

## Contemporary da'wah challenges: The normalization of infidelity in *WeTV* series and its impact on urban Muslim couples

Robby Aditya Putra,<sup>1\*</sup> Dede Mercy Rolando,<sup>2</sup> Maulida Fitri,<sup>3</sup> Muhamad Munir<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Jurai Siwo Lampung, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Institut Agama Islam Tulang Bawang, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> Institut Agama Islam Al Fithrah Surabaya, Indonesia

### Abstract

This study aims to examine the challenges of contemporary Islamic da'wah in addressing the normalization of infidelity in *WeTV* digital film series and its implications for urban Muslim couples in Bandar Lampung. This study employed a qualitative research design based on audience reception analysis, using in-depth interviews with six urban Muslim couples. Data were interpreted through the lenses of Social Learning Theory, Cultivation Theory, and the Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral approach. The findings reveal that *WeTV* series centered on infidelity do not directly encourage urban Muslim couples to imitate infidelity-related behavior. However, repeated exposure to such narratives influences how audiences understand marital conflict, emotional neglect, and modern relationships. Media influence appears more prominently in emotional engagement and interpretive shifts rather than in actual behavioral change. Although participants continued to uphold Islamic values concerning fidelity and marital ethics, digital media created a symbolic space of negotiation in which audiences normatively rejected infidelity while simultaneously expressing empathy toward the emotional conditions experienced by film characters. This study implies that contemporary Islamic da'wah is no longer concerned solely with the transmission of normative religious teachings, but also with the need to develop critical media literacy and strengthen Muslim family resilience amid the continuing expansion of digital culture.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji tantangan dakwah Islam kontemporer tentang normalisasi perselingkuhan dalam serial film digital *WeTV* serta dampaknya terhadap pasangan Muslim urban di Bandar Lampung. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif yang didasarkan pada analisis resepsi audiens (*audience reception analysis*), dengan pengumpulan data melalui

### Keywords:

*WeTV*; infidelity; da'wah challenges; Urban Muslim.

### Article history:

Received: 25 Feb 2026

Revised: 10 May 2026

Accepted: 29 Jun 2026

Published: 30 Jun 2026

### How to cite:

Putra, R. A., Rolando, D. M., Fitri, M., & Munir, M. (2026). Contemporary da'wah challenges: The normalization of infidelity in *WeTV* series and its impact on urban Muslim couples. *Islamic Communication Journal*, 11 (1), 207-236. <https://doi.org/10.21580/icj.2026.11.1.31467>

### \*Corresponding author:

Robby Aditya Putra, email: [robby@iaincurup.ac.id](mailto:robby@iaincurup.ac.id), Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup, Jl. Dr. Ak. Gani No. 01, Dusun Curup, Kec. Curup Utara, Kabupaten Rejang Lebong, Bengkulu 39119, Indonesia.

wawancara mendalam terhadap enam pasangan Muslim perkotaan. Data diinterpretasikan menggunakan kerangka teoretis *Social Learning Theory*, *Cultivation Theory*, dan pendekatan *Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral*. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa serial *WeTV* bertema perselingkuhan tidak secara langsung mendorong pasangan Muslim urban untuk meniru perilaku perselingkuhan. Namun, paparan narasi yang berulang memengaruhi cara audiens memahami konflik rumah tangga, pengabaian emosional, dan relasi modern. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengaruh media lebih terlihat pada keterlibatan emosional dan perubahan interpretasi dibandingkan perubahan perilaku secara nyata. Meskipun partisipan tetap mempertahankan nilai-nilai Islam mengenai kesetiaan dan etika pernikahan, media digital menghadirkan ruang negosiasi simbolik di mana audiens secara normatif menolak perselingkuhan tetapi pada saat yang sama menunjukkan empati terhadap kondisi emosional karakter dalam film. Penelitian ini berimplikasi pada dakwah yang tidak hanya dihadapkan pada persoalan penyampaian ajaran normatif, tetapi juga pada kebutuhan untuk membangun literasi media kritis dan penguatan ketahanan keluarga Muslim di tengah perkembangan budaya digital.

**Copyright** © 2026 Islamic Communication Journal.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital streaming platforms such as *WeTV* has created new challenges for contemporary Islamic da'wah, particularly in maintaining moral values, fidelity, and the resilience of Muslim families in modern society. Contemporary digital series have increasingly contributed to shaping audiences' perceptions of romantic relationships, marital conflict, and infidelity. In many media productions, infidelity is portrayed as an emotional response to loneliness, neglect, or dissatisfaction within a relationship, potentially contributing to the symbolic normalization of such behavior.

Several studies have revealed ongoing debates regarding the influence of digital media on Muslim marital relationships. Hertlein et al. (2022) found that social media use may increase marital conflict and contribute to the occurrence of infidelity. Rosli et al. (2025) also argued that uncontrolled digital media consumption can disrupt the stability of Muslim families and affect moral values within the household. In contrast, Jabali et al. (2024) demonstrated that digital media can also strengthen communication and emotional intimacy among Muslim couples when used positively. Meanwhile, Keldal and Kılıç (2021) emphasized that religiosity and Islamic values remain important factors shaping how Muslim couples interpret fidelity and marital conflict. These debates

indicate that digital media cannot be understood solely as either a threat or a solution to Muslim marital relationships.

One of the important issues emerging in contemporary media content is infidelity. In Indonesia, a total of 463,654 divorce cases were recorded in 2023, indicating that family instability remains a serious social issue (BPS, 2024; Syahrial, 2024). Various factors contribute to divorce, including prolonged conflict, economic hardship, domestic violence, abandonment, and infidelity, indicating that marital breakdown is influenced by a combination of interpersonal and structural factors (BPS, 2024). Infidelity ranks as the third leading cause of divorce (Pramudito & Minza, 2021). Infidelity is widely regarded as a serious violation of relational exclusivity that threatens relationship stability, undermines trust, and causes detrimental psychological and familial consequences for both partners and their families (Haseli et al., 2019). McDaniel et al. (2017) specifically categorized infidelity as a form of criminality, namely one that falls within the category of treason. Within the sociology of crime, two types of treason are recognized. The first is *High Treason*, which refers to serious acts of betrayal such as disclosing state secrets, assisting the enemies of the state, or assassinating a head of state. The second is *Petit Treason*, which refers to less serious forms of betrayal, such as killing one's partner (boyfriend, wife, or husband), committing adultery, or engaging in polygamy or polyandry.

Within the context of marriage, numerous studies have examined the factors that contribute to infidelity. Dew et al. (2022), for example, identified financial and emotional difficulties, communication problems, sexual incompatibility, childlessness, differences in interests, and older age at marriage as the primary causes of infidelity. In real-life relationships, according to Pramudito and Minza (2021), infidelity often results in relationship dissolution, loss of trust, and profound psychological consequences for those involved.

Early marriage is also considered one of the factors contributing to the high rate of divorce resulting from infidelity. Many individuals marry at a young age, and a considerable number also experience divorce during the early years of marriage. Widyastari et al. (2020) concluded that women who married at the age of 16 or younger were significantly more likely to experience divorce than those who married at a more mature age. Furthermore, Heaton et al. (2001) identified age at first marriage as one of the factors associated with divorce in Indonesia, although they also found that the influence of this factor has gradually weakened over time, while educational attainment has become a more important determinant of marital stability.

In addition, according to Shaleha (2021), the primary cause of infidelity is poor communication between husband and wife. Vowels et al. (2022) defined marital

problems as a condition in which couples lack the willingness to communicate, resulting in persistent conflict manifested through verbal arguments, physical violence, and psychological, emotional, or physical separation that may ultimately lead to divorce. Sexual incompatibility is also frequently cited as a reason for infidelity. The study by Buss and Shackelford (1997) showed that infidelity is often rooted in emotional or physical dissatisfaction within a relationship, which subsequently gives rise to problems of trust.

Furthermore, Ray C. Fair's (1987) theory of infidelity contributes through a utility model that divides an individual's time into three activities: working, spending time with one's spouse, and spending time with one's extramarital partner. However, this model does not take into account the respondents' socioeconomic status or racial background. Fair (1987) viewed infidelity as an external element that enters a marriage and consequently weakens or damages it. His analysis identified five major themes for preventing infidelity, namely maintaining the marital relationship, developing dual intimacy, adopting constructive conflict resolution strategies, establishing specific requirements for preventing infidelity, and implementing strategies to enrich married life, which were further elaborated into nineteen subthemes.

Although a considerable number of studies have examined the causes of infidelity, relatively few have investigated how representations of infidelity in films and television series influence public understanding of this phenomenon. For example, the television series *The Affair* portrays the complexity of infidelity from multiple perspectives. However, only a limited number of studies have linked such representations to changes in public attitudes toward infidelity in real-life contexts.

Štraser et al. (2021) argued that social media has become one of the primary means facilitating infidelity in the modern era. Their study examined how platforms such as WhatsApp and other social media platforms enable the emergence of new forms of infidelity, including *micro-infidelities*, such as secretly communicating with former partners or engaging in *sexting*. Meanwhile, McDaniel et al. (2017) argued that infidelity may also result from exhibitionistic tendencies influenced by media exposure, such as watching television programs, films, and similar media content. Both groups of studies indicate that the definition of infidelity has evolved in the digital era. However, existing research remains dominated by studies on social media and has not specifically examined films or digital streaming series. Moreover, McDaniel's study did not explicitly identify which film themes or genres may encourage infidelity-related behavior, leaving a gap in understanding the role of audiovisual narratives in shaping attitudes toward extramarital relationships.

Films, as part of the mass media, have long been utilized as a tool to influence audience perceptions. During World War II, Carl Hovland investigated how the United

States military used films as instruments for training and motivating soldiers. One notable example was the use of the films *The Battle of Britain* and *Why We Fight*, produced by Frank Capra. Hovland et al. (1949) examined these two films to measure the influence of film on three primary aspects. *First*, enhancing soldiers' understanding of specific information. *Second*, shaping soldiers' opinions. *Third*, increasing their morale and motivation to perform their duties and engage in combat. The findings demonstrated that both films were effective in achieving the first two objectives but did not produce a significant effect on increasing soldiers' motivation to serve or their hatred toward the enemy. These findings indicate that the media do not always possess a dominant influence in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors.

Regarding the relationship between infidelity and films, an article published by *Analisa Daily* (2014) reported that men who frequently watch pornographic films tend to have a greater likelihood of engaging in infidelity. Consistent with this finding, Katz (2022) found that watching films, particularly those containing explicit sexual content or themes of infidelity, may influence individuals' perceptions and behaviors regarding fidelity in relationships. However, Katz's study focused exclusively on films containing pornographic content and did not specifically examine films in which infidelity constitutes the primary theme.

More recently, the increasing incidence of infidelity has become increasingly commodified by film producers in Indonesia. As a form of mass media, films possess complex characteristics and exert a strong influence on audiences. *WeTV* is one of the production companies well known for producing drama series centered on infidelity. Some of its most popular titles include *Layangan Putus*, *Jangan Salahkan Aku Selingkuh*, *Sang Istri*, and *Main Api*. These series have attracted an exceptionally large public audience. *Layangan Putus* was reportedly watched by approximately 15 million viewers every day (Antara, 2022). Meanwhile, *Jangan Salahkan Aku Selingkuh* accumulated approximately 50 million views from the beginning to the end of its broadcast (Saputra, 2024). *Layangan Putus* has previously been examined by Utami and Kirana (2022), who focused on how the series shaped husbands' perceptions of fidelity and infidelity from their own perspectives. They concluded that the husbands experienced cognitive, affective, and behavioral influences, reflected in the ways they interpreted and understood loyalty and infidelity. Nevertheless, their study did not further investigate whether there is a relationship between *Layangan Putus* and perceptions of infidelity among couples who divorced as a result of infidelity. The study also did not specifically analyze how media narratives may normalize infidelity through character portrayal, dialogue, conflict construction, and emotional framing.

Research examining the relationship between infidelity-themed films and the increasing divorce rate remains relatively limited. Most previous studies have focused primarily on the impact of infidelity from the perspective of social media and its contributing factors, without exploring how digital streaming series on platforms such as *WeTV* shape understandings of infidelity among Muslim couples who experienced divorce due to extramarital relationships. Therefore, this study aims to examine the representation and normalization of infidelity in selected *WeTV* series and to analyze how these narratives create new challenges for contemporary Islamic da'wah among urban Muslim couples. This study also explores how audiences interpret infidelity through their cognitive understanding, emotional responses, and behavioral reflections regarding marriage and fidelity.

This study is important because it provides a deeper understanding of how digital media shape social perceptions of marriage, emotional intimacy, and betrayal, while simultaneously highlighting the challenges faced by contemporary Islamic da'wah in preserving moral values, marital commitment, and family resilience amid the growing normalization of infidelity narratives within streaming media culture. In relation to Islamic da'wah, Islamic moral teachings provide an important normative context for understanding how infidelity is evaluated within marital relationships. In Islam, *zina* (sexual intercourse outside marriage) is regarded as a major sin with serious consequences, as emphasized in the Qur'an (Surah Al-Isra [17]: 32): "*And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and an evil way*" (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Nevertheless, in this study, Islamic values are not employed as the primary legal framework but rather as a moral context for examining how audiences interpret the representation and potential normalization of infidelity in the selected films, as well as how these Islamic values are negotiated within the context of the selected films or series.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using an audience reception analysis design to explore how urban Muslim audiences construct meanings of infidelity representations in *WeTV* digital film series and how they perceive these representations as shaping their cognitive, affective, and relational behavioral responses within marital life. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on meaning, perception, interpretation, and participants' subjective experiences rather than numerical measurement. This approach is widely applied in media and communication studies because it enables researchers to explore audiences' personal experiences in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

The study applies purposive sampling to select participants who are relevant to the research objectives. This technique was chosen because the study requires respondents who have direct experience consuming digital media, particularly *WeTV* series that portray themes of infidelity. Participants were recruited through the researcher's personal networks, recommendations from urban Muslim communities, and social media platforms in Bandar Lampung. The criteria for participation included: (1) Muslim couples living in urban areas of Bandar Lampung; (2) aged between 23–40 years old; (3) married for at least one year; (4) active users of digital streaming platforms such as *WeTV* or *Netflix*; (5) having watched film series containing themes of infidelity; and (6) willingness to participate openly in interviews. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to select participants who genuinely understood the phenomenon under investigation (Campbell et al., 2021).

The study involved six urban Muslim couples as the primary respondents: AR (27 years old) and NS (25 years old), MF (31 years old) and DA (29 years old), RK (34 years old) and IL (30 years old), FH (28 years old) and SA (26 years old), AN (36 years old) and TR (33 years old), as well as YP (24 years old) and LN (23 years old). To maintain research ethics and confidentiality, all respondents' identities were anonymized using initials.

Media text analysis was conducted using a qualitative content analysis approach to identify representations of infidelity in several *WeTV* series, namely *Layangan Putus*, *Jangan Salahkan Aku Selingkuh*, *Sang Istri*, and *Main Api*. In *Layangan Putus*, the analysis focused on scenes portraying marital conflict, emotional neglect, and extramarital relationships involving the main character. In *Jangan Salahkan Aku Selingkuh*, the analysis emphasized scenes that justified infidelity emotionally. Meanwhile, *Sang Istri* was analysed through scenes depicting psychological tension and intimate marital relationships, whereas *Main Api* focused on sensual visuals, secret communication, and the romanticization of forbidden relationships.

In this study, "normalization" is operationalized as a media representation that repeatedly portrays infidelity as something understandable or emotionally negotiable within marital relationships. Indicators of normalization include: (1) the humanization of perpetrators of infidelity; (2) the portrayal of infidelity as a consequence of loneliness or emotional neglect; (3) the absence of clear moral consequences for perpetrators; and (4) the romanticization of extramarital relationships through visuals and dramatic narratives. A qualitative content analysis approach was employed to understand how the media constructs symbolic realities within society (Mayring, 2021).

Data were collected through observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews over approximately two months. Observation was conducted by repeatedly watching *WeTV* series to identify scenes involving infidelity, marital conflict, and emotional

dissatisfaction. Documentation involved recording significant dialogues, key scenes, and narrative elements related to relational conflict. Semi-structured interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online via *Google Meet* and *WhatsApp Call*, with durations ranging from approximately 45 to 90 minutes for each couple. All interviews were recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis. In-depth interviews are considered effective in media studies because they allow researchers to explore audiences' emotional experiences and interpretations of media texts (Silverman, 2024).

The study applied the principle of data saturation to determine data adequacy. Data collection was discontinued when additional interviews no longer produced significant new themes or findings. Saturation became evident among the fifth and sixth couples, where participants' responses began to reveal repetitive patterns concerning the normalization of infidelity, media influence on moral perceptions, and anxieties regarding modern marital relationships.

As a qualitative study, the researcher served as the primary research instrument during the data collection and interpretation process. The researcher recognized that religious values, personal experiences, and perspectives on media morality could influence the analytical process. Therefore, to minimize subjective bias, the researcher applied consistent interview guidelines, conducted triangulation between observational and interview data, and maintained professional relationships with participants to ensure they felt comfortable discussing issues related to infidelity and marital relationships.

Interview questions were developed based on three primary dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The cognitive dimension examined how respondents understood and evaluated infidelity after watching *WeTV* series. The affective dimension explored emotional responses such as anger, sadness, disappointment, sympathy, or empathy toward film characters. Meanwhile, the behavioural dimension investigated how respondents reflected on potential actions and attitudes within real-life relationships after watching such media content. This approach is relevant to media psychology studies, which suggest that audiovisual media can simultaneously influence audiences' thoughts, emotions, and behavioural tendencies (Valkenburg, 2021).

This study employs Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Gerbner's Cultivation Theory, and the Cognitive–Affective–Behavioural approach. Social Learning Theory explains that individuals tend to imitate behaviours observed in media, particularly when such behaviours appear socially rewarding. Cultivation Theory argues that repeated exposure to media content can shape audiences' perceptions of social reality. Meanwhile,

the Cognitive–Affective–Behavioural approach is used to understand how media influences audiences' thoughts, emotions, and relational behavioural responses toward infidelity represented in digital media. In the context of modern streaming platforms, these theories remain relevant for explaining the influence of media on moral perceptions and social relationships within urban society (Perloff, 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Representation and mechanism of normalization of infidelity in *WeTV* series

The discussion regarding the normalization of infidelity in the series *Layangan Putus*, *Jangan Salahkan Aku Selingkuh*, *Sang Istri*, and *Main Api* (see Figure 1) demonstrates that contemporary digital media actively constructs a new cognitive framework. This framework shapes audience perceptions of fidelity and commitment. It also influences the interpretation of marital conflict in contemporary society.



Figure 1 (a-d): *WeTV* film series posters with infidelity themes  
Source: Compiled by the authors, 2025

These four series position infidelities as a dramatic narrative produced with psychological complexity, emotional aesthetics, and situational legitimacy. In other words, the media no longer frames infidelity as a singular deviation, but rather as a relational response endowed with emotional rationality. This shift is highly significant because it marks a transformation of discourse, from normative morality to interpretative morality, where actions that are clearly prohibited in religious teachings are instead presented through lenses of empathy and psychological understanding.

The poster images of the *WeTV* series used in this study demonstrate strong visual representations of relational conflict, emotional intimacy, and the romanticization of

infidelity. The *Layangan Putus* poster portrays emotional expressions and marital tension through the composition of characters who appear visually connected yet emotionally separated, symbolizing inner conflict and betrayal within marriage. Meanwhile, the poster of *Jangan Salahkan Aku Selingkuh* explicitly places the word “infidelity” at the center of its narrative, illustrating how infidelity is positioned not only as the main theme but also as a commercial attraction within digital streaming media.

The *Sang Istri* poster presents visual representations of physical intimacy and sensuality through the dominance of dark red tones, symbolizing passion, emotional conflict, and complex intimate relationships. The presence of the “18+” label further indicates that the series is marketed as adult-oriented content containing sexual relationships and marital conflict. Meanwhile, the *Main Api* poster portrays bodily closeness and sensual expressions between male and female characters, suggesting romantic relationships that transcend normative marital boundaries. The use of body imagery, gaze, and physical contact within these posters demonstrates how digital media constructs emotional attraction through sensuality and relational conflict.

Within the context of this study, these visual images function as part of a symbolic construction that supports the normalization of infidelity in streaming media. Such visual representations reinforce narratives suggesting that marital conflict, emotional dissatisfaction, and extramarital relationships constitute common aspects of modern life.

The series *Layangan Putus* explicitly constructs a new schema of marriage as a relationship inherently vulnerable to crises of fidelity, even when it appears stable and harmonious. The husband character is portrayed as having the image of a happy family man, yet he commits betrayal due to unmet emotional needs. This representation shifts audience understanding by suggesting that infidelity emerges not solely from weak faith, but also from imbalanced communication dynamics and the pressures of modern life. *Layangan Putus* became the series with the most massive audience reach. Since its premiere, it has generated extensive public discussion across various social media platforms, marked by trending topics, the viral circulation of iconic dialogue quotes, and the production of derivative content such as reaction videos, critical reviews, and digital memes.

The high level of engagement demonstrates that the narrative of infidelity in this series was not merely consumed as entertainment but was also negotiated as a collective emotional experience. This phenomenon strengthens the cultivation process in which perceptions are gradually shaped to view fidelity conflicts as an inherent part of modern marital reality (Bandura, 2001).

In *Jangan Salahkan Aku Selingkuh*, the cognitive construction is further expanded through a narrative that more explicitly centers on the perpetrator’s emotional

justification. The series broadens this framework by portraying infidelity as a response to a relationship perceived as emotionally unrewarding. The significant number of viewers during its initial release phase indicates the strong appeal of its controversial theme. Audience engagement is evident in the polarization of opinions within comment sections and digital discussion forums, which indirectly prolongs the exposure cycle of the infidelity narrative through sustained public debate.

Meanwhile, *Sang Istri* presents the perspective of a woman experiencing relational injustice, thereby shaping the understanding that betrayal is often triggered by emotionally and structurally unequal relationships. The series stands out through its dramatic approach that emphasizes the female perspective and relational imbalance. Although it does not always dominate mainstream trending charts, *Sang Istri* maintains strong vitality through community discussions and extensive viewer commentaries, in which audiences reflect on their personal experiences regarding fidelity and justice within marriage.

Furthermore, *Main Api* offers a more explicit portrayal of relational temptation within modern workplace settings, demonstrating how infidelity frequently emerges in contexts of intense social interaction that are not ethically managed. *Main Api* also illustrates the dynamics of infidelity within professional contexts and contemporary workplace environments. The series gained significant attention for raising issues of emotional relationships in work settings that closely mirror urban realities. Many of its scenes were clipped and widely redistributed in short-video formats, further amplifying its reach and extending its cycle of virality. Collectively, these four series construct a sharp cognitive transformation: the locus of blame is no longer placed entirely on the individual perpetrator, but gradually shifts toward relational systems perceived as unhealthy, uncommunicative, or emotionally unjust.

### **Theoretical analysis of infidelity narratives**

Table 1 contains the theoretical analysis of four *WeTV* series centered on infidelity by integrating the concepts of representation, Social Learning Theory, Cultivation Theory, and the cognitive–affective–behavioral response framework. The table illustrates how each series represents infidelity, the potential observational learning processes that may emerge among audiences, the cultivation effects resulting from repeated media exposure, and the possible cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses elicited by these portrayals. This theoretical mapping serves as the analytical framework for interpreting how repeated exposure to infidelity-themed narratives may influence viewers' perceptions and attitudes toward marital fidelity.

**Table 1. Theoretical analysis**

Series title	Representation of infidelity	Social learning theory (Bandura)	Cultivation theory (Gerbner)	Cognitive-affective-behavioral
<i>Layangan Putus</i>	Infidelity is portrayed within a complex marriage: the offender still appears caring toward the family	Viewers may model ambivalent relational scripts, loving the family while betraying the partner (symbolic modeling)	Repeated exposure to marital conflict cultivates the perception that infidelity is common in urban marriages	Cognitive: understanding the offender's motives; Affective: empathy/sympathy; Behavioral: greater tolerance toward breaches of commitment
<i>Jangan Salahkan Aku Selingkuh</i>	Infidelity is rationalized as a response to unmet emotional needs	Observational learning of justifications becomes an alternative relational script	Repetitive of justificatory narratives cultivate a symbolic reality in which infidelity can be "understandable"	Cognitive: logical justification; Affective: emotional defense of the offender; Behavioral: increased willingness to compromise on fidelity norms
<i>Sang Istri</i>	Focus on the victim (wife) who forgives for the sake of the family	Viewers learn gendered coping roles: patience and acceptance as normative responses	Cultivation of the value that preserving the family outweighs sanctioning betrayal	Cognitive: rationalization to stay; Affective: empathy toward the wife; Behavioral: normalization of tolerance toward infidelity
<i>Main Api</i>	Temptation to cheat linked to an urban lifestyle and digital relationships	Modelling of flirting/emotional closeness with non-partners as seemingly acceptable	Continuous portrayals of urban relational risks cultivate the belief that infidelity is a common modern risk	Cognitive: redefinition of fidelity boundaries; Affective: attraction/curiosity; Behavioral: increased ambiguity in relationship boundaries

Source: Compiled by the authors, 2025.

The vitality of these four series is measured not only by their viewership numbers, but also by the ability of their narratives to persist within the digital sphere through reposts, comments, discussions, and the reproduction of derivative content. This phenomenon indicates that the theme of infidelity has become a dramatic commodity

with high market value as well as strong emotional resonance within contemporary urban popular culture.

Within the framework of Social Learning Theory, the most dominant mechanism of influence is subtle and symbolic modeling. Characters who engage in infidelity are not portrayed as entirely evil antagonists, but rather as individuals experiencing emotional loneliness, relational dissatisfaction, or existential crisis. When the unfaithful character is given narrative space to explain their motives and even attains temporary happiness or emotional justification, a process of vicarious reinforcement occurs.

Viewers observe that infidelity does not always end in destruction but may sometimes result in emotional satisfaction or personal freedom. This is where the subtle danger of media lies: not in explicitly encouraging infidelity, but in providing behavioral models that symbolically appear to “function” as solutions to marital conflict.

For mature Muslim couples, exposure to infidelity-centered narratives in digital streaming content appears less associated with direct imitation than with subtle shifts in interpretive framing. Interview data suggest that some participants became more empathetic toward characters involved in emotional dissatisfaction, particularly when infidelity was portrayed as a response to neglect, loneliness, or relational disappointment. While the present study cannot conclusively claim cognitive or behavioral transformation, the findings indicate that repeated media exposure may contribute to a more negotiable perception of marital fidelity among certain urban Muslim audiences.

### **Urban Muslim couples' reception of infidelity narratives through social learning and cultivation**

For the Muslim couples who participated in this study, exposure to infidelity narratives in digital streaming content did not appear to be directly associated with imitative behavior. Instead, the influence was reflected in subtle shifts in how they interpreted relationships and marital fidelity. Interview data indicate that several participants became more empathetic toward characters experiencing emotional dissatisfaction, particularly when infidelity was portrayed as a response to neglect, loneliness, or disappointment within relationships. Although this study cannot conclusively determine the existence of cognitive or behavioral transformation, the findings suggest that repeated media exposure may contribute to the emergence of more negotiable perceptions of marital fidelity among some urban Muslim audiences.

This phenomenon was reflected in interviews conducted with six respondent couples. AR (27 years old) explained that he began to understand why certain film characters chose infidelity when their relationships were filled with emotional conflict

and a lack of attention from their spouses. Nevertheless, AR continued to regard infidelity as an act contrary to religious values and marital commitment. Similarly, NS (25 years old) stated that such media content made her more aware of the importance of emotional communication within marriage so that partners would not seek comfort from others outside the relationship.

MF (31 years old) explained that *WeTV* series frequently portray perpetrators of infidelity in a “humanized” manner, allowing audiences to sympathize with the characters’ internal emotional struggles. Meanwhile, DA (29 years old) argued that certain scenes in the films framed infidelity as the consequence of unhealthy relationships rather than merely as morally wrongful behavior. According to her, narratives of this kind may influence how audiences interpret marital conflict in modern life.

RK (34 years old) stated that repeated exposure to infidelity narratives on streaming platforms may gradually make audiences more accustomed to perceiving such issues as a common aspect of urban life. IL (30 years old) also explained that although she did not approve of infidelity, films of this nature indirectly made the issue appear more normalized than before. In addition, FH (28 years old) expressed concern that several *WeTV* productions excessively portray unhealthy relationships as romantic and emotionally appealing. According to FH, such portrayals may influence how younger audiences understand fidelity within relationships. SA (26 years old) added that films centered on infidelity often encourage audiences to focus more on the emotional motivations of the perpetrators than on the moral consequences experienced by the betrayed partners.

AN (36 years old) stated that he observed changes in how urban society perceives infidelity, particularly because digital media frequently portrays marital conflict in more permissive ways. Meanwhile, TR (33 years old) argued that contemporary streaming series tend to construct empathy toward perpetrators of infidelity through narratives of loneliness, trauma, and emotional dissatisfaction within marriage. YP (24 years old) explained that several scenes in *WeTV* series may influence how younger generations understand romantic relationships, especially when infidelity is portrayed in dramatic and emotional ways. LN (23 years old) similarly stated that such narratives made her realize that modern marital conflicts are increasingly complex, making communication and commitment crucial elements in maintaining marital relationships.

Furthermore, *Cultivation Theory* helps explain how the thematic repetition across these four series gradually constructs a new symbolic reality regarding the institution of marriage. When infidelity is continuously presented as the central conflict, a cultivated perception emerges that unfaithfulness is a common and almost inevitable phenomenon

in modern married life. This mediated reality functions as a “symbolic environment” that shapes how audiences interpret their social world. For urban Muslim couples, repeated exposure to such narratives creates a paradox of awareness. On one hand, they continue to uphold religious norms that clearly condemn infidelity as a major sin. On the other hand, they begin to perceive the phenomenon as something “realistic” and potentially experienced by anyone (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). This paradox gives rise to an ambivalent attitude of normative rejection coexisting with phenomenological understanding. Sociologically, this ambivalence is concerning because it opens space for cognitive compromise toward moral violations, even if such violations are not explicitly legitimized.

The application of Bandura’s *Social Learning Theory* and Gerbner’s *Cultivation Theory* in this study demonstrates that media influence does not operate merely through direct imitation of infidelity-related behavior, but rather through processes of symbolic learning, moral negotiation, and the gradual construction of social reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Bandura, 2001). *WeTV* series do not explicitly teach audiences to engage in infidelity; instead, they construct narrative conditions in which infidelity appears emotionally understandable and more “humanized” rather than simply a deviant moral act. In this context, media functions not only as entertainment but also as a space for the production of meaning that shapes how urban Muslim audiences understand marital conflict, fidelity, and modern relationships.

From the perspective of *Social Learning Theory*, the learning process occurs when audiences observe how film characters receive emotional validation, attention, or happiness after engaging in betrayal. In the series *Layangan Putus*, for example, the male protagonist continues to be portrayed as a caring father who loves his family despite committing infidelity (Bandura, 2001). This narrative creates a complex form of *symbolic modeling*: the perpetrator of infidelity is not positioned as entirely “evil” but rather as an individual experiencing emotional conflict and relational pressure. Such conditions produce moral ambiguity that encourages audiences not only to judge the perpetrator, but also to understand him emotionally.

This tendency appeared in interviews with AR (27 years old), who explained that he began to perceive infidelity in films as a consequence of unhealthy marital relationships rather than solely as the result of individual moral failure. This statement reflects a cognitive shift from absolute moral judgment toward a more negotiative relational interpretation. NS (25 years old) also stated that she felt sympathy for characters experiencing emotional neglect within marriage, even though she continued to reject infidelity morally. These findings indicate that the media successfully constructs

emotional empathy toward perpetrators, resulting in greater moral ambivalence among audiences.

From the perspective of *Cultivation Theory*, such influence becomes stronger because infidelity narratives are repeatedly presented across various series using similar conflict patterns: emotionally distant relationships, failed communication, partners who do not understand each other's emotional needs, and the emergence of a third party as a new source of emotional comfort (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). The repetition of these patterns gradually constructs a symbolic perception that infidelity constitutes a common aspect of modern urban married life. Infidelity is no longer perceived as an extraordinary moral deviation, but rather as a "relational risk" realistically associated with urban relationships.

MF (31 years old) stated that *WeTV* series make marital conflicts appear very close to everyday reality. According to him, infidelity in films is no longer portrayed as purely a moral crime, but as something that can happen to anyone when relationships experience emotional emptiness. DA (29 years old) similarly explained that she increasingly viewed the perpetrators' emotional motivations as more dominant than the moral consequences experienced by their legitimate spouses. These findings indicate that the cultivation process does not necessarily encourage audiences to approve of infidelity, but rather familiarizes them with the idea that infidelity may appear "understandable" under certain circumstances.

This phenomenon is also visible in the gender representations found in the series *Sang Istri*. In this series, female characters are frequently portrayed as remaining silent, enduring betrayal, and preserving the family despite emotional suffering. Within the framework of *Social Learning Theory*, such patterns create symbolic learning regarding ideal gender roles in marriage, where women are positioned as guardians of family stability, even at the cost of enduring emotional pain (Bandura, 2001). Through repeated exposure to these representations, female audiences may learn that patience, acceptance, and sacrifice are normative responses to betrayal.

RK (34 years old) stated that many women in such series continue maintaining their marriages for the sake of children and family image. IL (30 years old) added that the media often portrays women who remain in toxic relationships as more morally virtuous than women who choose to leave them. This analysis demonstrates that the media not only normalizes infidelity but also normalizes emotional inequality within gender relations. From the perspective of *Cultivation Theory*, repeated narratives of this kind may gradually shape the social perception that a "good woman" is one who tolerates betrayal in order to preserve family unity.

In the series *Main Api*, media influence becomes even more subtle through the romanticization of emotional intimacy and sensuality. Infidelity does not begin directly through sexual relationships, but through intense communication, emotional attention, eye contact, flirting, and psychological closeness with a third party. From the perspective of *Social Learning Theory*, audiences learn that emotional intimacy outside marriage may appear acceptable as long as physical boundaries are not crossed. Through this process, the media gradually constructs moral desensitization toward non-physical forms of betrayal.

FH (28 years old) stated that certain scenes made emotional relationships with others appear “not entirely wrong” when one’s spouse at home was perceived as emotionally neglectful. SA (26 years old) similarly explained that such series portray forbidden relationships as originating from simple and human emotional needs. Meanwhile, AN (36 years old) argued that streaming media excessively portrays infidelity as a normal aspect of modern urban life. TR (33 years old) even admitted that he increasingly perceives infidelity as “common” within urban environments because almost every household drama presents similar relational conflicts.

These findings demonstrate that media influence in this study operates through three interconnected layers. *First*, the media constructs symbolic learning regarding how marital conflicts are understood and resolved (*symbolic relational scripts*). *Second*, the media generates emotional empathy toward perpetrators through humanization and psychological justification. *Third*, the media cultivates social perceptions by repeatedly presenting infidelity until it appears as a common reality within urban life. Consequently, media influence does not primarily lie in direct behavioral imitation, but in gradual transformations in how audiences understand morality, fidelity, gender relations, and the risks associated with modern marriage.

In the context of contemporary Islamic da'wah, these conditions constitute a serious challenge because digital media do not directly reject religious values; rather, it gradually renegotiates moral boundaries through emotional and symbolic narratives. Infidelity is not normalized through explicit persuasion, but through processes of emotionalization, humanization, and narrative repetition that increasingly cultivate audience tolerance toward relational betrayal in modern life.

The findings suggest that repeated exposure to infidelity narratives in *WeTV* series may contribute to what cultivation theory describes as the normalization of mediated social realities. Among the participants interviewed, scenes depicting emotional neglect, hidden affairs, and relational dissatisfaction did not diminish religious condemnation toward adultery; however, they appeared to reinforce the perception that infidelity is increasingly common within contemporary urban relationships. This indicates that

media exposure functions less as a source of direct behavioral imitation and more as a symbolic framework through which participants interpret the vulnerability of modern marriage.

This paradox of awareness gives rise to a distinctive ambivalent attitude. Normative rejection remains intact because it is grounded in strong religious convictions, while phenomenological understanding develops under the influence of the media's symbolic reality. Individuals reject infidelity in principle, yet at the same time begin to understand that such actions may emerge as consequences of complex emotional dynamics within marriage. This ambivalence reflects a subtle process of cognitive compromise. Individuals do not explicitly legitimize infidelity, but they start to perceive it as a phenomenon with psychological and social backgrounds that can be understood. This shift is significant because it marks a transformation in thinking from moral absolutism toward a more contextual interpretation.

Such ambivalence carries important implications. When a behavior is perceived as a common occurrence, moral sensitivity toward it tends to gradually decline. This process occurs through cognitive desensitization, where repeated exposure to emotionally framed representations of infidelity makes individuals increasingly accustomed to such narratives. While this perceptual habituation does not directly alter moral beliefs, it may weaken the firmness of boundaries between what is considered right and wrong in the social sphere. Individuals may continue to declare that infidelity is wrong, yet in everyday interpretation, begin to regard it as part of a reality that is not entirely avoidable.

The normalization of infidelity in the media operates through mechanisms of repeated and consistent symbolic reality construction. Continuous exposure to narratives centered on extramarital conflict shapes the perception that unfaithfulness is a common phenomenon in modern marriage. For urban Muslim couples, such exposure produces a paradox of awareness: religious norms continue to firmly reject infidelity, while the symbolic reality constructed by the media encourages the understanding that such behavior could happen to anyone. The resulting ambivalence does not morally legitimize infidelity, but it opens space for cognitive compromise that may gradually weaken the firmness of normative boundaries over time.

### **Cognitive–Affective–Behavioral responses to infidelity narratives**

The Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral approach provides a more comprehensive explanation of how this normalization process unfolds gradually and multidimensionally. On the cognitive dimension, these series construct a new schema of marriage as a fragile relationship vulnerable to emotional betrayal. Viewers no longer perceive infidelity

solely because of weak faith or individual morality, but as the outcome of complex interactions among emotional needs, power dynamics within the household, and modern social pressures. This cognitive transformation is significant because it shifts the locus of blame from the individual to the relational structure. Consequently, the perpetrator of infidelity is no longer seen as the sole violator, but rather as a product of an unhealthy relational system.

On the affective dimension, high dramatic intensity through emotional dialogue, suggestive background music, and vivid portrayals of the characters' suffering produces strong empathic resonance. Audiences are invited to feel the loneliness, inner wounds, and longing for affection experienced by the unfaithful character, causing anger to gradually shift into empathy. This affective shift represents a crucial point in the normalization process, as repeated empathy can reduce moral resistance toward actions that fundamentally contradict religious values.

In *Layangan Putus*, the inner suffering of the betrayed wife is portrayed through deeply emotional dialogue and layered visualizations of sorrow, allowing viewers to directly experience the relational wound. At the same time, however, the internal conflict of the unfaithful husband is depicted in a humanized manner, creating an emotional dilemma between anger and empathy. In *Jangan Salahkan Aku Selingkuh*, the affective approach is even more explicit, as the narrative attempts to provide emotional justification for the act of betrayal, portraying infidelity as emerging from a need to be loved and understood. Meanwhile, *Sang Istri* utilizes the psychological suffering of a woman as a medium of empathy, leading viewers to recognize how unequal relationships can trigger emotional fractures. *Main Api*, on the other hand, highlights the intensity of emotional temptation within a professional environment, complete with suggestive dialogue and depictions of loneliness, inviting viewers to feel the inner conflict that drives a character toward a third party.

Several participants described experiencing emotional responses that shifted from immediate moral rejection toward a more empathetic understanding of the characters' relational circumstances. Rather than indicating approval of infidelity, these responses appear to reflect the participants' engagement with the emotional complexity presented in the narratives. The findings do not suggest direct behavioral imitation; however, they indicate that repeated exposure to infidelity-themed series may influence how viewers interpret marital conflict, emotional dissatisfaction, and relational vulnerability.

At the cognitive level, some participants tended to describe infidelity as a more complex interpersonal issue rather than solely as an individual moral failure. At the affective level, participants expressed mixed emotional reactions, including anger,

disappointment, fear, and empathy toward certain characters. Meanwhile, at the behavioral level, several participants reported becoming more attentive to communication patterns and emotional connection within their own marriages. These responses should not be interpreted as definitive psychological transformations, but rather as reflective tendencies emerging from participants' interaction with media narratives.

The influence that emerges is latent and reflective rather than direct imitation. Mature Muslim couples generally do not replicate infidelity-related behaviors; instead, they become more attentive to the quality of communication and emotional attachment within their own marriages. However, this heightened awareness is not always positive. In some cases, it may generate latent anxiety and relational suspicion.

Thus, the media not only shape proactive efforts to improve relationships but can also instill a sense of insecurity that gradually weakens trust over time. This illustrates how the normalization of infidelity operates through complex psychological mechanisms: not by directly encouraging action, but by subtly shifting perceptions, emotions, and expectations regarding the reality of marriage.

Rather than functioning solely as entertainment, infidelity narratives within digital streaming platforms may also operate as cultural representations that subtly negotiate dominant values concerning marriage and the pursuit of personal happiness. From Gramsci's perspective, this process can be understood as a form of cultural hegemony, in which repetitive media representations gradually normalize particular emotional frameworks and social interpretations (Gramsci, 1971). Nevertheless, the findings of this study do not indicate that participants abandoned or rejected Islamic marital values. Instead, the interviews reveal an ongoing tension between religious understandings of marriage, which emphasize fidelity, patience, trust, and responsibility, and contemporary media narratives that prioritize emotional fulfillment and individual happiness.

These findings were obtained through interviews with six urban Muslim couples in Bandar Lampung who regularly consumed *WeTV* series centered on infidelity themes. AR (27 years old) and NS (25 years old) expressed concerns regarding the emotional framing of infidelity within digital series. AR stated that *WeTV* series often portray infidelity as the result of unhealthy marital relationships, leading audiences to understand the emotional motivations of the perpetrators. NS also explained that such programs made her perceive modern marital conflicts as highly complex and vulnerable to emotional betrayal.

Similar responses were expressed by MF (31 years old) and DA (29 years old). MF argued that many *WeTV* series portray perpetrators of infidelity in a "humanized"

manner, encouraging audiences to sympathize with the characters' emotional struggles. DA added that films frequently emphasize the emotional suffering of the perpetrators rather than the moral consequences experienced by the betrayed spouse. These findings suggest that the media not only presents marital conflict but also constructs emotional justifications that may shift audience perceptions regarding fidelity and betrayal within marriage.

Meanwhile, RK (34 years old) and IL (30 years old) highlighted how repetitive infidelity narratives in digital series may influence audience social perceptions. RK explained that infidelity conflicts within streaming series increasingly appear "common" because they are consistently presented in modern household dramas. IL further stated that women in such films are frequently portrayed as remaining patient and enduring betrayal in order to preserve the family. According to her, this repeated pattern indirectly shapes the perception that women's tolerance toward betrayal is normal within marriage.

In addition, FH (28 years old) and SA (26 years old) expressed concerns regarding the romanticization of emotional relationships outside marriage. FH stated that several scenes in *WeTV* series make emotional intimacy with another person appear "not entirely wrong" as long as it does not involve physical intimacy. SA also explained that forbidden relationships in digital series are often packaged romantically and emotionally, enabling audiences to emotionally connect with characters engaged in infidelity. These conditions demonstrate how the media humanizes perpetrators of infidelity through visuals, dialogue, and psychological conflict.

AN (36 years old) and TR (33 years old) argued that modern streaming series excessively portray infidelity as a common aspect of urban life. AN stated that digital media currently present marital conflict and betrayal as unavoidable risks within modern relationships. Meanwhile, TR admitted that he increasingly feels infidelity is "everywhere" because nearly all popular household dramas present similar relational conflicts. These findings indicate the existence of a cultivation process, in which repetitive media exposure gradually shapes audience perceptions regarding the reality of modern relationships.

On the other hand, YP (24 years old) and LN (23 years old) demonstrated more reflective responses toward such media content. YP stated that infidelity-themed series actually made him more cautious in maintaining communication and emotional intimacy within his relationship. LN also expressed that such programs served as reminders that marital relationships require strong commitment and emotional attentiveness in order to avoid disruption by third parties. These responses indicate that media influence does

not necessarily produce acceptance of infidelity, but may also encourage relational awareness and moral reflection within marriage.

The interview findings demonstrate that participants responded to infidelity narratives in multiple ways, ranging from moral concern and emotional ambivalence to increased relational awareness. The findings do not indicate direct behavioral imitation or definitive psychological transformation. However, repeated exposure to infidelity narratives appears to shape how some urban Muslim audiences understand emotional dissatisfaction, relational vulnerability, and marital conflict in modern life.

Several participants also demonstrated emotional shifts, moving from firm moral rejection toward more empathetic understandings of the relational situations experienced by film characters. These responses do not indicate approval of infidelity, but rather emotional engagement with the complexity of conflicts portrayed in media narratives. At the cognitive level, some participants began to perceive infidelity as a complex interpersonal issue rather than merely an individual moral failure. At the affective level, participants expressed emotional reactions such as anger, disappointment, fear, and empathy toward certain characters. Meanwhile, at the behavioral level, several couples acknowledged becoming more attentive to communication patterns, emotional intimacy, and the quality of their marital relationships.

In this regard, the findings are consistent with *Cultivation Theory*, which explains that repeated media exposure can gradually shape audience perceptions of social reality. Media influence in this study did not primarily emerge in the form of direct imitation of infidelity-related behavior, but rather through subtle changes in moral interpretation, emotional engagement, and relational awareness among audiences. Media narratives portraying emotional neglect, loneliness, secret relationships, and marital dissatisfaction contributed to perceptions that infidelity constitutes a real and common phenomenon within contemporary urban life. Nevertheless, all participants consistently emphasized that *zina* and betrayal remain contrary to Islamic teachings and marital ethics. Therefore, this study demonstrates the existence of a dynamic negotiation between religious values, emotional responses, and media representations within the everyday experiences of urban Muslim couples in the digital era.

These interview findings indicate that the normalization of infidelity operates subtly through mechanisms of self-reflection. Urban Muslim couples do not immediately accept infidelity as morally justified; however, repeated exposure to such narratives leads them to acknowledge that the phenomenon can occur within modern social realities. This acknowledgment does not eliminate their normatively grounded religious rejection, but

it generates a new awareness that communication quality, emotional intimacy, and spiritual commitment must be continuously nurtured to maintain marital stability.

Thus, the interviews confirm that media effects on mature couples in a religious urban environment such as Bandar Lampung are dialectical in nature: media introduce new understandings of the complexity of marital conflict, while Islamic values continue to function as a moral fortress that directs their responses toward reflection and relational improvement rather than legitimization of infidelity.

The normalization of infidelity in *WeTV* series operates as a discursive process shaped through the humanization of perpetrators, ambiguity of moral consequences, and repetitive narratives that frame betrayal as an emotionally understandable response. Through Social Learning Theory, audiences learn the possibility of rationalizing deviant behavior; through Cultivation Theory, they construct perceptions of infidelity as a common social phenomenon; and through the Cognitive–Affective–Behavioral model, gradual transformations occur in how individuals think, feel, and respond to marital conflict. In the context of mature Muslim couples, these effects produce a sharp dialectic: religious norms continue to reject infidelity in absolute terms, yet mediated reality instills an understanding that the phenomenon possesses psychological complexity. This dialectic ultimately shapes an ambivalent attitude, a psychosocial condition in which individuals maintain moral commitment while cognitively and emotionally beginning to tolerate the existence of behavior that was previously regarded as entirely taboo.

### **Contemporary da'wah challenges and the resilience of urban Muslim families**

In the context of contemporary Islamic da'wah, the development of digital media has created new challenges in maintaining moral values, fidelity, and the resilience of Muslim families. Streaming platforms such as *WeTV*, *Netflix*, and other digital media continuously present narratives of marital conflict, emotional relationships outside marriage, and infidelity framed through psychological and emotional approaches. These conditions influence how society understands relationships, love, commitment, and betrayal in modern life.

Islamic da'wah in the digital era is facing a significant transformation in the process of moral formation within society. In the past, moral authority was largely shaped by family, educational institutions, and religious organizations. Today, digital media also functions as a space for the production of values and social interpretations. Streaming media narratives shape audience perceptions through stories, visuals, music, emotional conflicts, and psychological attachment to characters. As a result, moral values are increasingly understood not only through normative religious teachings but also through emotional experiences constructed by media.

This phenomenon reflects a process of *moral negotiation*, namely the renegotiation of moral boundaries between right and wrong in modern relationships. Infidelity in digital series is frequently portrayed as the consequence of loneliness, trauma, emotional neglect, and failed marital communication. Such representations generate empathy toward perpetrators, leading audiences to understand infidelity through emotional and psychological perspectives. Vowels explain that morally ambiguous media narratives can produce *moral rumination*, a process of moral reflection in which audiences experience ambivalence between ethical rejection and emotional empathy toward media characters (Vowels et al., 2022).

From the perspective of da'wah, these conditions indicate that the moral challenges faced by contemporary society are becoming increasingly complex. Audiences continue to recognize that infidelity contradicts religious teachings, yet repeated media exposure may gradually shift moral sensitivity through continuous emotional framing. Infidelity is increasingly perceived as a human, realistic, and relatable relational conflict. This demonstrates how digital media slowly influences the way society interprets sin, betrayal, and marital responsibility.

The repetitive presentation of infidelity narratives across streaming platforms further reinforces social constructions regarding modern relationships. In *Cultivation Theory*, Gerbner and Gross argues that repetitive media exposure can shape audience perceptions of social reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Hermann found that digital media have a significant influence on public perceptions of interpersonal relationships, conflict, and social norms. When household dramas repeatedly present similar patterns, emotionally distant relationships, the presence of a third party, and emotional conflict, audiences gradually perceive infidelity as a common phenomenon within urban life (Hermann et al., 2023).

The challenge of da'wah becomes even more significant because digital media also aestheticizes moral conflict. Infidelity is packaged through romantic cinematography, emotional music, intimate visuals, and touching dialogue. Forbidden relationships are portrayed through emotional attention, psychological intimacy, and relatable emotional needs for modern audiences. Hermann explains that sympathetic media characters can encourage *moral disengagement*, a condition in which audiences weaken their moral judgment toward deviant behavior due to a strong emotional attachment to the characters (Hermann et al., 2023).

These conditions indicate that contemporary Islamic da'wah is confronting a digital culture shaped by emotions and symbols. Modern society consumes media narratives daily through smartphones and streaming platforms with high intensity. In such circumstances, the media possesses the ability to gradually shape social perceptions

through visual and emotional repetition. Hermann explains that digital popular culture constructs public understanding of what is considered normal and realistic through continuously repeated narratives in media (Hermann et al., 2023).

The challenge of da'wah is closely related to maintaining the values of fidelity and marital commitment amid a digital culture that emotionally normalizes relational conflict. Da'wah requires approaches capable of understanding media psychology, popular culture, and symbolic constructions within urban society. Critical media literacy has become increasingly important so that Muslim communities can recognize how media shapes emotions, perceptions, and perspectives regarding marital relationships.

Scharrer and Warren explain that modern streaming media possesses a powerful capacity to shape perceptions of gender, romantic relationships, and family norms through repeated representations within digital culture. In this context, Islamic da'wah faces the challenge of preserving the values of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* amid media cultures that emphasize individual emotional fulfillment as the center of modern relationships (Scharrer & Warren, 2022).

Contemporary Islamic da'wah therefore requires stronger cultural and digital approaches in responding to the transformation of modern society. Da'wah needs to be present through media literacy education, strengthening family communication based on Islamic values, and developing digital narratives capable of presenting healthy, ethical, and Islamically grounded representations of relationships. The challenge of da'wah today lies in maintaining the moral resilience of Muslim communities amid a digital media culture that gradually cultivates social tolerance toward relational betrayal through the humanization of perpetrators, repetitive narratives, and emotional audience engagement.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study finds that the normalization of infidelity themes in *WeTV* series is driven by the logic of the media industry, which is oriented toward market demand, ratings, and audience preferences, reflecting audiences' strong interest in such narratives. Within this commercial framework, private moral issues are constructed and repackaged into audiovisual products with significant commercial value. This condition reinforces the cycle of content production, whereby audience popularity and positive engagement encourage the continuous reproduction of similar themes.

This study demonstrates that *WeTV* series centered on infidelity do not directly encourage urban Muslim couples to imitate infidelity-related behavior. However, repeated exposure to such narratives appears to influence how some participants understand marital conflict, emotional neglect, and the dynamics of modern

relationships. The influence was more evident in shifts of interpretation and emotional engagement rather than in actual behavioral changes. Infidelity within digital series is represented through emotional framing, the humanization of characters, and psychological conflict, all of which make relational betrayal appear more complex and emotionally understandable.

The findings also indicate that participants continued to uphold Islamic values regarding fidelity and marital ethics. Nevertheless, digital media creates a space for symbolic negotiation in which audiences simultaneously reject infidelity normatively while also expressing empathy toward the emotional conditions experienced by film characters. In this context, media influence is not deterministic; rather, it operates subtly through processes of interpretation, emotional engagement, and relational reflection.

Despite these findings, this study has several methodological limitations. *First*, the relatively small number of participants, all of whom were drawn from Bandar Lampung, limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of urban Muslim couples in Indonesia. *Second*, the study relied on self-reported interview data, making the findings highly dependent on participants' honesty, memory, and subjective interpretation. *Third*, as a qualitative study, the analytical process cannot be entirely separated from the researcher's subjectivity in interpreting interview responses and media representations.

Therefore, this research is positioned as an exploratory study that seeks to understand how infidelity narratives within streaming media are negotiated by urban Muslim couples in their everyday lives. The study does not aim to establish a definitive causal relationship between media consumption and audience behavioral change. Instead, it highlights subtle transformations in how audiences interpret relationships, marital conflict, and fidelity within the context of contemporary digital culture.

Future research is recommended to involve broader and more diverse participant groups, including Muslim couples from both rural and urban areas, intergenerational families, and different age groups, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how digital media influences Muslim family relationships. Furthermore, future studies may employ digital ethnography, audience reception analysis, or longitudinal approaches to examine how repeated exposure to streaming media shapes relational perceptions over time. Subsequent research may also expand its focus to other digital platforms such as *TikTok*, *Instagram Reels*, or Korean dramas in order to explore how various forms of digital narratives construct perceptions of intimacy, fidelity, and marital ethics in the era of new media.

## REFERENCES

- Analisa Daily. (2014, February 7). *Menonton film porno bisa memicu pria selingkuh?* <https://analisadaily.com/berita/arsip/2014/2/7/4680/menonton-film-porno-bisa-memicu-pria-selingkuh/?utm>.
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2025). *Jumlah perceraian menurut provinsi dan faktor penyebab perceraian (perkara)*. <https://www.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/3/YVdoU1IwVmlTM2h4YzFoV1psWkViRXhqTlZwRFVUMDkjMw==/jumlah-perceraian-menurut-provinsi-dan-faktor.html?year=2023>.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1>.
- Buss, D. M., & Shackelford, T. K. (1997). Susceptibility to Infidelity in the First Year of Marriage. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31(2), 193–221. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1997.2175>.
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., & Prior, S. (2021). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 26(8), 652–661. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1744987120927206>.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2024). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Dew, J. P., Saxey, M. T., & Mettmann, A. (2022). Money lies and extramarital ties: Predicting Separate and joint occurrences of financial deception and extramarital infidelity. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1038169>
- Fair, R. C. (1978). A theory of extramarital affairs. *Journal of Political Economy*, 86(1), 45–61. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/epdf/10.1086/260646>.
- Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication*, 26(2), 172–199. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1976.tb01397.x>.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Q. Hoare & G. Nowell Smith, Eds. & Trans.). Lawrence & Wishart.
- Hermann, E., Morgan, M., & Shanahan, J. (2023). Cultivation and social media: A meta-analysis. *New Media & Society*, 25(9), 2492–2511. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231180257>.
- Heaton, T.B., Cammack, M., & Young, L. (2001). Why is the divorce rate declining in Indonesia? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 480–490. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00480.x>.
- Hertlein, K. M., Chang, J., Van-Yperen, A., Fatkin, K., & Nakamura, S. (2022). Experiences after infidelity via internet communication: Surveillance, ambivalence, and

- termination. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 37(4), 537–556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2021.1907568>.
- Hovland, C. I., Lumsdaine, A. A., & Sheffield, F. D. (1949). *Experiments on mass communication*. Princeton University Press.
- Jabali, O., Hamamra, B., & Mahamid, F. (2024). Modern relationships and social media: Exploring the digital dynamics of husband–wife interactions. *Humanities & Social Sciences Communications*, 11, 1727. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-04289-3>.
- Katz, H. (2022). *The media handbook: A complete guide to advertising media selection, planning, research, and buying* (8th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003175704>.
- Keldal, G., & Kılıç, N. (2021). Investigating the associations between social media addiction, marital beliefs, and attitudes toward cohabitation during emerging adulthood. *Marriage & Family Review*, 57(8). <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2021.1919813>.
- Kementerian Agama RI. (2019). *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya*. Kementerian Agama RI.
- Mayring, P. (2021). *Qualitative content analysis: A step-by-step guide*. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781036231798>.
- McDaniel, B. T., Drouin, M., & Cravens, J. D. (2017). Do you have anything to hide? Infidelity-related behaviors on social media sites and marital satisfaction. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 66. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.09.031>.
- Perloff, R. M. (2023). *The dynamics of persuasion: Communication and attitudes in the 21st century* (8th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003290056>.
- Pramudito, A. A., & Minza, W. M. (2021). The dynamics of rebuilding trust and trustworthiness in marital relationship post infidelity disclosure. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 48(2). <https://doi.org/10.22146/jpsi.60974>.
- Rosli, F. S., Zahari, N. N., Faizolakhman, N. I., & Rosidi, M. H. (2025). The influence of social media on marital conflict: An analytical study through the lens of *Maqasid al-Shariah* in preserving family stability and dignity. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(7), 598–608. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90700049>.
- Scharrer, E., & Warren, S. (2022). Adolescents' modern media use and beliefs about masculine gender roles and norms. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 99(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990211035453>.
- Shaleha, R. R. A. (2021). The cheating heart: Phenomenology in women who decides to have an affair in marriage. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 20(2), 109–122. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jp.20.2.109-122>.

- Syahrial, M. (2024, May 16). *Jumlah perceraian di Indonesia tahun 2023 capai 463.654 kasus*. *Kompas.com*.  
<https://bandung.kompas.com/read/2024/05/16/110741878/jumlah-perceraian-di-indonesia-tahun-2023-capai-463654-kasus>.
- Silverman, D. (2024). *Interpreting qualitative data* (7th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Štraser, A., Lukić, O., & Bodroža, B. (2021). Disloyal partner behaviors on social networks: Contribution of personality traits and self-presentation to infidelity and attentiveness to alternatives. *Primenjena Psihologija*, *14*(3), 365–391.  
<https://doi.org/10.19090/pp.2021.3.365-391>.
- Utami, A. B., & Kirana, R. D. (2022). Persepsi tentang perselingkuhan pada penonton film seri Layangan Putus. *Konvergensi: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Komunikasi*.  
<https://doi.org/10.51353/kvg.v3i2.705>.
- Valkenburg, P. M., Beyens, I., Pouwels, J. L., van Driel, I. I., & Keijsers, L. (2021). Social media use and adolescents' self-esteem: Heading for a person-specific media effects paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, *71*(1), 56–78.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqaa039>.
- Vowels, L. M., Vowels, M. J., & Mark, K. P. (2022). Is infidelity predictable? Using explainable machine learning to identify the most important predictors of infidelity. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *59*(2).  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2021.1967846>.
- Widyastari, D. A., Isarabhakdi, P., Vapattanawong, P., & Völker, M. (2020). Marital dissolution in postmodern Java, Indonesia: Does early marriage increase the likelihood to divorce? *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, *61*(8), 556–573.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2020.1799308>.

