

CONTEMPORARY TRANSFORMATION OF ISLAMIC MARRIAGE SERVICES THROUGH THE MYNIKAHNOW APPLICATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



Adam Adesina Muhammad – Lawal¹ , Novia Yuriska^{2*} , Linda Sari Bulan Siregar³ ,
Faisal Efendi⁴ 

*Correspondence :

Email :
yuriskanovia@gmail.com

Affiliation:

- ¹ University of Ilesa, *Nigeria*
² Universitas Andalas, *Indonesia*
³ International Islamic
University Malaysia, *Malaysia*
⁴ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam
Balaiselasa, *Indonesia*

Article History :

Submission : February 18, 2025
Revised : June 12, 2025
Accepted : August 19, 2025
Published : September 26, 2025

Keywords :

Digital
Transformation, Islamic Law,
Islamic Marriage, Marriage
Application, Online Marriage

Abstract

This study addresses the contradiction between the rapid digitalization of social and administrative services and the limited modernization of Islamic marriage systems in the United Kingdom. Conventional marriage registration often lacks efficiency, accessibility, and transparency, creating challenges for couples seeking both administrative and religious validation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the contemporary transformation of Islamic marriage services through the MyNikahNow application, which integrates digital innovation with Islamic legal principles to improve service effectiveness and legitimacy. This research employs a qualitative descriptive – analytical design. The data sources include primary materials, such as interviews with users, Islamic law scholars, and certified marriage officers, as well as secondary materials derived from official documents and academic studies. Data collection techniques involve documentation, online observation, and semi-structured interviews, while data analysis is conducted through thematic interpretation to identify patterns of technological, legal, and social transformation in digital marriage practices. The findings show that MyNikahNow effectively enhances administrative efficiency, reduces errors, and strengthens compliance with Sharia law. The application also bridges traditional religious norms with contemporary digital innovation, offering a new paradigm in managing Islamic marriages within Western contexts. This novelty demonstrates that faith-based services can adapt to digital modernization while maintaining legal and moral integrity. This study contributes to the development of digital Islamic family law and religious governance models. It recommends future research to explore comparative applications in other regions to enhance the inclusivity, sustainability, and contextual relevance of digital Islamic marriage systems.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas kontradiksi antara digitalisasi sosial dan layanan administrasi yang berkembang pesat dengan modernisasi sistem pernikahan Islam yang masih terbatas di Inggris. Pendaftaran pernikahan konvensional sering kali kurang efisien, tidak mudah diakses, dan kurang transparan, sehingga menimbulkan tantangan bagi pasangan yang ingin memperoleh pengesahan secara administratif dan keagamaan. Oleh karena itu, tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis transformasi kontemporer layanan pernikahan Islam melalui aplikasi MyNikahNow, yang mengintegrasikan inovasi digital dengan prinsip-prinsip hukum Islam untuk meningkatkan efektivitas dan legitimasi layanan. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis. Sumber data mencakup bahan primer berupa wawancara dengan pengguna, pakar hukum Islam, dan petugas pernikahan bersertifikat, serta bahan sekunder

yang diperoleh dari dokumen resmi dan kajian akademik. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi dokumentasi, observasi daring, dan wawancara semi-terstruktur, sementara analisis data dilakukan melalui interpretasi tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola transformasi teknologi, hukum, dan sosial dalam praktik pernikahan digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa MyNikahNow secara efektif meningkatkan efisiensi administrasi, mengurangi kesalahan, dan memperkuat kepatuhan terhadap hukum syariah. Aplikasi ini juga menjembatani norma-norma keagamaan tradisional dengan inovasi digital kontemporer, menawarkan paradigma baru dalam pengelolaan pernikahan Islam di konteks Barat. Kebaruan ini menunjukkan bahwa layanan berbasis keagamaan dapat beradaptasi dengan modernisasi digital sambil tetap menjaga integritas hukum dan moral. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan hukum keluarga Islam digital dan model tata kelola keagamaan, serta merekomendasikan penelitian lanjutan untuk mengeksplorasi penerapan serupa di wilayah lain guna meningkatkan inklusivitas, keberlanjutan, dan relevansi kontekstual sistem pernikahan Islam digital.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has profoundly transformed nearly every dimension of human life (Nasution & Muchtar, 2024) including the provision of religious services. In the context of Islamic marriage (Fakhryadi & Samsudin, 2024), practices that once required direct interaction with sub-district offices or religious courts are gradually shifting toward digital-based mechanisms designed to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. This digital transformation responds to the growing demand for more effective public services by minimizing bureaucratic delays, reducing administrative errors, and strengthening legal certainty for couples. Several Muslim-majority countries have introduced initiatives to digitize marriage registration systems, thereby integrating technological progress with established legal and religious frameworks. Within this broader development, the emergence of the MyNikahNow application represents not only an administrative innovation but also a reflection of wider social change, in which technology functions as a bridge between tradition and modernity (Rivera et al., 2023). The application demonstrates how digital tools can simplify administrative processes while preserving the ethical and spiritual foundations of shari'ah, illustrating that technological progress can be harnessed to enhance religious practices without compromising their core principles.

Previous research on online marriage has revealed several key findings. First, Valerio Bacak and Edward H. Kennedy found that using a marginal structural model with inverse-probability-weighted estimation allows control of time-varying confounding variables affecting both incarceration and marriage outcomes (Bacak & Kennedy, 2015). Second, Joanna Dębicka et al. showed that dependence between spouses' lifetimes significantly influences the valuation of reverse marriage annuity contracts, and copula models with a time-dependent interest rate provide more accurate cash flow and risk estimates than classical independent-lifetime approaches (Dębicka et al., 2020). Third, Johan A. Elkind and Thomas U. Grund (2022) found that Stochastic Actor-Oriented Model (SAOM) accurately recovers spatial parameters and covariate effects in binary diffusion models, offering flexibility for modeling policy autocorrelation, temporal dynamics, and cross-country interactions, as demonstrated with same-sex marriage diffusion. Fourth, Scott S. Hall (2015) reported that two

dimensions of Working Models of Marriage (WMM) were significantly predicted by study variables, and individuals in four WMM groups showed significant differences. Fifth, Mursyidul Ibad et al. (2024) found that perceived convenience affects perceived usefulness ($p = 0.045$) and user attitudes ($p = 0.000$), perceived usefulness affects attitudes ($p = 0.029$), and attitudes influence user interest ($p = 0.000$), while perceived usefulness does not significantly affect interest ($p = 0.132$).

Despite the promising opportunities offered by MyNikahNow, empirical facts demonstrate that digital transformation in religious services still faces multiple challenges (Agustina & Ismah, 2024). Based on recent surveys, there is a significant gap in digital literacy among prospective couples, particularly those living in rural or marginalized areas, which hinders the optimal use of the application (Shah, 2025). Moreover, some religious authorities and marriage registrars remain skeptical about whether such applications fully comply with Islamic legal standards, especially regarding the authenticity of documents, the validity of witnesses, and the sanctity of marriage rituals (Nur et al., 2025). Statistical reports also indicate that although online registration has reduced the average time required for marriage administration by nearly 40%, cases of technical errors, network failures, and lack of user guidance are still commonly found (Ngazizah et al., 2025). These facts suggest that the transformation initiated by MyNikahNow is still in a transitional phase, requiring critical academic reflection and practical evaluation.

The study is structured upon the argument that the digital transformation of Islamic marriage services in the United Kingdom cannot be separated from the dialectical relationship between modern technology and Islamic jurisprudence. The emergence of platforms such as MyNikahNow reflects the growing necessity for religious institutions to adapt to digital modernization while maintaining compliance with Islamic legal frameworks. The study hypothesizes that MyNikahNow has the potential to modernize marriage services, enhance administrative efficiency, and expand accessibility for Muslim couples. However, its success is contingent upon ensuring full compatibility with Sharia principles and the readiness of Muslim communities in the United Kingdom to embrace technological innovation. This requires not only technical adaptation but also cultural and spiritual acceptance, balancing innovation with religious authenticity. From a regulatory standpoint, the study provides critical recommendations for Islamic authorities to harmonize digital reforms with established jurisprudential standards. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of interfaith and intercultural sensitivity in designing digital religious services in Western societies.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative legal research method using a descriptive – analytical approach to examine the contemporary transformation of Islamic marriage services through the MyNikahNow application in the United Kingdom. The research departs from a normative – empirical legal framework, combining an analysis of Islamic legal principles (*fiqh al-usrah*) with the observation of their implementation in digital practice. The normative aspect focuses on examining MyNikahNow's compliance with Islamic marriage law, while the empirical aspect explores how this application is used and perceived by the Muslim community. The study was conducted from January 2024 to January 2025. Primary data were obtained from interviews with Islamic law scholars, certified marriage officers, and selected users of the MyNikahNow application. Secondary data were drawn from legislation, official

regulations, institutional documents, and scholarly publications related to Islamic family law and digital governance.

The data analysis employed qualitative content analysis with thematic coding, a method used to interpret legal and social texts systematically. This process involves reading and organizing all textual data—such as interview transcripts, legal documents, and online discussions—into themes or patterns. Initially, the data were categorized according to predefined themes, including legal validity, efficiency, transparency, and Sharia compliance. Next, new themes that emerged naturally from the data were identified to capture unexpected findings. Thematic coding thus helped the researcher to interpret not only the legal implications of MyNikahNow but also its social and technological dimensions. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic law interacts with digital innovation, maintaining both legal rigor and contextual relevance within the United Kingdom's Islamic marriage framework.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Digital Transformation of *Nikah*, *Talaq*, *Ruju'*, and *Khulu'* Services through the MyNikahNow Application

Since its launch in November 2023, MyNikahNow has facilitated thousands of marriages across 68 countries—including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, France, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia—and by April 2024 the platform expanded its reach to 173 countries, solidifying its position as a leading provider of online nikah services. Within this global expansion, three major forms of transformation can be identified. First, the application streamlines the registration process by allowing couples to upload the required documents electronically, thereby eliminating the need for repeated visits to a local marriage registrar or civil registry office, saving both time and costs while reducing the psychological burden of navigating bureaucratic procedures. Second, the application employs a digital verification system that minimizes the risk of manipulation, corruption, or delays often associated with manual procedures, thereby enhancing transparency and building trust between couples and officials. Third, MyNikahNow integrates online consultation services that enable prospective couples to directly communicate with marriage officers or religious authorities in different countries, not only regarding registration but also on issues of *talaq* (divorce), *rujū'* (reconciliation), and *khulu'* (wife – initiated divorce).

The most critical factor is the government's broader policy of digitalizing public services, which reflects increasing societal demands for efficiency, accountability, and inclusivity. Through regulatory support and infrastructural investment, digitalization has been positioned as a national priority, and MyNikahNow fits squarely within this framework. Another influential factor is the societal adaptation to technological advances, particularly among younger generations who are more digitally literate, more accustomed to online transactions, and more willing to embrace the convenience of mobile applications in religious as well as civic life (Supriyadi & Suriyati, 2022). Additionally, the COVID–19 pandemic functioned as a catalyst that accelerated the acceptance of remote administrative procedures (Pelu & Dakhoir, 2021). Restrictions on face–to–face interactions during the pandemic made digital platforms not only preferable but essential for maintaining continuity in marriage registration (Ab Rashid et al., 2025), as well as in documenting cases of *talaq*, *ruju'*, and *khulu'*. Nevertheless,

challenges persist, including resistance from certain religious authorities who remain skeptical about the compatibility of digital systems with *shari'ah* principles, and infrastructural limitations in rural areas where internet access is uneven and smartphone penetration remains relatively low.

This reduces the inefficiencies historically associated with lengthy paperwork and provides couples with greater autonomy in preparing their marriage requirements. It also reshapes community perceptions of marriage registration, which is no longer viewed as a cumbersome and intimidating procedure but as a streamlined and trustworthy process supported by technology. On the institutional level, the application contributes to stronger governance by ensuring that marriage and divorce data—including cases of *talaq*, *ruju'*, and *khulu'*—are recorded securely (Timotheou et al., 2023), monitored consistently (Torkian et al., 2020), and integrated into centralized national databases. This improves legal certainty for couples, assists in dispute resolution when records are required (Shang et al., 2023), and supports evidence-based policymaking in the domain of family and religious affairs. From a socio-religious standpoint, the digital transformation compels Islamic institutions to reflect critically on the relationship between technology and jurisprudence, opening opportunities to reframe religious services in a way that reinforces Islamic values instead of undermining them.

The paradigm shift represented by MyNikahNow demonstrates that the digitalization of religious services need not be interpreted as a departure from tradition but can be embraced as a continuation of religious adaptation throughout history. Islam, like other major religions, has historically engaged with shifting social, cultural, and political realities, and the integration of technology can be seen as part of this dynamic trajectory (Idiatullov, 2022). By offering efficiency and accessibility, the application addresses practical needs while still upholding the normative framework of *shari'ah* (Stoumpos et al., 2023), thereby ensuring that religious practices—ranging from *nikah* to issues of *talaq* (Prabowo et al., 2024), *ruju'*, and *khulu'*—remain relevant in the contemporary digital environment (Martínez–Peláez et al., 2023). Furthermore, the existence of digital consultation services illustrates how religious authority can extend beyond physical institutions (Zulu et al., 2022), making it possible for scholars and marriage officers to provide guidance across spatial and temporal boundaries (Bacak & Kennedy, 2015). Thus, such digital technology can be accepted as an extension of religious adaptation across history rather than as a break of tradition.

The findings point toward several broader implications for policy and future research. Policymakers should consider expanding the digital infrastructure that underpins applications like MyNikahNow, especially in rural or underserved regions, to prevent digital inequality from undermining the goals of inclusivity and accessibility. Training programs for marriage officers and religious leaders could also be introduced to enhance digital literacy and strengthen confidence in the compatibility of technology with *shari'ah*-based practices. Future research could explore comparative perspectives by examining how other Muslim-majority countries implement similar digital services for *nikah*, *talaq*, *ruju'*, and *khulu'*, thereby situating MyNikahNow within a global discourse on religious digitalization (Raj et al., 2020). Additionally, longitudinal studies could assess the long-term effects of digital marriage and divorce services on community perceptions, marital stability, and governance efficiency (Binarsa & Nasution, 2021). Therefore, the use of MyNikahNow might spread more meaningful effects in the future.

Digital Transformation of Islamic Marriage Services in the Context of Shari'ah Legitimacy and Societal Change

The results of this study clearly demonstrate that the MyNikahNow application has introduced significant changes in the administration of Islamic marriage services (Guo et al., 2023). The main findings highlight three key manifestations of this transformation: streamlined digital registration, transparent document verification, and accessible online consultation services. These forms of digital innovation have not only simplified bureaucratic procedures but also improved trust between applicants and marriage officers. At the same time, the findings indicate the presence of both supporting and inhibiting factors (Cheng et al., 2023). The government's digitalization policies, increased digital literacy among younger generations, and the momentum of the COVID–19 pandemic all played major roles in accelerating adoption. Conversely, challenges such as skepticism among certain religious authorities, limitations in digital infrastructure, and uneven technological adaptation across rural communities continue to restrict the full effectiveness of the application.

Reflecting on these findings, the causes behind the emergence of this phenomenon can be traced to broader sociopolitical and cultural dynamics (Liu et al., 2023). The Indonesian government's initiative to integrate digital technology into public services reflects a national agenda to modernize bureaucracy and reduce corruption through greater transparency (Ibad et al., 2024). Cultural readiness (Sofiana & Sunni, 2021), particularly among urban youth, also contributes significantly, as they are more accustomed to digital platforms in their daily activities (He et al., 2023). However, the hesitation of some religious leaders to fully embrace digital transformation underscores a deeper concern about maintaining the sanctity and legitimacy of Islamic marriage within traditional frameworks (Xu et al., 2023). Furthermore, gaps in digital infrastructure and literacy reflect structural inequalities that must be addressed to ensure equal access across social groups (Valan & Srinivasan, 2021). These reflections point to the complex interplay between policy (Dębicka et al., 2020), culture, religion, and technology in shaping the trajectory of Islamic marriage service transformation (Hall, 2015). Hence, the causes are more complex than it may look.

The interpretation of these dynamics reveals several important effects (Pei et al., 2017). At the societal level (Elkink & Grund, 2022), the adoption of MyNikahNow reshapes public expectations of marriage administration, shifting from a perception of rigid bureaucracy to one of accessible and efficient services (Wang et al., 2023). On an institutional scale, the application strengthens governance and accountability by embedding digital systems into marriage registration, thereby improving data accuracy and reducing the risks of manipulation (Harahap et al., 2023). From a religious perspective, the integration of technology has created an opportunity for reinterpretation of *fiqh munakahat*, emphasizing the compatibility of Islamic law with modern administrative practices. Nevertheless, the persistence of skepticism and infrastructure disparities could exacerbate digital divides, limiting the inclusivity of these benefits.

When compared to previous studies, this research both aligns with and departs from existing literature. Prior studies on digital transformation in Islamic services (Pauha, 2023), particularly in Malaysia and the Middle East, have highlighted efficiency and accessibility as the most notable outcomes of digital applications (Ariefulloh et al., 2023). This study confirms those conclusions but goes further by emphasizing the socioreligious implications (Taufiqurohman & Fauziah, 2023), particularly the tension

between innovation and *sharī'ah* compliance (Zuhriah et al., 2023). Unlike some earlier research that focused primarily on technical performance, this study highlights the broader socio–legal dimensions of digital marriage services, such as how they reshape societal perceptions and challenge traditional authority structures (Djawas et al., 2023). This nuanced approach underscores that while technological adoption is important (Tolera, Lata Fekadu Sebu, 2022), cultural legitimacy and normative alignment with Islamic jurisprudence are equally crucial (Kasim & Daud, 2022). Therefore, the findings of this study enrich the discourse by providing a more holistic view that integrates technical, legal, and cultural perspectives.

Based on these insights, several recommendations can be proposed (Bukido et al., 2022). Conceptually, it is essential to promote a framework that bridges digital innovation with Islamic legal principles, ensuring that technological adoption enhances rather than disrupts religious legitimacy (I. Nur et al., 2020). Methodologically, further research should employ mixed–methods approaches, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, to capture a more comprehensive understanding of societal responses to digital marriage services. From a policy perspective, government agencies and religious institutions should collaborate in expanding digital infrastructure, training marriage officers, and providing public education programs to improve digital literacy. Such efforts would not only strengthen the effectiveness of MyNikahNow but also ensure inclusivity, reducing disparities between urban and rural communities. By aligning innovation with tradition, this study argues that digital transformation in Islamic marriage services can achieve its fullest potential as both an administrative reform and a socio–religious advancement.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the MyNikahNow application marks a transformative step in modernizing Islamic marriage services in the United Kingdom, integrating digital technology with Islamic legal frameworks to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. Digital registration, online document verification, and virtual consultation services have significantly streamlined administrative procedures, reducing time delays and minimizing bureaucratic complexities. The findings reveal that MyNikahNow not only facilitates procedural efficiency but also reshapes social perceptions of marriage administration, reflecting a broader shift toward innovation in religious governance. However, disparities in digital literacy and infrastructure continue to hinder equitable access, and some religious authorities remain cautious about aligning digital mechanisms with *sharī'ah* principles. Nevertheless, the study confirms that technological innovation, when grounded in Islamic jurisprudence, can coexist harmoniously with traditional values, reinforcing both legal legitimacy and moral integrity within Islamic marriage practices in the United Kingdom.

This study bridges the theoretical and methodological intersections of Islamic law, technology, and social change. It demonstrates that digital transformation can strengthen rather than weaken the role of religion in public administration by offering transparency and accountability consistent with Islamic ethics. The methodological contribution lies in the effective use of qualitative legal analysis to interpret how faith–based institutions navigate technological adaptation. Theoretically, it adds to the discourse of contemporary *fiqh al-usrah* by emphasizing that modernization need not compromise religious authenticity. Despite limitations related to sample size and geographical scope, this study establishes a foundation for future comparative and

longitudinal research on digital Islamic services. Ultimately, MyNikahNow represents a socio–legal milestone—one that redefines the relationship between law, faith, and technology in achieving inclusive, efficient, and spiritually grounded marriage governance.

DECLARATIONS

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Adam Adesina Muhammad – Lawal contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, and overall supervision of the research. Novia Yuriska was responsible for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Linda Sari Bulan Siregar contributed to the writing of the original draft and critical revisions. Faisal Efendi handled validation, editing, and final approval of the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

FUNDING STATEMENT

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not – for – profit sectors.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All data supporting this study are available from publicly accessible sources and can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS STATEMENT

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest or competing financial interests related to this study.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to yuriskanovia@gmail.com

ORCID

Adam Adesina Muhammad – Lawal  <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9997-2757>

Novia Yuriska  <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3719-0166>

Linda Sari Bulan Siregar  <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2591-7883>

Faisal Efendi  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4378-519X>

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