

Research Article

Assessing the Effectiveness of Islamic Law in Addressing Free Social Interactions: A Socio-Religious Literature Analysis in Indonesia

Pahrul

STAI Rasyidiyah Khalidiyah Amuntai, Indonesia
Corresponding Author, Email: pahrulsekumpul@gmail.com

Abstract

Free social interaction (commonly referred to as pergaulan bebas) can be defined as deviant behavior that violates social and religious norms. More specifically, the term is often associated with sexual relationships outside the bounds of official marital commitment. The current condition of such behavior has reached an alarming level, with increasing types of misconduct, a growing number of cases, and broader demographic involvement. This phenomenon is deeply concerning, as it can lead to the breakdown of individuals, families, communities, and even human civilization as a whole. As a religion believed to offer a complete and comprehensive legal framework, Islam provides an essential perspective in addressing the issue of free social interaction. Thus, it is necessary to examine how effective Islamic law is in tackling this moral crisis. Through a library research method, it is found that pergaulan bebas is influenced by multiple factors, including individual behavior, societal norms, social media, and governmental policies. The findings also reveal that Islamic law remains relevant across all times and contexts and proves to be highly effective in both preventing and resolving issues related to free social interaction. Among the Islamic legal principles are commands to maintain piety (taqwa) and to equip oneself with religious knowledge. Islam also sets specific guidelines for social conduct, such as the obligation to lower one's gaze, dress modestly, and avoid seclusion (khalwat) or mixed-gender interactions without clear boundaries (ikhthilath). Furthermore, Islamic law enforces explicit and firm punishments for those who violate these moral boundaries, serving both as a

deterrent and a corrective mechanism. This paper aims to contribute meaningful insights that may serve as a valuable reference for policymakers in formulating strategies to combat the issue of pergaulan bebas effectively.

Keywords: Free Association, Islamic Law, Sharia.

INTRODUCTION

Free social interaction (pergaulan bebas) is a long-standing social issue that has been widely discussed over time. Generally, it is most prevalent among teenagers, whose unstable emotional development makes them vulnerable to harmful influences. However, this behavior is not exclusive to youth; adults are also increasingly involved, and alarmingly, the phenomenon has begun to affect children at a very early age.

According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI, 2025), pergaulan is defined as the act of socializing or engaging in social relationships, while bebas means entirely unrestricted, unimpeded, or unbound—implying the freedom to act, speak, or behave without constraint. Thus, pergaulan bebas can be interpreted as social interaction in a community context that is unregulated or unrestrained (KBBI, 2025).

In general, pergaulan bebas refers to deviant behavior by individuals or groups that exceeds societal boundaries of rules, responsibilities, norms, and even shame. This includes behavior that violates both social and religious values. Examples of such behavior include drug abuse, casual sexual relations, drunkenness, and other forms of moral laxity. More specifically, the term is frequently associated with premarital or non-committal sexual activity (Gamedia, 2025).

The rise of pergaulan bebas has become increasingly alarming over time. Its impact extends beyond individuals, disrupting social and moral order, and potentially threatening the foundation of human civilization. Despite numerous efforts made to combat it, the problem remains unresolved and continues to spread.

Several studies have attempted to address pergaulan bebas from various perspectives, including Islamic viewpoints. One such work is published in *Jurnal Studi Islam Al Irsyad*, titled "Pergaulan Bebas Generasi Muda dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam (Al-Qur'an)" by Jalaluddin (2022). However, this study discusses pergaulan bebas in a general sense and does not elaborate in detail on the specific Islamic legal rulings that can address cases of free sexual relations or similar acts.

Therefore, this paper aims to explore more deeply the factors that contribute to

the widespread growth of pergaulan bebas in Indonesia and to assess how effective Islamic law is in resolving such issues. It is hoped that this work will provide meaningful insights and serve as a reference for addressing this growing societal concern, particularly regarding the surge in unrestrained social interaction in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method using a library research approach. The sources used combine both classical references—such as works written by early Islamic scholars—and contemporary literature, including recent books, scholarly journals, government reports, and official websites containing information relevant to the topic under study. Data collection was conducted through documentary study, which involved gathering texts from books, classical Islamic manuscripts (*kitab*), academic journals, and credible online sources that support the scope of this research.

The analytical technique applied is normative analysis, which focuses on examining various norms—particularly religious norms—related to the issue of pergaulan bebas (free social interaction). The data are presented descriptively, using concise, clear, and focused language that aligns with the objectives and framework of this literature-based study. The conclusion was drawn by synthesizing key points from the analyzed sources to form coherent descriptive findings consistent with the research aims.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The current state of free social interaction in Indonesia can rightly be described as a moral emergency. Numerous facts can be observed in society, such as the increasingly rampant cases of adultery. The perpetrators include not only adults and teenagers, but also children. This reality is truly alarming. Although there is no definitive statistic regarding the exact number of adultery cases in Indonesia—since such acts are often carried out in secrecy and go unreported—the prevalence of casual dating and premarital sex has become normalized.

According to data from the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), approximately 60% of Indonesian teenagers aged 16–17 have engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage. This is followed by 20% of teenagers aged 14–15, and another 20% among those aged 19–20 (MediaIndonesia.com, 2024). Another indicator of the

issue is the rising number of underage marriage dispensation requests, the majority of which stem from pregnancies out of wedlock. For example, in East Java Province in 2022, there were 15,212 applications for marriage dispensations, with 80% due to the female party already being pregnant (East Java Provincial Communication and Information Agency, 2023).

In addition, cases of infidelity are also on the rise. Many divorces are now triggered by affairs. Society has even coined new terms such as *ani-ani*, *sugar daddy*, and *sugar baby* to refer to relationships outside legal marriage. These terms normalize and even glamorize illicit relationships.

From an Islamic perspective, such behaviors are considered sinful. Moreover, this kind of destructive social interaction leads to serious societal problems, such as the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), children born without clear lineage, a surge in abortion due to unwanted pregnancies, broken families, increased violence, and broader societal chaos.

Clearly, this situation cannot be allowed to continue unchecked. Serious efforts must be made to create change. Unfortunately, current solutions have failed to resolve the problem effectively. This failure is largely due to misdiagnosing the root causes, leading to misguided responses that only worsen the situation. For example, when teenage pregnancy rates rise, some propose distributing free contraceptives to teenagers (MediaIndonesia.com, 2024). Or in response to unsafe abortions that endanger women's lives, some advocate for the legalization of abortion in clinics and hospitals. Instead of curbing the problem, such measures promote greater moral permissiveness.

Factors Contributing to Free Social Interaction

There are several contributing factors behind the increasing prevalence of *pergaulan bebas* in society. These include individual, familial, social, media, and governmental factors.

First, the individual factor. Weak faith and lack of knowledge make people vulnerable to immoral behavior, including deviant social interactions. Personal weakness may stem from one's own choices or be influenced by family conditions. Children raised in families that neglect religious values or come from broken homes are more likely to lose control in their behavior. In many cases, a child's promiscuous behavior is a reaction to a dysfunctional family environment (Kemendikdasmen, 2022).

Second, the environmental factor. Humans are social beings who interact with others, and such interactions are inherently influential. Beyond family, a child is also shaped by the school environment. The attitudes and educational methods of teachers and peers play a significant role in shaping a person's mindset and behavior. Moreover, broader societal norms also influence individuals. A society driven by capitalism tends to become permissive (everything is allowed) and individualistic (lacking concern for others). As a result, moral guidance, such as enjoining good and forbidding evil (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*), is neglected. Immorality becomes normalized: dating is seen as normal, premarital sex is no longer taboo, and even sinful acts are commercialized as a source of income.

Third, the role of social media. In today's digital age, information spreads freely without restriction. Social media timelines are flooded with content lacking educational value. To gain popularity and money, people often showcase inappropriate behavior publicly. Worse yet, this type of content garners widespread interest, reinforcing a cycle of supply and demand. This phenomenon undeniably contributes to moral degradation in society.

Fourth, the role of the state. A country governed by democratic principles upholds the notion of individual freedom, including freedom of behavior. This philosophy asserts that everyone has the right to act as they please, as long as it does not harm others. However, since the standard is based on subjective human judgment, there are no absolute moral boundaries in social conduct. This has given rise to liberal ideologies that further promote *pergaulan bebas*. The same applies to social media control. Under the banner of "freedom of expression," harmful content is left unchecked, with no clear restrictions from the state.

Furthermore, the laws in democratic countries are often ineffective in addressing social deviance, including *pergaulan bebas*. For instance, adultery is not legally punishable unless it is reported by a legitimate spouse or, in the case of unmarried minors, by their parents. If the act is consensual and no party files a complaint, it goes unpunished (Hukumonline.com, 2023). Such legal loopholes fail to deter offenders and do not serve as effective preventative measures.

Comprehensive Solutions to Address Free Social Interaction

As previously mentioned, the condition of education significantly influences

individual thoughts and behavior. An education system that focuses solely on academic achievement or the pursuit of degrees often neglects moral values. According to Emile Durkheim, a renowned sociologist from France, education should be universal, rational, and scientific. This includes respecting individual freedom while instilling a sense of responsibility toward society. Education is not only meant to develop individual potential but also to direct that potential toward the public good. It must be grounded in morality—not merely a normative system of right and wrong, but a system of facts connected to the broader structure of the world. Moral education is an integral component of the educational system and plays a vital role in shaping individuals and society (Virgianti, 2023). Through moral education, society can be safeguarded from deviant behavior.

Beyond the sociological perspective, the issue of free social interaction (*pergaulan bebas*) can also be examined through the lens of Islam, which is believed to be a complete and comprehensive religion. Islam provides a framework of life regulations that address all aspects of human existence.

Islam stands apart from other belief systems, not only as a religion concerned with spirituality (*ruhiyyah*) but also as an ideology encompassing politics (*siyasiyyah*). *Ruhiyyah* doctrines govern matters of the afterlife—heaven, hell, rewards, punishments, and sin—as well as rituals such as prayer, almsgiving (*zakat*), pilgrimage (*hajj*), fasting, and jihad. *Siyasiyyah* doctrines regulate worldly affairs, including politics, economics, social systems, education, governance, and legal sanctions (Abdurrahman, 2004).

As both a faith and an ideology, Islam consists of beliefs (*aqidah*) and a system (*nizham*), or in other terms, *aqidah* and *sharia*. Islamic *sharia* provides laws that can be classified into three main categories:

1. Laws governing the individual's relationship with the Creator, such as acts of worship including prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage, and jihad.
2. Laws governing the individual's relationship with themselves, such as dress codes, food and drink, and personal conduct reflecting one's character.
3. Laws regulating relationships with others, encompassing areas such as business, education, social interaction, governance, politics, and legal penalties (Abdurrahman, 2004).

Islamic law (*sharia*) is a mercy and brings benefit (*maslahah*) to mankind, as stated in the Qur'an:

“And We have not sent you [O Muhammad] but as a mercy to the worlds.”

(Qur'an, Surah Al-Anbiya [21]: 107)

Another verse affirms:

“Verily, there has come to you a clear proof from your Lord, a guidance and a mercy.”

(Qur'an, Surah Al-An'am [6]: 157)

The guidance and mercy referred to in these verses imply benefit for humans and the prevention of harm. This benefit is defined not by human reasoning alone, but through Allah's guidance (Ismail, 2004).

Islamic sharia, as brought by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, carries objectives known as *maqasid al-shariah*—overarching goals that protect humanity. These include the five fundamental necessities (*ad-dharuriyyat al-khams*):

1. Protection of religion (*hifz ad-din*),
2. Protection of life (*hifz an-nafs*),
3. Protection of intellect (*hifz al-'aql*),
4. Protection of lineage (*hifz an-nasl*),
5. Protection of property (*hifz al-mal*).

Jasser Auda, a contemporary Muslim scholar and expert in Islamic law, has further developed the *maqasid al-shariah* framework by integrating it with scientific systems theory and human development approaches. He introduced humanistic concepts such as gender issues, human rights, and justice. Specifically, in relation to the protection of lineage (*hifz an-nasl*), Auda proposed a family- and values-oriented framework, embedding justice and freedom as central principles. His work underscores the timeless relevance of Islamic law to human life (Pertiwi, 2019).

In governing human behavior, the Islamic system uses two main approaches: prevention (preventive) and case resolution (curative). To prevent violations of Islamic law, Islam urges believers to uphold *taqwa* (God-consciousness). Numerous verses in the Qur'an command this, including:

“O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims.”

(Qur'an, Surah Ali Imran [3]: 102)

Linguistically, *taqwa* means to guard or protect. Scholars commonly define it as the commitment to obey all of Allah's commands and avoid His prohibitions—both in private and in public, in outward actions and inward beliefs. *Taqwa* serves as a spiritual shield, instilling a fear of Allah and His Messenger, which in turn deters individuals from unbounded and immoral behavior. A God-conscious person strives to align their actions with Islamic law, including in interpersonal interactions.

To practice religious devotion correctly, Muslims must first understand the legal rulings regarding human actions—what is permitted and what is forbidden. Thus, seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim to gain proper understanding of sharia. As the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim man and woman.”

(Hadith narrated by Ibn 'Abd al-Bar)

In another narration:

“Whoever desires the world must have knowledge; whoever desires the Hereafter must have knowledge; and whoever desires both must have knowledge.”

(Hadith narrated by At-Tirmidhi)

In addition to the command to uphold piety (*taqwa*) and the obligation to seek knowledge, Islam also emphasizes the duty of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*). The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand. If he is not able to do so, then with his tongue. If he is not able to do that, then with his heart—and that is the weakest of faith.”

(Hadith narrated by Muslim)

Allah also commands in the Qur'an:

“Let there be among you a group who calls to goodness, enjoins what is right, and forbids what is wrong. And it is they who are the successful.”

(Qur'an, Surah Ali Imran [3]: 104)

More specifically, Islamic law has laid down a set of rulings that regulate interactions between men and women in order to prevent immoral social behavior. As outlined in *The Islamic Social System* by An-Nabhani (2012), several key rules apply:

First, Islam commands both men and women to lower their gaze. Allah says:

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts...”

(Qur'an, Surah An-Nur [24]: 30-31)

Second, women are commanded to dress modestly, covering their entire bodies except for the face and hands. Allah states:

“And let them not display their adornment except what is apparent thereof. And let them draw their veils over their bosoms...”

(Qur'an, Surah An-Nur [24]: 31)

In another verse:

“O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their outer garments over themselves. That is more suitable that they will be recognized and not be harassed. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

(Qur'an, Surah Al-Ahzab [33]: 59)

Third, Islam prohibits a woman from traveling alone for a day and night's journey unless accompanied by a male guardian (mahram). The Prophet ﷺ said:

“It is not permissible for a woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day to travel for one day and one night without a mahram.”

(Hadith narrated by Muslim)

Fourth, Islam forbids *khalwah*, i.e., seclusion between a man and a woman who are not mahram. The Prophet ﷺ said:

“No man should be alone with a woman unless she is accompanied by her mahram.”

(Hadith narrated by Bukhari)

Fifth, Islam forbids women from leaving their homes without their husband's permission, as the husband has a legal right over his wife. If a wife leaves without consent, it is considered sinful (*nusyuz*), and she forfeits her right to financial support.

Sixth, Islam encourages the segregation of men and women in specific spaces. Women should ideally live among women, and men among men. In mosques, schools, and public places, Islam has emphasized separation. Women are to form prayer rows behind men in mosques and should avoid mixing with men in crowded areas such as markets and streets. Their social lives are encouraged to revolve around other women or mahram men.

Seventh, Islam permits cooperation between men and women only in public affairs (*mu'amalat*), not in private or intimate social interactions such as non-mahram visits. Cooperation is meant to fulfill rights and responsibilities, not to develop unnecessary emotional or sexual relationships.

These rulings ensure that male-female interactions stay within the bounds of purposeful, public cooperation and do not deviate toward sexual attraction or unlawful relationships. By following these legal guidelines, Islam solves issues that arise from the desires and needs of both genders, covering matters such as financial support, children's rights, marriage, and more. The solution lies in limiting interactions strictly to their lawful objectives and avoiding intimacy between non-mahram men and women.

Despite adherence to these laws, violations may still occur. Islam therefore establishes firm punishments for those who break its laws—penalties that are determined by divine law, not by human desire.

For example, in the case of adultery (zina), Islam distinguishes between two categories of offenders:

1. Muhsan – those who are mature, sane, free, and have previously engaged in lawful intercourse (i.e., married).
2. Ghayr Muhsan – those who have never been married.

The punishment for a muhsan is stoning to death (rajm), while for a ghayr muhsan, it is 100 lashes and one year of exile (Rasjid, 2019).

Allah says in the Qur'an:

“The woman and the man guilty of fornication, flog each one of them with a hundred stripes. Let not compassion withhold you from carrying out Allah’s law, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment.”

(Qur'an, Surah An-Nur [24]: 2)

The Prophet ﷺ also said:

“Take from me, take from me. Allah has provided a way for them. The unmarried among them (who commit fornication) should receive 100 lashes and one year of exile. As for the married (who commit adultery), they should be lashed 100 times and stoned to death.”

(Hadith narrated by Muslim) (Rasjid, 2019)

The enforcement of Islamic law has two primary functions:

1. As atonement for the sinner, so they are not punished again in the Hereafter.
2. As a deterrent, to prevent others from committing the same sin, instilling fear and respect for divine law (Abdurrahman, 2004).

These rulings are just a fraction of the comprehensive Islamic system. Islamic law can address all of life’s problems and remains relevant for all times. However, the Islamic social system does not stand alone; it is integrated with the economic system, education system, judiciary system, and more. Therefore, for Islamic law to truly benefit humanity, it must be implemented completely and comprehensively—by individuals, society, and especially by the state. Only then can the full blessings of this divine system be realized

(Iskandar, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the rise of free social interaction in Indonesia is influenced by various factors. First, at the individual level, weak faith and limited religious knowledge make people easily drawn into destructive social behavior. Second, environmental influences—family, school, and broader society—play a significant role. Third, the unfiltered and unrestricted use of social media contributes to the normalization of immoral behavior. Fourth, the role of the state in enforcing effective laws is crucial yet often insufficient.

As a comprehensive way of life, Islam provides a complete set of timeless regulations for human conduct, including guidelines to prevent and address the issue of free social interaction. Generally, Islam calls upon every Muslim to increase piety (taqwa) and seek knowledge. More specifically, Islamic teachings outline clear rules regarding male-female interaction, such as lowering the gaze, proper modest dress, prohibitions on seclusion (khalwah) and unnecessary mixing, travel restrictions for women without a mahram, and other protective measures. These laws have proven highly effective in preventing immoral conduct.

Therefore, the author offers the following suggestions to various stakeholders:

1. Individuals should strive to strengthen their faith, pursue religious knowledge, and seek healthy environments that protect them from deviant acts.
2. Educational institutions should go beyond academic achievements by integrating religious and moral education into their curricula.
3. The government, as the entity responsible for the wellbeing of its people, must pay closer attention to the worsening social conditions and formulate policies that consider multiple perspectives—including Islamic values—as part of a holistic solution.

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