

Child Marriage from the Perspective of Hadith in the Hermeneutic Study of Muhammad Syahrur

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Abstract

Early marriage has become a controversial topic in religious and social studies, particularly from the perspective of Islamic law. Hadith provides guidance on marriage, which is often interpreted in diverse ways. This article examines early marriage from the perspective of hadith using Muhammad Shahrur's hermeneutics to understand the relevance of traditional views in a modern context. The study aims to explore Shahrur's interpretative method, which emphasizes contextualizing meaning, and to identify potential implications for Islamic marriage law. The method used is a qualitative approach with content analysis of hadith texts, supported by relevant literature. The findings indicate that Shahrur's hermeneutical method offers a new perspective on understanding hadith related to early marriage, which can strengthen arguments for adjusting the marriage age to align with socio-cultural conditions.

1. Introduction

Early marriage is a critical issue involving social, cultural, religious, and public health aspects (Ummah, 2019). In Muslim societies, the practice of early marriage is often rooted in religious views that refer to hadith as a source of law. Hadith, as one of the main foundations of Islamic law, provides various guidelines regarding the age deemed appropriate for marriage in Islam. However, traditional perspectives on early marriage face challenges when connected to modern developments concerning children's rights, health, and welfare (Asfiyak, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to re-examine the interpretation of hadith regarding early marriage to align with current social developments.

Previous studies have highlighted the impacts of early marriage on individuals and communities. Most traditional studies argue that younger marriage age aligns with the religious and cultural norms of traditional societies (Musfiroh, 2016). Some research attempts to understand the relevance of early marriage in a modern context, but these approaches tend to be normative or textual. Hermeneutical research, particularly from the perspective of contemporary thinkers like Muhammad Shahrur, remains relatively rare. Shahrur offers a contextual approach to understanding religious texts, providing a fresh perspective for exploring hadith on early marriage.

This article aims to explore how Muhammad Shahrur's hermeneutical approach can be applied to understanding hadith related to early marriage. The study seeks to open new avenues in the discussion of Islamic law that are relevant to modern social issues. By adopting contextual hermeneutics, this study aspires to present an alternative understanding that is more inclusive and responsive to evolving social realities while reinforcing individual rights within the framework of Islamic law (Mustaqim, 2017).

This research is expected to contribute academically by enriching the literature on Islamic marriage law from a contemporary perspective. Using Shahrur's hermeneutical approach, which emphasizes the contextualization of meaning, the study not only analyzes hadith texts but also integrates modern perspectives that consider issues of children's rights and societal welfare. Thus, this article seeks to enrich academic discourse in Islamic studies and provide alternative legal interpretations that are more relevant to the needs of the times (Kudsiyah, 2024).

2. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using hermeneutical analysis methods on hadiths related to early marriage. Data is sourced from collections of hadiths, literature on Shahrur's hermeneutics, and other related references discussing Islamic marriage law. The analysis process involves examining the historical and socio-cultural contexts of the hadiths, then integrating these with Shahrur's hermeneutical concepts to produce a contextual interpretation. This research is by going directly to the field on the object of research to collect primary data obtained directly from the object of research through observation and interviews with related respondents or sources.

3. Results and Discussion

Early Marriage in the Perspective of the Prophet's Hadith

Hadith refers to all sayings, actions, and approvals of Prophet Muhammad (Shufiyah, 2018). Marriage is both a command given by the Prophet Muhammad and a practice he personally engaged in. Islam strongly encourages marriage due to its critical role in

fulfilling the fundamental objectives of Islamic law, known as *maqasid al-shariah*. One of these objectives is *hifdz al-nasl* (protection of lineage). Through marriage, individuals safeguard themselves from temptations and sinful acts prohibited by religion.

In several hadiths, the Prophet emphasized the importance of marriage as a means of maintaining chastity, forming harmonious families, and fulfilling human nature. A well-known hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim (*muttafaq 'alaih*) highlights this:

The Hadith of Aisha's Marriage:

Hadith:

تَزَوَّجَنِي النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَأَنَا بِنْتُ سِتِّ سِنِينَ ، فَقَدِمْنَا الْمَدِينَةَ فَزَلْنَا فِي بَنِي الْحَارِثِ بْنِ خَزْرَجٍ ، فَوَعَكْتُ فَنَمَرَقَ شَعْرِي فَوَفَى جُمَيْمَةً ، فَأَتَنِي أُمِّي أُمُّ رُومَانَ وَإِنِّي لَفِي أَرْجُوحةٍ وَمَعِيَ صَوَاجِبُ لِي ، فَصَرَخَتْ بِي فَأَتَيْتُهَا لَا أَدْرِي مَا تُرِيدُ بِي ، فَأَخَذَتْ بِيَدِي حَتَّى أَوْقَفَتْنِي عَلَى بَابِ الدَّارِ ، وَإِنِّي لَأَنْهَجُ ، حَتَّى سَكَنَ بَعْضُ نَفْسِي ، ثُمَّ أَخَذَتْ شَيْئًا مِنْ مَاءٍ فَمَسَحَتْ بِهِ وَجْهِي وَرَأْسِي ، ثُمَّ أَدْخَلَتْنِي الدَّارَ ، فَإِذَا نِسْوَةٌ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ فِي الْبَيْتِ ، فَقُلْنَ : عَلَى الْخَيْرِ وَالْبِرَكَةِ ، وَعَلَى خَيْرِ طَائِرٍ . فَأَسْلَمَتْنِي إِلَيْهِنَّ فَأَصْلَحَنَ مِنْ شَأْنِي ، فَلَمْ يَرُعْنِي إِلَّا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ضَحَى ، فَأَسْلَمَتْنِي إِلَيْهِ ، وَأَنَا يَوْمَئِذٍ بِنْتُ تِسْعِ سِنِينَ (رواه البخاري، رقم 3894 ومسلم، رقم 1422)

Translation:

"The Prophet married me when I was six years old. Then we moved to Medina, and we lived with Bani Harith bin Khazraj. I fell ill, causing my hair to fall out. Later, my mother, Umm Ruman, came to me while I was playing on a swing with my friends. She called me, and I followed her, not knowing what she wanted. She took my hand and led me to the door of a house, where she washed my face and head with some water. Inside the house, I found several Ansari women who welcomed me with blessings. They dressed me up, and the Prophet came to me in the morning. At that time, I was nine years old." (*Narrated by Bukhari, No. 3894; Muslim, No. 1422*)

Asbab al-Wurud (Reason for Revelation):

This hadith was narrated by Aisha herself, explaining her marriage to the Prophet. The marriage took place in a social context very different from today's norms, where early marriages were more common in Arab societies. This union also had strategic significance in strengthening ties between the Prophet and Abu Bakr's family. However, interpretations regarding marriage age differ, with some scholars emphasizing the importance of understanding the historical and social context in which this occurred (Rahmah, 2009).

Historical Context of Early Marriage

In the Prophet Muhammad's era, early marriage was a common and accepted practice across various communities, including the Middle East. Maturity was often judged by physical signs of puberty rather than chronological age. In Arab society, signs of

maturity were linked to one's ability to fulfill family roles, including marriage and childbearing.

However, with time, interpretations of early marriage began to shift. Changes in social structures, health awareness, and child rights advocacy have redefined the ideal marriage age. Traditional views supporting early marriage have faced criticism due to the psychological, physical, and social risks it poses to children.

The hadiths concerning early marriage must be analyzed within their socio-historical context. Historically, limited access to formal education and shorter life expectancy shaped societal norms, making early marriage acceptable as a means of ensuring lineage continuity. However, these values do not necessarily align with modern understandings of health, education, and long-term well-being (Abha, 2015).

Modern Interpretations Using Syahrur's Hermeneutics

Modern perspectives on these hadiths call for contextual reinterpretation. Using Muhammad Syahrur's hermeneutical approach, hadiths on early marriage can be seen as flexible guidelines, adaptable to historical and social contexts. Syahrur argued that Islamic teachings provide dynamic boundaries (*hudud*) that allow for change in response to societal progress.

In the case of Aisha's marriage, it was appropriate for its historical context. Today, the boundaries of Islamic law regarding marriage must consider modern understandings of physical and psychological maturity. Scientific evidence highlights the need to protect children's health and educational opportunities, making early marriage less justifiable in contemporary contexts (Tampubolon, 2021).

Hermeneutical Approach of Muhammad Syahrur

Syahrur's hermeneutics emphasizes interpreting religious texts, including the Quran and hadith, by considering their socio-cultural contexts during revelation and adapting them to contemporary conditions. This flexible and contextual approach is particularly relevant in addressing modern challenges absent during the Prophet's time.

Principles of Syahrur's Hermeneutics:

1. **Dynamic Boundaries:** Texts have minimum and maximum limits, offering interpretive flexibility.
2. **Adaptation to Modern Norms:** Early marriage should align with contemporary standards of health and child rights.

3. **Focus on Justice and Welfare:** Islamic law aims to maximize societal benefit. Practices like early marriage may conflict with these principles in modern contexts.

Using this approach, Islamic rulings on early marriage can align with evolving norms and ensure justice, particularly in safeguarding children's rights.

Implications for Marriage Law

Adopting Syahrur's hermeneutical approach has significant implications for Islamic marriage laws. For example:

- **Raising the Minimum Marriage Age:** Aligning Islamic law with international standards on child rights.
- **Balancing Tradition and Modernity:** Harmonizing religious practices with contemporary health, education, and welfare considerations.

Some Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia, have revised marriage laws to increase the minimum marriage age. Despite resistance from conservative groups, Syahrur's approach provides robust religious justification for such reforms.

Social Relevance and Academic Contributions

This study contributes significantly to the discourse on Islamic family law. By adopting Syahrur's hermeneutics, it offers a more contextual, flexible, and socially relevant understanding of early marriage in Islam. It also serves as a reference for policymakers and religious leaders advocating for reforms to protect children from the risks associated with early marriage.

Syahrur's approach demonstrates that Islamic law is not static but adaptable, ensuring its continued relevance in addressing contemporary societal challenges.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Muhammad Syahrur's hermeneutical approach to hadiths concerning child marriage creates a space for contextual and adaptive interpretations that respond to social changes. This approach is highly relevant in addressing modern issues such as children's rights, education, and the psychological well-being of children who marry at an early age. The significant shift in societal understanding of the ideal age for marriage can be accepted as part of the dynamic nature of Islamic law, which transcends literal interpretations to focus on achieving the greater good. Syahrur emphasizes the importance of understanding religious texts within their historical context while simultaneously considering

contemporary social realities. In this context, the hermeneutical approach not only allows interpretive freedom but also upholds the fundamental Islamic values that support welfare and justice (Adam, 2020).

The discussion of child marriage from the perspective of hadiths using Muhammad Syahrur's hermeneutical approach begins by highlighting the importance of this study. Child marriage is a social issue with profound impacts on children's health, psychology, and social development. In some Muslim communities, hadiths narrating the marriage of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) are often used as the basis for child marriage practices, even though the historical conditions and contexts of that time differ significantly from today. Therefore, Syahrur's hermeneutical approach is highly relevant in providing a new understanding that is not only literal but also considers the objectives and values intended to be achieved in Islamic law (Mustaqim, 2017).

The impact of this hermeneutical approach is a more progressive and contextual understanding of child marriage. By re-examining religious texts from the perspective of humanity and *maqasid syariah* (the objectives of Islamic law), this approach has the potential to reduce practices that may harm children. This leads to the logical consequence that Islamic law should be understood as a mechanism for safeguarding individual welfare. Thus, Syahrur's hermeneutics lays a foundation for viewing child marriage as inconsistent with the objectives of Islamic law, which prioritize justice, protection, and societal well-being.

Furthermore, compared to traditional textualist theories that tend to adhere to literal interpretations, Syahrur's hermeneutics offers a different approach. Textualist approaches rely on hadiths as direct guidelines without considering changes in social and psychological contexts. Conversely, Syahrur's approach aligns more closely with contemporary Islamic thought, which emphasizes that laws should consider *maslahah* (benefits) for the community. His hermeneutics strengthens the view that the interpretation of religious texts can evolve with time, particularly in matters concerning children's rights (M Wahid, n.d.).

This hermeneutical approach also delves deeper into the significance of understanding *maqasid syariah* in interpreting hadiths, something often overlooked in classical textualist approaches. Syahrur argues that protecting children is part of the objectives of Islamic law; hence, practices that could endanger them, including child marriage, should be avoided or even prohibited in modern contexts. In this way, Syahrur's hermeneutics not only critiques but also offers solutions to enhance the relevance of Islamic teachings in contemporary life.

Finally, this analysis shows that Syahrur's hermeneutical approach does not reject the core teachings of Islam but invites a re-interpretation of those teachings to meet the

needs of the times. This approach paves the way for the development of adaptive and relevant Islamic law without compromising its fundamental values. Syahrur's hermeneutics provides a theoretical foundation for reconsidering the minimum age for marriage in Islamic law, aligning it with principles of protection and welfare, particularly for children who are still in the stages of physical and mental development.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the hermeneutical approach applied to hadiths related to child marriage can provide a more contextual understanding, particularly in relation to *maqasid syariah* (the objectives of Islamic law), such as protection and individual welfare. Muhammad Syahrur's hermeneutics offers the view that religious texts, including hadiths about marriage, should not be interpreted literally without considering the constantly changing social context. In this regard, child marriage, although rooted in hadiths, may not always align with modern conditions and could have negative impacts on children, highlighting the need for reinterpretation in accordance with the principles of justice and the greater good.

The academic contribution of this article lies in its effort to reassess religious texts through a hermeneutical approach to address contemporary social issues. By dialoguing hadith texts with modern social needs, this article offers a new perspective for Islamic studies, particularly in developing adaptive Islamic law that remains aligned with the core values of the religion. This article also strengthens the argument that the interpretation of hadiths can take into account both the historical context and the impact of practices on individuals and society at large.

The study recommends further research that tests this hermeneutical approach on other hadiths related to sensitive social issues. Additionally, empirical studies on the impact of child marriage in Muslim communities would provide a clearer picture of the relevance of this approach. Future research could also explore comparisons with the hermeneutical approaches of other Islamic thinkers to enrich the understanding of religious text interpretation in accordance with the principles of protection and welfare.

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