

ARE TODAY'S DATING APPS SHARIA- COMPLIANT?

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Abstract: *Dating applications have completely changed how people meet and build relationships in the current digital world. According to Müller in article Jamaludin. et. al (2024) research, young adults in Malaysia are more likely than people in other age groups to use online dating apps. About 41% of those between the ages of 16 and 24 and 43% of those between the ages of 24 and 34 reported using dating apps. This study aims to achieve three main objectives, to identify the features and operational models of selected dating apps that claim to be Sharia-compliant, to study these features in the light of Islamic jurisprudence and ethical standards and to suggest recommendations for how dating applications can better align with Sharia principles, particularly in areas of data management, user interactions, and community accountability. The study's findings indicate that Baitul Muslim surpasses other dating applications regarding shariah compliance. Baitul Muslim offers three unique characters or elements that cannot be found in other dating apps which are elements of immorality and disturbance control, The application must minimize trust issues and background assessment based on religion and character. This study will give readers a greater understanding of how contemporary dating tools align with Islamic legal and ethical norms, enabling both users and developers to make more educated decisions.*

Keywords: *Dating Apps, Tinder, Omi, Baitul Muslim, Sharia Rules, Malaysia Current Issues*

Introduction

In the modern world, technology is increasingly developing which has made all people of various ages exposed to social media. This makes them easily exposed to various things, including dating apps which are used as an alternative way to find friends or companions. This application exists to make it easier for users to find a partner quickly and easily without having to socialize using old or traditional methods. According to Razaq et al. (2020), users who use dating apps usually want to find a life partner. However, some also use this application to overcome loneliness and some also want to find social excitement. This is said to be so because by using this application they can communicate with someone who is like the person they dream of to establish a more serious relationship. In line with today's technological developments, many people choose dating apps as a shortcut for them to find a life partner without having to meet first and they think that through this application they can get to know their partner better.

Dating apps are online applications that operate using a sharing economy framework where they obtain user information voluntarily without being forced. This application encourages users to create a digital identity that depends on their purpose, including whether they are looking for a serious relationship or just looking for friends. This starts with users creating a profile that contains a picture, gender, age, and a brief introduction about themselves to facilitate the match with their dream partner. Therefore, dating applications can collect a lot of information from the profile filling that users have created (Stoicescu et al., 2019). One of the popular dating applications today is Tinder which is one of the shortcuts to connect and suggest a desired partner. Based on Wu and Trottier (2022), to use this application, users are required to log in via a Facebook account to facilitate the user's profile being automatically imported into the Tinder application without having to create a new profile such as a name, age, picture, and gender. By using a Facebook account, the system can confirm whether the account is fake or not and will be deleted if the account is found to be fake. However, now, Tinder has allowed users to register using a phone number that no longer requires a Facebook account.

This approach is done because most users do not like their lives posted on Facebook to be seen by users of the tinder application. This application has also added swipe night; tinder explores and video chat to attract users' interest and make it easier for users to communicate with their chosen partner. Swipe night is a short video where users need to make a choice whether to swipe left or right to make it easier for them to meet their choice.

According to Müller in article Jamaludin. et. al (2024), Tinder has emerged as the most widely used online dating app in Malaysia, with Dating.com, Tantan, OkCupid, Grindr, Coffee Meets Bagel, Paktor, and Bumble following closely behind. According to Chan et al. (2023), the statistics of dating app usage such as Tinder, Omi, and Baitul Muslim in Malaysia as shown in diagram below:

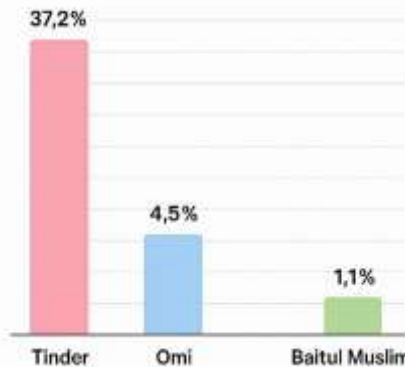


Fig. 1. The Popularity of Online Dating Apps

Based on the Figure 1, with 37.2% of users, Tinder is more popular because to its enormous user base, ease of use, entertaining features like swiping and Super Likes, and global recognition and appeal to a global community. However, because they cater to smaller more niche markets, Baitul Muslim primarily serves the Muslim community, Omi (4.5%) and BaitulMuslim (1.1%) are less well-liked. Both apps have fewer users, lack some of Tinder's captivating features, and do not enjoy the same degree of marketing or worldwide visibility (Chan et al., 2023).

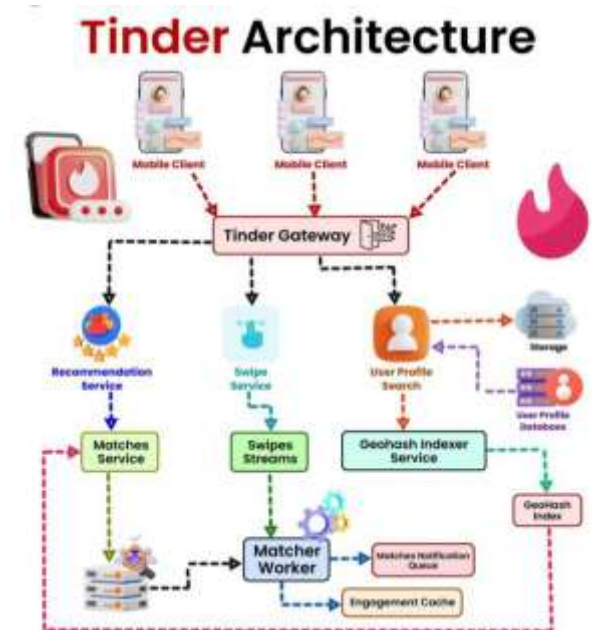


Fig. 2. The Architecture of Tinder

To ensure that this application runs smoothly, they store the profile picture that they get from user registration to symbolize that the user is serious about finding a partner. In addition, this application stores the user's location through GPS access on the user's phone. This is done to make it easier for the system to suggest partners who are within a short distance. In addition, this application also stores some information about the user's identification, including demographics and psychographics that they find on the profiles that users have created. In conclusion, obtained by dating apps plays a major role in facilitating the system to suggest partners that suit the user's needs or desires.

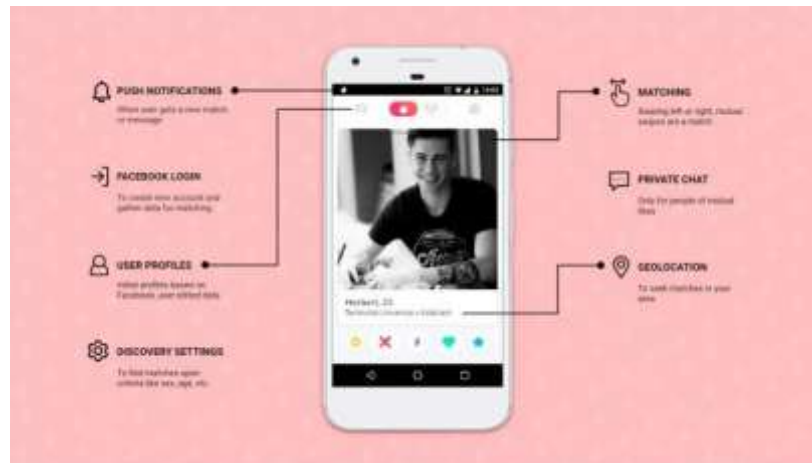


Fig. 3. Tinder App Features

The platforms are becoming more popular, raising concerns about their adherence to Islamic law, particularly Shariah. As a result, the main goal of this study is to determine if the databases and functional structures of well-known dating apps are Sharia-compliant. When compared to the entire Sharia framework, the degree of real compliance is still debatable, even if some platforms assert that they uphold Islamic values by providing features like chaperoned chats or intentions-based filtering, such as for marriage rather than casual dating.

Furthermore, **this topic is crucial to discuss because it is well known that the use of technology in social and personal life is growing quickly.** It is crucial for Muslim communities to understand how technology aligns with religious norms, and claims of Sharia compliance carry legal, ethical, and commercial weight. It is particularly when directed at Muslim users, so it is important to verify the veracity of such claims. Sharia compliance in the context of dating apps would include things like modesty, privacy, boundaries between genders, honesty in intention, data usage ethics, and avoiding things that lead to zina (adultery or fornication).

Current Issue of Dating Apps in Malaysia

In 2022, a 41-year-old Johor Bahru woman fell victim to a romantic fraud. She used a well-known dating app to meet a man. According to the man, he was an engineer from another country. He informed her that he had sent her costly presents and cash as a token of his love after they had been speaking for a few weeks.

Later, the woman received a call from a caller posing as a customs official. He informed her that to retrieve the package, she would need to pay taxes and other fees because it was stuck at the airport. She sent money multiple times since she trusted the man. She lost RM120,000 in total (Bernama, 2022).

According to the police, scams of this kind are extremely prevalent in Malaysia. Scammers frequently pose as in love before requesting money. According to the Johor police, since 2020, the state has seen over 700 romance scam instances, resulting in millions of ringgits in damages (Harian Metro, 2022).

This instance demonstrates how risky dating apps can be for careless users. Fake accounts are used by scammers to deceive people financially and emotionally. To regulate dating apps in Malaysia, it is crucial to educate users to exercise caution and to establish stronger guidelines.

Overview in Sharia Rules of Online Dating

I. What does Islam say about relationships?

Islam prohibits casual romantic relationships between non-mahram individuals. According to Islamic teachings, relationships between non-mahram which are men and women are strictly regulated to protect individuals and society from harm. Islam does not permit casual dating or emotional intimacy outside of marriage. Instead, it promotes the concept of ta'aruf, which is a respectful and formal process where a man and woman get to know each other for the purpose of marriage, often with the involvement of their families. Emotional and physical closeness before marriage is considered haram (forbidden), as it can lead to behavior that contradicts Islamic values. As the Qur'an states, "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts..." and "Tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts..." (Qur'an, 24:30–31). Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Whenever a man is alone with a woman, Satan is the third among them" (At-Tirmidhi, n.d., Hadith 2165).

As stated by Nisa (2021), the ta'aruf process aims to reduce the possibility of engaging in haram relationships by ensuring the presence of supervision and a clear intention of marriage. This framework protects the dignity of both parties and ensures that any romantic relationship is built upon trust, respect, and Islamic ethics.

II. Shariah View on Using Online Dating Apps

Using dating apps is permissible in Islam if they are used for the purpose of finding a halal partner for marriage. Shariah does not inherently prohibit the use of technology in matchmaking, including dating apps, if Islamic principles are observed. This includes maintaining proper manners, avoiding indecent conversations or images, and being clear about one's intention for marriage. In fact, tools that make marriage more accessible and easier without compromising religious values are encouraged. According to Mufti Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari, the use of matrimonial agencies and platforms is permissible "as long as no rules of Shariah are violated" (al-Kawthari, n.d.). Similarly, Shaykh Bassem Itani of Seekers Guidance affirms that it is allowed to use social media or apps to seek marriage "provided that the matchmaking platforms are safe and adhere to the principles of Sacred Law and the etiquette of communication" (Itani, n.d.). The Federal Territories Mufti Office of Malaysia also stated that the use of dating websites for marriage is originally permissible but becomes haram if used for sinful purposes (*Pejabat Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan*, 2019). Mufti Naeem likewise supported the idea that dating apps can be used for marriage if approached with pure intentions and adherence to Islamic values (The Rio Times, 2024).

According to Nisa (2021), platforms such as Baitul Muslim reflect the attempt by Muslims to Sharia modern practices, meaning to adapt them in line with Islamic principles. Similarly, Al-Kuwari (2021) notes that many Muslim users of online dating apps are motivated by religious commitment and strive to conduct their interactions in a halal and respectful manner. Thus, the use of online dating apps is acceptable under Shariah if the process remains within the boundaries set by Islamic ethics.

Importance of Privacy and Modesty core requirement when using online dating apps in Islam. Islam places great importance on guarding modesty (*hayā'*) and protecting one's privacy, especially in interactions involving the opposite gender. These principles apply not only in real life but also in digital spaces. Muslim users must avoid posting revealing pictures, writing flirtatious bios, or engaging in inappropriate conversations. Islamic teachings emphasize that

modesty encompasses speech, dress, and conduct, both in public and private settings (Javaid, 2020). Furthermore, scholars advise that Muslims should refrain from uploading or sharing content that exposes private parts ('*awrah*'), as it can lead to sinful behaviors (Warse, 2019). The Qur'an instructs believers to lower their gaze and guard their modesty, highlighting the importance of modest behaviors in all interactions (Qur'an, 24:30–31).

Ahmad and Ismail (2021) also observed that Muslim users often present themselves in a way that emphasizes piety and humility rather than physical appearance, which reflects the Islamic emphasis on inner values. Upholding privacy and modesty are therefore essential in preserving one's dignity and preventing temptation or misguidance.

III) Common Mistakes Seen in Online Dating Apps

Several common mistakes occur when Muslims use dating apps without adhering to Shariah guidelines. One major mistake is oversharing, where individuals post excessive personal details or share photos that do not reflect Islamic modesty. These behaviors can lead to unintended consequences and contradicts the principles of modesty emphasized in Islam (Nisa, 2021). Another issue is unclear or dishonest intentions; some users join online dating apps without a serious purpose of marriage, which deviates from the Islamic concept of *ta'aruf*, a process intended for sincere matrimonial intentions (Juswandi, 2023).

Some platforms that are meant for halal matchmaking are misused for casual chatting and socializing, which weakens their Islamic purpose (Nisa, 2021). Additionally report that many users lie or exaggerate about their background and personality to gain attention, which is a clear violation of the Islamic value of honesty (Abubakar et al., 2020). Other common errors include not involving the family early in the process or failing to perform proper background checks, which could lead to trust issues or emotional harm. These mistakes show that while online dating apps could be halal, users must remain disciplined and guided by Islamic ethics at every step.

Thematic Analysis on Are Today's Dating Apps Sharia-Compliant.

No	characteristics of Sharia-compliant	Tinder	Omi	Baitul Muslim
1.	The main goal is to find a life partner through marriage. Sharia-compliant applications must have the goal of marriage as their foundation and not just serve as a place for casual encounters, free relationships, or dating without direction (Maznah,2021). According to the study, the Tinder app is more for casual dating, while Omi and Baitul Muslim clearly show their intention to find a partner and move towards marriage.	x	/	/
2.	User profile pictures must cover the aurat and not contain any pornographic/sexual elements. In Islam, maintaining modesty and gaze is an important foundation in social interactions, even if only online or through applications. Tinder allows users to use images that do not cover the aurah and are sexy (Betters, 2017), whereas Omi and Baitul Muslim restrict and filter the images used by users to be more modest and in accordance with Islamic teachings.	x	/	/
3.	Conversations or interactions are controlled to avoid elements of immorality and disturbance. Communication between men and women should be limited and monitored through moderators or reporting systems from relevant parties. Tinder and Omi do not have strict monitoring and allow more free interactions, whereas the Baitul Muslim app allows users to report inappropriate and rude behaviors and has a more structured way of interaction (West, 2017).	x	x	/

4.	Background assessment based on religion and character, not just hobbies and appearance, and not intended for marriage. Islam requires us to evaluate someone based on their religion, morals, and true intentions in marriage. Tinder and Omi focus more on hobbies and someone's appearance, but the Baitul Muslim app provides more space to learn about more important information from a crucial perspective, namely religion and household life (The Journal of Society and Media, 2023).	X	X	/
5.	The application must minimize trust issues by verifying user identities and ensuring honesty in profiles. In Islam, trust and honesty are the fundamental principles in building relationships, especially those aimed at marriage (Haese Voets et al., 2022). In Islam, trust and honesty are the fundamental principles in building relationships, especially those aimed at marriage. Sharia compliant applications need to take steps to avoid fake profiles, identify fraud, and dishonest behaviors.	X	X	/

Discussions

The dating app Tinder was created by Jonathan B, Sean R, and Justin M in 2012, where the app can be used by both male and female users. This application is technically used for chatting if they like each other. It's very easy to download the app link and easy to engage in practical activities to find a partner on the internet by simply entering personal data through the designated app and uploading it using a smartphone. The use of dating apps is very interesting and convenient, but it cannot be denied that finding a partner on apps like Tinder carries a high risk to personal safety. This is said because there are many cases of misuse of these applications, such as deceiving through self-images by showing a luxurious and stylish lifestyle. But it cannot be denied that some have successfully used the application and built happiness in their lives.

There are several types of self-imaging, namely actual self, ideal self, and ought self. The actual self refers to a person's perception of themselves, and it also refers to the physical appearance of an individual through profile photos or visible qualities on the application. Usually, behaviors and achievements depend on one's social life, which is shaped by parents, friends, or teachers. A person's image through their ideal self is seen in individuals who like to write bios such as "love to travel and explore," indicating that they enjoy socializing with many people and meeting new ones (Ward, 2016).

In addition, there is a dating app that is almost like the Tinder app, namely the Omi App created by the company Omi Pte. Ltd. It is a company based in Singapore and was launched in 2019. The Omi app is very popular in Southeast Asia, including Malaysia. Although the Tinder and Omi apps are quite similar, many people say that this app is more about "serious dating" and has stricter safety measures compared to the Tinder app. The

development of social media has now led to the increased use of dating apps, especially apps like Omi. It is also aimed at finding a soulmate or making new friends just to get a partner. Its usage is as usual, just by viewing the profiles of each displayed partner and selecting the partner we are interested in. In the Omi application, there are many features, including the ability to fill in personal data through their profiles.

The Omi app is slightly different from other dating apps; it has filters for chat partnersto establish more serious relationships (Fitriyani, 2020). In addition, it can arrange random dates and follow random quizzes because individuals using the Omi app must have different behaviours and personalities. Not only that, telepath is where we can chat directly like on the phone and it will sound a notification if Omi users meet someone like you, but without seeing the friend's profile photo, although we can see their bio profile. Overall, these features are used in the Omi app to facilitate the selection of a partner that matches our preferences, making it more unique and challenging to choose a partner (Sari & Kusuma, 2018).

As we can see, both of those dating apps are not quite suitable for Muslims accordingto Sharia law. There are other alternatives that can be used and are user-friendly for Muslims so that they are in accordance with the religion (Mukhtasor, 2022). One example of a popular application is Baitul Muslim. It is also an online platform specifically created to help individuals who practice Islam find partners in accordance with Islamic teachings. The Baitul Muslim app was launched in 2006, and it was the first of its kind to gain popularity in Malaysia for Muslims seeking partners before the emergence of Tinder and Omi. It is used according to Islamic teachings, specifically through the approach of ta'aruf, or in other words, the Islamic introduction process, as opposed to the dating app concept created by the West, which is unethical and more liberal.

The operation of the application is also very organized and ethical. Users who wish touse the application need to register an account by providing personal information such as name,age, location or residence, occupation, education level, and desired partner criteria. It is very safe because no sensitive information like phone numbers will be displayed publicly. After filling in all the personal information, the system will ask us to fill out a form with the criteriafor the ideal partner to easily achieve the desired goal. The Baitul Muslim application is very safe, and many recommend trying it because the application will verify and approve profiles, and they will be reviewed first by the administrators to prevent cases of fraud and misuse of fake accounts.

Additionally, it is also to ensure the safety of users and verify the authenticity of users registering for this application. Additionally, users can search using criteria based on age, occupation, state, education level, and religion. Only authorized users can communicate with other users. Furthermore, this application is closed and rigorous, which means that users cannot directly trade media or phone numbers. However, if both parties are interested in getting to know one another better, they can choose to include their families or a third party (Baitul Muslim, 2023).

Solutions to Improve Online Dating Apps Based on Sharia Compliance

Muslim users around the world are increasingly using online dating apps, therefore it's critical to address the pressing demand for platforms that uphold Islam's moral and ethical principles while still fulfilling the practical role of connecting people. Although popular apps like Tinder and Omi provide technical convenience and easy-to-use features, they fall far short of upholding Sharia's fundamental principles, especially those related to modesty, honesty, and the sanctity of marriage. The following three thorough remedies are suggested to improve the Sharia compliance of contemporary online dating apps, and they are based on the comparative study of current dating platforms that was provided in the preceding sections.

Enforce Profile and Image Moderation to Uphold Islamic Standards of Modesty

One of the most serious problems with non-Sharia-compliant dating sites is that users have no control over the kind of images they can submit, which frequently leads to the publication of images that are sexually suggestive or expose the aurat. Islamic teachings state that social interaction, particularly between non-mahram men and women, requires modesty in both look and behavior. Applications like Tinder, which let users share sexually suggestive or revealing photographs, go against these principles and may encourage actions that are forbidden in Islam (Betters, 2017).

This can be fixed by adding sophisticated artificial intelligence systems to dating apps that can identify and filter photos that don't follow Islamic dress regulations. The establishment of manual verification mechanisms, in which qualified moderators evaluate the suitability of photographs prior to their approval for exhibition, should be implemented in addition to technical enforcement. During the onboarding process, users must be made fully aware of the Islamic-based rules about permitted material. Baitul Muslim, an Islamic dating app that limits

the exposure of personal images and stresses a modest and polite self-presentation, has already partially adopted this image policing technique (Maznah, 2021).

Implement Comprehensive Background Verification Emphasizing Religious Commitment and Marital Intentions

A crucial aspect of Sharia-compliant matchmaking involves assessing an individual's religious beliefs, moral qualities, and sincerity in seeking marriage as opposed to casual partnerships. Islamic teachings stress that prospective partners should be evaluated based on their piety, intentions, and general moral character, in contrast to traditional dating apps like Tinder and Omi, which place a greater emphasis on surface-level characteristics like physical appearance and common interests (The Journal of Society and Media, 2023). Since the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stressed the significance of selecting a mate based on their moral character and religion, it is imperative that these principles be incorporated into the design of the dating app itself.

Dating apps should incorporate required user profile boxes that ask users to specify their religious membership, degree of religious practice, and clear marriage plans in order to guarantee this. To guarantee the veracity of the information supplied, the verification process can also be improved by optional third-party endorsements, such as confirmation by an imam, a community leader, or a dependable family member. The Baitul Muslim app has effectively applied this strategy, gathering user background information such as religious customs and home environment to provide a more comprehensive and Sharia-compliant picture of a possible spouse (Mukhtar, 2022). In addition to fostering more user trust, these safeguards protect the platform from individuals who could use it dishonestly.

Introduce Sharia-Based Interaction Controls and Ethical Communication Filters

When it comes to issues as serious as selecting a life mate, Islamic jurisprudence strongly supports contacts between non-mahram individuals to be restricted, courteous, and purpose-driven. The freedom of private communication offered by contemporary dating apps is one of its most worrisome features, since it can readily result in unethical behaviors, cyberbullying, or emotional exploitation. For example, Tinder and Omi provide unmoderated, open-ended communication tools that allow for immoral behavior, such as flirty or improper texting (West, 2017).

Sharia-compliant dating apps should have integrated filters that keep an eye out for inappropriate language and conduct in talks to guarantee that communication stays civil and focused. Real-time moderation and reporting tools that enable users to flag abusive or offensive conversations or accounts can support these filters. Additionally, applications may allow users to include a guardian or mahram in the earliest stages of engagement, either by duplicating them in messages or involving them as observers. Communication between users should be limited to mutual matches with serious intents.

Additional measures to deter pointless conversations include time-bound chats, message length restrictions, and auto-lock features for non-replies. This idea, often referred to as supervised or halal dating, is highly compatible with Islamic principles and guarantees that technology is utilized to promote relationships that are sincere and courteous. A workable model for this answer is Baitul Muslim's strategy of limiting direct access until intentions are clarified and enabling users to report improper interactions (Maznah, 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study investigated the growing popularity of dating apps in Malaysia and the issues they bring up, particularly about Sharia compliance and Islamic values. Despite being creative and helpful for bringing people together in the fast-paced world of today, these platforms frequently function without giving enough thought to cultural and religious sensitivity. According to our research, the fundamental design of most dating apps which emphasize informal communication, private messaging, and a lack of third-party supervision does not fit in well with Islamic teachings, which place a high value on modesty, family participation, and explicit marriage plans.

This study has looked at the present problems with dating app use among Malaysian users as well as the workings of dating apps and their databases. A review of Sharia principles uncovered significant elements like the necessity for proper intentions (niyyah), the ban on free mingling (ikhtilat), and the need of preserving one's privacy and dignity when looking for a life partner.

Determining if the dating apps available today comply with Sharia law and suggesting ways to make them better were two of the study's main goals. This goal has been accomplished, according to the analysis done. Despite the shortcomings of the current platforms, the study has shown that there is a great deal of room to improve them. Features like encourage purposeful and supervised communication using a Ta'aruf-based approach, including ethical user controls and Shariah-compliant design and participate in Shariah advisory panels and look for digital platform halal certification are some of the suggested enhancements. Also, stated the profile objectives (e.g., wanting marriage rather than casual dating), gender-specific filters, parental or guardian (wali) involvement, and the incorporation of Islamic counseling or matchmaking services are another solution too.

In conclusion, dating apps can be modified and updated to satisfy Muslim users' demands in a way that complies with Sharia law, even though they are not entirely in line with Islamic principles. Instead of impeding meaningful and morally sound relationships, technology may be a potent tool to support them with the correct mindset and ethical framework.

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