

EMOTIONAL UNPREPAREDNESS AND MARRIAGE POSTPONEMENT AMONG MUSLIMS: A *MASLAHAH MURSALAH* ANALYSIS OF WAITHOOD IN PALU CITY

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Abstract

This study examines marriage postponement (waithood) among Muslims in Palu City through the lens of maslahah mursalah in Islamic jurisprudence, addressing the limited attention given to emotional readiness within existing studies on waithood. Employing a qualitative descriptive design with an empirical juridical and normative theological approach, data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation involving eight Muslim individuals who delayed marriage due to emotional unpreparedness. The findings identify four dominant psychological and social factors underlying marriage postponement: past trauma, fear of marital failure, family responsibilities, and concerns over post-marital socio-economic stability. Drawing on Imam al-Ghazali's framework of maslahah mursalah, this study argues that postponing marriage to attain emotional readiness constitutes a form of preventive public interest (maslahah wiqā'iyyah), as it serves the objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharī'ah), particularly the preservation of psychological well-being (ḥifẓ al-nafs), rational deliberation (ḥifẓ al-'aql), and family continuity (ḥifẓ al-nasl). This research contributes to Islamic family law discourse by reframing waithood as an ethically grounded and legally coherent strategy rather than a deviation from Islamic norms, thereby extending waithood studies into the psychological–emotional dimension within an Islamic legal framework.

Keywords: Emotional unpreparedness; *Maslahah Mursalah*; Waithood.

A. INTRODUCTION

In Islamic jurisprudence, marriage is understood as a legally binding contract (*'aqd*) that renders the relationship between a man and a woman lawful.¹ Marriage is regarded as a sacred bond before God, representing the union of two individuals who enter a new phase of life together. It is not merely construed as a physical relationship, but also as an institution aimed at procreation and the preservation of lineage.² Accordingly, marriage holds significant spiritual, moral, and social value in the life of a Muslim. Nevertheless, although Islamic teachings position marriage as an essential component of human fulfillment, its implementation must still take into account individual readiness and personal maturity.

Marriage is generally considered appropriate when entered into after the completion of upper secondary education, as individuals at this stage are assumed to have acquired sufficient knowledge as well as more mature patterns of thinking and behavior.³ Empirical studies indicate that the ideal age for marriage ranges from 21 to 25 years for women and from 25 to 28 years for men. At this stage, women are considered to have attained adequate physical and psychological maturity, enabling

¹ Desi Pitriani Siregar, M. Riski Harahap, Ihsan Mubarak, Ali Akbar Elvina Jahwa, "Konsep Perkawinan dalam Hukum Islam dan Hukum Nasional di Indonesia" *Journal Of Social Science Research* 4 (2024): 6

² Aisyah Ayu Musyafah, "Perkawinan Dalam Perspektif Filosofis Hukum Islam," *Crepido* 2, No. 2 (2020): 113

³ Rani Wulandari, "Waithood: Tren Penundaan Pernikahan Pada Perempuan Di Sulawesi Selatan," *Emik* 6, no. 1 (June 5, 2023): 53

their reproductive organs to better support pregnancy and childbirth in a safer manner. Meanwhile, men within this age range are typically characterized by greater physical strength and mental stability, which are viewed as essential prerequisites for fulfilling responsibilities as heads of households in emotional, economic, and social dimensions.⁴

This perspective is consistent with Indonesia's positive law, as stipulated in Law Number 16 of 2019 amending Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage, which establishes the minimum legal age of marriage for both men and women at 19 years. The determination of this age threshold aims to ensure the physical and psychological maturity of prospective spouses so that they are capable of realizing the objectives of marriage, namely the formation of a happy, harmonious, and sustainable family. Thus, although individuals are legally permitted to marry from the age of 19, sociological and psychological considerations suggest that marital readiness should ideally also encompass emotional maturity and the capacity to bear the responsibilities inherent in married life.⁵

However, within the contemporary social context, many individuals postpone marriage despite having reached what is conventionally considered an ideal age. This postponement is

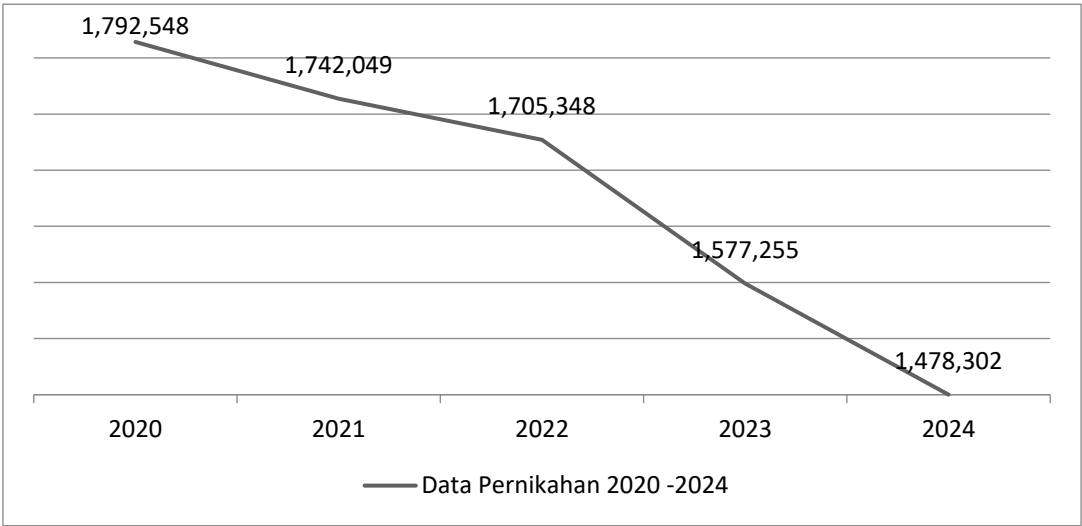
⁴ Wa Ode Wati Nurbaena, "Pengaruh Perkawinan Usia Muda Terhadap Pola Asuh Keluarga Di Kota Baubau," *Kybernan: Jurnal Studi Pemerintahan* 4, no. 1 (2019): 30

⁵ Yulanda Retno Susanti, "Pelanggaran Batas Usia Perkawinan Melalui Dispensasi Perkawinan Menurut Uu No. 16 Tahun 2019," *Hakam : Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam Dan Hukum Ekonomi Islam* 8, no. 2 (2024): 314

commonly referred to as *waitthood*, a phenomenon that reflects shifting perspectives among younger generations regarding the meaning of marriage and the appropriate timing for entering into it.⁶ In 2024, Statistics Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, BPS) reported that 69.75 percent of Indonesians aged 16–30 remained unmarried, representing an increase from 68.29 percent in the previous year.⁷

Data from Statistics Indonesia and other official sources further reinforce this trend, indicating that the number of married couples in Indonesia has continued to decline steadily over time.⁸

MARRIAGE STATISTICS (2020–2024)



⁶ Rani Wulandari, “Waitthood: Tren Penundaan Pernikahan Pada Perempuan Di Sulawesi Selatan,” *Emik* 6, no. 1 (2023): 57

⁷<https://kumparan.com/kumparannews/bps-ungkap-69-75-pemuda-di-indonesia-belum-menikah-24Rth0eVndM/full> (Diakses tanggal 9 oktober 2025)

⁸ Merdeka “Membedah Turunnya Angka Pernikahan Usia Muda di Indonesia” <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/membedah-turunnya-angka-pernikahan-usia-muda-di-indonesia-99421-mvk.html?utm> (Diakses tanggal 09 oktober 2025)

A similar phenomenon is also evident at the local level, particularly in Palu City, the capital of Central Sulawesi Province. According to Statistics Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, BPS) data from 2024, the population of Palu City reached approximately 389.96 thousand people, of whom 66.54 percent were of productive age (15–59 years).⁹ In 2020, the population of Palu City aged between 21 and 28 years was estimated at around 65,591 individuals, based on BPS data recording 47,723 people in the 20–24 age group and 34,266 people in the 25–29 age group.¹⁰ When these cohorts are projected to 2024, they fall within the age range of 25 to 32 years, which corresponds to the productive phase of life that is socially and economically commonly identified as the ideal period for entering family life. However, data from the Palu City Office of Population and Civil Registration indicate that in 2024 only 2,021 marriages were officially recorded.¹¹ When compared to the size of the relevant age cohort, this figure represents only about 3 percent of the young generation that would be expected to have reached full social adulthood.

⁹ Darmawan (2025), Persentase Penduduk di Kota Palu Menurut Kategori Kelompok (Data 2024), Link: <https://share.google/A4pGI0AXqsEIF9KkQ> (Diakses tgl 09 oktober 2025)

¹⁰ Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Palu <https://palukota.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/2/MjgjMg==/proyeksi-penduduk-2010-2020--perempuan-laki-laki-.html> (Diakses 13 November)

¹¹ Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Palu <https://sulteng.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/3/VkhwVUszTXJPVmQ2ZFRKamNIZG9RMVo2VEdsbVVUMDkjMw==/nikah-dan-cerai-menurut-kabupaten-kota-di-provinsi-sulawesi-tengah--2023.html> (Diakses 13 November)

Study on *waithood* in Indonesia remains limited. Nevertheless, several studies have provided an initial foundation for understanding this phenomenon from an Islamic perspective. One such study by Ramadhani Islami Putri et al. (2025) interprets Qur'an Surah An-Nur:32 using Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutical approach and concludes that postponing marriage for economic and career-related reasons constitutes an ethical strategy for building families that are financially and spiritually prepared.¹² Similarly, Syaifuddin Zuhdi et al. (2024) argue that delaying marriage due to mental readiness or career considerations does not contradict Islamic law and reflects the pursuit of public benefit (*maslahah*). In contrast to these studies, the present study emphasizes emotional unpreparedness as the primary factor underlying *waithood*, employing the framework of *maslahah mursalah* in Islamic legal analysis.¹³

This study offers novelty by positioning emotional unpreparedness as the central cause of marriage postponement, rather than treating economic or career factors as the primary determinants. By applying *maslahah mursalah* as an *uṣūl al-fiqh*-based analytical framework, the study underscores the importance of emotional readiness in maintaining marital harmony and preventing early divorce. Overall, this research

¹² R I Putri, A K Soleh, and M A Hakim, "Penundaan Pernikahan Di Kalangan Pasangan Muda: Telaah Hermeneutika Double Movement Fazlur Rahman Terhadap Qs An-Nur: 32", *Jurnal Yaqhzan* 11, No. 01 (2025): 61.

¹³ Syaifuddin Zuhdi, Yola Yasin, and Widi Astuti, "Perilaku Waithood Dalam Pandangan Hukum Islam," *Jurnal Program Pascasarjana Ilmu Hukum* 10, no. 2 (2024): 160.

extends the study of *waitthood* into the psychological–emotional dimension within the context of Islamic law.

Methodologically, this study is grounded in a qualitative approach that employs an empirical juridical research design, integrating a case study strategy with a normative theological perspective. The theory of *maslahah mursalah* serves as the principal analytical framework for examining the issues addressed in this study. Data were collected through three techniques: interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with eight Muslim informants in Palu City—three men and five women—who had postponed marriage due to emotional unpreparedness. Observations were undertaken to examine the informants' social life patterns, including work environments and daily interactions. Documentation involved the collection of written materials and Islamic scholarly literature, such as media reports on marriage postponement trends and studies related to the concept of *maslahah mursalah* relevant to this study. The dataset comprised both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained from interviews and observations involving the eight Muslim individuals in Palu City who delayed marriage due to emotional unpreparedness, while secondary data were derived from the Qur'an, Hadith, literature on *maslahah mursalah*, as well as relevant academic articles and statistical data related to the study theme.

B. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. An Overview of Waithood Cases in Palu City

The term *waithood* originates from English, combining the word *wait* and the suffix *-hood*, which denotes a condition or period. Literally, *waithood* refers to a state of waiting or a phase of postponement.¹⁴ Conceptually, *waithood* is understood as an extended phase of early adulthood in which individuals choose to delay marriage, sometimes indefinitely or even to remain unmarried altogether. This postponement represents a conscious decision, particularly among women, to refrain from establishing a household due to reluctance to enter binding relationships and the absence of readiness to assume the role of a spouse.¹⁵

The term was first introduced by Diane Singerman to describe the phenomenon of delayed marriage among young adults in the Middle East and North Africa, which has subsequently become increasingly evident in Indonesia. It captures a transitional period toward social adulthood in which individuals deliberately postpone marriage.¹⁶ Singerman characterizes *waithood* as a transitional phase in young people's

¹⁴ Gita Yulia, "Fenomena Waithood Di Indonesia Dilema Terjebak Di Zona"

https://www.kompasiana.com/gitayulia0139/6707e472c925c43aab755d32/fe-nomena-waithood-di-indonesia-dilema-terjebak-di-lampu-merah?page=1&page_images=1 (Diakses 9 oktober 2025)

¹⁵ Rani Wulandari, "Waithood:Tren Penundaan Pernikahan Pada Perempuan Di Sulawesi Selatan, Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial", *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-ilmu Sosial* 6, No.1 (2023), 57.

¹⁶ Dewinta Asokawati and Zain Arfin Utama, "Problematisasi Waithood Sebagai Upaya Kontrol Sosial Terhadap Persoalan Perkawinan Dalam Menekan Angka Kemiskinan," *Judge : Jurnal Hukum* 5, no. 02 (2024): 320

progression toward adulthood that is marked by delay. In societies where adulthood is closely associated with marriage, remaining unmarried places individuals in a liminal social position—no longer children, yet not fully recognized as adults. Singerman emphasizes that *waitthood* is not solely driven by economic factors, but is also related to identity formation processes, social pressures, and individuals' limited capacity to meet cultural expectations associated with adult roles. In the Middle Eastern context examined by Singerman, marriage postponement is largely triggered by high marriage costs and employment instability, compelling young people to wait for years until they perceive themselves as materially prepared.

Within the framework of this study, Singerman's conceptualization can be extended to demonstrate that marriage postponement may also be shaped by internal factors such as emotional unpreparedness. Even in the absence of significant economic constraints, some young adults continue to delay marriage because they perceive themselves as psychologically unready to engage in long-term relationships and to assume spousal responsibilities. Accordingly, *waitthood* in the context of Palu City does not merely reflect postponement driven by structural constraints, as described by Singerman, but also highlights the role of emotional and psychological dimensions in prolonging young adults' transition into full social adulthood.¹⁷

¹⁷ Diane Singerman "The Economic Imperatives of Marriage: Emergng Practices and Identities among Youth in the Middle East", *Jurnal: Middle East Youth Initiative Working Paper* No.6 (2007): 1-5

In Islamic tradition, for example, Imam al-Nawawi postponed marriage not as a rejection of the Sunnah, but in order to devote himself to the pursuit of knowledge and acts of worship. This illustrates that delaying marriage is permissible when it serves constructive purposes and supports readiness to establish a harmonious family in accordance with Islamic law.¹⁸

Within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, the postponement of marriage is allowed when it generates greater public benefit (*maṣlaḥah*).¹⁹ This view is further reinforced by contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Muhammad Abu Zahrah, who affirm that delaying marriage does not constitute a violation of Islamic law, provided that it is based on considerations that are legally justified (*sharʿī*). They argue that Islam allows a degree of flexibility in determining the timing of marriage, as long as the postponement does not lead individuals into immoral conduct and is motivated by the pursuit of greater benefit, such as moral, economic, and spiritual preparedness. Accordingly, marriage postponement may be regarded as consistent with the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, insofar as it aims to safeguard benefit and prevent harm at both the individual and societal levels.²⁰

¹⁸ Miftah H Yusufpatih, Imam Nawawi Pilih Membuang Selama Hidup, Ini Dalihnya, <https://Kalam.Sindonews.Com/Read/522604/70/Imam-Nawawi-Pilih-Membuang-Seumur-Hidup-Ini-Dalihnya-1629961725?Utm> diakses pada tanggal 1 Oktober 2025.

¹⁹ Daru Prayitno and A. Kumedi Ja'far, "Interpretasi Hukum Islam Terhadap Tren Menunda Pernikahan: Perspektif Hukum Keluarga Dan Tantangan Sosial," *Bulletin of Islamic Law* 2, no. 1 (2025): 26

²⁰ Ibid.

The reasons underlying marriage postponement vary considerably. Some are related to economic constraints, others to physical limitations, or to the absence of adequate mental and emotional maturity. Fundamentally, the decision to delay marriage is intended to provide individuals with greater flexibility to fulfill other responsibilities while preparing themselves for the demands inherent in married life. Entering marriage with sufficient material and physical readiness but inadequate mental preparedness may adversely affect the sustainability of family life.²¹

One of the most dominant factors is mental unpreparedness. This reason is frequently expressed by university students, recent graduates, and unmarried individuals aged approximately 20 to 25 years. They acknowledge that marriage is not a simple undertaking but involves substantial responsibilities that require emotional maturity and strong psychological readiness.²²

In general terms, emotion refers to mental activities or states involving thoughts, feelings, and desires, particularly those that are intense or heightened. According to Paul Ekman, there are at least four basic human emotions: anger, fear, sadness, and happiness. These emotions are universal in nature and

²¹ Moh Kasim Umasangadji, "Hukum Menunda Perkawinan Dalam Islam (Studi Kasus Di Desa Waitina Kecamatan Mangoli Timur Kabupaten Kepulauan Sula)," *Jurnal Hukum Dan Ekonomi* 09, no. 1 (2023): 60.

²² Rachmy R. Diana, "Penundaan Pernikahan: Perspektif Islam Dan Psikologi," *Jurnal Psikologi* 1, no. 2 (2008): 171.

experienced by individuals across cultures.²³ Emotional maturity refers to a condition in which an individual has reached a developed stage of personal growth. It can be understood as the capacity to respond to various life situations in a constructive and adaptive manner, rather than in a childlike way.

Based on the foregoing discussion, emotional maturity may be defined as an individual's ability to regulate emotions, to assess situations objectively and critically, and to demonstrate mature emotional responses when confronted with diverse life circumstances. Saul identifies at least three key aspects of emotional maturity: appropriate emotional responses, the range and depth of emotions, and emotional control.²⁴ From this perspective, emotional unpreparedness can be understood as a condition in which individuals are unable to recognize, comprehend, or regulate their basic emotions effectively. In such circumstances, individuals tend to react impulsively or excessively when faced with challenging situations.

Within the context of marriage, emotional unpreparedness constitutes a major obstacle to the development of a harmonious relationship. Couples who lack emotional readiness often encounter difficulties in managing conflict, expressing emotions appropriately, and understanding each other's emotional needs.

²³ Oktanurvia Budi, Sarasati, "Emosi Dalam Tulisan," *Jurnal Psibermetika* 14 (2021): 41.

²⁴ Amalia Kusuma Dewi, Rin Widya Agustin, and Pratista Arya Satwika, "The Relationship between Emotion Maturity and Social Adjustment with Migrant Employees' Psychological Well-Being at PT. Pelabuhan Samudera Palaran Samarinda" 127, no. Icaaip 2017 (2018): 88

The findings indicate a significant relationship between emotional maturity and marital readiness. Individuals with a high level of emotional maturity tend to demonstrate a high level of readiness for marriage, whereas those with low emotional maturity tend to exhibit low marital readiness²⁵.

Based on official data from Statistics Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, BPS) of Palu City, as published in *Palu City in Figures 2024*, the dynamics of marriage rates in Palu City during the 2022–2024 period reveal a marked downward trend. In 2022, a total of 2,245 marriages were recorded. In 2023, however, the number declined to 2,066 marriages, representing a decrease of approximately 7.97 percent compared to the previous year. This downward trend continued in 2024, with 2,021 marriages recorded, indicating a further decrease of around 2.2 percent relative to 2023.²⁶

Considering this data trend, it is evident that the decline in the number of marriages in Palu City has occurred consistently, despite the relatively high proportion of the population within the productive age group. This condition suggests the presence of more complex social dynamics underlying the statistical figures.

²⁵ Ratih Eka Pertiwi Nabila Triana Putri, “Emotional Maturity And Marital Readiness Among Marriage Dispensation Applicants,” *Jurnal Psychological Research And Intervention* 7 (2024): 48.

²⁶ Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah, *Nikah dan Cerai Menurut Kabupaten/Kota (kejadian) di Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah, 2024*, <https://sulteng.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/3/VkhwVUzTXJPVmQ2ZFRKamNIZG9RMVo2VEdsbVVUMDkjMw==/nikah-dan-cerai-menurut-kabupaten-kota-di-provinsi-sulawesi-tengah-2023.html?year=2024>, diakses pada tanggal 12 Oktober 2025.

One phenomenon that warrants further examination is *waithood*, defined as a prolonged postponement of the transition into adulthood—particularly with respect to marriage—which has become increasingly observable among the productive-age population in Palu City.

The phenomenon of *waithood*, examined through a case study approach in Palu City, involved several individuals, comprising three men and five women aged between 25 and 41 years. The findings reveal that *waithood* among productive-age adults in Palu City is shaped by a set of recurring and interrelated factors, with emotional unpreparedness emerging as the most dominant theme. Rather than being driven solely by economic constraints, marriage postponement reflects a complex interaction between psychological readiness, social experiences, moral responsibility, and individual life priorities. Four major themes were identified across the cases.

a. Emotional Unpreparedness as the Central Driver of Waithood

Across participants, emotional unpreparedness consistently emerged as the primary factor underlying the decision to postpone marriage. Informants perceived marriage as a long-term commitment requiring psychological stability, emotional regulation, and the capacity to manage relational conflict. Many participants explicitly stated that they did not feel mentally prepared to assume spousal responsibilities, despite

having reached what is socially considered an appropriate marital age.

This perception was particularly evident among individuals in their mid-twenties to early thirties, who emphasized the need for emotional maturity prior to entering marriage. Observations and interviews suggest that participants associated emotional readiness with self-awareness, emotional control, and the ability to respond constructively to interpersonal challenges. In this context, postponing marriage was understood not as rejection of marriage itself, but as a deliberate strategy to avoid relational instability and future marital failure.

b. Trauma, Trust Deficit, and Fear of Marital Failure

Another prominent theme relates to past trauma and diminished trust in the institution of marriage. Several female participants reported negative childhood experiences, exposure to family conflict, or personal relational trauma that shaped their apprehension toward marital commitment. These experiences contributed to a deep-seated fear of repeating patterns of disharmony observed in their immediate social environment.

Participants frequently referred to high divorce rates and non-harmonious marriages among relatives, colleagues, or close acquaintances. Such observations reinforced their skepticism toward marriage and heightened their perceived emotional vulnerability. As a result, marriage postponement functioned as a protective mechanism, allowing individuals to safeguard their

emotional well-being while reassessing the meaning and risks of marital relationships.

c. Moral and Economic Responsibility as a Source of Psychological Burden

For several male participants, *waitthood* was closely associated with moral responsibility toward family members and concerns over post-marital economic sustainability. Older unmarried men, particularly those employed as civil servants, highlighted obligations to support parents or extended family as a major consideration in delaying marriage. These responsibilities were perceived as incompatible with the financial demands of married life, especially housing costs and increasing dowry expectations.

Importantly, these economic concerns were framed not merely as material insufficiency, but as a moral burden that intensified psychological pressure. Participants expressed concern that entering marriage without adequate stability could result in harm to both spouses. Consequently, postponing marriage was viewed as a rational and ethically responsible choice until emotional and economic conditions were perceived as sufficiently stable.

d. Career Orientation and Deliberate Timing of Marriage

A further theme identified in the findings concerns career orientation and intentional life planning. Some participants, particularly women in their mid-to-late twenties, emphasized the importance of professional development and economic self-

sufficiency prior to marriage. While these individuals did not reject marriage, they viewed the current stage of life as inappropriate for marital commitment.

In this context, marriage postponement was framed as a matter of timing rather than unwillingness. Participants expressed a desire to first achieve personal goals, financial stability, and emotional readiness before transitioning into family life. This orientation reflects a form of deliberate *waithood*, in which marriage is postponed as part of a broader life strategy aligned with self-development and future marital sustainability.

Taken together, the findings indicate that *waithood* in Palu City is not a homogeneous or purely structurally driven phenomenon. Instead, it is sustained by a convergence of emotional unpreparedness, psychological trauma, moral-economic responsibility, and strategic life planning. Emotional readiness functions as a cross-cutting theme that intersects with other factors, reinforcing marriage postponement even in the absence of severe economic constraints. These patterns suggest that *waithood* should be understood as a prolonged transitional phase shaped by both internal psychological dynamics and external social pressures. In this sense, marriage postponement reflects a conscious effort by individuals to minimize potential harm and enhance relational preparedness before entering marital life.

Table 1.

Thematic Patterns of Waithood among Productive-Age Adults
in Palu City

Theme	Key Indicators	Dominant Rationales	Informant Profile
Emotional unpreparedness	Self-doubt, emotional instability, fear of commitment, difficulty managing conflict	Marriage perceived as requiring strong emotional maturity and psychological readiness	Male & Female, 25–32 years
Trauma and trust deficit	Childhood family conflict, failed relationships, exposure to divorce	Fear of repeating disharmonious marital patterns; low trust in marriage as an institution	Female, 25–28 years
Moral and economic responsibility	Family financial obligations, housing insecurity, dowry pressure	Ethical concern over entering marriage without adequate stability	Male, 28–41 years
Fear of marital failure	Observation of non-harmonious marriages, high divorce rates	Marriage viewed as high-risk without emotional resilience	Female, 25–26 years
Career orientation and life planning	Career focus, financial self-sufficiency, delayed timing	Marriage postponed as part of deliberate life strategy rather than rejection	Female, 25–28 years
Self-understanding and personal development	Desire for self-reflection, identity formation	Psychological readiness prioritized over financial readiness	Male, 25 years

2. Emotional Readiness in Marriage: An Islamic Legal Perspective

From the perspective of Islamic family law, emotional readiness prior to marriage underscores that marriage is not merely a physical union between two individuals, but also a spiritual and emotional convergence aimed at establishing a household characterized by *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*.²⁷ In this context, Islam positions emotional readiness as a foundational requirement that prospective spouses must possess before entering marriage. Such readiness encompasses the ability to regulate emotions, communicate effectively, develop mutual understanding, and provide reciprocal support. Through emotional balance, spouses are better equipped to foster a harmonious household and to experience marriage as a form of worship in devotion to God.²⁸

Islam conceptualizes marriage as a sacred covenant (*mīthāqan ghalīẓan*) that encompasses not only physical and social dimensions but also spiritual and emotional aspects.²⁹ Accordingly, emotional readiness constitutes a critical prerequisite enabling spouses to confront the trials and dynamics of marital life. The *Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam, KHI)* emphasizes that marriage must be grounded

²⁷ Anisa Nur Khotimah, “KESIAPAN MENIKAH DALAM PERSPEKTIF PSIKOLOGI PENDIDIKAN ISLAM,” *Penelitian Guru Indonesia* 5, no. 5 (2025): 4309

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Abdi Samra Chaniago, “Memaknai Mitsaqon Ghalizha Sebagai Kunci Harmoni Keluarga Islam,” *Jurnal Landraad* 2, no. 2 (2023): 200.

in an awareness of the respective rights and obligations of each party. Communication and deliberation (*musyawarah*) between prospective spouses are encouraged to ensure shared understanding of vision and collective responsibility in marital life. When marital issues arise, Islamic family law promotes resolution through a *sharī'ah*-based approach, either by reference to the Qur'an and Hadith or through institutional mechanisms such as mediation and guidance provided by the Office of Religious Affairs (*Kantor Urusan Agama*, KUA).

In addition, Islam underscores the importance of thorough premarital preparation across spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions. Emotional readiness includes the capacity to manage differences in character, adapt to change, and confront marital challenges with patience and resilience. Insufficient emotional preparedness has frequently been identified as a contributing factor to rising divorce rates in Indonesia, particularly in cases where marriage is entered without adequate understanding and preparation. For this reason, premarital education integrating psychological, financial, and religious components is strongly advocated within Islamic law. Such education aims to equip prospective spouses with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities while fostering psychological maturity in navigating marital life.³⁰

³⁰ Ahmad Zain Sarnoto, "Model Pendidikan Pranikah Dalam Perspektif Al- Qur ' an (Studi Empris Kehidupan Pernikahan Di Kota Bogor)" 4, no. 2 (2022): 190.

Emotional maturity constitutes a key determinant of readiness for an ideal marriage. Emotionally mature individuals are better able to manage conflict, communicate effectively, and make prudent decisions when facing domestic challenges. Religiosity further functions as a moral foundation that guides individuals to act in accordance with Islamic values. Within the framework of Islamic family law, emotional readiness and religiosity are interrelated dimensions that together establish a balance between rationality, spirituality, and social responsibility in the formation of a harmonious family. Consequently, emotional readiness is not merely a psychological condition but also reflects depth of faith and commitment to viewing marriage as an act of worship to God.

In this respect, Islamic family law regards emotional readiness as a vital element in sustaining a stable and blessed household. Couples who are emotionally and spiritually prepared are not only capable of conducting marital life with mutual care and understanding but also of framing marriage as an expression of devotion and accountability to God. This perspective indicates that emotional readiness in Islam transcends individual necessity and constitutes an integral component of the implementation of *sharī‘ah*, aimed at preserving dignity, tranquility, and shared well-being in married life.³¹

³¹ Dwiky Meiretno, Helmi Basri, and Suhayib, “Kesiapan Emosional Menuju Pernikahan Analisis Manajemen Keuangan Rumah Tangga Ditinjau Menurut Hukum Keluarga Islam (Studi Kasus Pada Pemuda Usia Ideal

3. Waithood through the Lens of Maslahah Mursalah

Maslahah mursalah constitutes an important concept in Islamic jurisprudence, referring to policies or legal determinations adopted to secure public welfare in the absence of explicit scriptural evidence (*dalīl sharʿī*). In this context, *maslahah* denotes benefit or public interest, while *mursalah* signifies that such benefit is unrestricted or not explicitly regulated by textual sources.³² The term *maslahah mursalah* is composed of two interrelated elements, in which *mursalah* functions as a descriptive qualifier of *maslahah*. Linguistically, *mursalah* means “unrestricted” or “detached,” and in Islamic legal discourse it refers to a form of benefit for which no direct textual indication exists regarding its permissibility or prohibition.³³ *Maslahah mursalah* is among the legal evidences over which classical jurists differed (*dalīl mukhtalaf fīh*).³⁴ Because it is not supported by explicit textual proof, scholars exercised considerable caution in employing it as a basis for legal reasoning. They therefore formulated stringent conditions to

Menikah Di Kabupaten Indragiri Hilir),” *Jurnal Muamalah Dan Ekonomi Syari’ah* 06, no. 02 (2024): 117–20.

³² Uswatun Hasanah, “Kedudukan Mashalih Al-Mursalah Sebagai Dalil Hukum,” *Al-Usrah: Jurnal Al-Ahwal As-Syakhsyah* 12, no. 1 (2024): 23–30.

³³ Cik Hasan Bisri, “Maslahah Al- Mursalah Sebagai Dalil Dan Metode Ijtihad,” *Hikmah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 16 (2020): 204–18.

³⁴ Muhammad Huzaifi, “Kedudukan Maslahah Mursalah Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali” *Jurnal Al-Nadhair* 2, No.1 (2023), 37.

prevent legal rulings from being grounded in personal interests or subjective inclinations.³⁵

Nevertheless, the Companions, the Successors (*tābi'īn*), the Followers of the Successors (*tābi' al-tābi'īn*), and subsequent jurists applied the principle of *maslahah mursalah* in legal decision-making. Through this approach, they were able to respond to the evolving needs of Muslim societies by issuing rulings aligned with prevailing public interests, even when such rulings were not explicitly mentioned in the scriptural texts.³⁶ Within the framework of Islamic law, *maslahah mursalah* may serve as a foundation for legislation provided that it satisfies specific conditions established by jurists. These conditions are intended to preserve the integrity of Islamic law and to prevent the misuse of public interest arguments for subjective or opportunistic purposes. This study adopts the perspective of Imam al-Ghazali regarding *maslahah mursalah*.

Imam al-Ghazali articulated strict criteria for the admissibility of *maslahah mursalah* in legal reasoning. According to him, a benefit may only be considered if it falls within the category of *ḍarūriyyāt* (essential necessities) related to the five fundamental objectives of Islamic law: the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). Moreover, such

³⁵ Muhammad Huzaifi Muslim, “Kedudukan Maslahah Mursalah Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali,” *Jurnal Al-Nadhair* 2, no. 1 (2023): 31–47.

³⁶ Agus Hermanto, *Metode Pembaruan Hukum Islam Pendekatan Interdisipliner*, vol. 17, 1385.

benefit must be established with certainty (*qaṭ'ī*), rather than mere speculation. Al-Ghazali further emphasized that the benefit must be general in nature, serving the broader public interest rather than the interests of specific individuals or groups. Finally, it must not contradict definitive scriptural texts (*naṣṣ qaṭ'ī*), thereby remaining consistent with the overarching objectives of Islamic legislation. Accordingly, al-Ghazali concluded that *maslahah mursalah* may only be employed when it fulfills four criteria: necessity, certainty, general applicability, and non-contradiction with definitive textual evidence.³⁷

The phenomenon of *waithood*, or delayed marriage, observed among residents of Palu City may be examined through the lens of *maslahah mursalah* as conceptualized by Imam al-Ghazali. In his view, *maslahah mursalah* refers to a form of benefit that lacks direct textual grounding yet remains acceptable when it aligns with the primary objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), namely the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. In this context, the decision of informants to postpone marriage does not represent a rejection of marriage itself, but rather a rational and ethical measure aimed at safeguarding personal well-being. Such postponement reflects prudence, ensuring that marriage, when undertaken, promotes tranquility, stability, and blessing rather than generating conflict, distress, or harm within the household.

³⁷ Mukhsin Nyak Umar, *AL-MASHLAHAH AL-MURSALAH*, ed. Maizuddin (Banda aceh: turats, 2017).

When examined more closely, delaying marriage due to insufficient emotional readiness constitutes a form of necessary benefit intended to prevent hardship and potential harm that may arise from entering marriage prematurely. From the perspective of *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, postponement serves to protect psychological well-being by preventing individuals from becoming entangled in stressful or detrimental relationships. From the standpoint of *ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*, this decision demonstrates the exercise of sound judgment in recognizing the significant responsibilities inherent in marital life. Furthermore, in terms of *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, delaying marriage reflects an effort to ensure that future offspring are raised within a harmonious, stable, and nurturing family environment. Accordingly, the phenomenon of *waithood* may be understood as a preventive application of *maslahah mursalah*, aimed at preserving benefit and averting harm prior to marriage, in full accordance with Islamic legal principles that seek to balance spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions of human life.

Thus, *waithood* in Palu City can be interpreted as a manifestation of *maslahah mursalah* consistent with Imam al-Ghazali's conception of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*. Delaying marriage on the basis of emotional, economic, and spiritual readiness functions as a preventive strategy to maintain marital stability and to protect the five fundamental objectives of Islamic law: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. From this perspective, *waithood* does not contradict Islamic teachings; rather, it reflects

an effort to realize public welfare and to prevent harm within the context of ongoing social transformation.

C. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that marriage postponement (waithood) among Muslim adults in Palu City is predominantly shaped by emotional unpreparedness rather than solely by economic or structural constraints. Based on in-depth interviews with eight informants, the findings indicate that past trauma, fear of marital failure, family responsibilities, and concerns regarding post-marital economic and social stability constitute the primary factors underlying delayed marriage decisions. These findings confirm that marriage readiness is not merely a material condition but fundamentally requires psychological and emotional maturity to sustain marital relationships.

By employing *maslahah mursalah* as an analytical framework, this study contributes to Islamic family law discourse by reconceptualizing waithood as a form of preventive public interest (*maslahah wiqā'iyah*). From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, marriage postponement in cases of emotional unpreparedness serves to protect psychological well-being (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), reflects rational deliberation in assuming marital responsibility (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), and supports the formation of stable and harmonious families (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*). Accordingly, waithood does not represent a rejection of marriage but rather a strategic

and ethically grounded decision aimed at minimizing potential harm and maximizing long-term marital welfare.

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