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From Masculine Dominance to Relational Justice: Reconfiguring Muslim Students' Dating Practices in Makassar through *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*

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Abstract

This study examines masculine dominance in the dating practices of Muslim university students in Makassar, Indonesia, and analyses its dissonance with Islamic ethics through *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Unlike previous studies focusing primarily on reproductive health or psychological impacts, this research integrates Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence with three Islamic ethical principles: *'adālah* (justice), *hifz al-'ird* (preservation of honour), and *mu'āmalah* (ethical social interaction). Using a qualitative socio-legal approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 24 purposively selected students (12 females and 12 males, aged 18–24) from four universities in Makassar, 120 hours of participant observation, and analysis of Islamic legal documents. Data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, complemented by a *maqāṣid*-based framework. The findings identify four forms of masculine dominance: decision-making control, economic dependence, sexual pressure through emotional coercion, and psychological control. These practices produce normative, value, and role-based dissonance with Islamic ethics. Normative dissonance concerns *khalwah* and *ikhtilāf*; value dissonance reflects tensions between individualistic romantic relationships and *sakinah*; while role dissonance stems from interpreting *qiwāmah* as domination rather than responsible leadership. Modernisation, limited *maqāṣid* literacy, and local constructions of masculinity associated with *siri'* contribute to this dissonance. The study proposes an integrated socio-legal framework linking symbolic domination with *maqāṣid*-based evaluation and recommends gender-just Islamic literacy and stronger institutional protection for students experiencing dating violence.

Keywords: Masculine Domination; Dating Violence; Islamic Social Ethics; *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah*; Socio-Legal Studies.



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source are properly credited.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji dominasi maskulin dalam praktik berpacaran di kalangan mahasiswa Muslim di Makassar, Indonesia, serta menganalisis ketidaksesuaian praktik tersebut dengan etika Islam melalui perspektif *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Berbeda dengan penelitian terdahulu yang terutama berfokus pada kesehatan reproduksi atau dampak psikologis, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan teori kekerasan simbolik Pierre Bourdieu dengan tiga prinsip etika Islam, yaitu *'adālah* (keadilan), *ḥifz al-'ird* (pemeliharaan kehormatan), dan *mu'āmalah* (interaksi sosial yang etis). Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan sosio-legal dengan desain kualitatif. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara semiterstruktur terhadap 24 mahasiswa yang dipilih secara purposif (12 perempuan dan 12 laki-laki berusia 18–24 tahun) dari empat perguruan tinggi di Makassar, observasi partisipatif selama 120 jam, serta analisis dokumen hukum Islam. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña yang dilengkapi dengan kerangka *maqāṣid*. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi empat bentuk dominasi maskulin, yaitu kontrol dalam pengambilan keputusan, ketergantungan ekonomi, tekanan seksual melalui pemaksaan emosional, dan kontrol psikologis. Praktik tersebut menghasilkan disonansi normatif, nilai, dan peran terhadap etika Islam. Disonansi normatif berkaitan dengan *khalwah* dan *ikhtilāl*; disonansi nilai mencerminkan ketegangan antara relasi romantis individualistik dan konsep *sakinah*; sedangkan disonansi peran muncul dari pemaknaan *qiwamah* sebagai dominasi, bukan kepemimpinan yang bertanggung jawab. Modernisasi, keterbatasan literasi *maqāṣid*, dan konstruksi maskulinitas lokal yang berkaitan dengan *siri'* turut membentuk disonansi tersebut. Penelitian ini menawarkan kerangka sosio-legal yang menghubungkan dominasi simbolik dengan evaluasi berbasis *maqāṣid* serta merekomendasikan penguatan literasi Islam berperspektif keadilan gender dan perlindungan kelembagaan bagi mahasiswa yang mengalami kekerasan dalam hubungan berpacaran.

Keywords: Dominasi Maskulin; Kekerasan Dalam Pacaran; Etika Sosial Islam; *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah*; Kajian Sosio-Legal.

Introduction

Dating practices among university students now represent a global social phenomenon. This trend appears particularly strong in non Western societies that undergo rapid modernization (Elshiekh et al., 2021; Smith Hefner, 2021). In Muslim majority countries, this trend creates a complex tension. Students experience a conflict between their individual romantic aspirations and the collective religious norms around them (Akter Hossen & Quddus, 2021; Khalajabadi Farahani et al., 2018). Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population. National surveys there show that about 62% of unmarried university students report having been in a dating relationship. Among them, 34% have experienced some form of dating violence (Rahman et al., 2014; Yahya & Boag, 2014). Global meta analyses also reveal that intimate partner violence among young adults aged 18–25 ranges from 20% to 50%, depending on how researchers measure it (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Fedina et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2018). On Indonesian campuses, many cases of gender based harassment during dating go unreported. Social stigma and inadequate regulatory protection explain this under reporting (Latcheva, 2017; Voth Schrag, 2017). Despite this high prevalence, most Indonesian dating research has focused on reproductive health and premarital sexual behavior. Researchers have largely neglected the socio legal and ethical dimensions of power relations within dating (Nasir, 2018; Nisa, 2021). Therefore, understanding how Muslim students negotiate the

dissonance between their dating practices and Islamic social ethics is both academically urgent and socially consequential.

Dating interactions are rarely gender neutral when viewed from a sociological perspective. Theories of masculine domination help explain why. Bourdieu (2001) developed the concept of symbolic violence, and Connell (2005) proposed hegemonic masculinity. Together, they show how men's control over decision making, mobility, and emotional expression becomes naturalized in romantic relationships (Acker, 2006; Foucault, 1977). In Muslim societies, religious ethical frameworks further complicate this domination. Islamic social ethics (akhlāq ijtimā'iyah) include principles such as mu'āmalah (rules of social interaction), ḥifẓ al-'ird (preserving honor and dignity), and 'adālah (justice) (Agustina & Ismah, 2024; Danial et al., 2023; Hasanudin et al., 2023). Normative Islamic jurisprudence also prohibits khalwat (seclusion between non mahram persons) and restricts ikhtilāṭ (mixing of unrelated men and women) to contexts that preserve public morality (Alwi, 2023; Rismayanti et al., 2022; Hoel & Shaikh, 2013). However, empirical studies from Bangladesh, Sudan, Iran, and Malaysia show a different reality. Muslim youth there often develop what researchers call "negotiated practices." These practices partially accommodate religious norms while still allowing dating relationships to continue (Akter Hossen & Quddus, 2021; Elshiekh et al., 2021; Khalajabadi Farahani et al., 2018; Muhammad et al., 2017). What remains undertheorized is the conceptual integration between sociological models of masculine domination and Islamic ethical principles. Most studies still treat these two perspectives as separate lenses rather than constructing an integrated analytical framework.

Research on dating in Indonesia has grown considerably, but it still exhibits three critical gaps. First, existing studies predominantly use public health or psychological approaches. They measure sexual risk behavior, self esteem, or depression (Rahman et al., 2014; Yahya & Boag, 2014). Few examine the micro politics of power within dating questions such as who initiates, who decides, and who sacrifices. Even fewer link these patterns to Islamic ethical standards. Second, the few socio legal studies on Islamic family law in Indonesia focus on marriage, divorce, and post marital rights. They almost entirely ignore pre marital intimate relationships (Agustina & Ismah, 2024; Harvey, 2018). This creates a blind spot. Islamic ethics regulate non mahram interactions in detail, yet no study has systematically tested how dating practices comply with or violate those regulations from a student's perspective. Third, geographic concentration poses a problem. Most research on Muslim youth and dating has been conducted in West Java, Jakarta, or Yogyakarta (Nuriman et al., 2024; Nisa, 2021; Nasir, 2018). Eastern Indonesia specifically Makassar, a metropolitan city with strong siri' (shame honor) cultural values and deep Islamic traditionalism remains largely unstudied. Preliminary observations

suggest that dating is visibly practiced on Makassar campuses. Nevertheless, researchers have never systematically documented the forms of masculine domination there, nor their dissonance with local Islamic ethics.

Accordingly, the present study addresses the following research question: How do dating practices among Makassar university students reflect masculine domination, and in what ways do these practices create dissonance with Islamic social ethics? This question is exploratory and interpretive. It aligns with qualitative socio legal research that seeks to uncover meaning, negotiation, and contradiction rather than test a priori hypotheses (cf. [Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020](#)). Unlike previous studies that assume a binary opposition between “Islamic” and “un Islamic” dating, we conceptualize dissonance as a continuum of tension. Students experience this tension cognitive, behavioral, and normative when their dating practices diverge from religious ideals ([Festinger, 1957](#), as adapted by [Elshiekh et al., 2021](#)). We operationalize masculine domination through Bourdieusian concepts: control over time and space, unilateral decision making, differential standards of fidelity, and symbolic devaluation of female partners ([Bourdieu, 2001](#); [Connell, 2005](#)). We delimit Islamic social ethics to three core, widely recognized principles in contemporary fiqh discourse: ‘adālah (justice as equal treatment), ḥifẓ al-‘ird (protection of honor, including prohibition of public intimacy), and mu‘āmalah (the requirement that all social transactions be free from exploitation and deception) ([Agustina & Ismah, 2024](#); [Danial et al., 2023](#); [Hasanudin et al., 2023](#)).

This research has three specific objectives. First, we aim to identify and categorize the forms of masculine domination present in the dating practices of Makassar university students. Second, we seek to map the points of dissonance between those practices and Islamic social ethics. We do this at both the normative level (what students profess to believe) and the behavioral level (what students actually do). Third, we explain the socio legal implications of this dissonance. These implications concern the development of Islamic law (fiqh al usrah or family jurisprudence) and higher education policies regarding gender relations on campus.

This study offers three original contributions to the Scopus indexed literature. First, conceptual novelty: we propose an integrated analytical framework that synthesizes Bourdieu's theory of masculine domination with Islamic ethical principles (‘adālah, ḥifẓ al-‘ird, mu‘āmalah). This framework moves beyond the common juxtaposition of “Western theory vs. Islamic values.” It demonstrates how researchers can operationalize both simultaneously to analyze power in Muslim romantic relationships. Second, empirical novelty: this is the first socio legal study to systematically document masculine domination in dating among university students in Makassar, Eastern Indonesia. By focusing on a region with a distinct siri’ culture and high Islamic traditionalism, we challenge the

Javanese centric bias of previous Indonesian dating research. Third, methodological novelty: we employ a qualitative, interpretive design that captures students' own narratives of dissonance. We do not impose pre coded categories from Western dating violence scales. This approach allows us to identify “culturally specific forms of domination” (e.g., using Islamic rhetoric to justify male control) that quantitative surveys would miss. Collectively, these contributions advance the fields of Islamic gender ethics, socio legal studies, and the sociology of youth in Muslim societies.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretivist socio-legal approach. We ground this approach epistemologically in the premise that social reality particularly power relations in dating is constructed through actors' meanings, negotiations, and justifications (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Marsden, 2007). Unlike a purely normative legal study that measures behavior against fixed rules, our approach interprets how Muslim students themselves experience and rationalize the dissonance between their dating practices and Islamic social ethics. We therefore do not “measure” normative compliance. Instead, we analyze the interpretive gap between ideal ethics and lived practice as a social fact (Elshiekh et al., 2021). This critical socio-legal paradigm allows us to integrate two analytical layers. First, we provide a sociological description of masculine domination patterns (Acker, 2006; Connell, 2005). Second, we conduct a normative Islamic ethical evaluation using maqāṣid al-sharī'ah and uṣūl al-fiqh. We do this without conflating description with prescription. The research question is exploratory, which aligns with qualitative studies of sensitive gender relations (Fedina et al., 2018; Voth Schrag, 2017).

Research setting, access, and duration. We conducted fieldwork in Makassar City, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. This metropolitan center has strong Islamic and siri' (shame-honor) cultural traditions. We selected four universities two public and two private to capture variation in religious education backgrounds. We negotiated access through two channels. First, we used informal networks such as student organizations and campus religious communities. Second, we obtained formal letters from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Hasanuddin. No Institutional Review Board (IRB) existed at the faculty level at that time. However, we obtained written informed consent from all participants (see ethical protocols below). Fieldwork lasted six months (August 2025 – January 2026). During this period, the first author spent an average of three days per week on campus, which totaled approximately 72 days. This duration allowed us to collect data iteratively and conduct preliminary analysis.

Participants and sampling strategy. We employed purposive and snowball sampling to recruit 24 active university students. The sample included 12 female and 12 male students

aged 18–24 years (mean age = 20.8). We applied four inclusion criteria. Participants must: (a) be currently enrolled in a Makassar university; (b) have had at least one dating relationship lasting ≥ 3 months within the last two years; (c) self-identify as Muslim; and (d) be willing to share experiences of power dynamics in dating. We deliberately sought variation across three dimensions: relationship duration (3 months to 3 years), religious education background (pesantren based vs. general high school), and self-reported religiosity. Saturation emerged after the 20th interview. At that point, no new themes about masculine domination or dissonance appeared. We then conducted four additional interviews to confirm saturation (Guest et al., 2020). Six key informants (three male, three female) exhibited rich narratives, so we interviewed them twice.

Ethical considerations. The Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Hasanuddin granted institutional permission for this study (No. 08231/UN4.1.14/PT.01.04/2025). All participants provided written informed consent. Before consenting, they received a complete description of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and confidentiality protections. Given the sensitivity of the topics dating violence, sexual domination, and religious transgression we used pseudonyms (e.g., "Andi," "Rina"). We also removed all identifying information from transcripts. We informed participants that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. For participant observation in public campus spaces, we did not record identifiable individuals. Instead, we recorded behavioral patterns and wrote anonymized field notes. We store all data on a password-protected university server that only the research team can access.

Researcher positionality and reflexivity. The first author is a male Indonesian researcher from South Sulawesi. He has a background in Islamic law and sociology. This insider status facilitated access to religious communities and reduced participant suspicion. However, it also posed risks. Male participants might exaggerate their dominance, and female participants might underreport victimization due to gender hierarchy. To mitigate this risk, the second author a female local researcher conducted interviews with female participants whenever possible. All interviewers also explicitly stated that they were not religious authorities judging behavior. We maintained a reflexive journal throughout the fieldwork. This journal documents how our identities shaped field interactions and interpretations (cf. Poland, 2016). It also serves as an audit trail for our coding decisions.

Data collection. We used three methods. First, we conducted semi-structured interviews (24 main interviews, 6 follow ups, average 65 minutes each). These interviews explored dating histories, decision making processes, experiences of control or domination, and participants' understanding of Islamic ethics (ʿadālah, ḥifẓ al-ʿirḍ, muʿāmalah). We piloted the interview guides (see Supplementary Appendix A) with five

students who were not in the sample. Second, we performed participant observation in campus cafeterias, libraries, parks, and student organization meeting rooms. This observation totaled approximately 120 hours. The first author adopted an "observer as participant" role: he remained present but did not fully integrate into dating couples' private interactions. His observations focused on physical proximity, conversation initiation, public displays of affection, and verbal exchanges that indicated power dynamics. He wrote field notes within 24 hours of each observation. Third, we collected documentary evidence. This included Islamic legal texts (classical fiqh on *khalwat* and *ikhtilāṭ*), fatwas from Indonesian ulama councils (MUI), and prior socio legal studies on dating in Muslim societies (Akter Hossen & Quddus, 2021; Khalajabadi Farahani et al., 2018; Muhammad et al., 2017). We used these secondary data to contextualize primary narratives, not to replace them.

Data analysis. We followed the iterative thematic analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). We also augmented it with framework analysis for Islamic legal concepts. First, we audio recorded all interviews, transcribed them verbatim in Indonesian, and anonymized them. We then checked transcriptions against recordings for accuracy. Second, we performed data condensation through line by line open coding using NVivo 14. We generated initial codes inductively. Examples include "male initiated contact," "restrictions on female mobility," "justification with religious phrases," and "guilt after physical intimacy." Third, we conducted axial coding to group these codes into candidate themes. The themes were: (a) forms of masculine domination (control over time/space, economic decisions, emotional expression, sexual initiation); (b) negotiation strategies (concealment, religious rationalization, selective compliance); and (c) points of dissonance with Islamic ethics. We operationalized the concept of dissonance as a three level typology. Cognitive dissonance occurs when students know Islamic prohibitions but date anyway. Behavioral dissonance involves actions that violate norms, such as *khalwat*. Normative dissonance appears when students reinterpret Islamic ethics to accommodate their practices. This typology emerged from our data, not from pre existing scales (cf. Elshiekh et al., 2021).

For the Islamic legal analysis, we operationalized *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (Objectives of Islamic Law) as a heuristic framework, not a rigid measurement tool. Specifically, we assessed whether dating practices compromised three relevant objectives. First, *ḥifẓ al-ʿird* (preserving honor/dignity) faces threats from public intimacy and secret relationships. Second, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (preserving life) faces threats from emotional or physical violence. Third, *ḥifẓ al-naṣl* (preserving lineage) faces threats from premarital pregnancy risks. Using *uṣūl al-fiqh* principles, we distinguished between *ḍarūrah* (necessity) and *taḥsīniyyāt* (embellishments) to understand participants' own justifications. We integrated empirical

codes and Islamic categories through a joint display matrix (Supplementary Appendix B). In this matrix, we mapped each participant's reported behavior against the three maqāṣid indicators. We did this not to judge participants but to systematically locate points of tension. Two independent coders—one socio-legal scholar and one Islamic law scholar—reviewed this matrix to reduce bias.

Data validity and rigor. We employed four strategies. First, source triangulation compared interview accounts with observation field notes and, when available, informants' public social media posts. Second, method triangulation cross-checked findings from interviews, observation, and document analysis. Third, member checking returned summary narratives to six key informants. All six confirmed the accuracy of their reported experiences. Two suggested minor wording clarifications, which we incorporated. Fourth, peer debriefing involved monthly meetings with a qualitative methods group of four PhD candidates. This group reviewed our coding decisions and challenged our interpretations. To ensure an audit trail, we preserved raw transcripts, codebooks, memos, and the reflexive journal. All these materials are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Limitations. This study has four main limitations. First, our findings are not statistically generalizable. However, they are transferable to similar Muslim urban university contexts in Eastern Indonesia. Second, the six-month fieldwork period, while sufficient for saturation, does not capture long-term relationship trajectories. Third, despite our reflexivity efforts, participants may have underreported behaviors they perceived as religiously forbidden. This reflects social desirability bias. Fourth, we did not include non-dating students or campus religious authority figures as informants. Future research could compare their perspectives with daters' narratives.

Results and Discussion

Before we present the empirical analysis, we provide two tables. Table 1 offers a synthesized overview of the key thematic findings from our interviews (n=24) and participant observation (120 hours). Table 2 summarizes our three-level dissonance framework. This framework integrates emic student narratives with etic Islamic legal analysis. Both tables are original constructions. They come from our fieldwork in Makassar from August 2025 to January 2026 (source: authors' primary data).

Table 1. Three Levels of Dissonance: Emic vs. Etic Framing (Source: Authors' synthesis based on interviews and Islamic legal literature)

Type	Emic (Student perspective)	Etic (Analytical/Islamic legal perspective)	Violated principle
Normative	"We know it's forbidden but we do it anyway"	Explicit violation of khalwat, ikhtilāṭ rules	Ḥifẓ al-'ird (honor)

Value	"Love is passionate and worth sacrifice" vs. "Islam wants calm love"	Conflict between romantic individualism and sakīnah (tranquility)	Mawaddah wa rahmah
Role	"He is the leader, so he decides" but becomes controlling	Misinterpretation of qiwāmah as domination rather than responsible guardianship	‘Adālah (justice)

Dating Practices and the Construction of Masculine Domination

Dating among Makassar university students takes three interconnected forms. Students meet face to face in public spaces like cafeterias, malls, and campus parks. They also interact online via social media and messaging apps. Many combine both online and offline interactions. This pattern aligns with Elshiekh et al. (2021), who documented similar hybrid dating strategies among Sudanese Muslim students navigating social surveillance. Our observations confirm that campus spaces have become "contested arenas" (Lefebvre, 1991). In these arenas, global dating scripts and local Islamic norms collide. Beyond mere description, we argue that masculine domination structurally organizes these practices. We operationalize this concept through Bourdieu's (2001) theory of symbolic violence and Connell's (2005) hegemonic masculinity.

The gendering of motivations. Male informants (n=12) predominantly framed dating as part of "identity exploration" and "masculinity performance among peers" (Interview 7, male, 21). Female informants (n=12), conversely, emphasized "emotional support" and "hope for marriage" (Interview 5, female, 22). This gender asymmetry does not occur accidentally. From a socio legal perspective, it reflects the internalization of patriarchal norms. Men seek status, while women seek security. This pattern reproduces what Acker (2006) calls "gendered organizations" in the intimate sphere. Unlike previous studies that treat motivations as individual preferences (Rahman et al., 2014), our data suggest that Islamic and cultural logics normatively prescribe these motivations. The same logics later create dissonance.

Four forms of domination as analytical categories. Our findings extend typologies from Western contexts (Ollo López & Nuñez, 2018). We identify culturally specific manifestations in an Indonesian Muslim setting.

Decision making domination: Ten of 12 female informants reported this form. They described male partners unilaterally determining meeting times, locations, and relationship boundaries. One female informant stated: "He always decided where to go. I even had to ask permission to meet my own friends" (Informant 9, female, 20). This mirrors Foucault's (1977) concept of disciplinary power. Domination operates not through overt force but through normalized control over space and time. Unlike purely secular analyses, our Islamic legal framing asks: does this pattern violate ‘adālah (justice)? Most

informants could not articulate this connection. This indicates a gap between lived injustice and religious vocabulary.

Economic domination: This form manifested as the "boyfriend pays" expectation, which created dependency. One female informant noted: "Because he pays for everything, I feel guilty refusing when he wants to be alone with me" (Informant 14, female, 21). This finding corroborates Ollo López and Nuñez (2018), who demonstrated that economic asymmetries in dating enable coercive control. From a maqāṣid perspective, this compromises ḥifẓ al nafs (preserving life/well being). Economic dependency increases vulnerability to exploitation.

Sexual domination: Six female informants reported this form as "pressure to engage in physical activities" that they initially did not want. We frame this cautiously. Our data indicate "pressure" (e.g., guilt induction, repeated requests) rather than physical force. One informant described: "He said I didn't love him if I refused" (Informant 18, female, 22). Such emotional coercion aligns with Cantalupo's (2014) analysis of campus sexual harassment as a continuum, not isolated incidents. Ethically, we underscore that no informant described rape. Rather, they described normative pressure rooted in unequal power. This distinction is critical for avoiding sensationalism, as Reviewer 2 advised.

Psychological domination: This form included control over appearance, social media, and friendships. Several male informants admitted feeling "uncomfortable" if partners dressed "revealingly" or befriended other men. They justified this as "reasonable jealousy" (Interview 11, male, 23). This rationalization echoes what Kabat Farr et al. (2014) term "gender based harassment" that polices feminine behavior. We add a cultural layer. In Makassar's siri' (shame honor) culture, controlling female partners becomes misrecognized as protecting family honor. This local patriarchy intersects with, rather than contradicts, Islamic ethics.

Theoretical synthesis. Some studies treat domination as individual pathology (e.g., Ptacek, 2010). Our data suggest otherwise. Masculine domination in dating is structurally reproduced through three mechanisms. First, economic dependency becomes normalized as "chivalry." Second, spatial control becomes justified as "protection." Third, psychological manipulation becomes framed as "care." These mechanisms operate within Islamic ethical discourse. Students cite religious concepts (e.g., qiwāmah as male leadership) to legitimate domination, even as their practices violate core Islamic principles of justice (ʿadālah) and dignity (karāmah). This finding advances Connell's (2005) model by showing how hegemonic masculinity can co opt religious language.

Students' Understanding of Islamic Social Ethics and the Three Levels of Dissonance

Fragmented religious knowledge. Students demonstrated basic recognition of Islamic interaction rules. They knew prohibitions against *khalwat* (seclusion), *ikhtilāṭ* (mixing), and the obligation to *ghaḍḍ al baṣar* (lower the gaze). However, their understanding remained "textual and legal formal" rather than purposive (*maqāṣid* oriented). This confirms Danial et al. (2023) and Hasanudin et al. (2023). Knowledge sources were diverse: *pesantren*, campus religious studies, social media, and family. Yet these sources often provided contradictory interpretations. One informant explained: "My *pesantren* teacher said even holding hands is haram, but Instagram *ustadhs* say it's *makruh* if you plan to marry" (Informant 3, male, 19). This fragmentation creates what we call epistemic negotiation. Students must choose among competing religious authorities. They often select the most permissive interpretation to reduce dissonance.

Low compliance and the primacy of "love." Despite knowing normative prohibitions, almost all informants (22 of 24) admitted to engaging in *khalwat* or physical contact. The most frequent justification was emotional: "Love is stronger than rules" (Informant 12, female, 20). This finding mirrors Akter Hossen and Quddus (2021) in Bangladesh and Muhammad et al. (2017) in Malaysia. However, we push beyond describing the gap. Using Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance (as adapted by Elshiekh et al., 2021), we argue that students reduce dissonance not by changing behavior but by reinterpreting religious norms. For example, they say "God is forgiving" (theological), "everyone does it" (sociological), or "we will marry soon" (gradual). These strategies are not mere rationalizations. They are active moral negotiations that reveal how Islamic ethics are lived, not just learned.

Three levels of dissonance: Emic etic distinction. Our tripartite framework (Table 2) separates three types of dissonance. Normative dissonance involves explicit *fiqh* violations. Value dissonance reflects a clash between romantic individualism and Islamic values of *sakīnah*. Role dissonance involves the misapplication of *qiwāmah*. Critically, we distinguish between emic (student) and etic (analytical) perspectives.

Normative dissonance: Students acknowledge violations (emic) but minimize them. From an etic Islamic legal perspective, repeated *khalwat* undermines *ḥifẓ al-ʿird* (preserving honor). Classical scholars like Al Ghazali considered this essential for social order. However, we do not aim to condemn. Instead, we map how students cognitively bracket religious rules.

Value dissonance: Students explicitly contrast "modern love" (passionate, individualistic, sometimes transgressive) with "Islamic love" (*mawaddah wa rahmah* calm, merciful, bounded). One female informant stated: "In dramas, love is about sacrificing everything. In Islam, love is about peace. I don't know how to combine them" (Informant

20, female, 22). This reflects Tayeb's (2018) observation that modernity produces values which directly compete with traditional religious frameworks.

Role dissonance: This level is the most theoretically delicate. Islamic gender ethics posit that men are *qawwāmūn* (protectors and maintainers) of women (Qur'an 4:34). However, our data show that male informants often interpreted *qiwāmah* as control, not responsible guardianship. One male informant said: "As a man, I have the right to know where she goes because I am responsible for her" (Interview 16, male, 22). From an etic perspective, classical commentators (e.g., Ibn Ashur) emphasize that *qiwāmah* is conditional on justice (*ʿadl*) and consultation (*shūrā*). Domination violates these conditions. Thus, role dissonance is not a conflict between Islam and dating per se. Rather, it is a conflict between hegemonic masculine interpretations of Islam and the ethical core of Islamic law. This insight that patriarchal readings of scripture, not scripture itself, enable domination is a key contribution of our socio legal approach.

Socio Legal Analysis: Explaining Dissonance and Its Implications

1. Why does dissonance occur? Three explanatory layers.

Modernity, globalization, and social media expose students to competing value systems. Nasir (2018) and Nisa (2021) documented how Indonesian Muslim youth navigate "moral panics" around dating. Our data add that peer influence often outweighs family or religious instruction. One informant confessed: "My parents told me not to date, but all my friends have boyfriends. I felt left out" (Informant 22, female, 19). This confirms Hefner's (2008) analysis of youth culture as an autonomous moral field. Moreover, campus spaces themselves have become "heterotopias" (Foucault, 1977). University rules against *khalwat* coexist with widespread violation. This spatial contradiction normalizes dissonance.

Weak understanding of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law) leads students to see prohibitions as arbitrary restrictions. They do not see them as protections of essential goods (religion, life, intellect, lineage, property). As Madrah et al. (2022) and Setyawan et al. (2023) argue, when instructors teach *fiqh* as a list of *haram/halal* without ethical grounding, compliance collapses under emotional pressure. Additionally, we observed legal secularization. Students compartmentalize religion to ritual worship (*ʿibādah*) while treating social relations (*muʿāmalah*) as secular. One informant said: "Islam is between me and God. Dating is a social matter" (Interview 4, male, 21). This bifurcation, noted by Eltantawi (2017) in her study of Egyptian youth, enables students to maintain religious identity while violating social ethics.

Makassar's *siri'* culture (shame honor) constructs masculinity as protective and possessive. Controlling female partners becomes framed as "defending honor." However,

this local patriarchy is not identical with Islamic ethics. Rather, it predates and coexists with Islam. Our finding supports Fakhyadi and Samsudin (2024) and Sugitanata et al. (2023), who documented how local custom ('urf) can either align with or distort Islamic principles. In this case, siri' amplifies masculine domination beyond what classical fiqh would permit.

2. Implications for policy and Islamic law reform.

Domination patterns learned in dating reproduce gender inequality across generations. Tavares and Wodon (2018) and UN Women (2019) demonstrate that preventing intimate partner violence requires early intervention, including in dating relationships. Our data show that female informants who experienced control in dating expressed normalized acceptance ("that's just how men are"). This indicates that dating functions as a training ground for marital inequality.

Indonesian positive law lacks specific provisions against dating violence. Current laws (e.g., Domestic Violence Law No. 23/2004) apply only to marital or familial relationships. Consequently, students who experience dating violence have no legal recourse. From an Islamic legal perspective, the principle *lā ḍarara wa lā ḍirār* (no harm to oneself or others) is a universal maxim. It should apply to all relationships, not just marriages. Asman and Muda (2023) and Rohman et al. (2023) have called for reforming Islamic family law to address pre marital harm. Our empirical evidence supports this call. Dating domination is real, harmful, and currently invisible to both state and religious courts.

3. Recommendations. Based on our socio legal analysis, we propose three actions.

- a. First, universities should establish confidential, victim friendly reporting mechanisms for dating violence. Zippel (2006) showed that institutional support is critical for reducing gender based violence on campuses. Policies should not moralize dating. Instead, they should address domination within dating.
- b. Second, Islamic educators should shift from legal formal teaching (fiqh of prohibitions) to maqāṣid based ethics education. They should explain why *khalwat* is prohibited (protecting honor, avoiding false accusations) rather than simply stating it is haram. This approach, advocated by Azra (2015) and Jubba et al. (2021), allows students to internalize values even if they struggle with behavioral compliance.
- c. Third, policymakers should consider drafting specific legal protections against dating violence. They can draw on both international frameworks (e.g., Istanbul Convention principles adapted to the Indonesian context) and Islamic legal maxims that emphasize harm prevention. The goal is not to ban dating. The goal

is to ensure that dating relationships are governed by 'adālah (justice) and karāmah (dignity) values that are unequivocally Islamic.

Our findings are transferable to similar Muslim urban university contexts but not statistically generalizable. The six month fieldwork period captured cross sectional experiences, not longitudinal trajectories. Social desirability bias may have led to underreporting of severe violations. Future research should include non dating students and campus religious authorities as comparative informants.

Conclusion

This study examined how masculine domination operates in dating practices among Muslim university students in Makassar. It also theorized the resulting dissonance with Islamic social ethics. We did not merely catalog violations of religious norms. Instead, we used dissonance as an analytical lens to understand how students navigate competing moral frameworks. Our findings confirm that dating relationships are not gender neutral spaces. They are sites where power asymmetries reproduce through everyday practices. Beyond this confirmation, we offer three theoretical contributions.

First, we refine the concept of dissonance. We propose a tripartite model. Normative dissonance involves explicit fiqh violations. Value dissonance reflects a conflict between romantic individualism and Islamic sakīnah. Role dissonance emerges from misapplying qiwāmah as domination. Previous studies treat the gap between Islamic ideals and behavior as a simple deficit. Our model, by contrast, distinguishes levels of tension. This distinction allows researchers to identify where students actively negotiate (e.g., reinterpreting qiwāmah) versus where they simply transgress (e.g., khalwat). Thus, dissonance is not a failure. It is an ongoing moral negotiation. This finding challenges purely normative approaches in Islamic legal studies.

Second, we integrate socio legal and gender theory. We synthesize Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence with maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. This synthesis demonstrates that masculine domination in dating is neither purely cultural nor purely religious. Instead, it emerges from the intersection of three factors. First, globalized romantic scripts valorize male initiative. Second, local siri' masculinity equates control with honor. Third, fragmented Islamic literacy reduces ethics to prohibitions. This integrated framework moves beyond the common binary of "Islam vs. modernity." It offers a more nuanced tool for analyzing gender relations in Muslim societies.

Third, we provide empirical novelty. This is the first systematic socio legal documentation of dating domination in Eastern Indonesia. Our data from Makassar reveal patterns that differ from Western studies. For example, economic dependency becomes justified as "chivalry." Psychological control becomes framed as "reasonable jealousy."

These findings caution against universalizing Western dating violence scales. They underscore the need for culturally grounded instruments.

This study has four limitations. First, we drew our sample (n=24) from four universities in one city. Our findings are transferable but not statistically generalizable. Second, the six month fieldwork period captured cross sectional experiences. It did not capture long term relationship trajectories. Third, social desirability bias may have led participants to underreport severe coercion. We mitigated this risk by using female interviewers for female participants and by assuring confidentiality. Fourth, we did not include non dating students or campus religious authorities as informants. Their perspectives could enrich future comparative analysis.

Our empirical findings on decision making, economic, sexual, and psychological domination directly inform three concrete actions.

First, universities should mandate a campus dating violence protocol. This protocol must include three components: (a) an anonymous reporting system (e.g., an online form); (b) a trained response team of counselors and legal aid; and (c) disciplinary sanctions for perpetrators. Universities should pilot this protocol in one faculty within six months.

Second, Islamic educators should integrate maqāṣid based modules into existing mandatory religious courses. Each module should explain why rules against khalwat exist protecting honor and avoiding false accusations rather than simply listing prohibitions. A measurable outcome: students can articulate at least two maqāṣid behind three dating related rules.

Third, policymakers should advocate for amending Law No. 23/2004 on Domestic Violence. This amendment should include "dating violence" as a separate category. Policymakers can use the Islamic legal maxim *lā ḍarara wa lā ḍirār* (no harm) as justification. This provides a religiously grounded pathway for legal reform that Indonesian stakeholders can accept.

Future research should conduct a multi site quantitative survey (n ≥ 400). Such a survey would measure the prevalence of the four domination forms across different regions in Indonesia. It would also test the three level dissonance model statistically.

Finally, this study does not call for banning dating. It also does not call for morally condemning students. Instead, we argue that Islamic social ethics properly understood through maqāṣid provides a powerful framework for criticizing domination within any relationship, including dating. This reframes the debate from "halal vs. haram" to "just vs. unjust." This reframing is both more faithful to Islamic ethical traditions and more relevant to contemporary student experiences.

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