'Tinder' and the Rise of Hook-Up Culture: Mapping an Islamic Solution

Ahmad Shidqi Mukhtasor¹*

International Islamic University Malaysia Email: shidqimukhtasor@gmail.com

Abstract

The current understanding of sex has deviated from the normative values of Islam, where sexual activity outside of marriage has increased sharply. This is due to the emergence of a new sex culture called the 'hook-up culture', where a person engages in casual sex with the aim of fulfilling his own pleasure without any commitment. The development of the digital era has contributed to the growth of the hook-up culture and has become more real in modern human life. More specifically, after the presence of one of the most prominent dating applications, Tinder. This phenomenon shows the decline of human civilization. Whereas Islam as a religion of civilization describes sex as an element that forms human dignity and contributes to the formation of a quality civilization. This article tries to find a new conceptual framework in solving the problem of hook-up culture through an Islamic perspective. The research in this article explores the relationship between Tinder and hook-up culture and suggests Islam as a solution. The findings of this study indicate that the resolution that the ummah currently has in solving the problem of hook-up culture is still very specific in the discipline of Islamic studies, and needs further integration to overcome the problem of hook-up culture in society through exploring the key concepts of Islam and practical updates.

Keywords: Hook-up culture, Sex culture, Tinder, Islamic civilization, Islah.

Abstrak

Pemahaman terhadap seks pada saat ini sudah menyimpang dari nilai-nilai normatif Islam, dimana aktivitas seksual di luar nikah meningkat tajam. Hal itu itu disebabkan munculnya budaya seks baru yang disebut 'budaya hook-up', di mana seseorang terlibat dalam hubungan seks bebas dengan tujuan untuk memenuhi kesenangannya sendiri tanpa komitmen apapun. Perkembangan era digital turut menyuburkan pertumbuhan budaya hook-up dan menjadi lebih nyata dalam kehidupan manusia modern. Lebih spesifik lagi paska hadirnya salah satu aplikasi kencan paling terkemuka, Tinder. Fenomena ini menunjukkan kemerosotan

^{*} Jalan Gombak, 53100, Selangor, Malaysia

peradaban umat manusia. Padahal Islam sebagai agama peradaban menggambarkan seks sebagai unsur pembentuk harkat dan martabat manusia yang turut andil dalam pembentukan sebuah peradaban yang berkualitas. Artikel ini mencoba menemukan kerangka konseptual baru dalam memecahkan masalah hook-up culture melalui kacamata Islam. Penelitian dalam artikel ini mengeksplorasi hubungan antara Tinder dan budaya hook-up dan saran-saran Islam sebagai solusinya. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa resolusi yang dimiliki umat saat ini dalam memecahkan masalah budaya hook-up masih sangat spesifik dalam disiplin studi Islam, dan perlu integrasi lebih lanjut untuk mengatasi masalah budaya hook-up di masyarakat yang dimelalui dengan penggalian konsep-konsep kunci Islam dan aktualisasi praktisnya.

Kata Kunci: Budaya Pacaran, Budaya Seks, Tinder, Peradaban Islam, Islah.

Introduction

Statistics have shown us an immersed rise in the number of adolescents and people in general that has conducted sexual intercourse outside of marriage commitment. The act of having sexual intercourse outside of marriage is starting to become a part of practices in Muslim countries, and it has become an obvious norm in Western countries in terms of what to expect in romantic commitment outside of marriage.2 The boundaries currently go way beyond what is already been seen as problematic, that today a significant number of people around the globe do sexual intercourse without any commitment at all.³ People can leave their sexual partner whenever they want, since there is an acceptable norm within society, subscribing to culture such that one should not include personal and emotional feelings inside of those relationships. This casual sexual relationship with no commitment is what has been called as 'hook-up culture'. One may argue that this culture should not be considered as a problem, since those who are practicing it are hooking up with their own desire and intention to enjoy themselves.

² Garcia, Justin R., Chris Reiber, Sean G. Massey, and Ann M. Merriwether, "Sexual hookup culture: A review." *Review of General Psychology* 16, no. 2 (2012): 2-3; Madarina, Farahiah Almas. "Budaya Hook-Up pada Online Dating Tinder." *Asketik* 4.2 (2020): 187-188; 193-194.

³ Madarina, Farahiah Almas, 187-188; Sevi, Barış, Tuğçe Aral, and Terry Eskenazi, "Exploring the hook-up app: Low sexual disgust and high sociosexuality predict motivation to use Tinder for casual sex." *Personality and Individual Differences* 133 (2018): 17.

However, we argue that there are both short- and long-term grave consequences that will emanate from this culture. Studies has shown that significant numbers of people regretted their choice in hooking up, since there is a sense of loss and deprivation.⁴

Not only that hook-up culture is harmful on its materialistic measurements, but it is also a sign of our civilization moving backwards, due that Islam sees sexual act as an action that could not be separated from its spiritual elements due to its value related with the intention. And due to the development of technology, hook-up culture grew stronger both through media consumptions that normalize exposure of sexual contents and normalization of illicit sexual acts, that it has become a constitutive factor on the changing perception of adults on the conception of sexual relationship.

This is thus deemed as a big issue for Islamic civilization. Though there are already many researches on the practice of free sex $(zin\bar{a})$ according to Islam, many are still limited in legalistic discourse. Other discourses are still limited in apologetical area, with limited to little attempt to actualize the normative guidelines into an actual cultural and civilizational scale solution. This article tries to research what are elements that are needed to be researched further by understanding the phenomenon of hook-up culture properly and its acceleration due to Tinder app. By using the framework of Islamization through $tajd\bar{a}d$ and $isl\bar{a}h$, the author hoped that this article would be beneficial in addressing what it is intended for.

Sex Within Hook-Up Culture

Before Tinder came into its existence in 2012, hook-up culture has already got its place in American society. The introduction of Tinder to the American society gives them power to communicate and to meet new people more efficiently in order to hook-up, which this could be seen as an immense socio- cultural change.⁷ Hook-up culture could be defined as a culture that sees sexual intercourse as a casual activity for one to enjoy themselves sexually without the

⁴ Garcia, Justin R., et al, 15.

⁵ Syuqqah, Abdul Halim Abu, *Kebebasan wanita*. Vol. 6., trans. by As'ad Yasin, Jakarta: Gema Insani, 1997, 18-22.

⁶ Garcia, Justin R., et al, 2-3; Sales, Nancy Joe, "Tinder and the Dawn of the "Dating apocalypse"", *Vanity Fair*, August 6th, 2015, Retrieved from http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2015/08/tinder-hook-up-culture-end-of-dating. vi Madarina, Farahiah Almas, 190.

⁷ Ibid, 194.

need to be constrained with emotional commitment with the agents.8 In the events of hooking up, the agents are interacting with each other through sexual activities such as oral sex, fondling, cuddling, sexual touching, and sexual intercourse itself.9 It is a product of a cultural shift from a culture that deemed sexual relationship shall be normatively within the constrain of marriage, to what is so-called to be as an (inaccurate) 'liberation' of sexual relationship. It is stemmed from Western culture that is perverted by the exposure and normalization of erotic sexual content through media, songs, movies, and popular culture.¹⁰

Garcia et al. explained the phenomenon of hook-ups and the risks of it. They laid out the potentiality of two types of readings on this culture, evolutionary and sexual script theories. The former read hook-up culture as the consequence of evolutionary sexual behavior in attempting to conduct sexual reproductive activities without the heavy costs on time, maintenance (commitment relationship), and all the shortcomings had by the traditional sex culture according to hookup culture. The latter sees that the raise of casual sex is due to the pressuring sexual script as normative readings on sex from popular culture, such as media and society, for example, traditional sexual script will see men as the obligated sex to provide in relationship, pay bills, and so on. Sexual script theory sees that people conduct hook-ups due totheir reading on 'how should I posit myself on sex' due to the sexual script constantly repeating message on risky sexual behaviors, such as what we can see through the movies and songs that are opened and promoting the act of such.¹¹ Other motives such as fun and self-validation also occurs as significant, where usually men compete with other on number of 'body counts' to assert sexual dominance.¹² One's belief that hook-ups are harmless and sexual relationship is best without emotional commitment also a part of what endorsed hook-up culture.13

Hook-ups is hugely related to alcohol and drugs thus render the participants to become unaware of themselves, thus concluding

⁸ Garcia, Justin R., et al, 4; Madarina, Farahiah Almas, 191; Aubrey, J. S., & Smith, S. E. (2013). Development and validation of the endorsement of the hookup culture index. *Journal of Sex Research*, 50(5), 436.

Garcia, Justin R., et al, ibid; Aubrey, Jennifer Stevens & Siobhan E. Smith, ibid.

¹⁰ Garcia, Justin R., et al, 11.

¹¹ Garcia, Justin R., et al, 10-11.

¹² Sales, Nancy Joe, op. cit, Aubrey, Jennifer Stevens & Siobhan E. Smith, 437.

¹³ Aubrey, Jennifer Stevens & Siobhan E. Smith, ibid.

in actions that most of them regrets—according to the immense number of research Garcia et al. have cited. ¹⁴ Significant numbers of participants felt regret post-hooking up due to them being unaware of themselves during hook-ups, and the fact that they conduct sexual relationship with people they just met, with women recorded with higher vulnerability after hook-ups than men. Ayu Arba Zaman has noted an interesting critique on consent related to free sex consent, noting that individual's so-called consent is often clouded by their lust, pressure, and other lowly emotions and factors that makes one's self-declared decision on consent, biased. ¹⁵ This may explain why there are significant numbers of regrets post-hooking ups, that its agents are clouded by lust and societal pressure, thus regretting themselves.

Tinder and Hook-Up Culture

Condie et al. see that Tinder is already seen more than an app that could be used for hooking up. ¹⁶ However, one could not deny the prevalence of Tinder as one of the primary resources in finding partners for hooking up. Tinder has been considered as a dating app that is known as a hook-up platform, or sex app if one may call that so. ¹⁷ Even though Sumter et al. revealed that there are several factors why adults using Tinder, ¹⁸ but it is still undeniable that its usage to have casual sex is the biggest reason in using Tinder according to other reasons such as to have self-validation and to follow the current trend. ¹⁹ Therefore, one could not deny and separate Tinder as an app with its mainly used functions to be used as a medium to mitigate casual sex encounter as the part of hook-up culture.

Madarina argues that due the process of normal dating usually takes a long period of time especially inthe vast ocean of social media,

¹⁴ Garcia, Justin R., et al, 14, 17.

¹⁵ Zaman, Ayu Arba, "Makna Persetujuan dalam RUU P-KS: Sebuah Kritik".

This is Gender, July 25th, 2020, Retrieved from https://thisisgender.com/makna-persetujuan-dalam-ruu-p-ks-sebuah-kritik/

¹⁶ Condie, Jenna, Garth Lean, and Brittany Wilcockson. "The trouble with Tinder: The ethical complexities of researching location-aware social discovery apps." *The ethics of online research*, Emerald Publishing Limited, 2017, 2-3.

Sevi, Bans, et al., 17; Madarina, Farahiah Almas, 189.

¹⁸ Sumter, Sindy R., Laura Vandenbosch, and Loes Ligtenberg. "Love me Tinder: Untangling emerging adults' motivations for using the dating application Tinder." *Telematics and informatics* 34.1 (2017): 75.

¹⁹ Madarina, Farahiah Almas, 190; Sales, Nancy Joe, op. cit.

the usage of Tinder can cut short the amount of time needed to meet and choose their sexual partner. According to Ritzer in Madarina's research, the efficiency of Tinder as a dating app is its ability to quickly filter potential partners through the preferences put in the users' profile, thus the users can use elimination process in 'swiping' the profiles, whether they want to pick the profile of their potential partner or to discard it.²⁰ This is why she read the phenomenon on the emergence of Tinder as the cause of the rationalization process in industry, where due to modernity, industry focuses onefficient calculation to arrive at the better alternative in for their marketing.²¹ The reality is evident by the convenience that Tinder gave to its users in searching potential partners to have casual sex.²²

Current Islamic Solution to the Problem of Hook-Up Culture

Responding to the radical change of culture within the world society related with sex, Muslim communities have responded in many ways. Muslims have responded in various ways in order to come up with Islamic solutions through 'ibadāh and tazkiyyatun nafs (purification of soul). We also can track solutions offered by Muslims relating with sexual obscenity in the modern era from preachers and Islamic movements. Hasan Al-Banna, for example, relating with this issue, he focused his discourse on the importance for women to cover themselves due that men and women are fitnah (temptation) for each other. He argued based on Al-Qur'an and sunnah that men and women shall lower their gaze and preserve their private parts. He also focused on the importance for women to cover themselves and the importance to close all doors that opened the ways to ikhtilāt (societal mixing between men and women). He also addressed the issue of today's obscenity and tabarruj (overdressing) as the very essence on the issue of immodesty.²³ Zumaro argues several zinā prevention according to hadīths, such as sex education, fasting, lowering gaze, avoid khalwāt (mixing), and marriage. Sex education is seen important to the prevention of zinā because lack of information relating with

²⁰ Madarina, Farahiah Almas, 191-192.

²¹ Thid

²² Madarina, Farahiah Almas, 193; Sevi, Bans, et al., 19.

 $^{^{\}rm 23}\,$ Al-Banna, Hasan, Risalah Pergerakan, Translated by Anis Matta, Vol 2, Solo: Intermedia. 2001, 45-49.

sex will cause false conception and understanding on sex24 that presumably may lead to wrong sexual behaviors. This is done by separating children's bedroom with different gender. Fasting is seen as important because it may render the lowly lust of men, where it is also the recommended practice when one is still unable to marry.25 Hasan and Abdullah went further in mentioning actions to prevent zinā, such as understanding Islam holistically, sees Al-Qur'an contains the solution of all problems, understanding the bad consequences of zinā, pray (salāt), fasting, understanding sexual responsibility between spouses and the need in giving education, preserve 'aurat, prevent tabarruj, oversee media production, easing the process of marriage, and understanding their mahrām (prohibited family member to marry).26 These methods demonstrated by researchers, however, is still limited with arguments understood by Muslims and scholars within Islamic studies. We believe that there is the need for further argumentation to contest Islamic solutions of such to be actual and acceptable for the mankind as whole who have not confessed their faith to Islam.

As has been seen from the discourse laid out, the insurge of hook-ups as practice and thus embodied as a culture are far more complex than a mere uncontrolled jolt of sexual desire and lust of society. There are many factors contributed to the rise of hook-up cultures, such as societal pressure, media consumptions, intoxication, and so on. These issues could not be addressed merely by stressing out the importance of its preventions, rather that the understanding on the importance of such preventions should be guided with the proper understanding on the actual causes of the problem. A mere prohibition on such acts and self- control would not be necessarily sufficient since it has not provoked change on the root of the causes that lays on socio-cultural problem (without neglecting the importance of it and how it is argumentatively works within a specific scope of individual or societal level). Without connecting

Zumaro, Ahmad. "Konsep Pencegahan Zina Dalam Hadits Nabi SAW."

Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu al-Qur'an dan al-Hadits 15, no. 1 (2021): 150.

²⁵ Zumaro, Ahmad, 152-153; Dewanti, Asri Kusuma, "Puasa dan Pendidikan Karakter." Arsip Publikasi Ilmiah Biro Administrasi Akademik (2019).

²⁶ Hasan, Wan Ramizah, and Mohd Farid Ravi Abdullah, "Menangani Masalah Zina menurut Perspektif al-Quran dan Sunnah: Preventing Adultery/Fornication Issues According to The Quranic and Sunnah Perspectives." *The Sultan Alauddin Sulaiman Shah Journal (JSASS)* 7, no. 1 (2020): 52-61.

the two, the problemand the discourse will remain developing while not being actually solved.

This is why IIIT mentioned the importance to master modern sciences in order for one to be able to map out the Islamization agenda on the actual sciences. Though IIIT focused on the Islamization of science, the plan to do so is also significant on practical level, because it is the further action after one has arrived at the Islamization of science that will envelop Islamic knowledge that may be used properly to answer the practical issues of the modern science properly.²⁷

IIIT also mentioned the importance to master Islamic legacy and study on Islamic civilization so Muslim would know themselves better as an identity that constituted within it novel values that is essential in order to address and to understand reality.28 Tariq Ramadan also added the importance to renew the understanding (tajdīd) of the primary texts (Al-Qur'an and sunnah) so that its understanding could be properly implemented to do islāh (socio-political-cultural renovation) in modern times with instilling faithfulness on its intention and process.²⁹ By tajdīd in this context is perhaps not to come up with a new breakthrough on the level as Imam Syafi'i or other great mujtahid in any matter, rather that it is important to integrate the particulars of the solutions (societal order, contentment of soul, laws, family institution) into a holistic understanding of Islamic culture that could contest the current sexuality trend that celebrate lust as the ends of sexuality.

These frameworks in perceiving Islamic knowledge to solve civilizational problems shall be instilled on our readings on primary sources arguments on the issue of hook up culture. As we have seen, the key factors of hook-up culture include societal pressure, media consumption, and evolving conception on sexual relationship (evolution and sexual script theory). These factors should be understood properly in detail by researchers with integration agenda in order to come up with a proper mapping of Islamic solution on the problem. This is why Islamic civilization study becomes very crucial in this manner, where there is still lack of studies on Islamic civilization that discussed the conception of sex and the study of the

²⁷ International Institute of Islamic Thought, Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan, edited by Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, Herndon: IIIT, 1997, 82-90.

²⁸ International Institute of Islamic Thought, 14-18.

²⁹ Ramadan, Tariq. Radical reform: Islamic ethics and liberation. Oxford University Press, 2009, 12-14.

shifting sex culture from <code>jahīliyyah</code> era towards Islamic civilization. If we could grasp the key concepts as how we understood Rasulullah's method in solving the issue of intoxication, it will be another step forward in addressing the Islamic solution on hook-up cultures. In this manner, the author sees the need for and importance on elaborating the concept of <code>fāhishah</code> (obscenity) and how Rasulullah operates cultural sex <code>islāh</code> on his <code>ummah</code> at his time, there is a possibility that we could emulate the principle of <code>islāh</code> conducted by Rasulullah in the proper contextualization in our time, by integrating the approach and the means of today's era.

As also has been seen from the cause Tinder gave to hook-up culture, its rationalization process in accelerating the usage of Tinder that leads to the raising number of hook-ups is very conventional for modern society that really favors efficiency.30 If Muslim society could focus on the agenda in making the plans in hook-up culture prevention become even more convenient, it will be very much helpful in contributing to the Islamic solution on hook-up cultures, in which it could be implemented in *ta'āruf* (introduction) in which is the Islamic culture before conducting marriage, where further studies is needed to understand the key elements needed to accomplish the efficiency in calling people to marriage according to Islamic guidelines.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that Tinder, as the part of our today's technological culture, is very significant in the rise of hook-up culture. This phenomenon shall be seen as the importance to emerge a more actual and efficient planning in solving the issue of hook-up cultures, immediately. It has also been reviewed that hook-up culture is a cross-dimensional issue with various factors, such as media and culture, sex and society, and so on so forth. The reading on its cause based on merely on sexual lust is not sufficient to come up with the proper solution, where it could only serve solution at individual or micro level. There is the need to study more on key elements of hook-up culture in order to study potential plans in solving the problem at civilizational level.

We too shall address that to solve the cross-discipline issue of hook-up culture would not be sufficient with only normative and

³⁰ Madarina, Farahiah Almas, op. cit.

apologetic explanation of Islamic primary sources of knowledge. The studies on the understanding on Islamic solutions in Al-Qur'an and *sunnah* should be the normative guidelines for our today civilization to implement its spirit with today's technology and knowledge—to attain faithfulness on *maqāid ash-sharīah*.31 Further studies on the sex culture *islāh* conducted by Rasulullah from *jahīliyyah* era to Islamic civilization is needed as an in-depth historical study, as well as sexuality studies on Islamic civilization after Rasulullah, in order to come up with a civilizational mapping of the solution based on emulating the principles in the *islāh* and actualize it in today's context.

There are many limitations in this short article, where the author only come up with one key concept that could be prospected to be studied further, and the limitation in historical knowledge to address example on Rasulullah's <code>islāh</code> relating with <code>fāhishah</code>. The author hope that this article could still benefit its reader to ponder the future key concepts and its actualization, based on the framework that the author suggested. The author also has not breakdown in detail the operationalization of hook-up cultures that could be benefited from it the key elements that could constitute its decline, in order for Islamic civilization to thrive and fight against it.

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³¹ Ramadan, Tariq, 24-25.

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