

The Islamic Legal Perspective on the Minimum Age for Marriage

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Abstract

From an Islamic perspective, marriage is not merely the union of two people a man and a woman but rather the formation of a sacred covenant in the name of Allah, in which the bride and groom intend to build a household that is harmonious, peaceful, and filled with love and affection. This article aims to explore the provisions regarding the marriageable age from the perspective of Islamic law. This study employs a qualitative method, specifically library research. Library research was chosen because the subject of this study focuses on the ideas, norms, concepts, and legal provisions of Islamic law regarding the marriageable age, which can be traced through various written sources. This study employs a normative-doctrinal approach, specifically by examining the provisions regarding the age of marriage based on sources of Islamic law. The concept of the marriageable age according to Islamic law varies. Some scholars state that the minimum age for a person to enter into marriage is puberty, characterized by wet dreams (ejaculation) for men and menstruation for women. Other scholars maintain that the minimum age for marriage is determined not only by physical characteristics but also by the maturity of the mind and soul. Thus, fundamentally, scholars do not provide a specific limit regarding the age of marriage. This is because even if a prospective spouse has not yet reached puberty, it does not invalidate the marriage, since the issue of the minimum age for marriage is not included among the pillars and conditions for a valid marriage.

Article Information:

Received September 1, 2026

Revised September 10, 2026

Accepted September 13, 2026

Keywords:

Islamic Law, Minimum Age, Marriage

DOI:10.5281/[zenodo.2733834](https://zenodo.org/record/2733834)

INTRODUCTION

The stages of human life can be broadly categorized into three: birth, marriage, and death. These three stages of life are always fascinating to discuss from various perspectives. Among the three life events mentioned above, the issue of marriage has been the most extensively studied and analyzed, as marriage is a cornerstone of life that must be conducted in accordance with culture, religion, and applicable laws and regulations. Furthermore, marriage plays a crucial role in shaping human life within society (Adira et al., 2024). By its very nature, society cannot thrive without marriage, as marriage leads to offspring, and offspring form families that grow into extended families and, ultimately, society. Thus, marriage serves as the binding thread that sustains human life and society (Anindita et al., 2025).

How to cite:

Abdulghani, N. A., (2026). *The Islamic Legal Perspective on The Minimum Age for Marriage*. Tasdiq: Journal Islamic Studies and Syariah 1(2), 79-86

E-ISSN:

3164-4058

Published by:

PT. Pendidikan Islam Al-Fatihah

From an Islamic perspective, marriage does not merely unite two people a man and a woman but rather forges a sacred bond in the name of Allah, signifying that the couple intends to build a household that is harmonious, peaceful, and filled with love and affection. Humans and other living creatures alike have a need for sexual fulfillment with the opposite sex. Thus, from a biological standpoint, humans and animals share the same needs (Ayu & Kamsi, 2022).

However, what distinguishes them in fulfilling these needs is that humans are required to follow religious rules and norms, as well as religious morality, whereas animals are not subject to such requirements. Thus, marriage is the dividing line that distinguishes humans from animals in fulfilling this shared need. Marriage is one of the most significant events in human life. A marriage between a man and a woman has both tangible and intangible consequences for their respective families and communities, as well as for the wealth they acquire both before and throughout the duration of the marriage (Bayu Dwi Prasetiawan et al., 2024).

Regarding the determination of the minimum age for marriage, if a person wishes to get married, the first and most important requirement is that the prospective husband and wife must possess strong physical and mental readiness to build a household that embodies *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *warahmah*. When viewed from various perspectives, there are differing legal viewpoints regarding the minimum age for marriage across different legal systems. These legal differences are particularly interesting to examine and study, whether from the perspective of Islamic law or from the perspective of positive law (Bin Hashim & Aziz, 2023).

The issue of the minimum age for marriage is not specifically addressed in the Qur'an or the Hadith. The generally accepted requirements are that the individual must have reached puberty (*baligh*), be of sound mind, and be capable of distinguishing between right and wrong so as to give their consent to marriage; thus, they are considered ready for marriage. This age of puberty is related to the fulfillment of the duties of a husband and wife (Darussamin et al., 2023).

In Islamic law, scholars of the various schools of thought agree that the age requirement for marriage essentially involves being of sound mind and having reached puberty. Regarding the definition of puberty here, scholars agree that menstruation and pregnancy are among the signs that a woman has reached puberty. However, Imam Shafi'i and Imam Hanbali state that for a man, reaching the age of 15 signifies that he has reached puberty. Meanwhile, the Maliki school sets the age at 17, and Imam Hanafi establishes the age of puberty for a man as 18 years old (Faizal et al., 2022).

Explicitly, there are no verses in the Qur'an that directly address the minimum age for marriage; however, upon closer examination, there are two verses in the Qur'an Surah al-Nūr 24:32 and Surah al-Nisā' 4:6 that are related to the age of puberty, particularly in the terms "*shalihin*" and "*rusydan*: And marry off those among you who are single, and those who are fit for marriage from among your male and female slaves. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them through His bounty. And Allah is All-Encompassing (in His provision) and All-Knowing." (QS. al-Nūr/24:32).

According to M. Quraish Shihab, the term *waṣālihīn* is understood by many scholars to mean "those suitable for marriage" that is, those who are mentally and spiritually capable of building a household rather than those who are religiously devout, because the institution of marriage requires preparation not only material but

also mental and spiritual readiness for both the prospective husband and wife (Karunia & Rahaju, 2019).

Thus, it can be understood that indicators of a person's mental health are closely related to their age. By general logic, a mentally healthy and mature person is someone who is past childhood or, in other words, psychologically and intellectually mature. The term *ṣhālihīn* indicates that marriage in Islam has certain requirements, even if they are still general in nature. Maturity is synonymous with a person's age. The term *ṣhālihīn* serves as the foundation for determining the age of puberty required for marriage.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method in the form of library research. Library research was chosen because the subject of this study focuses on Islamic thought, norms, concepts, and legal provisions regarding the marriageable age, which can be traced through various written sources (F Efendi et al., 2023)(Mardoni et al., 2025) . This study employs a normative-doctrinal approach, which involves examining the provisions on the marriage age based on Islamic legal sources and the laws and regulations in force in Indonesia. This approach is used to understand the provisions on the marriage age and to analyze them based on the principles of Islamic law and the public interest in marriage. Similar studies on the minimum age for marriage have also frequently employed qualitative approaches and literature reviews by examining the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh texts, journals, and legislation (Fauzi et al., 2023). The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources include the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh texts, the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), and Law No. 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage (Arzam et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, secondary data sources included books on Islamic law, academic journals, research articles, undergraduate theses, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, and other relevant literature (Candra et al., 2024). Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach. The data collected through a literature review was first classified based on discussion themes, then compared and analyzed to gain a systematic understanding of the provisions regarding the marriageable age from the perspective of Islamic law. The analysis also focused on the concepts of *baligh*, maturity, readiness for marriage, public interest, and *maqashid al-shari'ah* (Sulastri et al., 2024). Conclusions were drawn deductively, that is, by deriving conclusions from general concepts and provisions in Islamic law to arrive at a specific understanding of the marriage age requirement. Thus, this study is expected to provide an objective overview of the Islamic legal perspective on the marriage age requirement and its relevance to marriage law provisions in Indonesia (Hafizh & Efendi, 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Marriage is one of the most important aspects of human life; indeed, it is a basic need for every normal human being. Without marriage, a person's life is incomplete and, moreover, goes against their natural human nature. Allah the Almighty has created His creatures in pairs. In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has reminded us that marriage is part of his Sunnah. Therefore, those who enter into marriage are following the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Essentially, neither the Qur'an nor the Sunnah provides clear guidelines regarding the minimum age for marriage. Both sources merely emphasize that a person intending to marry must be mature and capable so that they can manage and lead their family life properly. It is through this maturity that a husband and wife will be able to fulfill their mutual rights and obligations. In Surah al-Nisā'/4:6, Allah (swt) states:

And test the orphans until they reach marriageable age. Then, if in your opinion they are mature (capable of managing their wealth), hand over their wealth to them. And do not consume the orphans' wealth beyond what is reasonable, and do not rush to spend it before they come of age. Whoever (among the guardians) is well-off should refrain (from consuming the orphans' property), and whoever is poor may consume it in a reasonable manner. Then, when you hand over the property to them, you must have witnesses present for them. And Allah is sufficient as a Witness (over that testimony).

The verse above states that a person may marry once they have reached the legal age for marriage; in other words, a person may marry once they have reached puberty or adulthood (Abdol Malek & Samuri, 2025). According to Moh. Idris Ramulyo, the ideal age for marriage is 18 for women and 25 for men. However, these ages are not absolute; they still depend on the circumstances and the physical and psychological condition of the prospective spouses. Still within the framework of Islamic law, specifically regarding the legal subject in Islamic law (Mukallaf ma'ful 'alaih), human beings as legal subjects possess two legal capacities (al-Ahliyah). First, the capacity to receive rights and obligations, known as al-Ahliyah al-Wujub. Second, the capacity to perform legal acts, known as al-Ahliyah al-ada'. In general, Amir Syarifuddin, in his book Islamic Marriage Law in Indonesia, states that there are five requirements that must be met by both men and women who intend to marry, namely:

Both have clear identities and can be distinguished from others in terms of their names, gender, whereabouts, and other personal characteristics. Both are Muslims. There is no prohibition against them marrying each other. Both parties have agreed to marry and have also given their consent to the person who will officiate the marriage. Both have reached the appropriate age for marriage.

Regarding the appropriate and suitable age limit for marriage, the Qur'an and the Sunnah do not provide a clear explanation of the boundaries. Citing the opinion of Ibn al-Humam in his fiqh book titled Syarh Fath al-Qadi, Amir Syarifuddin concludes that a marriage conducted between a minor boy is valid. As in the hadith narrated by Aisha, which reads: From Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, from the Prophet, peace be upon him, who said: "The pen (of accountability) is lifted from three things: a person who is asleep until he wakes up, a child until he has a dream, and a mad person until he regains his senses [recovers] and becomes conscious." (Narrated by Ahmad and the Four Imams, except Tirmidhi) (Muhammadi et al., 2021).

The essential meaning of the hadith above does not explicitly indicate an age limit for puberty. It merely explains the signs of puberty (alamatuhu al-baligh), such as wet dreams for boys and menstruation for girls. Explicitly, the fuqaha do not agree on a minimum age for marriage, but they hold the view that a person having reached puberty does not necessarily indicate maturity, based on the following opinions of the schools of thought: According to some fuqaha, the criteria of puberty or maturity are not factors to be considered in determining whether or not a person is permitted to marry. Imam Malik, Imam Hanafi, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Hanbali hold that a

father may marry off his young, virgin daughter (who has not yet reached puberty), as may her grandmother if the father is absent. As for Ibn Hazm and Shubrumah, they hold that a father may not marry off his young daughter unless she has reached maturity and has given her consent (Murniati et al., 2024).

Historically, the age limit for marriage is exemplified by the Prophet's marriage to 'Aishah, who was 9 and 15 years old, as stated in the hadith narrated by Muslim: "The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, married her ('Aisha) when she was six years old, and he took her to live with him when she was nine, and she passed away when she was eighteen." (Narrated by Muslim).

Upon examining the normative foundations regarding the age of puberty or the minimum age for marriage from the perspective of the fuqaha, it can be concluded that the minimum age limit is 15 years, even though the Prophet married 'Aisha when she was 9 years old. At that time, particularly in Medina, a 9-year-old was considered an adult. A. Rofiq explains this as follows:

It can be understood that the age of 15 marks the beginning of adulthood for boys. This is because, typically, by that age, boys have experienced nocturnal emissions. As for girls, the age of 9 (nine) in regions such as Medina was considered the age of maturity (I Amin et al., 2022). This is based on 'Aisha's experience when she was married to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him); based on this hadith, the book *al-Kasyifah* explains: "There are three signs of a person's maturity (baligh): the completion of the age of 15 for both men and women, wet dreams (ejaculation) for both boys and girls at the age of 9, and menstruation for girls at the age of 9." This can also be linked to the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) command to Muslims to teach their children to pray at the age of seven and to discipline them at the age of ten if the child refuses to pray (Ibnu Amin et al., 2022).

The concession for prospective spouses under the age of nineteen or sixteen for women may be based on the hadith cited above. Although this permission must be accompanied by authorization from the relevant official, this demonstrates that the concept of legal innovation in Islam is of an *ijtihadi* nature. Furthermore, the interpretation of the text particularly regarding the Prophet's marriage to 'Aisha must also be understood in light of the circumstances and conditions of that time. This is important because the public interest at that time was clearly different from what it is today (Glenn et al., 2010).

Thus, it can be understood that the minimum age for marriage is 15 years, based on the narration of Ibn 'Umar, and 9 years, based on the Prophet's marriage to 'Aishah. On this basis, the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence differ in setting the age limit, as follows:

The scholars of the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence agree that menstruation and pregnancy are evidence of a woman's puberty. Pregnancy occurs as a result of the fertilization of an egg by sperm, while menstruation is equivalent to the emission of semen in men. The Imamiyyah, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools state that the growth of underarm hair is evidence of a person's puberty. The Hanafi school, however, rejects this view, arguing that underarm hair is no different from other body hair. The Shafi'i and Hanbali schools state that the age of puberty for both boys and girls is fifteen years, while the Maliki school sets it at seventeen years. Meanwhile, the Hanafi school sets the age of puberty for boys at eighteen years and for girls at seventeen years. (Ibn Qudamah, *Al-Mughni*, Vol. IV) (Putri et al., 2024).

The Hanafi view regarding the age of puberty mentioned above represents the maximum age, while the minimum age is twelve years for boys and nine years for girls. This is because at these ages, a boy may experience wet dreams, impregnate a woman, or ejaculate (outside of dreams), while a girl may experience wet dreams, become pregnant, or begin menstruating.

According to psychology, the best age to get married is between 19 and 25 years old. Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, a companion of the Prophet, narrated a hadith: Translation: "O young people, whoever among you is able to marry, let him marry, for it is a remedy, helps control one's gaze, and preserves one's chastity. Whoever is unable to do so should fast, for fasting serves as a shield." (Agreed Upon) (Faisal Efendi & Mulyani, 2024).

According to Abdul Rahim Umran, the age limit for marriage can be viewed in several ways, as follows: Biologically, sexual relations with a wife who is too young (physically immature) can cause suffering for the wife in biological terms, especially during pregnancy and childbirth. Socioculturally, a married couple must be able to meet social expectations, namely managing the household and caring for children. Demographically, underage marriage is one of the factors contributing to higher population growth.

According to Islamic scholars, in Islamic law, determining the minimum age for marriage can be based on three principles: the marriage age linked to the age of puberty (baligh); the marriage age based on the general meaning of Quranic verses that mention the threshold of capacity for marriage; and the hadith explaining Aisha's age at the time of her marriage to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

CONCLUSION

The concept of the marriageable age under Islamic law varies. Some scholars state that the minimum age for a person to enter into marriage is puberty, characterized by wet dreams (ejaculation) for men and menstruation for women. Other scholars maintain that the minimum age for marriage is determined not only by physical characteristics but also by the maturity of the mind and spirit. Thus, fundamentally, scholars do not set a specific limit on the age of marriage. This is because even if a prospective spouse has not yet reached puberty, it does not invalidate the marriage, since the issue of the minimum age for marriage is not included among the pillars and conditions for a valid marriage.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contribution

Naser Ali Abdulghani: Writing-Preparation of original manuscript, Conceptualization, Visualization, Methodology, Improve Language, Investigation.

AI Statement

The data and language usage in this article have been validated and verified by English language experts and no AI-generated sentences are included in this article.

Funding Statement

The author(s) declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that this research was conducted without any conflict of interest in the research.

Ethical Clearance

The place or location studied has agreed to conduct research and is willing if the results of this study are published.

Publisher's and Journal's Note

Researcher and (PT. Pendidikan Islam Al-fatimah) as the publisher and Editor of Journal Tasdiq that there is no conflict of interest towards this article publication.

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Tasdiq: Journal Islamic Studies and Syariah

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