

The culture of prewedding photography in the religious and social perspectives of the Lungge Village community, Temanggung

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the practice of prewedding photography in Lungge Village and analyzes it from the perspectives of Islamic law and culture. Prewedding photography, as a modern cultural phenomenon, has emerged alongside technological advancement and globalization and has become part of the process leading to marriage for some members of society. This research employs a qualitative approach using interviews and literature review to explore the background, objectives, and views of the community and religious scholars regarding prewedding photography. The findings indicate that the people of Lungge Village engage in prewedding photography for various purposes, including documentation, public announcement, complementing wedding invitations, and adapting to contemporary trends. Nevertheless, prewedding photography is not regarded as obligatory or recommended, but rather as optional. From the perspective of Islamic law, scholars from Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and local religious figures generally consider prewedding photography to be mubāḥ (permissible). However, its legal status may change to ḥarām (prohibited) if the practice violates Islamic principles, such as exposing awrah, physical contact, khalwat (seclusion), or intimate poses between prospective spouses prior to a valid marriage contract. Therefore, prewedding photography is viewed as conditional and must be carried out with caution (ihtiyāt), in accordance with Islamic ethics, and with objectives that do not lead to harm. This study concludes that prewedding photography, as a product of modern cultural acculturation, may be accepted in Islam as long as it does not contradict Islamic values and continues to uphold the sanctity of marriage as an act of worship.

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Introduction

Rapid technological advancement has increasingly shaped human behavior, sometimes fostering excessive dependence that leads to what may be described as intellectual passivity. This dependency gradually weakens critical and reflective thinking, blurring the distinction between what is ethically right and wrong. Over time, such conditions may result in the erosion of moral and ethical values. Moreover, some individuals begin to lose sensitivity toward noble and sacred values in life, including spiritual and humanitarian principles. Immersed in an instant and materialistic lifestyle promoted by technological progress, modern society often evaluates itself and its surroundings primarily from a practical standpoint, while neglecting the ethical and religious dimensions that should serve as fundamental foundations of life. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that without documentary photography, visual records of significant events in human history would not exist (Rafly Abimanyu, 2025).

Religion, on the other hand, upholds profound sacred values, one of which is clearly manifested in the teachings on marriage. In Islam, marriage is regarded as an act of worship recommended (sunnah) by Allah SWT and applies to all beings created in pairs. Human beings are believed to be created with their life partners as part of the perfection of human nature (fitrah). A marriage is considered legally valid in Islam only when its essential pillars and conditions are fulfilled. Without meeting these requirements, a marriage holds no legitimate legal status within Islamic law.

The phenomenon of prewedding photography is not limited to urban areas (Alfansuri, 2024) but has spread to rural regions, including Lungge Village. Notably, even communities with strong religious orientations have begun to participate in this trend, raising concerns among religious scholars (ulama). This situation underscores the importance of exploring the views and attitudes of ulama, who play a central role in guiding society. As moral and religious authorities, ulama function as the frontline in preserving the purity of Islamic teachings and filtering external cultural influences that may threaten long-established Islamic values. Within this discourse, differing opinions exist: some ulama permit prewedding photography, while others prohibit it on the grounds that it may involve elements of ikhtilat (free mixing between non-mahram men and women) and khalwat (seclusion) (Alfansuri, 2024).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the phenomenon of prewedding photography in Lungge Village by understanding the social background of the community engaging in this practice and analyzing the religious perspectives of ulama regarding it. Through these religious viewpoints, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper public understanding of ethical boundaries and appropriate attitudes toward foreign cultural practices, ensuring their alignment with Islamic values.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method using a case study approach. This approach is selected because the research focuses on examining a phenomenon in depth, detail, and within its specific social context. The case study design enables the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practice of prewedding photography culture and the meanings attributed to it by the actors and socio-religious authorities in the research setting. According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research is a method used to investigate objects in their natural conditions, where the researcher serves as the key instrument. Data collection techniques are conducted through triangulation, combining multiple methods, while data analysis is inductive in nature and emphasizes meaning rather than generalization. In line with this view, qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of spoken and written words, as well as observable behaviors of the research subjects. Moleong emphasizes that qualitative research is conducted rigorously to achieve a thorough, detailed, and focused understanding of a particular organization, institution, or social phenomenon. Therefore, this study aims to explore and collect in-depth information regarding the culture of prewedding photography from the perspectives of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) scholars, Muhammadiyah scholars, and community leaders in Lungge Village. In the data collection process, this study employs several techniques, including in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. The use of multiple data collection methods is intended to obtain valid and comprehensive data, as well as to strengthen the research findings through data triangulation.

Results

The practice of prewedding photography in Lungge Village, Temanggung

Photography is a form of image-making intended to document everyday life, particularly the most significant moments in human existence, including wedding-related documentation such as walīmah (Rafly Abimanyu, 2025). In Islamic tradition, the walīmah of marriage is a Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, aimed at publicly announcing the marriage to the wider community. Along with the development of time, the form of the wedding walīmah has undergone changes from one period to another, including the emergence of the prewedding photography phenomenon, which has become widely popular among society. Photography functions as a medium to record or document events and experiences (Zwageri, 2023).

Based on the author's research involving a married couple who conducted a prewedding photo session in Lungge Village, several data were obtained explaining the background of prospective brides and grooms in undertaking prewedding photography. Among the findings are insights into how the people of Lungge Village first became familiar with and interested in prewedding photo sessions. As human civilization progresses, cultural patterns and traditions have changed, influencing social behavior. Cultural theory explains that individual behavior can be shaped by the cultural patterns in which individuals are situated. Through the internalization of these cultural patterns, individuals acquire experiences that form a way of life oriented toward seeking pleasure and avoiding discomfort.

These factors form the basis for couples in Lungge Village who choose to engage in prewedding photography. However, in practice, the author did not find any obligation requiring prospective brides and grooms to conduct prewedding photo sessions. Moreover, based on interviews with parents and individuals who had undertaken prewedding photography, all respondents agreed that prewedding photography is not a mandatory practice. This is because prewedding photography does not constitute part of the syar'i (conditions) or rukn (pillars) of marriage in Islamic law, nor is it required by state regulations. Nevertheless, in practice, although prewedding photography is not obligatory, several subjects explained that it is still considered necessary as a means of commemorating an important moment in life. Someone informant, stated that prewedding photography is not governed by any rule that mandates its implementation; however, from a personal perspective, it is regarded as worthwhile due to its perceived benefits. Therefore, considering the significant role of photographers in producing prewedding photographs, photographers are advised to pay close attention to Islamic ethical values so that the resulting images do not conflict with Islamic syar'i'ah. In this way, prewedding photography can provide benefits while avoiding elements of mađarat (harm).

Discussion

1. An Analysis of the Views of Lungge Religious Scholars on Prewedding Photography

Every individual possesses inherent potential, just as every educational or social institution has its own potential, whether in terms of human resources or educational capacity. Within the tradition of *ijtihād*, determining legal rulings for new or emerging issues naturally gives rise to differences of opinion among religious scholars (ulama). This diversity of opinion is also evident in the perspectives of the ulama of Lungge Village regarding the legal status of prewedding photography. Based on the author's research conducted with a Lungge religious scholar identified by the initials HF, differences of opinion were found in responding to the phenomenon of prewedding photography. Some scholars strongly reject the practice, while others permit it under certain conditions. The differing opinions of the ulama in Lungge Village are presented as follows:

a. Opinions Permitting Prewedding Photography

Some scholars permit prewedding photography under specific circumstances, particularly after the marriage contract (akad) has been concluded. However, opinions differ when the photo session is conducted prior to the akad. Within this group, some scholars completely prohibit prewedding photography, while others allow it with strict limitations. These views can be categorized based on the timing of the photo session:

b. Prewedding Photography After the Akad

From the perspective of Islamic law, prewedding photography falls within the realm of contemporary jurisprudence (*fiqh al-mu'āşirah*), for which no explicit textual evidence directly regulates its practice. However, within *uṣūl al-fiqh*, it is established that "the original ruling regarding conditions in *mu'āmalāt* is permissibility, unless there is evidence that prohibits it."

Moreover, human society continuously experiences social and cultural transformation that cannot be avoided across generations. Consequently, it is unsurprising that the phenomenon of prewedding photography has emerged within Muslim communities. What must be carefully considered is how such new cultural practices can be harmonized with Islamic law. As stated in a well-known legal maxim: "Preserve beneficial traditions of the past and adopt new

developments that are better." This principle implies that old customs should not be abandoned entirely, nor should new practices be rejected outright. Rather, beneficial and *maṣlaḥah*-oriented elements of new cultural practices may be adopted and integrated appropriately. Therefore, prewedding photography need not be completely rejected; rather, its substance and implementation must be regulated.

According to members of the Lungge Village community, prewedding photography is often applied within the context of the *walimah* (wedding reception). As a form of marital celebration, its underlying purpose (*maqāṣid*) is to help invited guests easily recognize who is getting married and their family background. Including prewedding photographs on wedding invitations serves as a means of identification, which may encourage invitees to attend the event.

Nevertheless, it is essential to avoid elements in prewedding photography that could lead to pornography or provoke negative perceptions within society, such as overly intimate poses or attire that does not comply with Islamic standards, as outlined in Q.S. al-*Aḥzāb* (33):59. Based on this perspective, the author concludes that prewedding photography conducted by couples who have already completed the *akad* is permissible (*ḥalāl*). However, its implementation must adhere to Islamic ethical boundaries. Although certain physical expressions may be lawful between legally married couples, public exposure to such images may provoke negative thoughts among viewers. Furthermore, if the clothing worn does not properly cover the *'awrah*, or is excessively tight or revealing, the ruling may shift from permissible to *makrūh* or even *ḥarām*.

c. Prewedding Photography Before the Akad

As long as certain boundaries are maintained, some scholars allow prewedding photography prior to the *akad*, particularly when its purpose is limited to facilitating public recognition of the prospective bride and groom through wedding invitations.

From the explanations provided by Lungge scholars, it can be understood that greater emphasis is placed on the perceived benefits of including

prewedding photographs in wedding invitations, aligning with the primary objective of the walīmah: to publicly announce a marriage. However, Islamic regulations concerning interactions between non-mahram men and women stipulate that mixing (ikhtilāt) is only permitted in cases of necessity or emergency. According to the author, the inclusion of photographs on wedding invitations does not constitute an emergency situation. Therefore, the author tends to discourage prewedding photography conducted before the akad. As an alternative decorative element for invitations, the author suggests using caricature illustrations instead of photographs in such circumstances.

2. An Islamic Legal Review of Prewedding Photography

The legal status of prewedding photography is not explicitly regulated in either the Qur'an or the Hadith. Nevertheless, as an object of fiqh discourse, photography—which is closely related to prewedding photography—has been discussed and its legal position determined by earlier Muslim scholars. One of the most well-known opinions is the fatwa issued by the Mufti of the Egyptian Kingdom, Shaykh Muhammad Bakhit al-Muṭī‘ī, which affirms that photography is permissible (mubāh). This view was later reinforced by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who stated that “photography is permissible, as long as the subject being photographed is lawful.”

From these scholarly opinions, it can be understood that prewedding photography, as a product of photographic practice, is subject to certain criteria in Islamic law, determining whether it falls within permissible or prohibited forms. Accordingly, this study examines the issue through several Islamic legal theories. By considering the perceived benefits (maṣlahah) and harms (maṣarar) articulated by both the Lungge community and its religious scholars, the analysis employs the framework of maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah.

In Islamic law, every human action is evaluated based on fundamental legal categories: ḥalāl, ḥarām, makrūh, mubāh, or mandūb (recommended). This evaluative framework also applies to evolving social and cultural phenomena, including the practice of prewedding photography, which has become increasingly popular among young Muslim couples. Prewedding photography refers to the act of photographing engaged couples prior to the formal marriage contract (akad nikāh). Typically, these photographs are used for wedding invitations, souvenirs, or widely shared through social media.

However, this practice has generated various legal responses within Islamic jurisprudence, as it may involve violations of shar‘ī boundaries governing interactions between unmarried men and women (Lisa, 2023).

Islam stipulates that men and women who have not entered into a valid marriage contract are considered ajnabiyy (non-mahram strangers), and their interactions are therefore restricted—particularly those that may lead to temptation or moral impropriety (fitnah). In this context, prewedding photography often features intimate poses such as holding hands, embracing, or other forms of physical contact, as well as attire that does not conform to Islamic guidelines, including tight, transparent, or revealing clothing. In Surah al-Nūr (24):30–31, Allah SWT explicitly commands believing men and women to lower their gaze, guard their chastity, and conceal their ‘awrah. Allah says:

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts... And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts and not to display their adornment except what is ordinarily apparent thereof.” This verse serves as a foundational legal basis for maintaining proper conduct between non-mahram men and women. Furthermore, Allah states in Surah al-Isrā’ (17):32: “And do not approach adultery. Indeed, it is an abomination and an evil path.”

Scholars explain that the prohibition “do not approach adultery” extends beyond the act itself to include all behaviors that may lead toward it. This includes ikhtilāt (free mixing between non-mahram men and women) and khalwah (seclusion between a man and a woman who are not mahram) (Alfansuri, 2024). From a fiqh perspective, the majority of scholars agree that activities involving physical interaction between non-mahram men and women—including photographing poses that suggest intimacy—are prohibited (ḥarām). Moreover, if prewedding photography creates opportunities for khalwah or unlawful ikhtilāt, it contradicts the principle of *sadd al-dharā’i*, which aims to prevent harm (mafsadah) before it occurs. Thus, while the original ruling (*al-asl*) of photography is permissibility (mubāh), its legal status may change depending on how it is practiced. This aligns with the well-known principle of *uṣūl al-fiqh*:

Al-*asl* fī al-*ashyā’* al-*ibāhah* mā lam yarid dalīl ‘alā taḥrīmihā—the original ruling of all things is permissibility unless there is evidence indicating prohibition.

Nevertheless, some contemporary scholars argue that prewedding photography may be permitted under strict conditions, such as maintaining proper

covering of the 'awrah, avoiding physical contact, refraining from intimate poses, and conducting the photo session under the supervision of a mahram or a trustworthy third party. Under such circumstances, the practice is viewed as not violating sharī boundaries, and its documentary purpose may be regarded as a socially tolerated need, provided that it does not contradict religious principles. Therefore, prewedding photography must be assessed contextually rather than categorically deemed unlawful. Furthermore, marriage in Islam is regarded as a solemn and binding covenant known as mithaqan ghalīzān, as stated in Article 2 of the Indonesian Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), which defines marriage as a strong contract intended to obey Allah and whose implementation constitutes an act of worship (Perpustakaan Nasional RI, 2011). Marriage is not merely a social bond but a sacred ritual imbued with spiritual significance. Consequently, all activities associated with marriage—including preparatory stages such as prewedding photography—should reflect values of dignity, purity, and submission to Islamic law. Practices that undermine the sanctity of marriage prior to the akad, such as immodest poses or exposing the 'awrah, compromise the devotional essence inherent in marriage.

In Islam, the process of mutual acquaintance between prospective spouses is encouraged through *ta'āruf*, a form of interaction conducted within religious boundaries, rather than through unrestricted socialization that may approach immoral conduct. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ never exemplified free interaction between prospective spouses prior to marriage. Therefore, prewedding photography that violates these boundaries is inconsistent with the Prophetic ethos and Islamic etiquette. Considering legal, moral, and social dimensions, the ruling on prewedding photography in Islam is conditional. When conducted in strict adherence to Islamic principles, it may be tolerated as a form of cultural expression. However, when it violates fundamental sharī norms, it becomes prohibited (ḥarām). Muslims are therefore urged to exercise wisdom and discernment in engaging with modern cultural practices, ensuring that Islamic law remains the

primary reference in all forms of cultural adaptation. This aligns with the fiqh maxim:

Al-muḥāfaẓah ‘alā al-qadīm al-ṣāliḥ wa al-akhdh bi al-jadīd al-aṣlah—to preserve beneficial traditions of the past and adopt new practices that are better (Hasan Ayyub, 2009).

From an Islamic legal perspective, the growing trend of prewedding photography among Muslim communities as part of the journey toward marriage raises serious fiqh-related concerns. Many scholars regard the practice as unlawful (*ḥarām*) due to its inherent violations of the ethical boundaries governing interactions between non-mahram men and women. Prewedding photo sessions are often conducted in relaxed settings involving physical proximity, seclusion, or intimate gestures such as embracing or holding hands, all of which are religiously impermissible without a valid marriage contract. Such practices contradict Islamic teachings that emphasize strict boundaries between men and women prior to lawful marriage (Helmi, 2016). These activities constitute *ikhtilāṭ*, defined as the mixing of non-mahram men and women in a shared space involving interaction without *sharī’i* justification (Alfansuri, 2024).

Conclusion

The practice of prewedding photography in Lungge Village is carried out for various purposes, including informing the wider community, documenting the wedding moment, complementing wedding invitations (*walīmah*), and adapting to modern cultural developments. Although considered important by some members of the community, prewedding photography is not viewed as an essential necessity and remains optional. In practice, the concept and style of prewedding photos are largely determined by the photographer rather than the couple themselves. The views of religious scholars in Lungge Village regarding prewedding photography vary, yet they generally emphasize the need for caution (*iḥtīyāṭ*). The majority of scholars hold that the original ruling of prewedding photography is *mubāḥ* (permissible), but it may become prohibited if it violates Islamic legal principles, such as exposing ‘awrah, physical contact, *khalwah* (seclusion), or intimate poses prior to a valid marriage contract. This is because couples who are not yet legally married remain *ajnabiyy* (non-mahram) to one another and are therefore required to observe proper

boundaries in accordance with Islamic teachings. Furthermore, scholars stress that new cultural practices, including prewedding photography influenced by global culture, may be accepted as long as they do not contradict Islamic values. Accordingly, prewedding photography is permissible only when it upholds Islamic etiquette, serves a legitimate purpose, and does not lead to harm. Thus, the scholars' stance toward prewedding photography is selective and contextual, reflecting an effort to preserve the sanctity of marriage amid the challenges of cultural modernization.

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