliberation, and finding solutions that are mutually agreed upon by the parties.¹³ In the legal framework in Indonesia, mediation has a strong normative foundation through Supreme Court Regulation Number 1 of 2016 concerning Mediation Procedures in Court. The regulation states that mediation is a way of resolving disputes through a negotiation process to reach an agreement between the parties with the help of a mediator. The mediator acts as a neutral party who accompanies the parties in the negotiation process to explore various possibilities for dispute resolution, without deciding or forcing a settlement. Thus, the main characteristic of mediation lies in its non-adjudicative, voluntary, closed, and consensual nature.¹⁴

In the social life of the community, the resolution of family conflicts is usually sought through the deliberation route first before using the formal legal route. This principle is then strengthened by the obligation of mediation in court. Through PERMA Number 1 of 2016, mediation is a procedure that must be taken in the judicial process, including in the religious justice environment. This provision emphasizes that mediation is not just a complementary option, but an important part of the civil case settlement process. Especially in divorce cases, mediation serves as a forum for husbands and wives to re-

¹² Kostadin Dimitrov and Tsonka Miteva-Katrandzhieva, "Mediation in Healthcare: Enhancing Conflict Resolution Between Patients and Physicians Beyond the Courtroom," *Cureus* 16, no. 12 (December 10, 2024): e75487, <https://doi.org/10.7759/CUREUS.75487>.

¹³ Majdi, "The Role of Mediation in Divorce Dispute Resolution in the Perspective of Islamic Family Law."

¹⁴ Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, "Regulation of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 2016 concerning Mediation Procedures in Courts" (2016).

evaluate their decisions, understand the legal impact of divorce, and explore the possibility of reconciliation or finding a better solution for the benefit of the family.¹⁵ Family dispute resolution is basically not only aimed at ending the case, but also preventing the spread of conflict. If domestic disputes are brought directly to court without adequate dialogue space, the conflict can turn into an increasingly sharp conflict as each party tries to prove the other party's mistakes. Mediation provides an opportunity for the parties to change the pattern of conflict from blaming each other to the process of finding solutions. In this perspective, mediation does not only function as a legal procedure, but also as a means of restoring communication.¹⁶

Although PERMA Number 1 of 2016 places mediation as the main instrument in resolving civil disputes, its effectiveness in domestic cases involving digital infidelity does not always work as expected normative goals. In practice, the existence of electronic evidence in the form of screenshots of conversations, recordings of communications, and social media activities often strengthens one party's belief that the marital relationship can no longer be maintained.¹⁷ This condition causes mediation to face different challenges compared to conventional family disputes because mediators are not only dealing with conflicts of interest, but also with crises of trust that have been amplified by digital evidence.

Several studies show that conflicts triggered by social media have special characteristics in the form of high emotional intensity,¹⁸ shame in digital public spaces and the emergence of electronic traces that can be accessed and played back by those who feel aggrieved.¹⁹ This situation has the potential to reduce the parties' openness to dialogue and narrow the space for negotiation in mediation. Thus, the success of mediation in digital infidelity cases depends not only on the procedures set out in

¹⁵ Forrest S Mosten and Lara Traum, "Mediation as the Default Approach for Family Dispute Resolution," ABA, 2023, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/family_law/resources/family-advocate/2023-fall/mediation-default-approach-family-dispute-resolution/.

¹⁶ Yayah Yarotul Salamah, "The Urgency Of Mediation In Divorce Cases," *Ahkam Journal* Vol. 13, no. 1 (2013): 81-88, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v13i1.953>.

¹⁷ Cantika Reika Viana, "The Position And Influence Of Electronic Evidence In Proving Civil Cases In Indonesian Courts," *ADIL: Legal Journal* 16, no. 2 (January 29, 2025): 317-39, <https://doi.org/10.33476/AJL.V16I2.5734>.

¹⁸ Skye Bouffard, Deanna Giglio, and Zane Zheng, "Social Media and Romantic Relationship: Excessive Social Media Use Leads to Relationship Conflicts, Negative Outcomes, and Addiction via Mediated Pathways," *Social Science Computer Review* 40, no. 6 (December 1, 2022): 1523-41, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08944393211013566>.

¹⁹ Nia Maulina et al., "The Dynamics of the Influence of Social Media on Household Harmony in the Perspective of Family Law," *Scientific Journal in the Fields of Social, Economic, Cultural, Technological, and Educational* Vol. 4, no. 7 (2025): 1393-1410.

PERMA, but also on the mediator's ability to manage the psychological, emotional, and digital aspects that arise in contemporary family disputes.²⁰

When associated with domestic conflicts due to infidelity, mediation becomes increasingly important because this type of conflict usually causes deep emotional wounds. Infidelity, especially when reinforced by social media evidence such as digital conversations, videos of infidelity, uploads, photos, or screenshots, can certainly cause anger, betrayal, shame, and a strong desire to end a marriage. In such conditions, the litigation process has the potential to escalate conflicts because each party can use evidence to attack each other.²¹ Mediation provides a more controlled space so that the evidence and events in question are not solely used to humiliate the other party, but are directed at resolving the problem proportionately. In other words, mediation can be a more humane mechanism in dealing with sensitive domestic conflicts. This is in line with the view that mediation in religious courts is not only intended to resolve cases procedurally, but also to strengthen the court's function in non-adjudicative dispute resolution.

From a socio-legal perspective, mediation cannot be understood solely as a procedural obligation that must be passed before the examination of the case can be continued. Digital evidence often presents facts that are considered so personal that they trigger anger, betrayal, and rejection of peace efforts. In such a situation, mediators are required not only to understand mediation techniques, but also to be able to place electronic evidence proportionately so that it does not turn into an instrument that further escalates conflicts.²²

The findings show that there is a gap between the normative design of peace-oriented mediation and the reality of family disputes in the digital age. PERMA Number 1 of 2016 does regulate mediation procedures in general, but the regulation has not specifically answered the handling of family conflicts involving electronic evidence and social media dynamics. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of mediators through increasing digital literacy and the ability to manage emotional conflicts so that the goals of mediation can still be achieved in the context of information technology developments.

Thus, mediation as a form of Alternative Dispute Resolution (APS) in domestic conflicts has a broader scope of functions than just procedures required in court. Mediation serves as a means of settlement that prioritizes peace, restores communication

²⁰ K. Kressel, *Mediation Revisited*, ed. Dalam M. Deutsch, P. Coleman, and Marcus, 2006.

²¹ Putri Amalia Zubaedah, "Family Law and the Role of Psychology in Divorce Dispute Resolution," *Journal of Literacy Community* 1, no. 1 (2024): 31–36.

²² Boulle L., *Mediation: Principles, Procces and Practice* (Australia: LexisNexis, 2011).

between parties, protects family interests, and offers a more humane solution.²³ In cases of infidelity involving evidence from social media, mediation is very relevant because it is able to prevent the destructive misuse of digital evidence and direct the parties towards a more proportionate and measurable solution. Therefore, the author emphasizes that mediation is a crucial foundation to examine more deeply the position of social media evidence and the role of mediators in handling domestic infidelity conflicts in the digital era.

2. The Position of Social Media Evidence in Infidelity Conflict

Social media in the digital era has changed the pattern of social relationships in married life. In the household sphere, digital interactions that go beyond the limits of reasonableness can develop into digital infidelity or *cyber infidelity*.²⁴ This type of infidelity does not always involve physical contact, but can arise through intense conversations, romantic messages, photo uploads, comments, video calls, and confidential communication through various digital platforms.²⁵ So, when referring to the context of infidelity, social media is often a medium for relationships outside of marriage through intense online communication that has the potential to damage family harmony. Thus, social media not only serves as a communication tool, but also as a factor that causes significant family conflicts.²⁶

From the perspective of civil procedure law in Indonesia, evidence is regulated in Article 164 of the HIR (Herzien Inlandsch Reglement) which includes evidence of letters, witnesses, suspicions, confessions, and oaths. Similar provisions are also contained in Article 1866 of the Civil Code (BW).²⁷ The development of information technology then expanded the type of evidence through the recognition of information and electronic documents as stipulated in Law Number 11 of 2008 jo. Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE Law).²⁸ In the context of

²³ Salamah, "THE URGENCY OF MEDIATION IN DIVORCE CASES."

²⁴ Obiora Benedict Agbo, Chinelo Christiana Agbo, and Gloria Chidinma Nnamani, "Effect of Digital Infidelity in Marital Communication among Couples in Enugu Metropolis," *International Journal of Media, Security & Development (IJMSD)* 8, no. 1 (2022): 52–65.

²⁵ Pramudita, Rohmat, and Hadaiyatullah, "An Analysis of Islamic Family Law on Divorce Due to Infidelity on Social Media."

²⁶ Yusnita Eva, Septia, and Witia Oktavianani, "Social Media Triggers Divorce (Case Study at the Padang Religious Court Class 1a)," *Journal Ijtihad* Vol. 2, no. 2 (2020).

²⁷ Dea Mahara Saputri and Abdul Azis, "The Position of Evidence in Civil Procedure Law as the Implementation of Legal Certainty," *Rechtsregel: Journal of Law* 6, no. 2 (2023): 207–16, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32493/rjih.v6i2.37572>.

²⁸ Astria Yuli Satyarini Sukendar, "THE VALIDITY OF EVIDENCE IN THE FORM OF CHATting ON SOCIAL MEDIA AGAINST THE CRIMINAL PROCESS FOR ACCUSATIONS OF ADULTERY (ARTICLE

mediation in the Religious Court, the provisions regarding evidence also refer to the Supreme Court Regulation Number 1 of 2016 concerning Mediation Procedures in Courts. Therefore, evidence in the form of messages, photos, or recordings of conversations on social media can be categorized as legitimate electronic evidence in judicial proceedings.

When it comes to the position of social media evidence in infidelity conflicts, it is also necessary to distinguish between the context of litigation and mediation. In litigation, evidence is used to prove legal arguments before the judge. However, in mediation, social media evidence is not used to determine the wrong side and the right side, but rather as a basis for understanding the source of the conflict, the degree of rift in the relationship, and the possible acceptable resolution of the parties. This means that in the mediation process, social media evidence functions more as a spark for dialogue and clarification, rather than as an instrument of punishment.²⁹ This distinction is important because mediation aims to seek agreement, not to make a decision. If social media evidence is used offensively in mediation, then the mediation process can turn into a forum for mutual blame that actually magnifies conflicts. This causes social media evidence to not only have a juridical dimension, but also a psychological and social dimension. Such evidence can strengthen the perception that there has been a violation of the obligation of fidelity in marriage, although legally it is still necessary to test its relevance and validity.

Regarding the evidence of infidelity according to the results of the author's interview with one of the mediators of the Soreang City Religious Court, according to him, in an infidelity conflict, digital evidence such as chats or social media uploads is often positioned as secondary *evidence* that must be strengthened with other evidence. For example, what happens a lot in the field can be photos or videos that show relationships with third parties. Visual evidence such as videos is often considered to be more socially powerful because it can show events in person. However, legally, evidence in the form of videos certainly still needs to be examined to ensure its authenticity, source, context, and relevance to the case.³⁰ This means that video recordings can be used as valid evidence after being examined by experts and supported by other clues to assess their authenticity. The principle of caution over video authenticity remains relevant for

284 OF THE CRIMINAL CODE)," *Journal of the Pulpit of Justice* 12, no. 2 (2020): 252–61, <https://doi.org/10.30996/mk.v12i2.2483>.

²⁹ Muhammad Mawardi Djalaluddin et al., "THE MISUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CAUSE OF DIVORCE AT THE MAJENE RELIGIOUS COURT (STUDY OF FIQH AND SOCIAL MEDIA)," *Journal of Curiosity* Vol. 16, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35905/kur.v16i1.7093>.

³⁰ Imam Sucipto, "Interview (Mediator)" (Afternoon: Religious Court, n.d.).

assessing social media evidence in domestic infidelity conflicts.³¹

Thus, social media evidence has an important place in domestic infidelity conflicts, but its use must still take into account the legitimacy, authenticity, relevance, privacy, and purpose of dispute resolution. In litigation, social media evidence can help the judge assess the postulates of dispute, betrayal, or the breakdown of domestic harmony. In contrast to mediation, such evidence can be the basis for understanding the source of conflict and formulating more humane solutions. Therefore, the discussion of social media evidence is not enough to be placed only in the framework of electronic evidence, but must also be associated with emotional dynamics, digital communication ethics, and the role of mediators in keeping evidence from becoming a tool to destroy relationships, but a means to achieve a fair and proportionate settlement.

3. The Role of Mediators in Social Media Evidence-Based Infidelity Conflict Mediation

Infidelity is a sensitive issue because it concerns trust, self-esteem, family honor, and marital continuity. Infidelity is usually characterized by a change in attitude. The most obvious and most frequent changes in attitude in cases of infidelity are the tendency to keep things a secret, act defensively, and lie.³² When evidence of infidelity emerges on social media, conflicts can become sharper because digital evidence is often easy to store, share, and show to others.³³

In such conflict situations, mediators have a central position in the mediation process because the success of dispute resolution is not only determined by the will of the parties, but also by the mediator's ability to manage communication, emotions, and conflicting interests, so that mediation becomes an important instrument as a non-litigation dispute resolution mechanism that prioritizes reconciliation rather than confrontation. Mediators act as neutral third parties who facilitate communication between the parties to reach a fair agreement and avoid wider negative impacts, such as divorce or prolonged conflicts. This role is not only administrative, but also substantive because the mediator helps the parties explore mutually acceptable interests, emotional needs, and solutions.³⁴ It can be understood that in the conflict of infidelity, especially those strengthened by social media

³¹ Social Journal, "Video Recordings as Evidence in Adultery Cases," *Title: Journal of Social and Cultural Studies*. Vol. 9, no. 1 (2022): 53–70, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sjsbs.v9i1.24104>.

³² Aziz Dewanti, M. Hasbi Umar, and Rahmi Hidayati, "The Impact of Infidelity on Husband and Wife Domestic Relationships," *MAQASID : Journal of Islamic Law Studies* Vol. 14, no. 1 (2025): 172–83, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30651/mqs.v14i1.26234>.

³³ Maulina et al., "The Dynamics of Social Media's Influence on Household Harmony in a Family Law Perspective."

³⁴ Ahmad Kurniawan and Hasnuldi Miaz, "The Role of Mediation in the Settlement of Family Cases in Religious Courts," *Sakato Law Journal* Vol. 3, no. 1 (2025): 13–28.

evidence, of course as a mediator will deal with disputes that have a high emotional charge. Evidence in the form of screenshots of conversations, photos, videos, uploads, or private messages often leads to feelings of anger, disappointment, shame, and betrayal. This condition makes it difficult for the parties to distinguish between legal needs, emotional needs, and family interests.

In the context of social media evidence-based infidelity conflicts, mediators face additional complexity. Digital evidence is often ambiguous and requires contextual interpretation. For example, conversations on social media can be interpreted differently by each party, so the mediator must be able to place the evidence within the framework of interpersonal relationships and applicable legal norms. In addition, mediators must ensure that the use of such evidence does not violate privacy or exacerbate conflicts, given that issues of authenticity and legality of digital evidence are a major concern in modern legal practice.

Referring back to the results of the author's interview with one of the mediators of the Soreang City Religious Court, the author obtained supporting information that if there is an infidelity conflict that already has evidence on social media, very few mediators succeed in reuniting their households. This happens because the average infidelity has clear evidence on social media, so one party has very high emotions.³⁵

Based on this, this study shows that a mediator in addition to having basic roles, also needs to understand the basic character of electronic evidence, such as the possibility of manipulation of screenshots, the context of truncated conversations, fake accounts, the deletion of messages, or the dissemination of personal data. This understanding is important so that the mediator does not rush to conclude that a social media evidence must be true or must be false. However, the mediator must remain within the limits of the mediation's authority. The mediator is not in charge of verifying juridically whether social media evidence is valid or not like the judge in the trial. The mediator can only use the existence of such evidence as an entrance to identify the source of the problem and open up room for clarification. If the authenticity of social media evidence is disputed, the mediator can direct the parties not to make the mediation forum an arena of proof, but rather a forum for settlement. That is, digital evidence remains proportionally positioned: it is important to understand the conflict, but it should not shift the purpose of mediation into judgment. Therefore, the position of evidence on social media in mediation is not as a tool to punish, but as information that helps the communication process and dispute resolution. This is in line with the nature of mediation which

³⁵ Imam Sucipto, "Interview (Mediator)."

emphasizes dialogue and interest-based settlement rather than formal evidence.

The role of the mediator also includes a psychological function, namely as a facilitator of emotional expression. In infidelity conflicts, emotions such as anger, disappointment, and betrayal are very dominant. The mediation process provides space for the parties to express their feelings in a controlled manner, thereby reducing tension and paving the way for constructive dialogue. In this case, mediation not only serves as a means of resolving disputes, but also has a therapeutic effect that helps the parties achieve emotional stability.³⁶ This means that mediators are required to have multidisciplinary competence, not only in the field of law, but also in the field of psychology and interpersonal communication. This is important because social media-based infidelity conflicts often involve complex dynamics of trust and perception. The mediator must be able to understand the character of the parties, identify the root of the conflict, and formulate the right approach to reach an agreement. The professionalism of the mediator, including training and certification, is a key factor in the success of mediation.³⁷

The strengthening of the role of mediators shows that their role is crucial, especially when domestic conflicts are triggered by modern factors such as the abuse of social media. In this case, the author refers to one of the decisions of the Religious Court, such as Decision Number 0064/Pdt.G/2021/PA. Adl. In this case, the use of social media as a means of communication with third parties is one of the main factors that cause the fracture of domestic relationships. The judge considered that the conflict that occurred had reached the level of continuous dispute without hope of getting along again, so the divorce lawsuit was granted. This ruling shows that failure in mediation, either due to the unwillingness of the parties or because of the non-optimal role of the mediator, can lead to divorce. This decision emphasizes that the failure of mediation both due to the unwillingness of the parties to reconcile and because mediation that did not run optimally was one of the reasons for granting the divorce lawsuit. In practice, mediation often comes to an impasse, especially in cases involving infidelity or deep emotional conflicts triggered by social media.

From this perspective, the mediator has a strategic role as a *gatekeeper* who determines whether the conflict can be resolved peacefully or proceed to the litigation process. With the right approach, mediators can help the parties understand the legal and social

³⁶ M Aris Rofiqi, Sitti Hartinah DS, and Mulyani, "The Role of Counseling and Mediation in Anticipating the Increase in Divorce Cases," *Journal of Education and Counseling* Vol. 4, no. 5 (2022): 8493–8506, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jpdk.v4i5.8077>.

³⁷ Hasudungan Sinaga, "The Role of Mediation in the Framework of Legal Development in Indonesia," *Journal of Scientific Scholars* Vol. 3, no. 4 (2024): 1726–37, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.56799/jceki.v3i4.3993>.

consequences of divorce, as well as encourage the creation of alternative solutions such as improved communication, digital behavioral agreements, or new commitment-based reconciliation. Effective mediation has been proven to be able to maintain good relations between the parties and produce more flexible solutions compared to court decisions.³⁸

In addition to these roles, of course, the mediator also plays a role in maintaining the confidentiality and dignity of the parties. Social media-based infidelity conflicts are prone to involve personal data, intimate conversations, photos, videos, or family information that should not be disseminated. In mediation, the mediator needs to emphasize that the evidence brought by the parties is only used for the sake of clarification and dispute resolution, not to embarrass the spouse or expand the conflict into the public sphere. This is important because the abuse of social media can exacerbate a domestic crisis and expand its impact on the social environment.³⁹

Overall, this study shows that the role of mediators in mediating social media-based infidelity conflicts is crucial and multidimensional. Mediators not only act as communication facilitators, but also as conflict analysts, emotion managers, and legal educators. The success of mediation is highly dependent on the mediator's ability to integrate legal, psychological, and social aspects in the dispute resolution process. Thus, optimizing the role of mediators is the key to facing new challenges that arise due to technological developments and the dynamics of modern relationships.

4. Obstacles and Challenges of Mediation in Infidelity Conflict

Mediation is an alternative form of dispute resolution that emphasizes the process of dialogue, deliberation, and mutual agreement between the disputing parties. In practice, mediation involves a neutral third party, namely a mediator, whose role is to help the parties find an acceptable solution without forcing a decision. This concept developed in response to the weaknesses of dispute resolution through litigation channels that tend to be time-consuming and costly.

There are two negative conditions in the outcome of mediation, namely mediation is unsuccessful and cannot be implemented. Both have very different legal consequences and causes based on PERMA No.1 of 2016. Mediation is declared unsuccessful if the mediation process has been carried out according to the procedures and time period specified by PERMA No. 1 of 2016, but the parties fail to reach a peace agreement. The mediation that was declared unsuccessful was caused by a failure to achieve results. This

³⁸ Majdi, "The Role of Mediation in Divorce Dispute Resolution in the Perspective of Islamic Family Law."

³⁹ Susan Agustina Putri and Mirna Nur Alia Abdullah, "Social Media And Divorce: Implications, Prevention Strategies And The Role Of Premarital Education," *SABANA (Sociology, Anthropology, and Culture of the archipelago)* Vol. 4, no. 2 (2025): 318–31, <https://doi.org/10.55123/sabana.v4i2.3414>.

happens for reasons that are substantial and voluntary, including unbridgeable differences in principles, namely when the parties have conflicting views or demands and there is no common ground, even though they have negotiated intensively. Then, the withdrawal of one of the parties, namely unilaterally withdrawing from the mediation process before the end of the period, shows a loss of will to reconcile. Finally, no agreement was reached within the time frame, that is, after it was extended, the mediation time (maximum 49 calendar days) expired, but there was no agreement yet. The legal consequences if mediation is declared unsuccessful, the judge is obliged to continue the examination of the subject matter at the trial.

Mediation is declared unfeasible, that is, if there are procedural or administrative obstacles that make the mediation process itself impossible. Regarding the cause of the non-practicable mediation, PERMA No.1 of 2016 has explicitly regulated the reasons that make mediation unpracticable, which is non-voluntary (beyond the will to negotiate), namely absenteeism, namely the defendant or plaintiff who is required to attend the first mediation meeting without a valid reason after being duly summoned twice. Then, inability to act occurs when the party present does not have the authority to make a decision (for example, a legal representative without a special power of attorney to reconcile) or the party concerned is declared legally incompetent. Finally, cases that fall under the exclusion from mediation: these cases are exempt from the obligation of mediation (e.g., applications for objections to BPSK decisions, IP disputes, or cases resolved through the e-Court procedure without the consent of the parties).

The chances of successful mediation in infidelity cases generally tend to be small because there is an element of deep betrayal of trust in the relationship. Infidelity not only disrupts commitment, but it also creates emotional wounds that are difficult to heal in a short period of time. The betrayed party often experiences anger, disappointment, and loss of trust, so the desire to reconcile becomes very low. This condition makes the mediation process more complex because it not only resolves conflicts rationally, but also restores damaged emotions and trust. As a result, while mediation can still be done as a settlement effort, its success rate is often hampered by one party's unwillingness to open up and repair the relationship.

The unsuccessful mediation was also influenced by the documented nature of digital infidelity evidence. Such as uploading photos of infidelity, screenshots of the screen when making video calls, and message history on social media that leads to infidelity. Psychologically, the presence of evidence that can be seen repeatedly will prolong the trauma process and increase resistance to peace efforts.

Dr. Imam Sucipto, S.Sy., M.Ag. CPM. As a mediator at the Soreang Religious Court,

he said that *"in the mediation process, the mediator not only plays the role of a communication facilitator, but can also provide a spiritual approach as a form of emotional support for the parties. One of the forms is to pray for the parties to become calmer, open, and able to think clearly in facing conflicts."* This approach aims to help ease inner tension, foster open-mindedness, and encourage sincerity in seeking a peaceful path. With a more stable emotional state, the parties are expected to more easily receive input, understand each other's point of view, and consider fair and sensible solutions.⁴⁰

Some of the factors that hinder the implementation of mediation in dealing with infidelity conflicts include:⁴¹

First, the emotions that peak. As said by Dr. Imam Sucipto, S.Sy., M.Ag. CPM. *"I always explain the rules before the mediation process takes place. Regarding the opportunity to speak, if I am speaking, then the other party should not interrupt, because later I will give the same portion of speaking time. Also, during mediation, the parties should not use unpleasant language, let alone language that could offend the other party. However, in this infidelity case, it is very difficult for the parties to control their overflowing emotions because they have been betrayed, and this is one of the obstacles for mediators in handling infidelity cases."* With these conditions, these unstable emotions can trigger arguments, blaming each other, and even refusing to listen to each other. As a result, the mediation process, which was supposed to be a space for dialogue, turned into a place for emotional venting. In situations like this, mediators face a major challenge to ease tension, keep the atmosphere comfortable, and direct the parties to be able to control their emotions and refocus.

Second, the parties' desire to divorce is very unanimous. Furthermore, the obstacle to mediation in an infidelity conflict is when the parties decide to divorce. In this case, the parties are not open to mediation at all. Mediation, which is ideally aimed at finding common ground, often does not work effectively because one or even both parties no longer have the motivation to improve the relationship. They tend to follow the mediation process only as a formality, rather than as a sincere attempt at reconciliation. As a result, mediators face difficulties in establishing productive dialogue and directing the parties towards a peaceful solution, as their orientation is already focused on separation as a last resort.

Finally, the absence of one of the parties. In an infidelity conflict, the absence of one of the parties, generally the defendant, is also an obstacle. At the first mediation summons, the defendant was not present. Then a resummon was made by the bailiff, but

⁴⁰ Imam Sucipto, "Interview (Mediator)."

⁴¹ Imam Sucipto.

the defendant was no longer present so that the mediation could not be carried out and continued with the trial process. Usually, the incident occurred because the defendant, as the party who cheated on him, was embarrassed to attend and it has also been proven that this defendant was indeed having an affair.

In mediation, handling infidelity cases presents challenges and obstacles that are not light for a mediator. Unlike conflicts in general, infidelity touches on very personal aspects, such as trust, self-esteem, and emotional stability of the parties. This condition often gives rise to intense emotions that make it difficult to create constructive communication. In addition, the inequality of desire between parties who want to maintain the relationship and those who have lost hope is also an obstacle in the mediation process.

CONCLUSION

Mediation as an alternative to resolving domestic disputes has significant urgency, especially in infidelity conflicts supported by evidence from social media. In contrast to litigation that places evidence as an instrument to prove wrongdoing, in mediation evidence social media serves as a means of clarification to understand the root of the conflict and open up space for dialogue. The role of the mediator in this context has proven to be multidimensional, not only facilitating communication, but also including managing emotions, conflict analysis, legal education, and maintaining the confidentiality of the parties. The complexity of this role increases when digital evidence is presented, so mediators are required to have basic literacy in the character of electronic evidence without having to take over the juridical function which is the authority of the judge. However, the success of mediation in infidelity cases tends to be low. There are three main obstacles identified: the high emotional load of the parties that is difficult to control during the mediation process, the strong desire to divorce so that participation in mediation is formal, and the absence of one of the parties that causes mediation to be unfeasible and the case must proceed to trial. This condition confirms that the effectiveness of mediation is not solely determined by the procedure, but is highly dependent on the psychological readiness and good faith of the parties.

This research offers a conceptual contribution in the form of a competency model of mediator in the digital era which includes three dimensions: electronic literacy to understand the character and limitations of digital evidence, therapeutic communication to manage emotional dynamics in conflicts with a betrayal dimension, and conflict management based on family psychology to place the long-term interests of the parties above the momentary desire to blame each other. This model is expected to be a

framework for developing the competence of mediators in the Religious Court in facing the challenges of family disputes in the digital era. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of mediators systemically through digital literacy training, conflict psychology approaches, and therapeutic communication. In addition, there is a need to adapt regulations and mediation procedures that are more responsive to technological developments, so that mediation remains relevant and effective as a humane, fair, and sustainable family dispute resolution mechanism in the digital era.

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