

Analysis of Mut'ah Marriage Representation in the Film *Bidaah*: A Critical Examination of Its Alignment with Islamic Family Law

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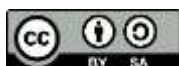
Abstract

This study aims to analyse the representation of mut'ah marriage practices in the film Bidaah and assess its compatibility with the principles of Islamic family law. This phenomenon is motivated by the emergence of religious practice deviations and the manipulation of religious arguments by charismatic figures depicted in visual media. The focus of this study is how the film constructs the practice of mut'ah marriage and how Islamic family law views this representation. This research method is qualitative with a media text analysis type of research. The data collection technique uses content analysis of the film Bidaah as the primary data source, supported by a literature study as secondary data for its legal basis. The analysis was conducted descriptively and analytically with reference to classical Islamic literature, the Compilation of Islamic Law, and the principles of maqāsid al-syarī'ah. The results of the study show that the practice of mut'ah marriage in the film Bidaah is represented as a temporary and deviant 'inner marriage'. The practice is carried out without the involvement of a guardian, without valid witnesses, and without official registration, with the dowry being only a recitation of Al-Fatihah. From the perspective of Islamic family law, this practice is considered invalid because it does not fulfil the pillars and requirements of marriage and contradicts the sacred purpose of marriage to form a permanent family. This study concludes that the film serves as a social critique of the abuse of authority or power by religious leaders or heads of religion, which can harm the rights of women and children when such marriages occur.

Keywords: Heretical Films, Islamic Family Law, Media Representation, Mut'ah Marriage.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi praktik nikah mut'ah dalam film *Bidaah* serta menilai kesesuaiannya dengan prinsip hukum keluarga Islam. Fenomena ini dilatarbelakangi oleh munculnya penyimpangan praktik keagamaan dan manipulasi dalil agama oleh figur karismatik yang digambarkan dalam media visual. Fokus masalah dalam kajian ini adalah bagaimana film tersebut mengonstruksi praktik nikah mut'ah dan bagaimana pandangan hukum keluarga Islam terhadap representasi tersebut. Metode penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian analisis teks media. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan analisis isi (content analysis) terhadap film *Bidaah* sebagai sumber data primer, didukung oleh studi kepustakaan sebagai data sekunder untuk landasan hukumnya. Analisis dilakukan secara deskriptif-analitik dengan mengacu pada literatur Islam klasik, Kompilasi Hukum Islam, dan prinsip maqāsid al-syarī'ah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik nikah mut'ah dalam film *Bidaah* direpresentasikan sebagai "nikah batin" yang bersifat sementara dan menyimpang.



Praktik tersebut dilakukan tanpa keterlibatan wali, tanpa saksi yang sah, dan tanpa pencatatan resmi, dengan mahar yang hanya berupa bacaan Al-Fatihah. Dalam perspektif hukum keluarga Islam, praktik tersebut dinyatakan tidak sah karena tidak memenuhi rukun dan syarat pernikahan serta bertentangan dengan tujuan sakral pernikahan untuk membentuk keluarga yang permanen. "Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa film *Bidaah* berfungsi sebagai medium kritik sosial terhadap penyalahgunaan otoritas oleh tokoh agama, yang berdampak pada eksploitasi dan kerugian terhadap hak-hak perempuan serta anak dalam institusi pernikahan."

Kata kunci: Film *Bidaah*, Hukum Keluarga Islam, Nikah Mut'ah, Representasi Media.

A. INTRODUCTION

Marriage in Islam is a sacred bond that aims to build a *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *warahmah* family, which is permanent and long-term (Januario et al., 2022). However, in the history of Islamic law, the concept of *mut'ah* marriage, a contract marriage with a specific time limit, has emerged, sparking lengthy debates among scholars (Suaidi Suaidi, 2023). In Indonesia, this phenomenon has not only become a discourse in public spaces and religious institutions, but has also spread to visual artworks such as films. One work that raises this sensitive issue is a drama titled *Bidaah* (Verdana, 2025). This film attempts to portray the reality of religious authority abuse and the practice of *mut'ah* marriage wrapped in religious narratives, which ultimately triggers tensions between moral values, positive law, and religious interpretations. The presence of this film is important because the mass media has great power in shaping public perception of the legality and ethics of controversial religious practices.

Although there has been much discussion of *mut'ah* marriage from a classical *fiqh* perspective, an academic problem arises when this practice is presented in popular media such as the film *Bidaah*. There is a gap between legal texts (*fiqh*) that explicitly prohibit *mut'ah* according to the majority of Sunni scholars (Miftahatul Qalbi, 2020) (including positive law in Indonesia) and media representations that sometimes blur these boundaries for the sake of dramatisation or social criticism. The main problem lies in how the film constructs the understanding of *mut'ah* marriage as a form of deviation or as a hidden reality. This creates ambiguity for ordinary viewers who may find it difficult to distinguish between pure religious guidance and the distorted narrative presented on screen.

Several previous studies have explored similar themes but with different focuses. Research by (Zaputra, 2023) emphasises the purpose and wisdom of marriage in general from the perspective of the Qur'an as the ideal foundation for a bond. Meanwhile, a more specific study on media was conducted by (Zhafirah et al., 2025), which analysed religious deviations and the crisis of authority in marriage in the drama *Bidaah* using the Maqasid Al-Shariah approach. The study concluded that there was a moral crisis in the portrayal of religious characters. However, this study takes a different position by focusing its in-depth analysis on the practice of mut'ah marriage itself as the main object of study, as well as how the film *Bidaah* specifically exposes the technicalities and sociological impact of such contract marriages on the dignity of women and the validity of families according to Islamic law in Indonesia.

This study aims to reveal the hidden messages behind the film and provide legal education regarding the position of mut'ah marriage within the framework of contemporary Islamic law, so that the public can be more critical in absorbing religious information sourced from entertainment media.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To dissect this phenomenon, the study uses a qualitative research method with library research (Chu, 2015). The main data source is the film *Bidaah* itself, which is analysed using content analysis and discourse analysis techniques (Kim et al., 1985). The researcher observed every scene, dialogue, and symbol related to the practice of mut'ah marriage, then confronted them with Islamic family law literature and the opinions of legal experts. Through a descriptive-analytical approach, This study uses a qualitative research design with a library research approach (Chu, 2015) and semiotic analysis (Yahya & Oktaviani, 2017) that focuses on the relationship between signifiers (images/sounds) and signifieds (Efendi et al., 2023). The research targets (subjects and objects) in this study are the film *Bidaah* as the primary data source, as well as supporting documents such as books, journals, and religious texts (the Qur'an and Hadith) as secondary data sources (Jarbi, 2019). The data collection technique was carried out through the documentation method (Damogalad et al., 2024) directly from various relevant literature sources to identify religious values and their relevance to Islamic

Family Law. Finally, the data analysis technique applied was content analysis (Kim et al., 1985), which is objective and systematic to draw inferences from image, sound, and text data, where the validity of the data was tested through This study employs methodological triangulation to ensure data validity. The researcher integrates Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis with an in-depth observation of cinematographic elements in the film 'Bidaah' to achieve a comprehensive understanding (Wiyanda Vera Nurfaejriani, Muhammad Wahyu Ilhami Arivan Mahendra, Rusdy Abdullah Sirodj, 2016) of sources and references from experts (Ahmad Zubaidi, 2019).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Practice of Mut'ah Marriage in the Film *Bidaah*

In Islamic law, a valid marriage must fulfil specific pillars (*arkān al-nikāḥ*), namely the presence of the bride and groom, a legitimate guardian (*wali*) for the bride, two just witnesses, and the pronouncement of *ijab* and *qabul*. These elements are designed to ensure legal certainty, transparency, and protection of the rights of both spouses. However, the marriage practices depicted in *Bidaah* deviate significantly from these principles.

One of the most evident deviations is the absence of a guardian and witnesses during the marriage contract. In several scenes, Walid conducts marriage ceremonies privately with female followers without the involvement of family members or qualified witnesses. Instead, he claims spiritual legitimacy by stating that the Prophet Muhammad is present as a witness. For instance, Walid tells Amira that the Prophet is present to marry them (Suriaty, 2025). This claim replaces the legal role of witnesses with mystical authority, which contradicts the procedural requirements of marriage in Islamic jurisprudence.

Another problematic aspect concerns the form of the dowry (*mahr*). Islamic law recognises the dowry as a mandatory right of the wife and as a symbol of respect and responsibility from the husband (Ridwan, 2020). Although the form of dowry can vary, it must represent a meaningful obligation. In the film, however, Walid replaces the dowry with the recitation of Surah Al-Fatihah. In one scene, he states that he accepts the

marriage with Al-Fatihah as the dowry (Suriaty, 2025). Within the context of the narrative, this recitation functions merely as a symbolic ritual and does not fulfil the substantive purpose of dowry as a form of economic protection for the wife.

The film also emphasises the concept of “spiritual wives,” which implies that the marital relationship exists only in a metaphysical or spiritual sense. Walid explains to Baiduri that she is only his wife in the unseen realm and that the relationship does not necessarily have social or legal consequences (Suriaty, 2025). This statement indicates the temporary and conditional nature of the relationship, which resembles the structure of mut'ah marriage.

Such a concept contradicts the Islamic understanding of marriage as *mītsāqan ghalīẓan*, a strong and enduring covenant intended to establish a stable family structure. Marriage in Islam is not designed as a temporary relationship but as a long-term commitment that forms the basis of family life.

The consequences of these unregistered marriages are also illustrated in the narrative. Because the marriages are conducted secretly and without legal recognition, women who become spiritual wives have no legal protection. This vulnerability is illustrated through the character Habibah, who is divorced unilaterally and expresses her inability to pursue legal claims because the marriage was never officially recorded (Suriaty, 2025).

The film therefore demonstrates how unequal power relations within a religious community can facilitate exploitation. Female followers who lack sufficient religious knowledge are particularly vulnerable to manipulation by religious leaders who claim spiritual authority.

Overall, the depiction of spiritual marriage in *Bidaah* reveals a systematic misuse of religious authority. Sacred religious concepts, spiritual narratives, and symbolic rituals are utilised to legitimise practices that contradict the fundamental principles of Islamic marriage law.

2. Legal Analysis of the Marriage Practices in *Bidaah*

From the perspective of Islamic family law, the marriage practices portrayed in *Bidaah* fail to meet the legal requirements of a valid marriage. The absence of a guardian and witnesses alone renders the marriage contract invalid according to the majority of

Islamic jurists. These elements are essential safeguards that protect women from coercion and ensure the transparency of the marriage process.

The narrative also illustrates how religious authority can be used to legitimise practices that contradict Islamic law. Walid frames the spiritual marriage as part of religious devotion and portrays obedience to him as obedience to divine commands. This construction of authority creates a hierarchical structure in which followers feel obligated to comply with his directives.

Furthermore, the film demonstrates how religious symbols can be manipulated to create the appearance of religious legitimacy. The recitation of Qur'anic verses, the invocation of the Prophet Muhammad as a witness, and the use of spiritual terminology are employed to give the impression that the marriage practices are consistent with Islamic teachings. In reality, these elements function primarily as rhetorical devices to conceal deviations from established legal norms.

This representation highlights a broader issue within religious communities: the potential misuse of religious authority to control followers. When religious leaders possess unquestioned authority, the interpretation of religious teachings can be manipulated to serve personal interests rather than communal welfare.

D. DISCUSSION

1. Mut'ah Marriage in Islamic Family Law

Marriage in Islam is regarded as a sacred covenant (*mītsāqan ghalīẓan*) intended to establish tranquillity (*sakinah*), affection (*mawaddah*), and compassion (*raḥmah*) between spouses (Januario et al., 2022). Within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, marriage serves several essential objectives, including the protection of religion, lineage, and social stability (Septia, 2024).

Islamic teachings also emphasise the protection of women's rights in marriage. Women are entitled to dowry, financial maintenance, and dignified treatment as part of the legal consequences of the marital relationship (Hamdiyah, 2025). These provisions demonstrate that the institution of marriage in Islam is designed not only to regulate sexual relations but also to protect social justice and family stability.

The marriage practices portrayed in Bidaah contradict these objectives in several ways. The absence of guardians and witnesses removes the legal safeguards that protect women from exploitation. Moreover, the secret nature of the marriages prevents public accountability and enables male authority figures to exercise unchecked power (Albanjari, 2025).

Legal registration of marriage also plays an important role in contemporary Islamic legal systems In Indonesia and Malaysia like Among the many marriage laws in Malaysia, the one selected as the object of this research is the Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories) Act 1984(Kurniawan, 2020). marriage registration through official institutions ensures legal recognition and protects the rights of spouses and children. According to the Compilation of Islamic Law and Law No. 1 of 1974, unregistered marriages can result in the loss of legal rights related to inheritance, lineage, and financial support (Negara, 2021).

The concept of mut'ah marriage itself has been widely debated among Islamic scholars. Linguistically, the term mut'ah refers to enjoyment or temporary benefit (Aimmah, 2018). In legal terminology, it refers to a marriage contract with a predetermined duration agreed upon by both parties.

However, the majority of Sunni scholars consider mut'ah marriage to be prohibited. The Qur'an emphasises that sexual relations are only permissible within legitimate marital relationships, as stated in QS. al-Mu'minun verses 5–7 (Miftahatul Qalbi, 2020). Several hadiths also indicate that the Prophet Muhammad eventually prohibited mut'ah marriage after it had been temporarily permitted in the early period of Islam.

One narration from Ali bin Abi Talib states that the Prophet forbade mut'ah marriage during the Battle of Khaybar (Nurhakim, 2024). Other narrations also confirm that the prohibition of mut'ah marriage is permanent until the Day of Judgement (Yasin, 2024). These narrations form the basis for the consensus among most Sunni scholars that mut'ah marriage is no longer permissible.

From the perspective of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, mut'ah marriage is problematic because it prioritises temporary pleasure rather than the long-term objectives of marriage. Islamic marriage aims to establish stable families, regulate inheritance, and

ensure the clarity of lineage. Temporary marriages fail to fulfil these objectives and therefore contradict the fundamental principles of Islamic family law (Ruslan, 2023; Habibi, 2025).

Another important issue concerns inheritance rights. In a valid marriage, spouses automatically acquire inheritance rights as a consequence of the marital bond. Mut'ah marriage, however, does not create such rights, which indicates that the relationship lacks the legal status of a permanent marriage (Madani, 2016).

2. Representation of Religious Manipulation in the Film *Bidaah*

The film *Bidaah* illustrates how religious authority can be manipulated to justify practices resembling mut'ah marriage. Walid Muhammad Mahdi Ilman, as the leader of the Jihad Ummah community, uses his authority to persuade female followers to become his spiritual wives. By framing these marriages as acts of devotion, he transforms personal desires into acts of supposed religious obedience (Wiraseptya & Tedy, 2025).

The acceptance of spiritual marriage by female followers is portrayed as a result of limited religious literacy and structural pressure within the community. Characters such as Dewi and Mia lack sufficient knowledge of Islamic marriage law, which makes them more susceptible to manipulation by religious leaders (Khairun Niam, 2025).

The hierarchical structure of the community reinforces this vulnerability. Obedience to the leader is equated with obedience to religion, creating an environment where questioning authority is discouraged. As a result, women often accept spiritual marriage not out of genuine consent but because of trust in authority and fear of being considered disobedient.

Walid further strengthens his influence by promising spiritual rewards. He claims that becoming his spiritual wife will bring the women closer to God and help them participate in religious struggle. Such narratives blur the boundary between religious devotion and personal exploitation, ultimately normalising practices that violate Islamic legal principles (Hanifia Laila Harisi, 2025).

The film also depicts broader forms of injustice, including forced marriages and pseudo-polygamy within the community. Women are sometimes married to older men

under the justification of religious duty while their rights remain unprotected. These practices illustrate how distorted interpretations of religion can lead to systemic gender inequality.

Through this representation, *Bidaah* highlights the dangers of religious manipulation. Sacred teachings that should function as instruments of justice and protection can instead be transformed into tools of domination when interpreted by individuals who abuse religious authority (Adiansyah, 2025).

Table 1. Representation of Mut'ah Marriage Practices in *Bidaah*

Category	Film Representation	Analysis
Guardian and Witnesses Not Required	Walid performs a wedding without the presence of a guardian or witnesses.	Breaches fundamental tenets of marriage according to Islamic law
Material Dowry Not Given	A recitation of the Qur'an replaces the material dowry.	Religious ritual employed to legitimize an unlawful contract
Temporary Marriage	Women are labeled as "spiritual wives."	Possesses characteristics typical of temporary marriage
Legality and Society	The women cannot exercise any legal rights.	Highlights weaknesses stemming from the lack of marriage registration
Manipulation of Religious Authority	Religious authority dominates women.	Depicts patriarchal control and manipulation of religious power

Source: Mediation of *Bidaah* Film

D. CONCLUSION

The study present paper posits that the movie *Bidaah* uses symbolic representation of the semiotics of mut'ah marriage in relation to a perverted representation of its underlying principles. The findings indicate that the principles of some of the essential aspects of marriage have been redefined, namely wali, witnesses, and mahar. It appears that these principles have been replaced by mysticism and spirituality to legitimize the clandestine marriage (*nikah batin*). The visual and verbal presentation of such a marriage shows that its temporary nature does not guarantee legal

protection to women as is witnessed in the form of unilateral divorce among the protagonists in the movie.

Considering the perspective of Islamic family law, it appears that there is substantial divergence between such practices and Sharia norms as well as positive law. According to the implementation of Islamic law in Indonesia, any marriage without the participation of the guardian, without witnesses, and without being registered is considered bathil. Therefore, it can be argued that this film serves as a critique of improper interpretation of family law using the pretext of religion, which undermines the principles of justice and maslahah.

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