

Social Labeling, Power, and Deviancy Amplification: Community Stigmatization of Migrant Residents in Adultery Cases in Banda Aceh

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Abstract

Existing research on social labeling in adultery (*zinā*) cases in Aceh remains limited, particularly in exploring how local power dynamics shape processes of stigmatization. This article examines how the social labeling of migrant residents (*ureung tamong*) accused of *zinā* operates as a mechanism of social control that reinforces the dominance of local residents (*asoe lhok*), while media exposure intensifies stigma through deviancy amplification. Employing a legal anthropological approach, the article is based on three months of fieldwork in Banda Aceh, involving participant observation, in-depth interviews with ten key informants—including village authorities, community leaders, law enforcement officers, and local residents—and analysis of relevant online and social media content. The findings reveal that social labeling in *zinā* cases is driven not only by religious and customary norms but also by underlying community power structures, rendering *ureung tamong* significantly more vulnerable to public exposure and social sanctions than *asoe lhok*. Additionally, digital media exacerbates the amplification of deviance, resulting in prolonged social exclusion of individuals who have already faced customary or formal legal punishment. The persistence of digital records further obstructs their reintegration into society. This article contends that social labeling functions not merely as a tool of moral regulation but also as a strategy for maintaining the dominance of powerful groups within the community. It concludes by calling for more inclusive media practices and legal policies to prevent the prolonged social and psychological marginalization of individuals in *zinā* cases who have fulfilled their legal obligations.

[Penelitian mengenai pelabelan sosial dalam kasus perzinahan di Aceh masih terbatas, khususnya dalam menelaah bagaimana dinamika kekuasaan lokal membentuk proses stigmatisasi. Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana pelabelan sosial terhadap pendatang (*ureung tamong*) yang diduga melakukan *zina* berfungsi sebagai mekanisme kontrol sosial yang memperkuat dominasi penduduk lokal (*asoe lhok*), serta bagaimana eksposur media memperparah stigma melalui amplifikasi penyimpangan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan antropologi hukum, artikel ini didasarkan pada kerja lapangan selama tiga bulan di Banda Aceh, yang meliputi observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan sepuluh informan kunci—terdiri dari aparat desa, tokoh masyarakat, aparat penegak hukum, dan warga lokal—serta analisis terhadap konten

media daring dan media sosial yang relevan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pelabelan sosial dalam kasus zina tidak semata-mata dipengaruhi oleh norma agama dan adat, tetapi juga oleh struktur kekuasaan di dalam komunitas, sehingga ureung tamong jauh lebih rentan terhadap eksposur publik dan sanksi sosial dibandingkan asoe lhok. Selain itu, media digital memperburuk amplifikasi penyimpangan, yang berujung pada pengucilan sosial berkepanjangan terhadap individu yang telah menjalani sanksi adat maupun hukum formal. Keberadaan jejak digital yang terus bertaban semakin menghambat proses reintegrasi sosial mereka. Artikel ini menegaskan bahwa pelabelan sosial berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai alat regulasi moral, tetapi juga sebagai strategi untuk mempertahankan dominasi kelompok yang berkuasa di dalam komunitas. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini merekomendasikan adanya kebijakan media dan hukum yang lebih inklusif guna mencegah marginalisasi sosial dan psikologis yang berkelanjutan terhadap individu dalam kasus zina yang telah menjalani sanksinya.]

Keywords: Adultery, Banda Aceh, Qanun Jinayat, Social Labeling, Stigmatization.

Introduction

Adultery (*zina*) constitutes one of the most serious criminal offenses in Islamic criminal law, requiring stringent evidentiary standards before any punishment can be imposed.¹ Classical Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) stipulates that the act of *zina* must be proven either by the voluntary confession of the offender or through the testimony of four reliable and just male witnesses.² However, in practice, these stringent requirements are often overlooked by segments of Muslim societies that prioritize social sanctions and extrajudicial punishments, bypassing formal legal procedures.³ This phenomenon reflects a persistent gap between normative legal principles and their actual social implementation, particularly within communities that uphold customary laws and social norms over the formal tenets of Islamic law.⁴ Numerous studies have demonstrated that interpretations of *zina* vary across Muslim-majority countries, influenced by diverse socio-political and cultural contexts.⁵ Such variations contribute to inconsistencies in the application of sharia (Islamic law), occasionally leading to conflicts between religious norms, state laws, and international human rights standards. Although the national criminal code does not fully incorporate Islamic criminal law in Indonesia, several autonomous regions, such as Aceh, have enacted the *Qanun Jinayat* (Islamic criminal codes) as part of their positive law. Nevertheless, the enforcement of these

¹ N. M. Ngema and D. Iyer, "Penalty for Committing Fornication & Adultery (Zina) in Islamic Law as a Violation of Freedom from Torture," *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development* 15, no. 6 (2022): 11–18.

² See: Mhd Rasidin et al., "The Mapping Verses and Application of the Linguistic Approach and Ushul Fiqh Toward the Law of Adultery," *El-Mashlahab* 14, no. 1 (March 25, 2024): 21–42; Luqman Zakariyah, "Confession and Retraction: The Application of Islamic Legal Maxims in Safiyyatu and Amina's Cases in Northern Nigeria," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30, no. 2 (June 2010): 251–63.

³ Mizaj Iskandar et al., "Extrajudicial Trend in Sharia Law Enforcement: Customary Justice or Vigilantism?," *Petita: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah* 9, no. 2 (November 1, 2024): 624–40.

⁴ Nailur Rahmi and Rinta Okta Henny, "Sanksi Adat tentang Larangan Perkawinan terhadap Orang Sesuku dengan Pelaku Zina," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 5, no. 2 (November 30, 2020): 329–42.

⁵ See: Manisuli Senyonjo, "Judicial Imposition of the Death Penalty and Corporal Punishment in Iran and Saudi Arabia for Unlawful Consensual Sexual Relations under Shari'a: A Human Rights Critique," *International Human Rights Law Review* 13, no. 2 (December 5, 2024): 265–312; Sudarti Sudarti, "Perbandingan Hukum Pidana Perzinaan di Malaysia dan Brunei Darussalam," *El-Mashlahab* 11, no. 1 (June 28, 2021): 78–96.

qanun (local sharia-based bylaws) often presents new challenges in reconciling religious norms with national and international legal standards, particularly regarding the protection of individual rights for those accused of *zīnā*.⁶ Accordingly, further examination is warranted to analyze how divergent interpretations of Islamic criminal law affect justice and legal protection for individuals implicated in *zīnā* cases.

This issue becomes even more complex when societal responses extend beyond the alleged perpetrator of *zīnā*, encompassing individuals merely suspected of the offense. Such individuals are frequently subjected to social condemnation and punishment without recourse to lawful procedures. In Kumpang, a village in Banda Aceh, *ureung tamong* (migrant residents or temporary outsiders) suspected of committing *zīnā* have faced a range of extrajudicial punishments, including being doused with sewage water, physical assault, public humiliation, and exposure through local media.⁷ In many cases, however, the alleged actions do not constitute *zīnā* per se but rather fall under offenses such as *kehalwat* (illicit proximity between the sexes) or *ikehtilāf* (physical intimacy or sexual conduct between unmarried individuals), as delineated in the *Qanun Jinayat*.⁸ Such acts of vigilantism against *ureung tamong* are not without socio-cultural rationale. For the *asoe lhok* (local residents), *zīnā* is perceived not only as an individual sin but also as a threat to the social harmony of the village (*gampong*).⁹ Within this context, the *asoe lhok* claim moral authority to safeguard the village's reputation by ensuring that no violations of sharia law—especially by outsiders—occur within their territory.¹⁰ However, this practice starkly contrasts the Islamic legal principle that upholds the protection of individual dignity, even in cases where the offense is proven.¹¹ Moreover, it disregards the stringent evidentiary requirements in the *Qanun Jinayat*.¹²

The enforcement of sharia in Aceh has long served as a mechanism of social engineering, intended to shape community behavior.¹³ Nonetheless, previous studies reveal a wide range of societal responses to sharia violations—ranging from vigilantism and the application of customary law to outright resistance against sharia itself. For instance, research

⁶ See: M. Djawas et al., “Harmonization of State, Custom, and Islamic Law in Aceh: Perspective of Legal Pluralism,” *Hasanuddin Law Review* 10, no. 1 (2024): 64–82; Farkhani et al., “Legal Protection of Minority Rights: Study on the Implementation of Qanun Number 6 of 2014 Concerning the Jinayat Law in Langsa City, Aceh Special Region Province,” *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 17, no. 2 (2023): 215–32; Mutiara Fahmi et al., “Punishment for Zina Muḥṣān Offenders in Aceh Qanun No. 6 of 2014 in the Perspective of Fiqh al-Siyāsah,” *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 1 (June 27, 2022): 346–68.

⁷ Ana, Personal Communication with a Community Figure, August 31, 2022.

⁸ See: “Aceh Qanun No. 6 of 2014 on Jinayat Law,” Article 1; Muhammad Adib Alfarisi et al., “Negotiating Customary Law and Fiqh Norms: The Transformation of the Mepahukh Tradition in the Indigenous Marriage Practices of the Alas People in Southeast Aceh,” *Indonesian Journal of Sharia and Socio-Legal Studies* 1, no. 1 (2025): 72–93.

⁹ Abdullah, Personal Communication with the Village Elder (*Tetua Gampong*), September 4, 2022; Zahrul, Personal Communication with the Village Elder (*Tetua Gampong*), September 4, 2022.

¹⁰ Aslam Nur et al., *Ensiklopedia Kebudayaan Aceh*, 3rd ed. (Banda Aceh: Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Aceh, 2018), 12.

¹¹ ‘Alī Jum‘ah, *Wa Qāla al-Imām al-Mabādī’ al-‘Uẓmā* (Cairo: Dār al-Wābil al-Shaybī, 2010), 96.

¹² Yogi Febriandi, Muhammad Ansor, and Nursiti Nursiti, “Seeking Justice Through Qanun Jinayat: The Narratives of Female Victims of Sexual Violence in Aceh, Indonesia,” *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 9, no. 1 (July 29, 2021): 103–40.

¹³ R. Michael Feener, “Social Engineering through Sharī‘a: Islamic Law and State-Directed Da‘wa in Contemporary Aceh,” *Islamic Law and Society* 19, no. 3 (2012): 275–311.

by Faisal Husen Ismail et al. identifies dissatisfaction with the formal judicial system, experiences of impunity, and collective enthusiasm for preserving social norms as key drivers of vigilantism against individuals accused of violating sharia.¹⁴ Similarly, findings by Sardjana Orba Manullang et al. highlight challenges in achieving justice in the implementation of *'uqūbāt* (Islamic criminal punishments),¹⁵ while Mulizar et al. reveal that Acehese society enforces sharia not only through the *Qanun Jinayat* but also via diverse customary norms that vary across regions.¹⁶ Although the formal authority to enforce sharia lies with the state, David Kloos's research underscores that local communities and vigilante groups frequently usurp this role, at times employing violence under the pretext of protecting public morality.¹⁷ However, the implementation of sharia in Aceh is far from universally accepted. Kloos's ethnographic study demonstrates that many Acehese Muslims engage in a form of daily negotiation with sharia enforcement.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Benjamin Otto and Jan Michiel Otto observe that when offenses are committed by *asoe lhok*, cases are often resolved amicably within families, avoiding the public exposure commonly experienced by *ureung tamong*.¹⁹ Reza Idria further notes that sharia—originally deployed as a political strategy to pacify separatist movements—has now become a target of criticism from intellectuals, women's rights activists, and marginalized groups, including the punk community, who perceive it as detrimental to their rights and freedoms.²⁰

Although previous research has extensively examined vigilantism, customary law, and resistance to sharia law, a significant gap exists in understanding how social identity shapes the enforcement of sharia norms. This article, therefore, focuses on how *asoe lhok* perceive and treat *ureung tamong* suspected of committing *zīnā*. The central argument advanced here is that the stigmatization and criminalization of *zīnā* in Aceh, particularly against *ureung tamong*, are not solely the product of sharia enforcement but are also driven by social labeling processes whereby *asoe lhok* assume the role of moral guardians of the village. This stigmatization often precipitates acts of social exclusion, vigilantism, and public punishment that exceed the formal provisions of the *Qanun Jinayat*. Consequently, this study seeks to

¹⁴ Faisal Husen Ismail et al., "Vigilantism among the Community in Aceh Against the Accused of Violating the Shariah Criminal Law," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 17, no. 2 (December 31, 2022): 531–53.

¹⁵ Sardjana Orba Manullang et al., "Implementation of Uqubat: An Effort to Minimize Khalwat Crimes in Aceh," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 24, no. 1 (June 29, 2024): 49–60.

¹⁶ Mulizar Mulizar, Asmuni Asmuni, and Dhiauddin Tanjung, "Maqashid Sharia Perspective of Legal Sanction for Khalwat Actors in Aceh," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 7, no. 1 May (May 23, 2022): 161–82.

¹⁷ David Kloos, "In the Name of Syariah? Vigilante Violence, Territoriality, and Moral Authority in Aceh, Indonesia," *Indonesia*, no. 98 (2014): 59–90.

¹⁸ David Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims: Religious Authority and Ethical Improvement in Aceh, Indonesia* (Princeton University Press, 2018): 189.

¹⁹ Benjamin Otto and Jan Michiel Otto, "Shari'a Police in Banda Aceh: Enforcement of Islam-Based Regulations and People's Perceptions," in *Islam and the Limits of the State: Reconfigurations of Practice, Community and Authority in Contemporary Aceh* (Brill, 2016), 185–213.

²⁰ Reza Idria, "Tales of the Unexpected: Contesting Syari'ah Law in Aceh, Indonesia" (Dissertation, Harvard University, 2020): iii. See also: Abdul Manan and Cut Intan Salasiah, "Evaluating the Implementation of Sharia in Aceh, Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 9, no. 3 (September 30, 2021): 549–66; Syarifah Rahmatillah Aljamalulail, Faisal A. Rani, and Muazzin Muazzin, "The Politics of Law on the Fulfillment of Restitution Rights for Rape Victims Based on the Qanun Jinayat in Aceh," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (March 31, 2024): 299–316.

address a gap in the legal and sociological literature by analyzing how moral authority, rooted in local identity, influences the imposition of social sanctions against those who violate sharia norms in Banda Aceh.

Methodologically, this study adopts a legal anthropological approach through three months of fieldwork, conducted from August to October 2022 in Kumbang Village, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, with Kumbang serving as a pseudonym to protect the village's identity. Employing ethnographic methods, the article collected data through participant observations of social interactions between the *asoe lhok* and *ureung tamong*, along with in-depth interviews involving ten informants—village officials, community leaders, law enforcement officers, and local residents involved in social labeling practices. All informants' identities have been anonymized throughout the article. Additional secondary data were gathered from online news reports and social media content relevant to the cases studied. The data were analyzed qualitatively using Howard S. Becker's Labelling Theory, which explains how individuals or groups perceived as deviant are subjected to negative societal labeling and stigma, ultimately shaping public perception and social attitudes toward them.²¹ Applying this framework, the article examines how *asoe lhok* perceive and treat *ureung tamong* accused of committing *zina* and explores the socio-cultural factors influencing such attitudes.

The Legal Provisions of *Jarimah Zina* and *Khalwat* in Aceh

Aceh is the only province in Indonesia endowed with special legal authority to implement sharia, as enshrined in Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Governance of Aceh.²² The historical application of Islamic law in Aceh traces back to the late 16th and early 17th centuries during the Aceh Sultanate, when sharia regulations governed various aspects of life, including sexual conduct and relationships.²³ Within this historical and cultural context, the Acehnese developed specific local terms to describe acts of *zina*. Unlawful intercourse between an unmarried man and woman is commonly referred to as *dina* or *mukah*, while extramarital affairs involving a married individual are termed *mumukah*. Additionally, expressions such as *tamong gampong* and *meureusam* frequently appear in daily discourse to describe *zina* from Aceh's socio-cultural perspective.²⁴

Historically, scholars differ regarding the precise origins of the *rajm* (death by stoning) penalty in the Aceh Sultanate.²⁵ According to the *Rawḍat at-Ṭābirīn*, a classical Indian text, the punishment of *rajm* was imposed during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah al-Qahhar (1537–1571). The text recounts a case in 1550,²⁶ where two individuals found guilty of *zina*

²¹ Howard Saul Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (Free Press, 1966), 3.

²² Rusjdi Ali Muhammad and Syahrizal, *Landasan Filosofi Pelaksanaan Syariat Islam di Aceh*, (Banda Aceh: Dinas Syariat Islam Aceh, 2018), 10.

²³ Arskal Salim, "'Sharia from Below' in Aceh (1930s–1960s): Islamic Identity and the Right to Self-Determination with Comparative Reference to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 32, no. 92 (March 2004): 80–99.

²⁴ J. F. Holleman, ed., *Van Vollenhoven on Indonesian Adat Law*, International Law - Book Archive Pre-2000 (Leiden Boston: Brill, 1981), 114.

²⁵ Khamami Zada, "Sentuhan Adat dalam Pemberlakuan Syariat Islam di Aceh (1514-1903)," *KARSA Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 20, no. 2 (2012): 197–210.

²⁶ Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Southeast Asia as Seen from Mughal India: Tahir Muhammad's 'Immaculate Garden' (ca. 1600)," *Archipel* 70, no. 1 (2005): 209–37.

were publicly stoned to death. A similar narrative is preserved in the account of Sultan Iskandar Muda, who ordered the execution by stoning of his son, Meurah Pupok, for committing *zīnā* with a noblewoman's wife.²⁷ However, European travelers visiting Aceh in the 16th and 17th centuries observed that the Sultanate's legal system was primarily influenced by customary law and royal decrees, with *rajm* reportedly enforced only during the reign of Sultan al-Mukammil.²⁸ It suggests that while Islamic law served as a fundamental judicial reference, its implementation was shaped by the Sultanate's political dynamics and discretionary governance.²⁹

Under Acehnese customary law, *rajm* was not always practiced; alternative punishments, better aligned with social contexts, were imposed.³⁰ One known traditional punishment was *boh trieng doe bak takue*, involving the execution of adulterers by submerging them in a river using bamboo restraints until death.³¹ In the Gayo region, consensual *zīnā* is locally referred to as *due sekenak*. Sanctions for *zīnā* under Gayo customary law were progressive, depending on the degree of the offense. Minor transgressions warranted *farak*, a five-year exile, while repeat offenses resulted in *jeret naru*—permanent exile.³² Although many customary practices have waned, some communities enforce social sanctions as a moral safeguard against *zīnā*. In Aceh, *zīnā* is viewed not only as a legal transgression but also as a grave social disgrace, tarnishing familial and communal honor. Consequently, local communities often assume an active role in upholding religious and social norms, administering both customary and social sanctions on those deemed immoral.³³

As part of preventive measures, the Aceh government enacted *Qanun* No. 14 of 2003 on *Khalwat* (*Mesum*). *Khalwat* (Arabic: *khalwah*) is defined as seclusion involving two or more opposite-sex adults, not bound by lawful marriage or family ties (*mahram*), engaging in private interaction potentially leading to *zīnā*.³⁴ The primary objective of this regulation is to preclude circumstances that might culminate in *zīnā*.³⁵ Accordingly, individuals apprehended for *khalwat* face discretionary punishment (*'uqūbāt ta'zīr*), ranging from three to nine lashes and fines between IDR 2,500,000 and IDR 10,000,000. Facilitators of *khalwat* also incur penalties, including imprisonment for two to six months and fines ranging from IDR 5,000,000 to IDR 15,000,000.³⁶ The enforcement of *khalwat* regulations reflects the underlying belief that such conduct constitutes a gateway to *zīnā*, warranting stringent social control. Moreover, these

²⁷ Ali Abubakar and Zulkarnain Lubis, *Hukum Jinayat Aceh: Sebuah Pengantar*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2019), 23.

²⁸ Ayang Utriza Yakin, "Hukum Adat vis a vis Hukum Islam di Aceh: Tinjauan Sejarah Hukum di Kesultanan Aceh Tahun 1516-1688 M," *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan* 38, no. 2 (June 3, 2008): 237–76.

²⁹ See: Arskal Salim, "Dynamic Legal Pluralism in Indonesia: Contested Legal Orders in Contemporary Aceh," *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 42, no. 61 (January 2010): 1–29; Faisal A Rani, Fikri Fikri, and Mahfud Mahfud, "Islam and National Law: A Formal Legal Review on Sharia Laws in Aceh," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 20, no. 1 (May 28, 2020): 47–57.

³⁰ Salma Salma et al., "The Other Side of the History of the Formulation of Aceh Jinayat Qanun," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 83–110.

³¹ Moehammad Hoesin, *Adat Atjeh* (Banda Aceh: Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Propinsi Daerah Istimewa Atjeh, 1970), 183.

³² Achmad Surya and Hasan Basri, "Eksistensi Sanksi Adat Jeret Naru dalam Masyarakat Gayo di Kabupaten Aceh Tengah," *Masalah-Masalah Hukum* 49, no. 4 (October 29, 2020): 359–68.

³³ Hoesin, *Adat Atjeh*, 183.

³⁴ "Aceh *Qanun* No. 14 of 2003 on *Khalwat* (*Mesum*)," Articles 1-2.

³⁵ "Aceh *Qanun* No. 14 of 2003 on *Khalwat* (*Mesum*)," Article 3.

³⁶ "Aceh *Qanun* No. 14 of 2003 on *Khalwat* (*Mesum*)," Article 22.

provisions mirror the Acehnese society's concern over liberal social interactions perceived as threats to Islamic morality and social norms.³⁷

The legal provisions governing *jarimah zinā* are detailed in *Qanun Aceh No. 6 of 2014 on Jinayat Law*. This *qanun* defines *zinā* as consensual sexual intercourse between a man and a woman outside a lawful marriage.³⁸ *Zinā* is classified as a *jarimah* (Islamic criminal offense)³⁹ because it contravenes sharia and is punishable by *hudūd* (fixed punishments prescribed by God) or *ta'zīr* (discretionary punishment).⁴⁰ Under this *qanun*, proven offenders are subjected to *'uqūbāt hudūd*, specifically 100 lashes. Repeat offenses warrant enhanced penalties, including fines equivalent to 120 grams of pure gold or imprisonment of up to 12 months. Additionally, individuals or business entities found providing facilities for *zinā* are subject to severe sanctions: up to 100 lashes, fines reaching 1,000 grams of pure gold, and imprisonment of up to 100 months.⁴¹ Distinctly, the *Qanun Jinayat* does not differentiate between *zinā muḥṣan* (adultery committed by a married person) and *zinā ghayr muḥṣan* (adultery by an unmarried person), diverging from classical *fiqh*.⁴² In traditional *fiqh*, *zinā muḥṣan* incurs the death penalty by stoning, while *zinā ghayr muḥṣan* is punishable by 100 lashes and exile (*taghrīb*).⁴³

Given the severity of the *hudūd* punishment, evidentiary standards for establishing *zinā* under the *Qanun Jinayat* are equally stringent.⁴⁴ Accusations must be substantiated by the testimony of four credible male witnesses. Failure to meet this evidentiary threshold exposes the accuser to prosecution for *qadḡ*—a false accusation of adultery. However, in cases where a pregnant woman identifies her sexual partner, DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) testing of the newborn may serve as admissible evidence,⁴⁵ substituting the need for four witnesses.⁴⁶ Additionally, an offender's voluntary confession—sworn under oath—is admissible, provided it withstands verification by legal investigators.⁴⁷

³⁷ Ngema and Iyer, "Penalty for Committing Fornication & Adultery (Zina) in Islamic Law as a Violation of Freedom from Torture," 11–18.

³⁸ "Aceh *Qanun* No. 6 of 2014 on Jinayat Law," Article 1.

³⁹ From the perspective of punishment, classical Islamic jurists classify *jarimah* into distinct categories. If the punishment is explicitly prescribed in the textual sources (*naṣṣ*), the act is categorized as *jarimah al-ḥudūd*. Conversely, if the punishment is not specified by *naṣṣ*, it is classified as *jarimah al-ta'zīr*. See: Abū Zahrah, *Al-'Uqūbāt fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 2015), 39–43.

⁴⁰ Ira Nurliza, Syahrizal Abbas, and Zikra Juninawan, "Formulation of Criminal Sanctions against Alcohol Drinkers in the Jinayah Qanun in Aceh," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran* 22, no. 2 (December 21, 2022): 195.

⁴¹ "Aceh *Qanun* No. 6 of 2014 on Jinayat Law," Articles 33–35.

⁴² Fahmi et al., "Punishment for Zina Muḥṣan Offenders in Aceh Qanun No. 6 of 2014 in the Perspective of Fiqh al-Siyāsah," 346–68.

⁴³ See: Zahrah, *Al-'Uqūbāt fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, 101; Mutiara Fahmi et al., "Punishment for Zina Muḥṣan Offenders in Aceh Qanun No. 6 of 2014 in the Perspective of Fiqh al-Siyāsah," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 1 (June 27, 2022): 346–68.

⁴⁴ Muzakkir Muzakkir, "Dawn of Justice: Evaluating the Alignment of Women and Children in Aceh's Qanun Jinayat," *Al-Ahkam* 32, no. 2 (October 30, 2022): 141–45.

⁴⁵ See: Bukhari Ali, Nur Wulandari, and Nahara Erianti, "Status of Children Born Out of Wedlock: A Study of Constitutional Court Decision and Its Relevance to the View of Ibnu Taimiyah," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 7, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 406–26; Amal Fathullah and Muhammad Abduh, "The Relationship of Children and Their Biological Father (Comparative Study of Positive Law of Indonesia, Thailand and Jordan)," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran* 22, no. 2 (December 19, 2022): 213–30.

⁴⁶ "Aceh *Qanun* No. 6 of 2014 on Jinayat Law," Articles 43–44.

⁴⁷ "Aceh *Qanun* No. 6 of 2014 on Jinayat Law," Articles 37–42.

Prior to the enactment of the *Qanun Jinayat*, *zīnā* cases in Aceh were adjudicated under the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP, Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana), which criminalized adultery only upon complaint by an aggrieved party.⁴⁸ The core distinction between the KUHP and the *Qanun Jinayat* lies in their respective legal philosophies: the KUHP prioritizes individual rights, whereas the *Qanun Jinayat* emphasizes the enforcement of Islamic moral norms.⁴⁹ Critics argue that the *Qanun Jinayat* contravenes human rights principles and lacks alignment with national and international legal standards.⁵⁰ Conversely, proponents regard the *Qanun Jinayat* as a model for integrating Islamic law within the national legal framework, reflecting Acehnese society's living law (*recht levende*) and potentially influencing broader national legal development.⁵¹

Social Construction of Adultery Offenders: Power, Morality, and Social Labelling

According to Becker's labeling theory, an act is not inherently criminal but becomes a crime only when designated as such by those who hold social and legal authority.⁵² The theory underscores that crime is not an intrinsic quality of any behavior but rather a socially constructed category shaped by prevailing norms, laws, and power structures. In other words, what is classified as deviant or criminal depends heavily on the social context and on which group possesses the authority to define the boundary between acceptable and unlawful conduct. In the context of Kumpang Village, the *asoe lhok* possess normative and social power that enables them to determine whether an action is considered deviant. Their dominant status within the community allows them to control the discourse on morality, including decisions on who deserves social sanctions.⁵³

For the people of Kumpang, *zīnā* is understood not only as a violation of sharia law—as stipulated in the *Qanun Jinayat*—but also as a moral and customary offense that tarnishes the community's honor.⁵⁴ The community internalizes religious teachings that classify *zīnā* as

⁴⁸ See: Anton Widyanto, "Kontekstualisasi Hukuman bagi Pelaku Tindak Pidana Zina di Aceh" (Dissertation, Banda Aceh, UIN Ar-Raniry, 2013), 190; Muhammad Ishar Helmi et al., "Effectiveness of Criminal Offense Law Regarding Illegal Levies: Reforming Social Organizations within the Indonesian Legal Framework," *Volksgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Konstitusi* 7, no. 2 (2024): 411–30; Mizaj Iskandar Usman et al., "Adultery Offenses in Indonesia's New Penal Code: Examining the Influence of Islamic and Customary Law," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 24, no. 1 (2025): 73–84; Hendro Widodo et al., "Restitution as an Instrument of Justice for Victims of Domestic Sexual Violence: A Study of Positive and Islamic Law in the Contemporary Era," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 4, no. 1 (2025): 676–99.

⁴⁹ Rusjdi Ali Muhammad, "Reconciliation for the Settlement of Criminal Cases: Reactualization of Local Wisdom in Indonesian Criminal Law [Upaya Perdamaian Untuk Penyelesaian Perkara Pidana: Reaktualisasi Kearifan Lokal dalam Hukum Pidana Indonesia]," *Legitimasi: Jurnal Hukum Pidana dan Politik Hukum* 10, no. 2 (December 26, 2021): 171–88.

⁵⁰ See: Zul Anwar Ajim Harahap, Zulfan, and Muhammad Ridwan, "Analyzing the Offense of Juvenile Khalwat in Aceh: Evaluation of Qanun Number 14 of 2003 from an Islamic Legal Perspective," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 18, no. 1 (May 3, 2024): 79–94; M. M. Marpaung and H. Susetyo, "Canning: Syariah Law Versus Human Rights in Aceh, Indonesia," in *Challenges of Law and Governance in Indonesia in the Disruptive Era II* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2021), 117–28.

⁵¹ Kamarusdiana Kamarusdiana, "Qānūn Jināyat Aceh dalam Perspektif Negara Hukum Indonesia," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 16, no. 2 (December 11, 2016): 151–62.

⁵² Becker, *Outsiders*, 8–9.

⁵³ Hoesin, *Adat Atjeu*, 1.

⁵⁴ Nina, Personal Communication with a Member of the *Tuba Peut* (Village Legislative Body), September 2, 2022.

a major sin (*keabīrah*) in the sight of God, reflecting their understanding of Surah al-Isra' [17] verse 32: *wa lā taqrabū al-ẓinā* (do not even approach adultery).⁵⁵ Many locals interpret this verse strictly, extending the prohibition beyond the act of *ẓinā* to include any behavior potentially leading to it, all deemed moral transgressions that must be prevented.⁵⁶ This social construction implies that individuals accused of *ẓinā*, or even those merely suspected, are subjected to various forms of social sanctions. These range from social ostracism and ritual public humiliation—such as being bathed by villagers at the *meunasah* (a small mosque or prayer house)—to enduring long-term stigmatization.⁵⁷ In Acehese society, the concept of *but peumale kawom* (a disgrace that humiliates the collective social identity) serves as a central principle for safeguarding collective morality. Thus, *ẓinā* is not merely perceived as a personal transgression but as a grave threat to communal honor.⁵⁸

Beyond its legal and moral dimensions, *ẓinā* is imbued with profound spiritual significance in the Kumpang community.⁵⁹ There is a prevailing belief that tolerating immoral acts, particularly *ẓinā*, invites divine retribution and jeopardizes the entire community.⁶⁰ Village elders affirm the belief that God will reject the repentance of those residing within a 44-house radius of the *ẓinā* incident. According to them, while all forms of *ma'siyah* (sinful acts) can bring misfortune, *ẓinā* is uniquely destructive as it strips the village of divine blessings (*gadeh berkah gampong*). This belief is reinforced by interpretations of both religious doctrine and customary law, which hold that any moral deviation carries significant social and spiritual consequences. In several cases, individuals suspected of *ẓinā* are unable to remain in their community due to the enduring stigma of being labeled as deviant. Despite such actions being justified by references to Islamic law and customary traditions, in practice, many individuals endure stigma and social punishment without any legal proof of *ẓinā*.⁶¹ It indicates that social labeling is often driven more by prejudice and communal judgment than by substantiated legal evidence.⁶²

In the social labeling process, those with greater societal power are more capable of determining who is labeled as deviant and who is not.⁶³ In Kumpang, *asoe lhok* exercise stronger social control than *ureung tamong*, particularly university students, thereby possessing the authority to impose social stigma. Findings from this study reveal that *ureung tamong* are disproportionately subjected to negative labeling compared to *asoe lhok*, even when similar

⁵⁵ La Gurusi et al., "Islamic Legal Perspective on Data of Child Victims of Sexual Violence: A Case Study of the Indonesia's Court," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 2 (December 30, 2024): 456–79.

⁵⁶ Zahrul, Personal Communication with the Village Elder (*Tetua Gampong*).

⁵⁷ Abdullah, Personal Communication with the Village Elder (*Tetua Gampong*).

⁵⁸ Abubakar Abubakar, Eka Sri Mulyani, and Anwar Anwar, "Identification of Some Distinctive Values of Acehese Malee (Shyness) for Character Education," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 7, no. 1 (January 30, 2019): 125–40.

⁵⁹ Ana, Personal Communication with a Community Figure.

⁶⁰ Mahdi Syihab, *Penegakan Syariat Islam: Etnografi Aksi Razi Santri Dayah di Aceh Utara* (Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabero, 2010), 69.

⁶¹ Abdullah, Personal Communication with the Village Elder (*Tetua Gampong*); Zahrul, Personal Communication with the Village Elder (*Tetua Gampong*).

⁶² Jan-Willem Van Prooijen, "Retributive Reactions to Suspected Offenders: The Importance of Social Categorizations and Guilt Probability," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 32, no. 6 (June 2006): 715–26.

⁶³ Chris Greer and Robert Reiner, "Labelling, Deviance, and Media," in *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, ed. Gerben Bruinsma and David Weisburd (New York, NY: Springer New York, 2014), 2814–23.

transgressions occur. The *asoe lhok* tend to enjoy greater protection from social stigma due to their strong local social networks and privileged access to family-based dispute resolution mechanisms. By contrast, *ureung tamong* face more severe social sanctions, including expulsion from the community and public exposure of their cases on social media platforms. This disparity in the labeling process reflects the effects of social dominance in constructing deviance—those in positions of authority are better able to evade the negative consequences of moral infractions.⁶⁴

Furthermore, social labeling is not confined to community interactions but is amplified by media coverage and the circulation of information on digital platforms. This process aligns with the concept of “deviancy amplification”, which posits that societal reactions to deviant behavior can intensify the stigma attached to the labeled individual.⁶⁵ One of the most significant effects of publicizing *zina* cases is the perpetuation of long-lasting stigma. During interviews, a local youth shared that reading or hearing news reports about *zina* immediately triggered negative judgments in their mind.⁶⁶ Media coverage not only raises public awareness of sharia violations but also reinforces social distancing from those labeled as deviants.⁶⁷ Another consequence of such publicity is the strengthened social exclusion of *zina* offenders—even after they have served their punishment or shown repentance.⁶⁸ Those labeled as adulterers face substantial obstacles to reintegration into the community, as the stigma persists through their digital footprints in social media and online news reports.⁶⁹

Social Labelling and Moral Control: The Dominance of *Asoe Lhok* over *Ureung Tamong*

Becker’s labeling theory posits that not all individuals who engage in deviant behavior are necessarily labeled as deviants. The labeling process is inherently discriminatory, where those with greater societal power can often avoid social stigma. At the same time, marginalized or vulnerable groups are more easily branded as criminals. Becker emphasizes that labeling is neither a neutral nor objective process; somewhat, it is deeply influenced by power relations within society. Dominant groups possess the authority to define deviance and dictate the imposition of sanctions.⁷⁰ In the context of Kumpang, *asoe lhok* wield greater social control than *ureung tamong*. One manifestation of this power is the application of *reusam*—a customary law system regulating social sanctions against those who violate Islamic norms.⁷¹

Reusam functions as a set of social rules inherited across generations in Aceh, guiding the community to maintain social stability and moral integrity.⁷² In Kumpang, one such

⁶⁴ Becker, *Outsiders*, 16–17.

⁶⁵ Kloos, “In the Name of Syariah?” 69.

⁶⁶ Hasan, Personal Communication with a Local Youth, September 14, 2022.

⁶⁷ Maher, Personal Communication with a Local Youth, September 2, 2022.

⁶⁸ Sulaiman, Personal Communication with the Boarding House Owner, August 31, 2022.

⁶⁹ Ahmad, Personal Communication with a Local Youth Leader, September 13, 2022.

⁷⁰ Becker, *Outsiders*, 14.

⁷¹ See: Muzakkir, “The Effectiveness of Aceh’s Jinayat Qanun on Crime Rates in the Community in a Review of Legal Socialization,” *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 16, no. 2 (November 18, 2022): 255–68; Syamsuar Syamsuar et al., “Settlement of Islamic Sharia Violations in the Perspective of Teungku Dayah and Local Wisdom Values on the West Coast of Aceh,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 11, no. 3 (September 30, 2023): 985–1004.

⁷² M. Jakfar Puteh, *Sistem Sosial Budaya dan Adat Masyarakat Aceh*, 4th ed. (Yogyakarta: Grafindo Litera Media, 2018), 162.

reusam stipulates that individuals proven guilty of *zina* are prohibited from returning to the *gampong* or are to be expelled.⁷³ However, findings from this study reveal that this *reusam* is disproportionately applied to *ureung tamong* rather than *asoe lhok*. A village elder (*tetua gampong*) explained that while this rule has long existed, it remains unofficial and unwritten, yet it is actively enforced in daily social practice.⁷⁴ In its implementation, *reusam* is frequently directed at outsiders—particularly university students—while native residents often evade equivalent sanctions. A Former Member of the Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong Task Force (Tim TAMAR, Tim Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Mungkar) explained: “*Meunyo ureung droe, ka han takeun ta im droe*” (if it is one of our own, it might not be prohibited or at least it will be ignored).⁷⁵ This phenomenon aligns with Becker’s argument that social rules are seldom applied equitably but often serve as tools of social control wielded by dominant groups to preserve their power.⁷⁶ Here, *asoe lhok* strategically utilize *reusam* to uphold community morality and maintain their social dominance over *ureung tamong*.

The disparity in the enforcement of social sanctions is evident in the following two cases from Kumpang. On June 5, 2022, villagers apprehended a couple suspected of engaging in *zina* in a rented room (*kamar kos*). The couple, DFN (19 years old) from Southwest Aceh and FY (20 years old) from South Aceh, had stayed together in the room for three days before being caught. Upon interrogation, both admitted to engaging in sexual intercourse. The case was subsequently reported to the Municipal Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP, Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja) and the Sharia Enforcement Authority (WH, Wilayatul Hisbah) for formal processing.⁷⁷ Two weeks later, villagers raided another rented room where a non-*mahram* student couple was suspected of indecent conduct. NP (20 years old) from Krueng Sabe and ZZ (22 years old) from Aceh Jaya had been monitored by local residents since June 16, 2022, and were eventually arrested at 2:00 a.m. Both admitted during questioning that they had engaged in sexual intercourse. The enraged villagers handed them over to the Syiah Kuala District Police, but the case was ultimately resolved through customary means—requiring both couples to marry as a form of reconciliation.⁷⁸

These cases illustrate that the adjudication of *zina* offenses in Kumpang commences at the village level, where the community exercises initial authority before involving formal law enforcement. The Tim TAMAR—comprising villagers, the Community Police Officer (Bhabinkamtibmas, Bhayangkara Pembina Keamanan dan Ketertiban Masyarakat), and the Village Supervisory Non-Commissioned Military Officer (Babinsa, Bintara Pembina Desa)—plays a pivotal role in ensuring that prevailing customs and norms address violations of

⁷³ Tari Nasyiah and Teuku Muttaqin Mansur, “Denda Adat dalam Penyelesaian Kasus Khalwat di Kota Banda Aceh,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Bidang Hukum Keperdataan* 3, no. 1 (February 28, 2019): 86–96.

⁷⁴ Abdullah, Personal Communication with the Village Elder (*Tetua Gampong*).

⁷⁵ Nurul, Personal Communication with a Former Member of the Tim TAMAR, September 5, 2022.

⁷⁶ Becker, *Outsiders*, 8–9.

⁷⁷ BERITAKINI.CO, “Diduga Mesum di Kos-Kosan, Pasangan Mahasiswa Digerebek Warga di Darussalam,” BERITAKINI.CO, June 5, 2022, <https://beritakini.co/news/diduga-mesum-di-kos-kosan-pasangan-mahasiswa-digerebek-warga-di-darusallam/index.html>.

⁷⁸ BERITAKINI.CO, “Pasok Pacar ke Kos-Kosan, Pasangan Mahasiswa Asal Aceh Jaya Digerebek di Kumpang,” BERITAKINI.CO, June 18, 2022, <https://beritakini.co/news/pasok-pacar-ke-kos-kosan-pasangan-mahasiswa-asal-aceh-jaya-digerebek-di-Kumpang/index.html>.

Islamic law.⁷⁹ However, the sanctions imposed in these cases highlight a clear disparity in how offenders are treated. *Ureung tamong* are consistently more vulnerable to repressive measures, whereas *asoe lhok* tend to benefit from family-based settlements and are shielded from public exposure and social humiliation.⁸⁰

Kumbang residents generally perceive *zina* as a serious moral and social offense that sullies the community's reputation.⁸¹ Most villagers believe that those who commit *zina* should be expelled, arguing that their presence contaminates the *gampong* and dishonors the family (*peumale kawom*). However, not every individual apprehended in these raids has committed *zina*; in several instances, those captured were merely suspected of engaging in behavior that could lead to adultery. Nevertheless, they still suffered severe social punishments, including public shaming, media exposure, and expulsion from the village.⁸² This uncertainty reflects the imbalance in applying legal and social norms, where social prejudice often exerts more influence than legal proof. This finding resonates with Becker's theory that social labeling frequently occurs absent concrete evidence, driven instead by societal interpretations and reactions to perceived deviance.⁸³

Media coverage of *zina* cases exacerbates the stigma against *ureung tamong*, often preceding any formal legal sanction. This dynamic aligns with the deviancy amplification theory, wherein public reactions to deviance further entrench the stigma attached to the labeled individual.⁸⁴ A resident remarked that every time they read or heard news about *zina*, negative judgments about the individual arose automatically.⁸⁵ As a result, individuals labeled as adulterers often face enduring difficulties reintegrating into their communities, even after serving their punishment or expressing genuine repentance.⁸⁶ In this context, the media functions not merely as an information channel but as a potent agent of social labeling, reinforcing stigma against those branded as deviants.⁸⁷ Moreover, digital media coverage of *zina* cases leaves an indelible digital footprint, making it nearly impossible for labeled individuals to erase the stigma. Consequently, they carry this social burden into the future, with their reputations permanently marked by their online records.⁸⁸

Deviancy Amplification and Social Stigma: The Role of Media in Labelling Adultery Offenders

Social stigma plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of individuals accused of *zina*. Stigmatization manifests in various forms, such as social exclusion, community

⁷⁹ Nurul, Personal Communication with a Former Member of the Tim TAMAR.

⁸⁰ Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims*, 107.

⁸¹ Ahmad, Personal Communication with a Local Youth Leader.

⁸² Ana, Personal Communication with a Community Figure.

⁸³ Becker, *Outsiders*, 147–55.

⁸⁴ Becker, *Outsiders*, 26–8.

⁸⁵ Saifuddin, Personal Communication with a Local Youth, September 14, 2022.

⁸⁶ Annisa Rahmadiana, Putri Nabilah, and Tiara Rahmawati, "Kajian Kriminologis atas Sanksi Adat 'Cuci Kampung' terhadap Pelaku Zina," *Journal of Judicial Review* 24, no. 1 (June 3, 2022): 19–34.

⁸⁷ Becker, *Outsiders*, 16–7.

⁸⁸ See: Anna Gjika, "New Media, Old Paradigms: News Representations of Technology in Adolescent Sexual Assault," *Crime, Media, Culture: An International Journal* 16, no. 3 (December 2020): 415–30; Yasemin Bilişli et al., "Exploring Stigmatization in Digital Newspaper Coverage of Substance Use Disorder," *Heliyon* 10, no. 7 (April 2024): e28694.

avoidance, and the persistent negative labeling of those involved in *zina* cases.⁸⁹ Individuals subjected to such labeling often experience profound psychological and behavioral changes, leading to long-term disruptions in their social lives. As developed by Becker, the concept of deviancy amplification explains how societal reactions to a transgression can intensify the deviant behavior itself.⁹⁰ In cases of *zina*, online media coverage functions not merely as a channel of information but actively exacerbates the social stigma against individuals labeled as violators of sharia norms.⁹¹ Media exposure frequently results in offenders facing insurmountable barriers to reintegration, even after expressing remorse or seeking repentance. Consequently, such individuals often suffer from social isolation, rendering them more vulnerable to further marginalization and deviant behavior.⁹²

In Kumbang, media coverage of sharia violations often conflates *kehalwat* with *zina*, despite the distinct legal definitions under Islamic law. However, media reports frequently frame these incidents as adultery, thereby intensifying social stigma against the accused. Some online outlets even publish photos of the alleged offenders with minimal censorship, covering only their eyes. For instance, coverage by BERITAKINI.CO and RUANGBERITA.CO exemplifies how media exposure can severely impact those accused's social and psychological well-being.⁹³ The effects of such reporting are not temporary. Instead, they create digital records that are difficult to erase, hindering individuals from accessing education, employment, and broader social participation.⁹⁴ This phenomenon is consistent with Becker's labeling theory, which posits that ⁹⁵ individuals struggle to reclaim their social standing once labeled as deviant—even after punishment or demonstrated behavioral change.

One of the most tragic examples of deviancy amplification in Aceh was the case of Putri Erlina, a 17-year-old girl who took her own life after being falsely labeled a prostitute by a local newspaper.⁹⁶ The incident stemmed from a sensationalized headline in *Harian Prohaba*, titled "Two Teenage Prostitutes Arrested by the WH", which publicly identified Putri without verification.⁹⁷ This label triggered intense social ostracism and psychological distress. In her suicide note, Putri apologized to her parents and adamantly denied ever engaging in prostitution, expressing that the media's portrayal had irreparably tarnished her reputation.⁹⁸ This case illustrates the devastating social consequences of unbalanced media

⁸⁹ Wahyu Utami, "Pengaruh Persepsi Stigma Sosial dan Dukungan Sosial terhadap Kesejahteraan Psikologis pada Narapidana," *Journal An-Nafs: Kajian Penelitian Psikologi* 3, no. 2 (December 29, 2018): 183–207.

⁹⁰ Becker, *Outsiders*, 26–8.

⁹¹ Febri Nurrahmi, "Mediated Representation of Sharia in Aceh: A Hybrid Approach to Media Frames," *Religions* 13, no. 9 (September 2022): 857.

⁹² Sulaiman, Personal Communication with the Boarding House Owner.

⁹³ RUANGBERITA.CO, "Diduga Hendak Berbuat Mesum, Sepasang Kekasih Digerebek Warga di Darussalam," RUANGBERITA.CO, June 6, 2022, <https://ruangberita.co/news/diduga-hendak-berbuat-mesum-sepasang-kekasih-digerebek-warga-di-darussalam/index.html>.

⁹⁴ Idria, "Tales of the Unexpected," 289.

⁹⁵ Becker, *Outsiders*, 36–9.

⁹⁶ Nurul, Personal Communication with a Former Member of the Tim TAMAR.

⁹⁷ Serambinews.com, "Dua Pelacur ABG Dibeureukah WH," Serambinews.com, accessed February 25, 2024, <https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2012/09/04/dua-pelacur-abg-dibeureukah-wh>.

⁹⁸ Muhammad Ansor, "Merayakan Kuasa Agama: Etnografi Razia Penegakan Syariat Islam di Langsa, Aceh," *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 22, no. 1 (June 22, 2017): 103–28.

reporting, including fatal outcomes such as suicide. Within the framework of deviancy amplification, such coverage not only exacerbates social stigma but also prolongs the effects of labeling, making it nearly impossible for individuals to restore their dignity and social standing.⁹⁹

Public attitudes towards the media's role in reporting *zīnā* cases are ambivalent. On the one hand, some community members support media exposure as a deterrent. On the other hand, they express concern that repeated associations with *zīnā* cases damage the village's reputation.¹⁰⁰ The *tetua gampong* explained:¹⁰¹ “On one hand, exposure is necessary to create a deterrent effect. However, on the other, every report about sharia violations inevitably links our village's name, making Kumbang look bad.” Others argue that media coverage of *zīnā* cases is inevitable, especially in the digital age where social media enables anyone to record and instantly disseminate events.¹⁰² This phenomenon is further exacerbated by platforms like TikTok, where residents' initial recorded cases quickly go viral before being picked up by mainstream media. For example, during Ramadan, a TikTok video depicting a suspected *zīnā* case went viral and was later reported by online media.¹⁰³ Upon seeing the coverage, villagers immediately associated the incident with Kumbang, despite subsequent verification confirming that the individuals involved were not from the village. A local youth in the village stated:¹⁰⁴ “Friends sent me the news, saying, ‘Look what your village people did.’ However, after checking, it turned out the perpetrators were outsiders.” It reflects how media-fueled stigma can produce inaccurate perceptions, impacting not only individuals but also tarnishing the collective image of entire communities.

Beyond social exclusion, individuals labeled as *zīnā* offenders face significant obstacles in education and employment. The digital footprint created by media reports becomes a persistent barrier, as society continues associating them with past transgressions.¹⁰⁵ According to the self-fulfilling prophecy concept within Becker's labeling theory, individuals who internalize their deviant label may eventually conform to societal expectations of their deviance. In other words, the constant societal perception of someone as a moral violator makes it increasingly difficult for them to break free from cycles of deviance.¹⁰⁶ The implications of these findings are clear: media must exercise greater caution and ethical consideration when reporting on *zīnā* cases. Failure to do so risks triggering a cycle of deviancy amplification, leading to prolonged social marginalization and, in extreme cases, irreversible harm to both individuals and communities.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ Becker, *Outsiders*, 26–8.

¹⁰⁰ Ahmad, Personal Communication with a Local Youth Leader.

¹⁰¹ Zahrul, Personal Communication with the Village Elder (*Tetua Gampong*).

¹⁰² Saifuddin, Personal Communication with a Local Youth.

¹⁰³ Serambinews.com, “Kronologi Sepasang Kekasih Kepergok di Kumbang hingga Viral Cerita Istri Pasok Pria saat Suami Tarawih,” Serambinews.com, accessed February 25, 2024, <https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2022/04/22/kronologi-sepasang-kekasih-kepergok-di-kumbang-hingga-viral-cerita-istri-pasok-pria-saat-suami-tarawih>.

¹⁰⁴ Saifuddin, Personal Communication with a Local Youth.

¹⁰⁵ Nina, Personal Communication with a Member of the *Tuha Pent* (Village Legislative Body).

¹⁰⁶ Becker, *Outsiders*, 26–8.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Dotter, “Creating Deviance: Scenarios of Stigmatization in Postmodern Media Culture,” *Deviant Behavior* 23, no. 5 (September 2002): 419–48.

Conclusion

The social labeling of *ureung tamong* (migrant residents) in *zina* (adultery) cases within Kumbang Village functions not only as a mechanism of moral control but also as a form of social domination exercised by the *asoe lhok* (local residents). Stigmatization is reinforced through negative labeling, social sanctions, and media exposure, all of which contribute to the exclusion of the accused and hinder their reintegration into society. This process aligns with Howard S. Becker's labeling theory, which posits that labeling determines not only who is considered deviant but also shapes an individual's long-term social position. In this context, *zina* accusations serve as a means through which dominant groups maintain power and control over vulnerable groups within the community. Media coverage further exacerbates the impact of this labeling by generating deviancy amplification effects. Individuals who have been labeled face escalating difficulties in reclaiming social acceptance, often becoming trapped in a deepening cycle of marginalization and deviance. The media, particularly through persistent digital footprints, acts as an agent of social labeling—cementing stigma and extending the social consequences for those involved in *zina* cases.

The findings of this study suggest that social labeling in *zina* cases is inseparable from the underlying power dynamics within the community. More nuanced and equitable policies are needed to handle sharia violations—whether within customary law frameworks, sharia enforcement mechanisms, or media reporting practices. Media outlets must exercise greater caution and ethical responsibility when reporting on *zina* cases to avoid inflicting prolonged harm on individuals who have already faced formal sanctions. Failure to do so risks perpetuating social exclusion and deepening cycles of deviance. This study is limited by its geographical focus on Kumbang Village. Therefore, the findings require further examination in other regions of Aceh to determine whether similar patterns of social labeling are prevalent elsewhere. Future research should explore the psychosocial impacts experienced by individuals subjected to such labeling and investigate potential reintegration strategies to prevent them from being permanently trapped in a cycle of stigma and marginalization.

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