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Analyzing the Impacts of the Waithood Phenomenon from the Perspective of Maqasid al-Shari'ah

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ABSTRACT

The increasing tendency of Indonesian youth to postpone marriage (waithood) has raised important legal and social questions regarding its compatibility with the objectives of Islamic law. This study analyzes the waithood phenomenon through the perspective of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, particularly the principle of ḥifẓ al-nasl (preservation of progeny). Employing a qualitative field research design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with young adults who had postponed marriage and religious leaders in Temanggung Regency, complemented by relevant Islamic legal literature, the Qur'an, Hadith, official statistics, and marriage regulations. The findings reveal two distinct forms of waithood. Sharī'ah-compliant waithood is characterized by temporary postponement based on legitimate reasons, such as financial hardship, educational pursuits, and family responsibilities, and remains consistent with the objectives of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. In contrast, structural-cultural waithood, driven by fear of marriage, consumerist values, and social media influences, may threaten ḥifẓ al-nasl by weakening family formation and generational continuity. Applying the principle of taysīr, this study proposes balanced policy measures, including accessible marriage facilitation, financial literacy, and community-based premarital counseling. The study contributes a conceptual typology of waithood that enriches contemporary Islamic family law discourse and offers practical guidance for policymakers and religious institutions.

Keywords

Waithood; Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah; Ḥifẓ al-nasl; Taysīr; Islamic family law.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of delaying marriage, commonly referred to as *waithood*, has become increasingly common among young Indonesians, particularly in urban areas such as Semarang, Surabaya, Jakarta, and Yogyakarta. *Waithood* refers to a condition in which individuals, especially young adult men and women, deliberately postpone marriage for various reasons, including pursuing higher education, career development, financial preparedness, and psychological readiness to undertake marital responsibilities (Khairiyah & Thohir, 2023). Recent demographic trends indicate that the average age at first marriage in Indonesia has gradually increased over the past decade, reflecting significant shifts in the social behavior and life aspirations of Millennials and Generation Z. According to data published by Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in its *Statistik Pemuda Indonesia 2024* report, the average age at first marriage among Indonesian youth reached

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approximately 21.22 years in 2024 22.77 years for young men and 20.41 years for young women indicating a continuing tendency among young adults to postpone marriage (BPS, 2024)

Recent demographic trends indicate that the average age at first marriage in Indonesia has gradually increased over the past decade, reflecting significant shifts in the social behavior and life aspirations of Millennials and Generation Z. On the one hand, Indonesia is experiencing a growing trend in the age at first marriage, accompanied by an increasing tendency among young adults to postpone marriage. On the other hand, child marriage practices requiring court-issued marriage dispensations continue to occur, although their prevalence has gradually declined in recent years, dropping from a peak of 64,196 cases in 2019 to 32,400 cases in 2024 (Direktorat Jenderal Badan Peradilan Agama (Badilag), 2025). This situation reflects a dual phenomenon in Indonesia's marriage landscape: while some segments of society increasingly delay marriage in pursuit of educational, professional, and economic goals, others continue to enter marriage at an early age through the mechanism of marriage dispensation, with data showing that approximately 5.9% of women aged 20–24 had married before reaching the age of 18 (BPS, 2025).

The factors contributing to *waithood* are complex and interconnected. First, financial insecurity has become one of the primary reasons for delaying marriage, particularly due to the increasing costs of traditional wedding ceremonies and the economic demands of establishing a household in contemporary society. Many young people also experience the burden of being part of the sandwich generation, whereby they are expected to support their parents and siblings while simultaneously preparing for their own future. Second, educational attainment and career advancement have become increasingly important priorities, especially among women seeking professional achievement before marriage. Third, negative perceptions of marriage, often expressed through the phrase marriage is scary, reflect concerns regarding marital responsibilities, domestic conflicts, and the potential loss of personal freedom. Fourth, social and familial pressures, combined with increasingly consumerist expectations surrounding marriage, further contribute to the postponement of marriage among young adults (Asokawati & Utama, 2024).

Although *waithood* provides opportunities for personal development and independence, it also raises important concerns from the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī,,ah*, particularly the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (the preservation of progeny). In Islam, marriage is not merely a social contract but also a Prophetic tradition (*sunnah*) intended to preserve human lineage, regulate natural desires in a lawful manner, and establish families characterized by tranquility, affection, and compassion (*sakinah, mawaddah,* and *raḥmah*) (Hasanuddin et al., 2024). Allah SWT states in the Qur‘an:

وَأَنكِحُوا۟ ٱلْأَيَـٰمَىٰ مِنكُمْ وَٱلصَّـٰلِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَآئِكُمْ ۚ إِن يَكُونُوا۟ فُقَرَآءَ يُغْنِهِمُ ٱللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِۦ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٣٢

“And marry those among you who are single and the righteous among your male and female servants. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty. And Allah is All-Encompassing and All-Knowing” (Departemen Agama RI, 1989).

This verse demonstrates Islam‘s strong encouragement of marriage as a means of family formation and the continuation of future generations.

Although waithood provides opportunities for personal development and independence, it also raises important concerns from the perspective of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, particularly the principle of ḥifẓ al-nasl (the preservation of progeny). In Islam, marriage is not merely a social contract but also a Prophetic tradition (sunnah) intended to preserve human lineage, regulate natural desires in a lawful manner, and establish families characterized by tranquility, affection, and compassion (sakinah, mawaddah, and raḥmah). The concept of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, formulated by classical Muslim scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Al-Shatibi, consists of five essential objectives (al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams): ḥifẓ al-dīn (preservation of religion), ḥifẓ al-nafs (preservation of life), ḥifẓ al-'aql (preservation of intellect), ḥifẓ al-nasl (preservation of progeny), and ḥifẓ al-māl (preservation of wealth) . Among these objectives, ḥifẓ al-nasl plays a crucial role in assessing the phenomenon of waithood. While moderate postponement may serve as maslahah ḥājiyyah by

supporting ḥifẓ al-māl and ḥifẓ al-'aql through financial stability and self-development, prolonged delays particularly beyond the age of 35 may instead give rise to mafsadah by threatening ḥifẓ al-nasl, as reflected in declining fertility rates, chronic loneliness, and heightened risk of violating Islamic norms . Some scholars therefore argue that postponing marriage without legitimate reasons or beyond a reasonable threshold may conflict with the objectives of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, particularly ḥifẓ al-nasl, because it may hinder the realization of one of the fundamental purposes of marriage in Islam (Fadhila et al., 2026).

On the other hand, Islam also recognizes the principle of *taysīr* (facilitation and ease in legal rulings). Accordingly, *waithood* may be justified when based on legitimate considerations, such as pursuing higher education, addressing health concerns, or facing genuine financial hardship (Rina & Ardi, 2025). Furthermore, the minimum marriage age of nineteen years, as stipulated in Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage, reflects efforts to protect the physical health and psychological maturity of prospective spouses (Arifa & Sarjduningsih, 2026).

The issue arises when many young people postpone marriage indefinitely or solely because of fear of marital responsibilities. From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, such circumstances may create tension with the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, as prolonged conflict and instability within families can undermine the quality of future generations. At the same time, concerns regarding economic uncertainty after marriage remain significant, reflecting the dimension of *ḥifẓ al-māl* (preservation of wealth). These concerns do not necessarily indicate a lack of faith in God's promises; rather, when accompanied by mutual responsibility and prudent financial management between spouses, they reflect an effort to ensure economic stability and an adequate quality of life for future children and family members (Hidayati & Hermawan, 2026).

In major urban areas, the phenomenon of waithood has become increasingly prominent due to economic pressures, consumerist lifestyles, and the influence of social media, which often portrays idealized and costly standards of marriage (Ghofi et al., 2025). These developments require deeper reflection through the lens of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* in order to address an important question: To what extent is waithood permissible within the framework of Islamic law? Furthermore, how can individual preparedness be balanced with the objectives of the *Sharī'ah*, particularly the preservation of progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*))?

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study is important for analyzing the phenomenon of *waithood* among young people through the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī,,ah*, particularly the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl*. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between marriage postponement and the objectives of Islamic law, as well as to offer relevant recommendations for young adults, religious scholars, and policymakers in responding to the growing trend of delayed marriage in Indonesia.

Despite the increasing number of studies on delayed marriage in Indonesia, most have focused on its sociological, psychological, or economic dimensions, while limited attention has been given to its evaluation through the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly *ḥifẓ al-nasl*. This study addresses that gap by analyzing waithood from the perspective of the objectives of Islamic law and introducing a distinction between Sharī'ah-compliant waithood and structural-cultural waithood as a conceptual framework for assessing delayed marriage. Accordingly, this research seeks to examine the extent to which waithood remains consistent with the objectives of Islamic law and to provide theoretical and practical contributions for the development of Islamic family law and policies that respond to the realities faced by contemporary Indonesian youth.

LITERATURE REVIEW/ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Explain This study employs a qualitative approach using field research to examine the phenomenon of *waithood* among young adults and to analyze it through the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī,,ah*, particularly the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (the preservation of progeny). The research

utilizes both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data are obtained through in-depth interviews with young adults who have postponed marriage as well as religious leaders who possess expertise in family and marriage-related issues. Secondary data are collected from the Qur'an, Hadith, literature on *maqāṣid al-sharī,,ah*, scholarly journals, publications of Statistics Indonesia (BPS), and relevant laws and regulations concerning marriage. Data collection is conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to the phenomenon of *waithood* (Sugiyono, 2019).

The research is carried out in several stages. The initial stage involves identifying the increasing age at first marriage and the growing trend of *waithood* among young people. This is followed by the development of research instruments and the selection of informants. The subsequent stage consists of data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. The collected data are then analyzed using a descriptive qualitative method through the processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Finally, the findings are interpreted through the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī,,ah* to assess the relevance of the *waithood* phenomenon to the objectives of Islamic law in preserving progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) and to formulate a balanced perspective between individual readiness and the objectives of marriage in Islam (Sugiyono, 2019).

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Waithood in the Perspective of Ḥifẓ al-Nasl

As formulated by Al-Ghazali and Al-Shatibi, maqāṣid al-sharī,,ah places ḥifẓ al-nasl (the preservation of progeny) among the five essential objectives (al-ḍarūriyyāt) of Islamic law (Muhammad Djalaluddin Mawardi, 2015). Al-Shatibi emphasizes that the ultimate purpose of the Sharī_ah is to promote human welfare (maṣlaḥah) in both this world and the hereafter. Consequently, any action that systematically hinders the realization of such welfare

including the indefinite postponement of marriage without legitimate justification may potentially conflict with the objectives of the Sharī_ah (Fadhila et al., 2026).

Allah SWT states in the Qur'an:

"Marry those among you who are single and the righteous among your male and female servants. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty. And Allah is All-Encompassing and All-Knowing" (International, 2026)

This verse indicates that poverty should not be regarded as an absolute obstacle to marriage, as Allah promises sustenance through His grace (International, 2026). Furthermore, Qur'an 30:21 explains that the purpose of marriage is to establish tranquility (sakinah), affection (mawaddah), and mercy (raḥmah). From a maqāṣid-based perspective, these verses not only encourage marriage but also emphasize that the quality and objectives of marriage, rather than the mere occurrence of a marital contract, constitute the true intent of the Sharī_ah. Consequently, considerations of readiness and preparedness cannot be disregarded in the implementation of marriage (Hafis & Syafitri, 2026).

Field findings in Temanggung reveal that most participants postpone marriage not because they reject the institution of marriage itself, but rather due to factors that classical Islamic jurisprudence would classify as „udhr mu„tabar (legitimate excuses). Genuine financial hardship, responsibilities related to caring for ill parents, and the necessity of completing higher education represent examples of circumstances recognized within the Islamic legal tradition (Hafis & Syafitri, 2026). As long as the intention to marry remains intact and the postponement is temporary and well planned, such delays remain within the boundaries acceptable under maqāṣid al-sharī„ah.

These findings demonstrate that the assessment of waithood in Islamic law cannot be reduced to a rigid judgment based solely on the fact of marriage postponement. Rather, it requires a contextual evaluation of the underlying motives, duration, and intended objectives in light of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Delaying marriage for legitimate reasons that promote personal readiness and family welfare may constitute a form of maṣlaḥah, whereas prolonged postponement without valid justification may undermine the realization of ḥifẓ al-nasl by weakening the institution of marriage and the continuity of future generations. Therefore, understanding the diverse motivations behind waithood is essential for distinguishing between forms of postponement that are consistent with the objectives of the Sharī'ah and those that warrant greater concern

B. Sub- Typologies of Permissible and Concerning Waithood

Drawing upon the maqāṣid systems approach developed by Auda (2008), the forms of waithood identified in Temanggung may be classified into two categories with distinct legal implications from the perspective of Islamic law.

First, Sharī'ah-compliant waithood refers to delays in marriage based on reasons recognized by Islamic teachings and characterized by a relatively clear and temporary timeframe. This category includes postponement due to genuine financial incapacity, the pursuit of education, responsibilities in caring for sick family members, or efforts to strengthen one's spiritual and intellectual preparedness through Islamic boarding school (pesantren) education. Such delays do not negate the intention to marry and therefore do not conflict with ḥifẓ al-nasl, as they do not undermine the continuity of future generations in the long term (Dwi Dasa Suryantoro & Ali Mansur, 2026) Suryantoro and Mansur's analysis of Indonesia's minimum marriage age policy similarly demonstrates that a delay grounded in the protection of intellect (ḥifẓ al-'aql) and lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl) constitutes a legitimate application of collective ijtihād (ijtihād jamā'ī) rather than a departure from sharia's objectives.).

Second, structural-cultural waithood refers to delays in marriage that lack strong Sharī'ah-based justification, are open-ended, and are influenced by modern social constructions such as fear of marital responsibilities, preferences for a single lifestyle, or negative perceptions of marriage shaped by social media exposure. This second category is considerably more problematic from the perspective of ḥifẓ al-nasl. If it becomes widespread, it may contribute to declining birth rates, weaken family institutions, and ultimately threaten generational continuityan objective explicitly protected by maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (Muhibbussabry et al., 2026) As Muhibbussabry et al. argue in their reconstruction of Auda's systems theory for Indonesian legislation, when maqāṣid values remain only partially and implicitly internalized in family-related regulation, the systemic safeguards intended to protect lineage and social sustainability risk being undermined in practice.

The distinction between Sharī'ah-compliant waithood and structural-cultural waithood demonstrates that the legal assessment of delayed marriage cannot be generalized, but must instead consider the underlying motives, objectives, and potential consequences in light of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Delays motivated by legitimate needs and accompanied by a clear intention to marry remain compatible with the objectives of Islamic law, whereas indefinite postponement driven by fear, excessive individualism, or consumerist values may gradually undermine ḥifẓ al-nasl and the sustainability of family institutions. This classification therefore provides a balanced analytical framework for evaluating the contemporary phenomenon of waithood while maintaining harmony between individual welfare (maṣlaḥah) and the broader objectives of the Sharī'ah.

C. The Principle of Taysīr as a Middle Path

Islam embraces the principle of *taysīr* (*tasyrī,, al-yusr*), which holds that the Sharī_ah is intended to facilitate human welfare rather than impose unnecessary hardship. Consequently, responses to the phenomenon of *waithood* cannot be based on generalized legal judgments that ignore individual circumstances and social realities. Labeling all forms of marriage postponement as undesirable or prohibited without considering the underlying reasons may be counterproductive, as it risks creating additional barriers to achieving a stable and meaningful marriage (Zainul Aziz Nasution et al., 2025).

The findings from Temanggung indicate that Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) possess substantial social capital that can be optimized as instruments of intervention grounded in the principle of *taysīr*. The authority of *kyai* figures, whose guidance is highly respected by students and local communities, can serve as an effective bridge between Islamic values and the realities faced by contemporary young adults. Similarly, premarital counseling programs conducted by the KUA should extend beyond administrative requirements and address the psychological and financial concerns of prospective couples in a comprehensive manner.

Overall, the principle of *taysīr* offers a balanced framework for responding to the phenomenon of waithood by recognizing both the objectives of Islamic law and the realities faced by contemporary young adults. Rather than encouraging unconditional delay or imposing rigid demands for immediate marriage, *taysīr* promotes solutions that strengthen individual preparedness while safeguarding the objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly *ḥifẓ al-nasl*. Therefore, collaborative efforts involving religious institutions, educational institutions, families, and government agencies are essential to create supportive environments that enable young people to enter marriage responsibly, confidently, and in accordance with both their personal circumstances and the broader objectives of the Sharī'ah

D. Policy Implications

The enactment of Law Number 16 of 2019, which establishes nineteen years as the minimum legal age for marriage, reflects the integration of *maqāṣid al-sharī,,ah* principles into the protection of physical health and psychological maturity among prospective spouses (Law No. 16 of 2019, Article 7[1]). Nevertheless, formal legal regulations alone are insufficient to address the complexity of the *waithood* phenomenon(Roslaili et al., 2021).

A more holistic policy approach is therefore required, including: (1) facilitating affordable and simple marriage ceremonies as alternatives to increasingly consumerist wedding practices; (2) integrating family financial literacy into educational and counseling programs offered by the KUA and Islamic boarding schools; (3) strengthening community-based premarital counseling programs that are inclusive and responsive to participants' socioeconomic conditions; and (4) providing psychological support services for young adults experiencing *waithood* due to social media influences and fears related to marital responsibilities(Hasanudin et al., 2024).

Through such measures, the objectives of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* can be pursued without neglecting the realities and challenges faced by contemporary young people, thereby ensuring a balanced approach between individual readiness and the broader objectives of marriage in Islam. These policy recommendations demonstrate that addressing the phenomenon of waithood requires more than legal regulation; it demands coordinated social, educational, and religious interventions that are responsive to the realities faced by young adults. By integrating the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, with practical measures that promote financial preparedness, psychological resilience, and accessible marriage support, policymakers and religious institutions can foster an environment that encourages responsible family formation. Such a balanced approach ensures that the objectives of Islamic law are realized while respecting the legitimate aspirations and challenges of contemporary Indonesian youth.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of *waithood* among Indonesian youth represents a social reality that cannot be addressed through a uniform interpretation of Islamic law. This study demonstrates that the assessment of marriage postponement must be contextual and grounded in the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī,,ah* rather than relying solely on rigid textual interpretations.

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that *waithood* cannot be universally categorized as either prohibited (*ḥarām*) or discouraged (*makrūh*). *Sharī,,ah-compliant waithood* namely, the postponement of marriage based on reasons recognized within Islamic jurisprudence, such as genuine financial incapacity, obligations to care for family members, or the need to complete educational pursuitsremains within the boundaries accepted by *maqāṣid al-sharī,,ah*. This is particularly the case when the intention to marry is maintained and the postponement is temporary, planned, and accompanied by a clear timeframe. In contrast, structural-cultural *waithood*, which is driven by fear of marital responsibilities, a long-term preference for a single lifestyle, or negative perceptions of marriage shaped by consumerist culture and social media, has the potential to conflict with the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (the preservation of progeny), one of the five essential objectives (*al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams*) of *maqāṣid al-sharī,,ah*.

The principle of *taysīr* (facilitation and ease), which constitutes a fundamental spirit of Islamic law, requires that responses to this phenomenon should not be punitive in nature but rather facilitative and supportive. Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), the Offices of Religious Affairs (KUA), and government institutions play strategic roles in creating an ecosystem that supports healthy and sustainable marriages. Such efforts may include promoting simple and affordable marriage practices free from excessive consumerist pressures, strengthening family financial literacy, and providing premarital counseling programs that address the psychological concerns

and anxieties experienced by young adults.

This study is limited by its geographical focus on Temanggung Regency. Consequently, the findings may not be fully generalizable to major urban areas such as Jakarta or Surabaya, where social and economic dynamics differ significantly. Future research should explore the phenomenon of *waithood* through comparative studies between urban and rural contexts and evaluate the effectiveness of community-based intervention programs designed to address the challenges associated with delayed marriage. Such studies would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of *waithood* and its implications for the objectives of Islamic law in contemporary society.

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