



The Impact of Delayed Marriage due to Education and Career on Female Lecturers in Banda Aceh: A Ma'ālat al-Af'āl Perspective

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Abstract

This study investigates the phenomenon of delayed marriage among female lecturers in Banda Aceh, specifically within the Syiah Kuala District, through the lens of *ma'ālat al-af'āl* (consideration of consequences). The rising national trend of unmarried youth, with Aceh ranking second highest, highlights the significance of this issue. Delays in marriage are primarily influenced by higher educational attainment and career development, although psychological and structural factors also contribute. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed qualitatively to identify the underlying factors contributing to delayed marriage. The findings suggest that postponing marriage for educational and professional purposes produces substantial positive outcomes, including enhanced emotional, psychological, and mental maturity, financial independence, and improved preparedness for motherhood. While negative consequences, such as psychological and social pressures, as well as potential reproductive health risks associated with prolonged stress were identified, these effects can be mitigated through adequate support systems. Overall, the resulting *maṣlahah* (benefit) appears to outweigh potential harms. From the perspective of *ma'ālat al-af'āl*, delayed marriage can therefore be understood as an action that generates greater long-term benefits, aligning with the objectives of the Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) in promoting maturity, well-being, and the overall welfare of individuals and families.

Keywords: Delayed Marriage, Female Lecturers, *Ma'ālat Al-Af'āl*, Education, Career

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji fenomena penundaan pernikahan di kalangan dosen perempuan di Banda Aceh, khususnya di Kecamatan Syiah Kuala, melalui pendekatan perspektif ma'ālat al-af'āl. Peningkatan tren pemuda belum menikah secara nasional, dengan Aceh menempati posisi kedua tertinggi, menunjukkan relevansi masalah ini. Penundaan ini didominasi oleh faktor pendidikan tinggi dan karier, meskipun faktor psikologis dan struktural turut berkontribusi. Data ikumpulkan melalui teknik wawancara dan dianalisis mendalam untuk memperoleh faktor penundaan pernikahan. Hasil penelitian mengindikasikan bahwa penundaan pernikahan demi pendidikan dan karier membawa dampak positif signifikan, meliputi kematangan emosional, psikologis, dan mental yang lebih baik, kemandirian finansial, serta kesiapan menjadi ibu. Meskipun terdapat dampak negatif seperti tekanan psikologis dan sosial serta risiko kesehatan reproduksi akibat stres, dampak ini dapat diminimalisir dengan dukungan memadai, sehingga masalah yang muncul lebih dominan. Dari perspektif ma'ālat al-af'āl, penundaan pernikahan dapat dipandang sebagai tindakan yang mendatangkan kemaslahatan lebih besar dalam jangka panjang, sesuai dengan tujuan syariat untuk mencapai kematangan dan kesejahteraan individu serta keluarga.

Kata Kunci: *Penundaan Pernikahan, Dosen Perempuan, Ma'ālat al-Af'āl, Pendidikan, Karier*

Introduction

The phenomenon of delayed marriage among highly educated women has become an increasing concern in the Islamic family law discourse as well as in contemporary social studies. Data from Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (BPS) indicate a steady rise in the proportion of unmarried youth, increasing from 64.56% in 2022 to 68.29% in 2023 and reaching 69.75% in 2024. Conversely, the number of married individuals declined significantly during the same period.¹ This trend is also evident in the Aceh Province, which ranked second nationally in terms of the percentage of unmarried youth, at 75.94% in 2023.² Aceh was surpassed only by DKI Jakarta, which recorded 80%, and was followed by North Sumatra in third place with 75.43%.³

One of the primary factors contributing to this delay is the expansion of educational access and opportunities for women, leading many to prioritize

¹ Karuniati Dewi Ramadani, Ramadani, Karuniati Dewi. Statistik Pemuda Indonesia. Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, *Statistik Pemuda Indonesia* (Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024), p. 16.

² Gandi Liyorba Indra, M. Yasin Al Arif, and Abdul Qodir Zaelani, "The Ideal Age For Marriage in The Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) and Psychology," *Al-'Adalah* 20, no. 1 (2023), p. 1.

³ Ramadani, Ramadani, Karuniati Dewi. Statistik Pemuda Indonesia. Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, *Statistik Pemuda Indonesia*.

education and career development before considering marriage.⁴ This decision is often grounded in rational considerations, including the desire for economic and psychological independence, as well as greater emotional maturity prior to marriage. The phenomenon is particularly prevalent in urban areas, where women's participation in education and the labor market is relatively high.⁵

Although education and career advancement are frequently cited as the dominant factors, social realities indicate that decisions to delay marriage are not determined solely by rational considerations.⁶ Many women postpone marriage for psychological and structural reasons, such as the absence of a suitable partner, traumatic experiences in past relationships,⁷ and social pressure surrounding idealized standards of marriage.⁸ Nevertheless, a national survey conducted by Populix in 2023 reported that 57% of women delayed marriage to focus on their careers. This was followed by other reasons, including personal interests and family considerations (53%), while not having found the right partner ranked third at 44%. The remaining respondents reported choosing to live independently or feeling no immediate need to marry.⁹ These findings reinforce the argument that, although marriage delay is a multidimensional phenomenon, education and career considerations remain the primary factors.¹⁰

On the one hand, this trend may be interpreted as a positive outcome of human resource development, particularly as more women gain access to higher education and actively participate in the workforce. On the other hand, delayed

⁴ Nurlaelah Abbas et al., "Theological Impact of Marriage for Religious Minority Families in Bali and Makassar," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 1 (2025); Sri Astuti A. Samad and Munawwarah Munawwarah, "Adat Pernikahan Dan Nilai-Nilai Islami Dalam Masyarakat Aceh Menurut Hukum Islam," *El-USRAH: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 3, no. 2 (2020), p. 289.

⁵ Gökay Keldal and Gürcan Şeker, "Marriage or Career? Young Adults' Priorities in Their Life Plans," *American Journal of Family Therapy* 50, no. 5 (2022); Valerie Kincade Oppenheimer, Matthijs Kalmijn, and Nelson Lim, "Men's Career Development and Marriage Timing during a Period of Rising Inequality," *Demography* 34, no. 3 (1997).

⁶ Wahyu Abdul Jafar et al., "Philosophical Foundations and Human Rights in the Bajapuk Tradition: Bridging Local Wisdom and Islamic Law in Minangkabau Marriage Practices," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 1 (2024), p. 212–33.

⁷ Hasanudin et al., "Phenomena of Domestic Violence Against Women and Divorce in 2020-2022 in Indonesia: An Islamic Perspective," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 17, no. 2 (2023), p. 137–52.

⁸ Zamira Hyseni Duraku, Liridona Jemini-Gashi, and Ervin Toçi, "Perceptions of Early Marriage, Educational Aspirations, and Career Goals among Kosovar Adolescents," *Marriage and Family Review* 56, no. 6 (2020); Frida Decaluwe and J. A. De Boever, "Woman and Career: An Unhappy Marriage? A Study Model: Dentistry," *Revue Belge de Médecine Dentaire. Belgisch Tijdschrift Voor Tandheelkunde* 57, no. 4 (2002).

⁹ M. Tahir Maloko et al., "Sompa Tanah in Makassar Bugis Customary Marriages: Legal, Religious, and Cultural Perspectives," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 12, no. 3 (2024), p. 1213.

¹⁰ Populix, "Indonesian Gen Z and Millennial Planning and Wedding Preparation," no. March (2023); A. W. Parker, "Career and Marriage Orientation in the Vocational Development of College Women.," *The Journal of Applied Psychology* 50, no. 3 (1966).

marriage also carries legal and social implications that should not be overlooked. Readiness for marriage is not determined solely by biological age, but also by emotional and intellectual maturity, as well as practical life skills required of a future spouse. Therefore, the Marriage Age Maturation (Pendewasaan Usia Perkawinan/PUP) program is essential in helping adolescents understand the long-term consequences of marriage that is not grounded in holistic readiness.¹¹

The increasing participation of women in higher education in Aceh further supports this argument. According to the 2023 Aceh Provincial Education Statistics, 15.30% of women have completed higher education, compared to only 11.05% of men.¹² This disparity reflects a shift in women's social roles from the domestic sphere to the public sphere. This shift is closely linked to the growing trend of delayed marriage among young people in Aceh, particularly among women, as a result of educational and career pursuits.¹³

This social reality becomes even more compelling in light of two contrasting phenomena observed in Aceh,¹⁴ On the one hand, the high rate of marriage dispensation reflects the persistence of early marriage driven by social and cultural pressures.¹⁵ On the other hand, many educated women choose to delay marriage in order to pursue career advancement and personal achievement. This contrast highlights the limitations of Islamic family law regulations in Indonesia, such as Law No. 16 of 2019, which primarily emphasize minimum marriage age requirements and do not fully capture the complexity of the reasons, motivations, and substantive implications underlying marriage postponement.¹⁶

¹¹ Vincenzo Cavaliere, Sara Sasseti, and Sara Lombardi, "Entrepreneurial Alertness and Self-Perceived Employability: A Virtuous Marriage for Career Development," *Personnel Review* 51, no. 1 (2022); Mursyid Djawas and Sri Astuti Abdul Samad, "Conflict, Traditional, and Family Resistance: The Pattern of Dispute Resolution in Acehese Community According to Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 4, no. 1 (2020), p. 65–84; Mursyid Djawas et al., "The Integration Between Syara' and Ade' in Marriage Tradition Bugis Bone, South Sulawesi," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 18, no. 2 (2023).

¹² Maulidya, *Statistik Pendidikan Provinsi Aceh 2023: Volume 14* (Aceh: BPS Provinsi Aceh, 2024), p. 53.

¹³ Sri Astuti A. Samad et al., "Teacher's Spiritual Competence and Its Implication in Islamic Religious Education Learning in Pidie, Aceh," *Ulumuna* 27, no. 2 (2023), p. 624–48.

¹⁴ Darmawan et al., "Marriage Dispensation and Family Resilience: A Case Study of the Bener Meriah Shariah Court, Aceh Province," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22, no. 2 (2022); Krista Lynn Minnotte, "Raising the Race: Black Career Women Redefine Marriage, Motherhood, and Community," *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 9, no. 2 (2017).

¹⁵ Edi Kurniawan et al., "Early Marriage, Human Rights, and the Living Fiqh: A Maqasid Al-Shari'a Review," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum Dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 20, no. 1 (2020), p. 1–15; Farida Ulvi Naimah et al., "Internalization of Local Traditions in Child Marriage from the Perspective of Maqasid Al-Usrah," *El-Mashlahah* 14, no. 2 (2024).

¹⁶ Hanzhe Zhang and Ben Zou, "A Marriage-Market Perspective on Risk-Taking and Career Choices," *European Economic Review* 152 (2023); Hui Li, Hang Yue Ngo, and Hazel Chui, "The Impact of Future Work Self on Perceived Employability and Career Distress," *Australian Journal of Career Development* 32, no. 1 (2023).

The phenomenon of delayed marriage has implications that extend beyond the individual level and significantly affect demographic and social structures. This is particularly evident among young female lecturers at several universities in the Syiah Kuala District of Banda Aceh City, as illustrated by the data presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Number and Percentage of Unmarried Female Lecturers at Selected Universities in Syiah Kuala District, Banda Aceh City

| No. | Universities | Total number of female lecturers | Not Married | Percentage |
|-----|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| 1. | Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry | 255 lecturers | 21 lecturers | 8,24% |
| 2. | Universitas Syiah Kuala | 1151 lecturers | 62 lecturers | 5,39% |
| 3. | Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempana | 114 lecturers | 17 lecturers | 14,91% |
| 4. | Universitas Ubudiyah Indonesia | 57 lecturers | 9 lecturers | 15,79% |
| 5. | Universitas Al Washliyah Darussalam | 27 lecturers | 6 lecturers | 22,22% |
| 6. | STKIP An-Nur Nanggroe Aceh | 9 lecturers | 3 lecturers | 33,33% |

Based on the data from six universities in the district, the proportion of unmarried female lecturers is notably high. In all institutions researched, the percentage of unmarried female lecturers exceeds 5%. In social science research, a figure above 5% is often considered significant when assessing structural issues such as delayed marriage. This pattern can no longer be viewed merely as an individual circumstance; rather, it serves as an indicator of broader shifts in social structures and values.¹⁷ Therefore, this issue should be examined not only in terms of social pressure or stigma, but also in relation to its implications for family law policy, women's rights, and the evolving role and contribution of women in the public sphere.

The selection of the Syiah Kuala District as the research site was based on both academic and demographic considerations. This area serves as the center of

¹⁷ Michele Hoffnung, "Wanting It All: Career, Marriage, and Motherhood during College-Educated Women's 20s," *Sex Roles* 50, no. 9–10 (2004); Hyoun Ju Kang, Jamie L. Callahan, and Mrudula Anne, "An Intersectional Social Capital Model of Career Development for International Marriage Immigrants," *Career Development Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2015).

higher education in Banda Aceh and hosts a concentration of female lecturers with diverse academic disciplines, social backgrounds, and career orientations. In addition, the openness of academic institutions in this district facilitates access to valid and representative data. More broadly, the Syiah Kuala District provides an important setting for examining the relationship between education, professionalism, and marital life among urban Muslim women.

A number of previous studies have examined the phenomenon of delayed marriage, including research that identifies both internal and external factors influencing marriage postponement among female students, as well as studies that approach the issue from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence by considering individual circumstances and motivations.¹⁸ Research by Fadil Yusuf Muhammad, for example, indicates that delays in marriage are influenced by educational attainment, economic conditions, and minimum marriage age policies within specific legal contexts.¹⁹ Similarly, studies by Siti Nazla Raihana and Hasna Mumtaza Abdullah highlight career aspirations,²⁰ concerns over potential declines in professional standing, and financial and emotional unpreparedness as key factors contributing to marriage postponement.²¹

Despite the growing body of literature on delayed marriage, studies that integrate the *ma'ālat al-af'āl* perspective while focusing specifically on female lecturers in Aceh remain very limited. This approach offers a more holistic framework within the Islamic law, as it emphasizes the long-term consequences of human actions, including the decision to delay marriage. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap and contribute academically to a renewed understanding of the social dynamics shaping the lives of modern Muslim women within the local context.

This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of delayed marriage among female lecturers at several universities in the Syiah Kuala District of Banda Aceh City using a qualitative approach grounded in the *ma'ālat al-af'āl* perspective, which emphasizes the long-term consequences of actions within Islamic law.²² Primary data were collected through structured interviews with eight informants from diverse academic disciplines and professional backgrounds, selected through purposive

¹⁸ R T Putra, "Radical Feminist and Interpretative Theories of Women: Career Women and Marriage Preparation," *Media Syari'ah: Wahana Kajian Hukum Islam Dan*, 25, no. 1 (2023).

¹⁹ Abdul Shukur Abdullah et al., "Correlates and Consequences of Delayed Marriage in Malaysia," *Institutions and Economies* 13, no. 4 (2021); Fadil Yusuf Muhamad, et.al., "Tinjauan Fiqih Munakahat terhadap Fenomena Penundaan Pernikahan pada Pemuda Indonesia Tahun 2021," *Bandung Conference Series: Islamic Family Law* 4, no. 1 (2024), p. 42–50.

²⁰ Mursyid Djawas et al., "The Legal Position of Children of Incest (A Study of Madhhab Scholars and Compilation of Islamic Law)," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 1 (2022), p. 139.

²¹ Siti Nazla Raihana, et.al., "Analisis Sosiokultural Penundaan Pernikahan pada Wanita Karir : Studi Kasus Kota Depok," *Socius: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 2, no. 1 (2024), p. 17–29.

²² Helmi Basri, *Teori Maalaatul Af'aa: Solusi Problematika Kontemporer dalam Bingkai Maqashid Syari'ah* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2021), p. 11-12.

sampling. Secondary data were obtained from official publications of the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) as well as relevant scholarly literature.

This methodological approach offers a novel perspective for understanding the legal implications and potential benefits of postponing marriage, particularly in relation to educational and career pursuits. It also enables a critical examination of the *ma'ālat al-af'āl* framework in assessing the long-term impacts of delayed marriage driven by educational and professional considerations.

The Impact of Delayed Marriage due to Education and Career

Most informants indicated that women who postpone marriage for the pursuit of education and career development tend to exhibit higher levels of emotional, psychological, and mental maturity, although such maturity cannot be regarded as an absolute outcome.²³ Hayail Umroh relates this tendency to Arnett's developmental theory, which suggests that around the age of 25 individuals generally reach a more advanced level of cognitive and emotional maturity. At this stage, individuals are considered better able to regulate impulsive behavior, distinguish between right and wrong, identify effective solutions to problems, understand differing perspectives, and interact with others more wisely than during adolescence.²⁴

This argument is further supported by Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood, which characterizes early adulthood as a period of exploration of identity, values, and interpersonal relationships prior to making major life decisions such as marriage. In addition, emotional maturity has been shown to have a substantial influence on marriage readiness, contributing approximately 51%, indicating that individuals with higher emotional maturity are more psychologically prepared to cope with the challenges of married life.²⁵ However, Hayail emphasizes that maturity is not determined solely by age; it is also strongly shaped by life experiences, the development of personal values, and a supportive social environment. Consequently, individuals who are able to interpret and respond positively to life experiences do not necessarily need to wait until the age of 25 to attain maturity.²⁶

In a similar vein, Marty Mawarpury notes that physiological maturation naturally occurs with increasing age. He draws on Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, particularly the stage of intimacy versus isolation, which underscores

²³ Nur Hannan et al., "Between Adherence to Madhhab and Adaptation to Context: Fatwās on Female Leadership in Nahdlatul Ulama-Affiliated Islamic Higher Education Institutions," *Journal of Islamic Law* 5, no. 2 (2024), p. 269–87.

²⁴ Interview with Hayail Umroh, Lecturer of Family Psychology at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, May 23, 2025.

²⁵ Tey Nai Peng, "Asian Population Studies Trends In Delayed And Non-Marriage In Peninsular Malaysia Trends In Delayed And Non-Marriage In Peninsular Malaysia," *Asian Population Studies* 3, no. 3 (2007).

²⁶ Siti Dian Natasya Solin et al., "Batak Customary Marriage: A Study of the Prohibition of Same-Clan Marriage and Its Relevance in the Contemporary Era," *El-Ussrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 7, no. 1 (2024), p. 62.

the role of lived experience in building meaningful relationships and overcoming life challenges as key factors in the formation of social and personal maturity. This stage, typically occurring in early adulthood between the ages of 20 and 40, represents a critical period for developing intimate and emotionally stable relationships.²⁷ Within this framework, Erikson viewed the capacity to form healthy interpersonal bonds as a central developmental achievement of early adulthood. Individuals who successfully navigate this stage are therefore better prepared to start marital relationships that require emotional closeness and long-term commitment.

Kusmawati Hatta also emphasized that postponing marriage in order to achieve emotional, physical, and mental readiness can be beneficial, provided that it is guided by a clear objective. She argued that the age range of 25 to 30 years represents an ideal period for marriage readiness, as individuals below the age of 25 are often considered less mature, while marrying after the age of 30 may raise concerns related to a declining productive age. Although marriage is legally permitted from the age of 20, mental and emotional readiness is frequently not fully developed at that stage.²⁸

Social support was also found to contribute significantly, approximately 24.5% to marriage readiness, underscoring the importance of a supportive environment in fostering a healthy transition into marriage. In other words, individuals require not only time and life experience to mature, but also emotional support, recognition, and access to information from their social surroundings in order to build confidence and readiness when making major life decisions such as marriage.²⁹

From an economic perspective, the interviewees noted that postponing marriage for educational and career pursuits has the potential to enhance women's financial independence. However, they also cautioned that higher education and career attainment do not automatically guarantee economic stability. Soraya Devy highlighted that independence and practical skills are essential for women to sustain their lives autonomously. From a theoretical standpoint, postponing marriage for educational reasons may be understood within Islamic jurisprudence as part of the *darūriyyāt*, as education provides essential provisions for future well-being. Nevertheless, she emphasized that not all forms of marriage delay lead to positive

²⁷ Interview with Marty Mawarpury, a Lecturer in Psychology at Universitas Syiah Kuala, May 5, 2025.

²⁸ Interview with Kusmawati Hatta, Dean of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, June 24, 2025.

²⁹ Khairunnisa Nazwa Kamilla, "Teori Perkembangan Psikososial Erik Erikson," *ECJ: Early Childhood Journal* 3, no. 2 (2022), p. 78–87; Okereke Chinyere Ijeoma, Joseph O. Uwakwe, and Nwamuo Paul, "Education an Antidote against Early Marriage for the Girl-Child," *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 2013; S. V. Merzlyakova and E. P. Kayumova, "Family Adaptation As A Predictor Of Family Self-Determination Of Digital Generation Students," *Obrazovanie i Nauka* 26, no. 3 (2024).

outcomes, particularly when the decision is driven merely by trends or lifestyle preferences without careful consideration of personal readiness.³⁰

This perspective aligns with the view that women's financial independence enhances their capacity to participate in household decision-making, improve family welfare, and foster a more balanced division of roles between husband and wife. Within the framework of Islamic law, financial independence is understood as a form of empowerment that can be pursued without undermining religious values or domestic responsibilities. Access to economic resources also enables women to engage more actively in both family and community development.³¹

This argument is reinforced by Mira Fauziah, who explained that women with established careers and strong educational backgrounds tend to enjoy more stable incomes than those without higher education. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that economic achievement ultimately depends on individual effort and commitment.³²

Women's financial contributions to the household have a significant impact on increasing overall family income, enabling not only basic needs but also secondary and tertiary needs to be met. In this way, women contribute not only to the family economy but also to the improvement of living standards, including investment and long-term savings.³³ Beyond strengthening women's position within the family, such financial stability also promotes household harmony, as economic-related tensions can be substantially reduced.³⁴

All interviewees agreed that age-related maturity plays an important role in shaping women's emotional readiness to assume maternal responsibilities. Hayail Umroh refers to Santrock's developmental theory, which suggests that individuals over the age of 25 generally demonstrate greater emotional and cognitive maturity, making them better prepared to adopt effective parenting practices. However, he also emphasized that such readiness does not emerge automatically with increasing age. Women who lack prior exposure to domestic responsibilities before marriage may encounter significant adaptation challenges when transitioning into motherhood. For this reason, he highlighted the importance of adequate parenting education in order to prevent what he termed lazy parent syndrome.³⁵

³⁰ Interview with Soraya Devy, Vice Dean for General Administration, Faculty of Sharia and Law, Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, May 16, 2025.

³¹ Z. A. Sathar and M. F. Kiani, "Delayed Marriages in Pakistan.," *Pakistan Development Review* 25, no. 4 (1986).

³² Interview with Mira Fauziah, Head of the Center for Women's Studies at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, May 13, 2025.

³³ Wardana Said et al., "Marriage Traditions and Family Resilience in Bugis Bone Society: A Study of Islamic Law and Islamic Education," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 3 (2024); Kamarusdiana Kamarusdiana et al., "Pre-Marital Education: Concepts and Regulations in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Al-Ahkam* 32, no. 1 (2022), p. 41–64.

³⁴ Tianhan Gui, "'Leftover Women' or Single by Choice: Gender Role Negotiation of Single Professional Women in Contemporary China," *Journal of Family Issues* 41, no. 11 (2020).

³⁵ Interview with Hayail Umroh, May 23, 2025.

Marty Mawarpury further reinforces this perspective by noting that more mature adults tend to exhibit higher levels of emotional stability and wisdom. From a developmental standpoint, age and maturity do influence readiness for marriage and childrearing. Nevertheless, he cautioned that parenting styles are shaped not only by age but also by past experiences and the parenting models encountered within one's family of origin.³⁶ This view is further supported by Eka Srimulyani, who argues that cognitive and attitudinal maturity can be cultivated through broader educational processes and social interactions, which in turn foster greater patience and attentiveness in raising children.³⁷

This indicates that although career women may have the means to secure their children's future through enhanced access to education and economic stability, they also face challenges in maintaining emotional engagement with their children. The dual responsibilities of career and family often result in fatigue and time constraints, reducing the intensity of mother-child interactions.³⁸ Many working mothers rely on childcare services, and upon returning home, they must readjust to parenting patterns that have been shaped externally. Similarly, homemakers engaged primarily in domestic work may also experience pressures, particularly when household burdens lead to fatigue and stress, which can influence parenting practices. Therefore, readiness for motherhood is shaped not only by age and education but also by mental preparedness, life experience, and the ability to manage multiple roles in a balanced manner.³⁹

Marty Mawarpury noted that psychological stress can affect women's reproductive conditions across different ages. However, he emphasized that stress is not exclusive to women who delay marriage and can be experienced by anyone. Maintaining hormonal balance and uterine health is therefore crucial, rather than directly linking reproductive outcomes to marital status.⁴⁰ Hayail Umroh added that while stress can disrupt the menstrual cycle through hormonal imbalances, it does not necessarily impair fertility or prevent conception.⁴¹

This perspective aligns with the views of Kusmawati Hatta, who cautioned that excessively delaying marriage may have negative implications for reproductive

³⁶ Interview with Marty Mawarpury, May 5, 2025.

³⁷ Interview with Eka Srimulyani, Director of Postgraduate Studies at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, May 27, 2025.

³⁸ Darmawan Darmawan et al., "Marriage Dispensation and Family Resilience: A Case Study of the Bener Meriah Shariah Court, Aceh Province," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22, no. 2 (2022); Mursyid Djawas et al., "The Construction of Islamic Inheritance Law: A Comparative Study of the Islamic Jurisprudence and the Compilation of Islamic Law," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 21, no. 2 (2022), p. 207-19.

³⁹ Maheen Abid Ali, Zahid Mahmood, and Sadia Saleem, "Satisfying Marital Relationship among Dual-Career Couples: A Validation Study," *Journal of Family Issues* 43, no. 3 (2022); Wiesław Przygoda, "Volunteering as an Instrument for Preparing Young People for Christian Marriage and Family Life," *Religions* 14, no. 9 (2023).

⁴⁰ Interview with Marty Mawarpury, May 5, 2025.

⁴¹ Interview with Hayail Umroh, May 23, 2025.

health, given that women have a limited productive window for their reproductive organs. He emphasized that although reproductive organs remain functional throughout life, their peak productivity is constrained by age.⁴²

Salami Mahmud further highlighted that psychological stress particularly arising from social pressure on unmarried women, can affect hormonal regulation and the quality of oocytes.⁴³ This is consistent with research indicating that stress can disrupt the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, leading to elevated cortisol levels, which in turn suppress the secretion of gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) and reduce ovulation. Consequently, women experiencing stress are approximately 1.7 times more likely to encounter menstrual cycle irregularities compared to those who are not stressed. Such irregularities not only disturb the menstrual cycle but may also contribute to infertility, particularly in cases of chronic stress. Additionally, severe stress can trigger an increase in prolactin levels, further inhibiting normal ovulatory processes. Therefore, maintaining mental health and psychological balance is essential not only for overall quality of life but also as a critical component of reproductive health and preparedness for motherhood.⁴⁴

Regarding the balance between public and domestic roles, Soraya Devy emphasized that this balance is strongly influenced by family background and partner support. She noted that even highly educated women may experience increased burdens if they lack adequate familial or spousal support. Conversely, a woman from a traditionally minded family who has a partner with modern perspectives and an understanding of religious values may find it easier to achieve equilibrium between domestic and professional responsibilities.⁴⁵

This perspective is supported by other research indicating that women, particularly female lecturers, can successfully manage multiple roles when strong family support and effective time management are present. For instance, a case study at UIN KHAS Jember revealed that several female lecturers were able to divide their time between household responsibilities and professional duties, including teaching, research, and community engagement. These findings suggest that success in balancing public and domestic roles largely depends on family cooperation, particularly from husbands and children and mutual understanding of each member's activities.⁴⁶ Key strategies identified include structured time management, setting

⁴² Interview with Kusmawati Hatta, June 24, 2025.

⁴³ Interview with Salami Mahmud, Lecturer at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, May 15, 2025.

⁴⁴ Przygoda, "Volunteering as an Instrument for Preparing Young People for Christian Marriage and Family Life.;" "Social Expectations And Personal Choices: Analyzing The Marriage Willingness Of Young People Under Economic Constraints," *World Journal of Sociology and Law* 2, no. 2 (2024).

⁴⁵ Interview with Soraya Devy, May 16, 2025.

⁴⁶ Mursyid Djawas and Nurzakia Nurzakia, "Perkawinan Campuran Di Kota Sabang (Studi Terhadap Faktor Dan Persepi Masyarakat Tentang Dampak Perkawinan Campuran)," *SAMARAH: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 2, no. 2 (2019), p. 307; Misran Ramli et al., "Unveiling

aside personal time, and ensuring quality time with family, all of which contribute to both mental well-being and academic performance.⁴⁷

Kusmawati Hatta added that achieving a balance between public and domestic roles remains challenging. She explained that even women who are independent in the public sphere often continue to rely on support at home, and the absence of such support can affect their psychological well-being. Therefore, maintaining equilibrium between these two domains is a complex and ongoing process.⁴⁸

Nashriyah also highlighted that a fair division of roles between partners is crucial, and women must be strategic in managing both domestic and public responsibilities to avoid being overwhelmed when entering married life. While higher education equips women with skills to prioritize and organize their responsibilities, partner support remains the decisive factor.⁴⁹ In this context, Islamic values play an important role in fostering a balanced husband–wife relationship, as reflected in the principle of *mu'āsyarah bi al-ma'rūf* (good companionship), which emphasizes cooperation, affection, and mutual respect for each other's roles both at home and in public spheres. Therefore, despite the ongoing challenges of managing dual roles, women can maintain harmony between domestic and professional responsibilities with adequate support and mutual understanding within the family.⁵⁰

Mira Fauziah further explained a dilemma often faced by women who postpone marriage: the tendency to set increasingly high standards when selecting a partner. She suggested that excessively high standards can make it difficult to find a suitable spouse, while lowering these standards too late may lead to unfavorable outcomes.⁵¹ Similarly, Salami Mahmud noted that higher standards can pose an additional challenge if they are not accompanied by a supportive social environment.⁵² Meanwhile, Eka Srimulyani emphasized that life experience and personal character are more decisive than age, allowing women to navigate the complexities of partner selection more wisely through self-reflection.⁵³ Nashriyah added that even when women have prepared themselves optimally, establishing a target timeline is important to prevent prolonged delays, which can have psychological and biological implications.⁵⁴

Illegal Marriages in Aceh: Examining the Role of Unofficial Qadi,” *El-Mashlahah* 14, no. 2 (2024), p. 409–30.

⁴⁷ Nurul Qomariyah, et.al., “Peran Ganda Dosen Perempuan dalam Melaksanakan Peran Domestik dan Peran Publik,” *Aulad: Journal on Early Childhood* 7, no. 1 (2024), p. 81–88.

⁴⁸ Interview with Kusmawati Hatta, June 24, 2025.

⁴⁹ Interview with Nashriyah, Head of the Center for Gender and Child Studies at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, May 8, 2025.

⁵⁰ Qomariyah, et.al., “Peran Ganda Dosen Perempuan,” p. 81–88.

⁵¹ Interview with Mira Fauziah, May 13, 2025.

⁵² Interview with Salami Mahmud, May 15, 2025.

⁵³ Interview with Eka Srimulyani, May 27, 2025.

⁵⁴ Interview with Nashriyah, May 8, 2025.

The results of the interviews indicate that postponing marriage for educational and career pursuits has both positive and negative impacts. On the positive side, women tend to develop greater emotional, psychological, and mental maturity; enhanced financial independence and decision-making abilities; improved emotional and social readiness for marriage; and increased preparedness for motherhood, supported by life experience and higher education. In addition, women gain empowerment in both domestic and public spheres, achieve a better balance between career and family responsibilities, and serve as positive role models for their children in terms of work ethic and educational attainment.

Conversely, the negative impacts include psychological and social pressure from the surrounding community due to unmarried status, the risk of hormonal imbalances caused by prolonged stress, and potential disruptions to reproductive health. Women may also face challenges in child-rearing due to limited time and energy, as well as the risk of role imbalance if adequate support from partners or family members is lacking.

Delayed Marriage due to Education and Career: A *Ma'ālat al-Af'āl* Perspective

In *nahwu* (Arabic grammar), the term *ma'ālat al-af'āl* corresponds to the concept of *tarkīb idāfi* (construct of possession or annexation) and consists of two words: *ma'ālat* (مآلات) and *af'āl* (أفعال). The word *ma'ālat* is the plural form of *ma'al* (مآل), derived from the root آل – يؤول – مآلا, which signifies “a place of return” or “the end point,” similar to the words رجع – يرجع – مرجع (*raja'a – yarji'u – marja'*). In this sense, *ma'al* and *marja'* share the same meaning and morphological pattern (*wazn*). The word *af'āl* is the plural of *fi'l* (فعل), meaning “action.” Therefore, *ma'ālat al-af'āl* can be interpreted literally as “the place of return of an action” or “the outcome/consequence of an action.”

Terminologically, *ma'ālat al-af'āl* refers to an effort to anticipate the consequences of a particular action or decision. These consequences may be beneficial, in which case the action is encouraged, or harmful, potentially violating the objectives (*maqāsid*) of *sharī'ah*, in which case the action becomes prohibited.⁵⁵

The legitimacy of the concept of *ma'ālat al-af'āl* is supported by several references in Islamic sources, particularly the Qur'an. One example is found in the words of Allah SWT:

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ... ﴿١٠٨﴾

The Meaning: *And do not curse those who worship other than Allah and then they insult Allah with hatred and without knowledge.*" (QS. al-An'ām: 108)

This verse provides a basis for the concept of *ma'ālat al-af'āl*, as it demonstrates that the permissibility or prohibition of an action can depend on its consequences. Although cursing idols or those who worship them in ignorance is generally permissible, if doing so will provoke greater harm, such as escalating

⁵⁵Basri, *Teori Maalaatul Af'aal*, p. 11-12.

insults against Allah, and then the action becomes prohibited. This illustrates that the potential outcomes of an action are a key consideration in determining its legal status in Islamic law.⁵⁶

Second, the *Sunnah* also reinforces the legitimacy of *ma'ālat al-af'āl* in establishing rulings. One relevant hadith is related to the practice of examining potential marriage partners before proposing:

عن المغيرة بن شعبة رضي الله عنه قال: خطبت امرأة على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: أنظرت إليها؟ قلت: لا، قال: فانظر إليها فإنه أجد أن يؤدم بينكما

The Meaning: *From al-Mughīrah bin Syu'bah ra., he said: I proposed to a woman during the time of the Apostle, then he said: 'Have you seen her?' I answered: 'No.' Then he said: 'Look at her, because that way you can make your family last a long time.'*" (HR. al-Nasā'ī).⁵⁷

This hadith exemplifies *ma'ālat al-af'āl* in practice, as the Prophet ﷺ instructed consideration of the long-term consequences of an action here, ensuring marital stability before making a decision. In other words, anticipating outcomes and weighing potential benefits or harms is central to applying Islamic legal principles.

This hadith illustrates that looking at one's future spouse before proposing was a *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The purpose is for a man to become acquainted with the woman he intends to marry, thereby increasing the likelihood of a lasting and harmonious marriage. While the original legal ruling prohibits looking at women who are not *mahram* to prevent slander or prohibited actions the concept of *ma'ālat al-af'āl* provides flexibility. An action that is initially forbidden can become permissible if it produces a real benefit and supports the achievement of the higher objectives of *sharī'ah* (*maqāsid al-sharī'ah*).

Thirdly, historical realities in the life of the Prophet ﷺ demonstrate frequent use of legal reasoning based on anticipating consequences (*i'tibār al-ma'ālat*). On this basis, the Prophet ﷺ established laws or adapted them according to individuals, circumstances, and potential outcomes, showing that legal rulings can be dynamic when guided by wisdom and consideration of long-term effects.⁵⁸

The relevance of applying the *ma'ālat al-af'āl* theory becomes especially evident in addressing the issue of postponing marriage among women, particularly for reasons of education and career. This theory enables actions to be evaluated not only in terms of their original legal ruling but also in terms of their long-term consequences for individuals and society. Accordingly, postponing marriage, which

⁵⁶Helmi Basri and Hidayatullah Ismail, "Teori Ma'ālāt Al-Af'āl dalam Maqāsid Sharīhāh dan Aplikasinya pada Permasalahan Fiqh Kontemporer," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan* 19, no. 2 (2019), p. 205–221; Hassan Suleiman, "Fiqh Al-Ma'ālāt: An Analysis Of Its Origin, Subsidiary And Application," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 10, no. 2 (2022).

⁵⁷Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, ed. Mu'assasat al-Risālah (Beirut: 1416 H/1996 M), 6: 112 (hadis no. 3235).

⁵⁸Basri and Ismail, "Teori Ma'ālāt Al-Af'āl dalam Maqāsid Sharīhāh," p. 217.

might traditionally have been viewed as negative or socially deviant can receive a more nuanced and contextual legal assessment. The *ma'ālat al-af'āl* approach also supports the perspectives of scholars (*ulama*) who consider such postponement a legitimate form of social *ijtihād*, and may even inspire new legal interpretations that better align with contemporary needs and benefits.

In this context, the application of the *ma'ālat al-af'āl* theory can be analyzed through four main approaches. The first is the *al-tashrīḥ al-naṣṣī* approach, which considers the consequences of an action explicitly addressed by the *sharī'ah* both Allah and His Messenger in the Qur'an and hadith. This is exemplified in QS. An-Nisā' verse 6:

وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ آنَسْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ... ﴿٦﴾

The Meaning: *Test the orphans (in terms of managing assets) until they are old enough to marry. Then, if in your opinion they are clever (in managing assets), hand over their assets to them.*" (QS. An-Nisā': 6).

In the context of postponing marriage, QS. An-Nisā' verse 6 provides an important basis. The verse emphasizes that individuals who are to take on significant responsibilities, such as managing property or entering into marriage must possess *rūsyud*, meaning mental maturity and readiness. Quraish Shihab, in *Tafsir al-Misbah*, explains that this maturity is not merely physical, but also encompasses cognitive development, emotional stability, and the ability to make wise and responsible decisions.⁵⁹ Accordingly, women who choose to postpone marriage in order to achieve psychological and financial readiness are following the guidance of *Shari'ah*, which discourages rushing into marriage without adequate preparation.

This perspective aligns with the views expressed by Hayail Umroh and Marty Mawarpury during interviews, who observed that adult women who have undergone a period of self-exploration tend to be more emotionally stable and better equipped to navigate the dynamics of marriage.⁶⁰ This observation is consistent with Erikson's and Arnett's theories on early adult development. Kusmawati Hatta further reinforces this view, emphasizing that postponing marriage to achieve emotional, physical, and mental readiness is beneficial, with the age range of 25–30 years considered ideal for optimal maturity.⁶¹

Second, the *al-zunūn al-mu'tabarāh* approach considers well-founded assumptions based on reality, rather than mere conjecture or weak guesses unlikely to occur.⁶² In this study, interviews with informants reveal several strong and justifiable positive impacts of postponing marriage. Emotionally, women who marry at a mature age tend to be calmer, more reflective, and better prepared to build

⁵⁹ Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Misbah*, vol. 2 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), p. 419-421.

⁶⁰ Interview with Hayail Umroh, May 23, 2025; Marty Mawarpury, May 5, 2025.

⁶¹ Interview with Kusmawati Hatta, June 24, 2025.

⁶² Basri, *Teori Maalaatul Af'aal*, p. 25.

healthy relationships. Economically, they have often achieved financial independence, enabling them to contribute to household stability.

Soraya Devy and Mira Fauziah highlighted that women who have pursued careers and completed higher education generally possess stronger bargaining positions within marriage and are able to balance public and domestic roles effectively. Furthermore, readiness for motherhood is enhanced when women have accumulated life experience and educational preparation.⁶³ Nashriyah also noted that maturity and broad insight foster more rational and patient parenting.⁶⁴ These findings represent strong, evidence-based conjectures, grounded in verified experience rather than mere assumption. Within the framework of *ma'ālat al-af'āl*, postponing marriage can therefore be evaluated as a beneficial action, justified by the likely positive consequences it produces.

Third, the *al-qarā'in wa al-mulābasāt* approach refers to social indications and supporting signs present in society.⁶⁵ Data collected from six universities in Syiah Kuala District, Banda Aceh City, show that the percentage of unmarried female lecturers is relatively high, ranging from 5.39% to 33.33%. This social indication demonstrates that postponing marriage is no longer an isolated or deviant individual choice, but rather a structural phenomenon shaped by educational demands and broader social dynamics. Consequently, such societal *qarīnah* provides a strong basis for legal *ijtihād* that is responsive to actual conditions, rather than solely relying on textual sources.

In the interviews, Nashriyah and Soraya Devy emphasized the critical role of partner and family support in establishing a balanced marital relationship, even amid the dual roles that women often occupy. This supports the notion that women who postpone marriage are generally better prepared for healthy marital life, as they already possess strong emotional, economic, and social foundations.⁶⁶ However, negative indicators cannot be ignored. Salami Mahmud explained that prolonged psychological and social pressure on unmarried women, such as stigma or societal expectations, can disrupt hormonal balance and adversely affect reproductive health.⁶⁷ Kusmawati Hatta also highlighted that postponing marriage for too long can have reproductive risks, given the limited productive age of female reproductive organs, even though the organs themselves remain throughout life.⁶⁸ Within the *ma'ālat al-af'āl* framework, this aspect represents potential *mafsadah* that must be carefully considered. Nevertheless, with adequate social support and proper mental management, such risks can be minimized, allowing the benefits of postponing marriage to remain dominant.

⁶³ Interview with Soraya Devy, May 16, 2025; Mira Fauziah, May 13, 2025.

⁶⁴ Interview with Eka Srimulyani, May 27, 2025.

⁶⁵ Basri, *Teori Maalaatul Af'aal*, p. 26.

⁶⁶ Interview with Nashriyah, May 8, 2025; Soraya Devy, May 16, 2025.

⁶⁷ Interview with Salami Mahmud, May 15, 2025.

⁶⁸ Interview with Kusmawati Hatta, June 24, 2025.

Fourth, the *tajribah* method or empirical experience is an essential basis for evaluating an action according to the real consequences it produces.⁶⁹ In the case of postponing marriage, interviews reveal that women who have completed their education and established careers tend to feel more prepared for married life. They have undergone a process of value formation, strengthened self-identity, and acquired extensive social experience, which equips them to face household dynamics with greater maturity.

Soraya Devy and Mira Fauziah further noted that the personal and social experiences gained before marriage make women wiser in managing household conflicts, more patient in raising children, and more adept at balancing family and career responsibilities. This aligns with the principle of *zhan ghalib* (strong suspicion), derived from repeated life experiences and social practice.⁷⁰ Consequently, delaying marriage for reasons of long-term readiness and benefit can be seen as a form of prudence (*ihtiyāt*) that aligns with the overarching objectives of Shari'ah (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*).⁷¹ At the same time, empirical experience also demonstrates that postponing marriage may present challenges, such as difficulty in finding a suitable partner or coping with the pressures of dual responsibilities. In these cases, mental readiness and environmental support are key determinants of whether the outcome of postponing marriage is predominantly beneficial or constitutes *mafsadah*.

Conclusion

This study examines the phenomenon of postponing marriage among female lecturers in Banda Aceh, particularly in Syiah Kuala District, through the lens of the *ma'ālat al-af'āl* perspective. The findings highlight a shift in the values and life priorities of urban Muslim women, where education and career increasingly influence decisions regarding marriage. Delaying marriage for educational and professional reasons provides several significant benefits, including emotional and psychological maturity, financial readiness, preparedness for motherhood, and the ability to balance domestic and public roles effectively. At the same time, potential challenges exist, such as social pressure and difficulties in childcare due to dual responsibilities. From the perspective of *ma'ālat al-af'āl*, postponing marriage can be considered a form of social *ijtihād* that carefully weighs long-term benefits against potential harms. This practice aligns with *Sharia* principles as long as the benefits outweigh the risks, a position supported by the approaches of *al-taṣhrīḥ al-naṣṣī*, *al-zunūn al-mu'tabarāh*, *al-qarā'in wa al-mulābasāt*, and *tajribah*. The phenomenon further demonstrates that the Islamic law is dynamic, capable of responding to contemporary social realities by integrating empirical evidence and contextual

⁶⁹ Basri, *Teori Maalaatul Af'aal*, p. 28.

⁷⁰ Qodariyah Barkah and Andriyani Andriyani, "Maqashid Al-Syari'ah Concept Of Kafa'ah In Marriage," *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari'ah Dan Masyarakat* 20, no. 1 (2020).

⁷¹ Basri and Ismail, "Teori Ma'ālāt Al-Af'āl dalam Maqāsid Sharī'ah," p. 218.

considerations. Therefore, postponing marriage for the sake of education and career does not merely challenge traditional norms but, in fact, aligns with the objectives of *Sharia (maqāṣid al-sharī'ah)* by promoting individual maturity, family welfare, and the broader empowerment of women.

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- Kusmawati Hatta, Dean of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, June 24, 2025.
- Soraya Devy, Vice Dean for General Administration, Faculty of Sharia and Law at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, May 16, 2025.
- Mira Fauziah, Head of the Center for Women's Studies at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, May 13, 2025.
- Eka Srimulyani, Director of Postgraduate Studies at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, May 27, 2025.
- Salami Mahmud, Lecturer in the Faculty of Islamic Education and Teaching at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, May 15, 2025.
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