

WAITHOOD IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF HADITH: A THEMATIC STUDY OF THE HADITHS ON MARRIAGE READINESS

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of waithood, referring to the postponement of marriage, has become increasingly prevalent among contemporary Muslim youth due to educational, economic, psychological, and social considerations. While previous studies have predominantly examined waithood from sociological and Islamic family law perspectives, limited attention has been given to its interpretation through a thematic analysis of the Prophetic traditions. This study aims to examine the phenomenon of waithood from the perspective of hadith using a thematic (*maudhu'i*) approach and Yusuf al-Qaradawi's contextual methodology. This research employed qualitative library research by analyzing hadiths related to marriage readiness, particularly those concerning *al-bā'ah*, marriage as the Prophet's Sunnah, and the criteria of religion and good character in selecting a spouse. The hadiths were examined through thematic collection, takhrij, contextual interpretation, and comparative analysis using Yusuf al-Qaradawi's framework. The findings demonstrate that the Prophetic traditions provide a balanced understanding of waithood through three interconnected principles: readiness, self-discipline, and responsibility. Marriage is encouraged for individuals who possess the capability to fulfill its obligations, whereas postponement may be justified when it represents a genuine process of preparation accompanied by moral self-discipline and responsibility. This study contributes to contemporary hadith scholarship by demonstrating that waithood should be understood not merely through a normative-textual reading of hadith but through a contextual interpretation that integrates the objectives of Islamic teachings with contemporary social realities.

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INTRODUCTION

Amid the rapid social transformation of contemporary society, marriage has become an increasingly complex issue in Indonesia. Marriage is no longer viewed solely as a religious obligation or a social institution but is also influenced by

educational attainment, career aspirations, economic conditions, changing cultural values, and individual life planning (Rahmania, 2025). These developments have contributed to the emergence of waithood, a phenomenon referring to the postponement of marriage despite having reached adulthood. Among Indonesian youth, this trend has become increasingly visible as many young people intentionally delay marriage while preparing themselves academically, financially, psychologically, and professionally (Afrilian, 2024; Usmi, 2025).

The waithood phenomenon has become particularly prominent among Millennials and Generation Z in Indonesia. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, postponing marriage has gradually become more socially acceptable. Several studies predict that this trend will continue until 2050. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) also indicate that younger generations are becoming increasingly selective in choosing life partners, while educational achievement, career establishment, financial readiness, and personal maturity have become important considerations before entering marriage. From a sociological perspective, waithood reflects changes in the transition to adulthood and the transformation of modern lifestyles, where delaying marriage is often regarded as an effort to achieve greater readiness before establishing a family (Salisa, 2025; Zuhdi, 2025).

These social changes are also reflected in demographic statistics. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) show that the number of marriages in Indonesia has decreased by 28.63% over the past decade. This decline indicates a shift in values, life orientation, and perceptions of marriage among younger generations. Previous studies have also examined the implications of waithood from different perspectives. For example, research by Tan Gusli from the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of West Sumatra Province entitled *Preservation of Marriage Institutions: Efforts to Prevent Economic Impacts, Sex Crises, and Depopulation Due to Childfree, Waithood, and Freesex Practices in Indonesia* (2024) explains that the increasing prevalence of waithood and childfree lifestyles, together with the emergence of premarital sexual behavior, may contribute to declining marriage rates, decreasing fertility rates, and broader demographic changes in Indonesia (Az-Zahra et al., 2025; Khoiriyah, 2026).

From the perspective of Islamic teachings, marriage occupies an important position as an institution intended to preserve religion, lineage, and social order. The Qur'an encourages Muslims who possess sufficient capability to marry while emphasizing that sustenance ultimately comes from Allah SWT.

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۚ إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٣٢)

"Marry those who are still single among you and also those who are worthy (to marry) from your servants, both men and women. If they are poor, God will empower them with His grace. Allah is Vast and All-Knowing."
(QS. An-Nur: 32).

Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH emphasized the importance of marriage for individuals who possess the necessary capability (al-bā'ah), as narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari No. 5066:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ، مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ، فَإِنَّهُ أَغْضُ لِلْبَصَرِ، وَأَخْصَنُ لِلْفَرْجِ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَيْهِ بِالصَّوْمِ، فَإِنَّهُ لَهُ وَجَاءٌ

"O young men, whoever among you is able to marry, then marry. Because getting married can hold the gaze more and preserve chastity. Whoever is unable to do so should fast, for fasting diminishes sexual desire."
(Al-Bukhārī, 1993)

These scriptural sources demonstrate that marriage is highly encouraged for Muslims who have attained the required capability. Nevertheless, Islamic jurisprudence recognizes that the legal ruling of marriage is not identical for every individual. The obligation or recommendation to marry depends on a person's physical, financial, psychological, and moral readiness, as well as the potential benefits and harms that may result from marriage or its postponement. Therefore, postponing marriage cannot be universally interpreted as contradicting Islamic teachings. Instead, it should be understood within the framework of the concept of capability (al-bā'ah), which considers the comprehensive readiness of an individual before entering married life. Previous studies concerning waithood have primarily approached the phenomenon from sociological, demographic, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, and Islamic family law perspectives (Nurrohman, 2025; Salisa, 2025) (Afrilian, 2024; Usmi, 2025)

These studies have successfully explained the social causes, legal implications, and demographic consequences of postponing marriage. However, they have generally discussed the Qur'anic and hadith foundations only in a normative manner and have not systematically reconstructed the concept of marriage readiness based on a comprehensive collection of prophetic traditions. Furthermore, studies employing the thematic hadith (*maudhu'i*) approach remain limited, particularly those that contextualize the hadiths using Yusuf al-Qaradawi's interpretive framework to understand their relevance to contemporary social realities.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the phenomenon of waithood through a thematic hadith (*maudhu'i*) approach and Yusuf al-Qaradawi's contextual interpretation. Rather than assuming that every form of marriage postponement is inconsistent with Islamic teachings, this study aims to reconstruct the concept of marriage readiness (*al-bā'ah*) based on relevant prophetic traditions and to analyze its relevance to the contemporary waithood phenomenon among Indonesian Muslim youth. The findings are expected to enrich contemporary hadith studies by providing a more comprehensive understanding of marriage readiness that integrates normative Islamic teachings with the changing social realities experienced by today's younger generation.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative library research design with a descriptive-analytical approach. The research focused on examining the phenomenon of waithood through a thematic hadith (*maudhu'i*) approach by collecting, classifying, and analyzing prophetic traditions related to marriage readiness. The objective was to reconstruct the concept of marriage readiness in Islam and to examine its relevance to the contemporary phenomenon of waithood.

The primary data consisted of hadiths concerning marriage, marriage capability (*al-bā'ah*), family responsibility, and the objectives of marriage found in al-Kutub al-Sittah, namely Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abi Dawud, Jami' al-Tirmidhi, Sunan al-Nasa'i, and Sunan Ibn Majah. The selection of hadiths was based on thematic relevance to marriage readiness, including traditions discussing physical, financial, psychological, spiritual, and social capability before marriage. Secondary data were obtained from syarah hadis literature, books of rijal al-hadith, classical and contemporary works on hadith studies, scientific journal articles, and literature discussing the waithood phenomenon from sociological and Islamic perspectives.

The collected hadiths were first traced through takhrij using the original hadith collections and supporting hadith references to identify their sources, chains of transmission, and textual variants. The authenticity and quality of each hadith were then determined by referring to the evaluations of authoritative hadith scholars contained in the classical hadith collections and syarah literature. Where necessary, sanad and matn criticism was conducted to ensure the reliability and contextual suitability of the traditions analyzed in this study.

The analytical framework adopted Yusuf al-Qaradawi's methodology for understanding hadith as presented in Kayfa Nata'amal Ma'a al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah. In this study, the approach was operationalized through five analytical indicators: (1) interpreting hadith in harmony with the principles of the Qur'an; (2) collecting and synthesizing all hadiths discussing the same theme to obtain a comprehensive understanding; (3) considering the historical context and circumstances surrounding the emergence of each hadith; (4) identifying the objectives of the Sharia (maqasid al-shari'ah) reflected in the traditions; and (5) distinguishing between permanent objectives and contextual means that may change according to different social conditions. These indicators served as the analytical framework for interpreting the hadiths within the context of the contemporary waithood phenomenon (In'am Awaluddin, 2025; Isnaini et al., 2025).

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the research identified the principal themes related to waithood and marriage readiness based on existing scientific literature. Second, relevant hadiths were identified and collected using thematic and keyword-based searches. Third, each hadith underwent takhrij to verify its source and authenticity, followed by an examination of its sanad and matn where necessary. Fourth, the hadiths were analyzed through syarah literature and compared with other narrations discussing similar themes to construct a comprehensive understanding of marriage readiness.

Finally, the findings were interpreted using Yusuf al-Qaradawi's contextual approach and subsequently related to the contemporary phenomenon of waithood among Indonesian Muslim youth. Through these analytical stages, the study aimed to

formulate a contextual understanding of marriage readiness derived from the Prophetic traditions while maintaining consistency with both classical hadith scholarship and contemporary social realities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Waithood as a Contemporary Social Phenomenon

Etymologically, the term waithood comes from the word "wait" which means to wait. Linguistically, this term can be understood as "waiting period". The phenomenon of waithood is one of the social symptoms that arise in the life of modern society, especially among the younger generation. The concept of waithood was first introduced by Diana Singerman, a political scientist and ethnographer through her research on young people in the Middle East in 2007. Diane Singerman introduced this term in her study of Middle Eastern youth who experience delays in marriage due to economic, social, and political factors (Hafis et al., 2024; Singerman, 2007).

In its development, waithood not only occurs in the Middle East, but also becomes a global phenomenon. The book *Waithood: Gender, Education, and Global Delays in Marriage and Childbearing* shows that delays in marriage and childbearing are closely related to education, gender changes, economic conditions, and changes in the way a person interprets adulthood. Thus, waithood cannot be understood only as a personal choice, but also as a result of changes in the broader social structure (Inhorn & Smith-Hefner, 2020).

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of waithood is beginning to be seen in the younger generation, especially those who live in urban environments and have access to higher education. Pam Nilan in her research explained that the transition to marriage in Indonesia's urban middle-class youth is influenced by three important aspects, namely religion, family, and finances. This shows that the decision to marry is no longer only determined by age, but also by financial readiness, family support, and considerations of religious values (Gofur et al., 2026; Nilan, 2008).

The discussion about waithood that increasingly appears on social media also makes this term more known, especially among the younger generation. As a result, various views emerged, both those who support and criticize the practice of postponing marriage. In this context, the opinions of religious leaders on waithood are important to study, especially in looking at the benefits and impacts it has on individuals and society. Therefore, the phenomenon of waithood can be analyzed through various scientific approaches, including the perspective of hadith that considers the benefit aspect in the decision to postpone marriage.

Social data in Indonesia also shows that the phenomenon of marriage postponement goes hand in hand with the decline in the number of marriages. Based on a report referring to BPS data, the number of marriages in Indonesia in 2023 was recorded at 1,577,255, down from 1,705,348 in 2022. In the 2013–2023 range, the number of marriages also decreased from 2,210,046 to 1,577,255 marriages. This data shows a real change in the marriage patterns of the Indonesian people over the past decade (Statistik, 2024).

However, the decline in marriage rates cannot be directly understood as a loss of marriage value among the younger generation. In some cases, the postponement of marriage is actually carried out because of awareness of the severity of household responsibilities. Some of the younger generation feel the need to prepare for work, finances, mental health, education, and the readiness of their spouse before marriage. From this point of view, waithood can be understood as a form of prudence in building a family so that marriage is not only carried out due to social pressure (Rahmatulloh, 2025).

However, the phenomenon of waithood can also cause problems if the delay turns into a permanent avoidance of marriage or causes a person to be trapped in a relationship pattern that is not in line with Islamic teachings. In this context, waithood needs to be read critically. Islam does advocate readiness before marriage, but Islam also places marriage as a way to maintain honor, properly channel human nature, and build offspring through a legal bond. Therefore, waithood is not enough to be understood as a social phenomenon, but also needs to be analyzed through a religious normative perspective (Rachman et al., 2026).

Thus, waithood as a contemporary social phenomenon has two sides. On the one hand, it can be a preparatory process towards a more mature marriage. On the other hand, it can become a socio-religious problem if it distances a person from the purpose of marriage and family responsibilities. Therefore, the thematic hadith approach is important to see how the hadiths

of the Prophet PBUH provide directions about readiness to marry, the ability to carry out responsibilities, and how to take care of oneself when one is not able to marry.

The Concept of Waithood Hadith Perspective

In the study of thematic hadith, hadiths that have a similar theme are collected and read thoroughly in order to produce a complete understanding. In this study, the themes collected are hadiths about marriage readiness, marriage ability, self-care, and moral responsibility in marriage. In this way, the discussion does not only rely on one hadith, but connects several relevant narrations to the phenomenon of waithood.

First hadith:

«حَدَّثَنَا عُمَرُ بْنُ حَفْصٍ: حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي: حَدَّثَنَا الْأَعَشَى قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي إِبْرَاهِيمُ، عَنْ عَلْقَمَةَ قَالَ: كُنْتُ مَعَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، فَلَقِيَهُ عَثْمَانُ بَنِي، فَقَالَ: يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، إِنَّ لِي إِلَيْكَ حَاجَةً، فَخَلُّوا، فَقَالَ عَثْمَانُ: هَلْ لَكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ فِي أَنْ نَزُوجَكَ بِكَرَا تَذْكُرُكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْهَدُ؟ فَلَمَّا رَأَى عَبْدِ اللَّهِ أَنْ لَيْسَ لَهُ حَاجَةٌ إِلَى هَذَا أَشَارَ إِلَيَّ، فَقَالَ: يَا عَلْقَمَةُ، فَانْتَهَيْتَ إِلَيْهِ، وَهُوَ يَقُولُ: أَمَّا لَنْ قُلْتَ ذَلِكَ لَقَدْ قَالَ لَنَا النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَيْهِ بِالصَّوْمِ فَإِنَّهُ لَهُ وَجَاءٌ).

"Narrated to us 'Umar bin Hafṣ, he said: has narrated to us my father, he said: has narrated to us al-A'masy, he said: narrated to me Ibrāhīm, from 'Alqamah, he said: I was with 'Abdullāh. Then 'Usmān met him at Mina. 'Usmān said, 'O Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān, I have a need with you.' Then the two were lonely. 'Usmān said, 'O Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān, what if we married you to a girl, who can remind you of your youth?' When 'Abdullāh saw that he had no desire for it, he gestured to me and said, 'O 'Alqamah.' So I approached him. At that time he said: 'As for if you say that, the Prophet PBUH said to us: O young men, whoever among you is able to marry, let him marry. And whoever is not able to do so, let him fast, for fasting is a suppression of orgasm for him."

This hadith is not only found in the saheeh of Bukhari but also found in many other books including those found in the saheeh books of Muslim, Sunan Ibn Majah, Sunan Nasa'I, Musnad Ahmad, Sunan Abi Daud, and many more. The key word in the hadith is al-bā'ah. In his lecture on the Muslim Ṣaḥīḥ, al-Nawawī explained that the scholars understand al-bā'ah in two interrelated meanings. First, the biological ability to mate; Second, the ability to bear the cost of marriage, including alimony. Thus, the readiness to marry in the hadith is not only seen from age, but also from the ability to carry out the functions and responsibilities of marriage. This meaning is reinforced by contemporary studies of istiṭā'ah al-bā'ah. Taufiq Hidayat and Raihanah Azahari explained that the ability to marry includes two main aspects, namely non-material ability and material ability. Non-material abilities include biological readiness, physical health, and lifespan, while material abilities include the ability to pay dowries and provide for sustenance (Hidayat & Azahari, 2020; Munawar & Permana, 2026)

From the perspective of hadith scholarship, the concept of al-bā'ah should not be understood as a single-dimensional concept. Classical scholars have offered different emphases in interpreting this term. Al-Nawawi explains that al-bā'ah refers both to physical or biological capability and to the financial ability to fulfill the obligations of marriage, while other scholars emphasize one of these dimensions depending on the context of the narration. This diversity of interpretation indicates that the Prophet's instruction to marry is inseparable from the principle of capability and responsibility rather than merely biological maturity or chronological age. Accordingly, the normative principle derived from this hadith is that marriage is recommended when an individual possesses sufficient capacity to fulfill its rights and obligations. In the contemporary context, this principle should not be interpreted by equating every modern criterion of readiness with the textual meaning of al-bā'ah. Instead, economic stability, psychological maturity, educational attainment, and social preparedness may be understood as contextual manifestations of one's ability to assume marital responsibilities, provided that these considerations do not become an unlimited justification for postponing marriage without legitimate reasons. Through Yusuf al-Qaradawi's contextual approach, the

essential objective of the hadith remains the fulfillment of responsibility and the preservation of individual and social welfare, whereas the practical indicators of readiness may vary according to changing social circumstances.

Second hadith:

– حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ الْأَزْهَرِ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا عِيسَى بْنُ مَيْمُونٍ، عَنِ الْقَاسِمِ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، قَالَتْ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «التَّكَاحُ مِنْ سُنَّتِي، فَمَنْ لَمْ يَعْمَلْ بِسُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي، وَتَزَوَّجُوا، فَإِنِّي مُكَاتِرٌ بِكُمْ الْأُمَمِ، وَمَنْ كَانَ ذَا طَوْلٍ فَلْيُنكِحْ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَعَلَيْهِ بِالصَّيَامِ، فَإِنَّ الصَّوْمَ لَهُ وَجَاءٌ»

Narrated to us Ahmad bin al-Azhar, he said: narrated to us Adam, he said: narrated to us 'Isā bin Maimūn, from al-Qāsim, from 'Ā'isyah, he said: The Prophet PBUH said, "Marriage is one of my sunnah. Whoever does not practice my sunnah, then he is not of my group. Marry yourselves, for I will be proud of your number in the presence of other people. Whoever has the ability, let him marry. And whoever is not able, let him fast, for fasting is a shield for him."

This hadith shows that marriage is part of the sunnah of the Prophet PBUH, so it should not be abandoned because of an attitude of underestimating or rejecting the sunnah. However, the recommendation to get married in this hadith is still associated with ability. For people who have spaciousness or ability, it is recommended to get married. As for those who are not able to afford it, the Prophet PBUH provides a solution in the form of fasting as a means of self-control. According to al-Sindī, the meaning of the threat "not belonging to my group" is aimed at people who leave marriage because they hate the sunnah, not to people who are not married because they are not able or have age.

This hadith emphasizes that marriage is part of the Prophet's Sunnah and should not be abandoned out of rejection of his guidance. Historically, the narration emerged in the context of the Prophet's response to attitudes of excessive asceticism among some companions who intended to avoid marriage as a form of worship. Therefore, the normative principle derived from this hadith is not that every unmarried person is blameworthy, but rather that Muslims are encouraged to maintain a balanced life by fulfilling both spiritual and social responsibilities. In relation to waithood, this hadith indicates that postponing marriage is acceptable when motivated by legitimate limitations in capability, but it should not develop into a permanent rejection of marriage or an excessive idealization of personal independence that contradicts the objectives of Islamic family life.

Third hadith:

– حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو السَّوَّاقُ الْبَلْخِيُّ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا حَاتِمُ بْنُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ هُرْمَزٍ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدٍ وَسَعِيدِ ابْنَيْ عُبَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي حَاتِمٍ الْمُزَنِيِّ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «إِذَا جَاءَكُمْ مَنْ تَرْضَوْنَ دِينَهُ وَخُلُقَهُ» فَأَنْكِحُوهُ، إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوا تَكُنْ فِتْنَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ وَفَسَادًا، قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ كَانَ فِيهِ؟ قَالَ: إِذَا جَاءَكُمْ مَنْ تَرْضَوْنَ دِينَهُ وَخُلُقَهُ

"Muhammad bin 'Amr al-Sawwāq al-Balkhī narrated to us: narrated to us Hātim bin Ismā'il, from 'Abdullāh bin Hurmuz, from Muhammad and Sa'īd, both sons of 'Ubaid, from Abū Hātim al-Muzanī, he said: The Messenger of Allah PBUH said, "If there comes to you a person whose religion and morals you are pleased with, then marry him. If you do not do so, there will be slander on the earth and destruction." They asked, "O Messenger of Allah, though there is something in him?" He replied, "If there comes to you a person whose religion and morals you are pleased with, then marry him."

In addition to the hadith about al-bā'ah, there are other hadiths that emphasize the importance of religion and morals in choosing a partner. In the narration of al-Tirmizī, it is stated that religion and morals are the main considerations in accepting prospective partners. According to al-Mubārakfūrī in Tuḥfat al-Aḥwazī, the meaning of "a person whose religion and morals you are pleased with" is a person who is good in religion and in good sociability. If the guardian only considers property, nasab,

or position, while ignoring religion and morals, then slander and damage can arise, such as the delay of marriage, the opening of opportunities for adultery, and the weakening of the guard of honor. Therefore, this hadith is relevant to the discussion of waithood, because it emphasizes that readiness to marry is not only measured by material stability, but also by the quality of religion, morals, and moral responsibility.

Based on a thematic analysis of the hadiths about marriage readiness, it can be concluded that the hadith of the Prophet PBUH provides a balanced framework in understanding marriage. On the one hand, the hadith advocates marriage for those who already have the ability (*al-bā'ah*) because marriage serves to maintain one's view and honor. On the other hand, hadith also provides space for people who are not able to postpone marriage while still taking care of themselves through fasting. In addition, the hadith about marriage as the sunnah of the Prophet and the hadith about religion and the morals of the prospective spouse show that the readiness to get married is not only material, but also includes moral, spiritual, and social responsibility. Therefore, in the context of thematic hadith studies, marriage readiness is understood as complete and proportional readiness, not just age or economic readiness.

From a textual perspective, this hadith establishes religion (*dīn*) and good character (*khuluq*) as the primary criteria in selecting a spouse. Classical commentators explain that these qualities are emphasized because they provide the strongest foundation for a stable family, whereas wealth, lineage, and social status are secondary considerations. The normative message of the hadith is that marital readiness should be evaluated holistically, integrating moral integrity with practical responsibility. Within the context of waithood, this narration offers an important corrective to contemporary tendencies that place excessive emphasis on financial perfection or social prestige before marriage. It suggests that the pursuit of readiness should remain proportional and should not obscure the ethical and religious qualities that the Prophet regarded as the essential foundation of marriage.

Hadith Analysis of Marriage Readiness with Yusuf al-Qaradawi's Approach

The phenomenon of waithood refers to the period during which individuals postpone marriage while preparing themselves to establish a family. In contemporary social studies, waithood is generally associated with educational attainment, employment, economic conditions, changing gender roles, and evolving perceptions of adulthood. Consequently, waithood should not automatically be interpreted as a rejection of marriage but rather as a transitional phase whose meaning depends on the motivations and objectives underlying the postponement. This understanding is consistent with Diane Singerman's work and the book *Waithood: Gender, Education, and Global Delays in Marriage and Childbearing*, which explain that delayed marriage is a global phenomenon shaped by socio-economic changes and shifting social values.

This study analyzes the phenomenon through Yusuf al-Qaradawi's approach to hadith interpretation as presented in *Kayfa Nata'amal Ma'a al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*. According to al-Qaradawi, hadith should not be interpreted solely through its literal wording but through a comprehensive framework consisting of several interconnected principles: interpreting hadith in harmony with the Qur'an, understanding one hadith through other narrations on the same subject, considering the historical and social context in which the hadith was delivered, identifying the objectives of the Sharia (*maqasid al-shari'ah*), and distinguishing between permanent objectives and contextual means that may change according to different social circumstances. These principles provide the analytical framework for examining the relevance of prophetic traditions to the contemporary phenomenon of waithood.

The hadith concerning *al-bā'ah* constitutes the primary foundation for understanding marriage readiness. Through Yusuf al-Qaradawi's approach, this narration should first be interpreted together with the Qur'anic encouragement to marry in QS. al-Nūr verse 32 rather than as an isolated command. Likewise, it should be understood alongside other hadiths concerning marriage, self-restraint, and family responsibility. This integrated reading demonstrates that the Prophet's command to marry is directed toward individuals who possess the capability to fulfill the rights and obligations of marriage, while fasting is prescribed as an alternative means of self-discipline for those who have not yet attained such capability. Accordingly, the permanent objective of the hadith is the protection of religion, honour, and family welfare, whereas the practical indicators of readiness may vary across different social contexts. Therefore, educational completion, financial stability, psychological maturity, and social responsibility may be regarded as contemporary manifestations of *al-bā'ah*, provided that these factors genuinely support preparation for marriage rather than becoming unlimited justifications for postponement.

The hadith describing marriage as the Sunnah of the Prophet further reinforces this understanding. When interpreted together with the hadith on al-bā'ah, the narration demonstrates that Islam encourages marriage while simultaneously recognizing differences in individual capability. Historically, this hadith responded to attitudes of excessive asceticism among individuals who intended to abstain permanently from marriage as a form of worship. Consequently, the expression "not of my Sunnah" should be understood as criticism of rejecting the Prophetic guidance concerning marriage rather than condemnation of individuals who postpone marriage because they have not yet attained sufficient capability. Through Yusuf al-Qaradawi's approach, the permanent objective of this narration is the preservation of marriage as an essential institution within Islamic life, whereas the means of achieving readiness remain flexible according to individual circumstances.

The hadith concerning religion and good character as the primary criteria for selecting a spouse complements the previous narrations. Rather than emphasizing wealth, social status, or lineage, the Prophet prioritized religious commitment and moral character as the fundamental basis for family life. Classical commentators explain that these qualities provide the strongest foundation for a stable and harmonious marriage. Interpreted thematically alongside the hadith on al-bā'ah, this narration indicates that marriage readiness is multidimensional, encompassing not only material capability but also ethical, spiritual, and social responsibility. Consequently, Yusuf al-Qaradawi's contextual reading demonstrates that contemporary standards of readiness should remain proportional and should not elevate economic achievement or social prestige above the religious and moral values emphasized by the Prophet.

Viewed through this analytical framework, waithood may be understood as an active period of preparation when it is directed toward strengthening one's religious commitment, emotional maturity, financial capability, social responsibility, and moral self-discipline. The Prophet's recommendation to fast for those who are not yet capable of marriage illustrates that the waiting period should be accompanied by efforts to preserve personal integrity and avoid behaviour contrary to Islamic ethical principles (Az-Zahra et al., 2025; Lailaturrohman, 2026). Postponement is not conceived as passive delay but as a constructive process of self-development before assuming the responsibilities of family life.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi's contextual approach demonstrates that the prophetic traditions neither demand marriage regardless of individual circumstances nor endorse unrestricted postponement. Instead, the hadiths establish a balanced framework in which marriage is encouraged when capability has been attained, while postponement may be justified when it represents a genuine process of preparation. Therefore, the primary concern is not whether marriage is postponed, but whether the postponement remains oriented toward fulfilling the objectives of marriage, preserving personal dignity, and realizing the broader values of the Sharia. Conversely, postponement that lacks any orientation toward preparation, neglects the fundamental values of marriage, or gives rise to individual or social harm requires critical reflection in light of the guidance provided by the prophetic traditions. Within this perspective, the relevance of the hadiths to the phenomenon of waithood may be summarized in three interconnected principles: readiness, self-discipline, and responsibility.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the phenomenon of waithood cannot be understood solely as a postponement of marriage but should be interpreted in light of both contemporary social realities and the normative guidance of the Prophetic traditions. Through a thematic hadith approach and Yusuf al-Qaradawi's contextual framework, the study shows that the concept of marriage readiness in Islam extends beyond biological maturity or chronological age to include the ability to fulfill economic, moral, spiritual, psychological, and social responsibilities. Rather than presenting marriage as an unconditional obligation regardless of circumstances, the hadiths establish a balanced framework in which marriage is encouraged when an individual possesses sufficient capability, while postponement may be justified when it represents a genuine process of preparation.

The principal contribution of this study is the formulation of three interconnected principles derived from the thematic analysis of the hadiths, namely readiness, self-discipline, and responsibility. These principles provide a contextual framework for understanding waithood from a hadith perspective. They indicate that postponing marriage may be regarded as compatible with Islamic teachings when it is oriented toward developing the capacity required for family life and preserving personal integrity. Conversely, postponement should be critically evaluated when it no longer reflects a process of preparation, neglects the fundamental values and objectives of marriage, or results in individual or social harm.

This study contributes to contemporary hadith scholarship by demonstrating that the phenomenon of waithood should not be approached solely through a normative-textual reading of the Prophetic traditions. Instead, the thematic hadith approach, combined with Yusuf al-Qaradawi's contextual methodology, enables a more comprehensive understanding that integrates textual evidence with the changing social realities influencing decisions to postpone marriage. This approach also offers an alternative perspective for contemporary discussions on marriage readiness within Islamic studies.

This study has several limitations. As a qualitative library research, the findings are conceptual and are derived exclusively from textual and literature-based analysis. The study has not empirically examined how contemporary Muslim youth understand or practice waithood in relation to the concepts of marriage readiness identified in this research. Future studies are therefore encouraged to integrate empirical approaches, such as interviews, surveys, or qualitative field research, to examine how these conceptual principles are interpreted and applied in diverse social and cultural contexts.

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