

Understanding Indonesia's Baby Bust: Demographic Implications of Marriage Law Reform and Islamic Legal Perspectives

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Abstract: *Indonesia has recently experienced declining marriage and fertility rates, raising concerns about an emerging baby bust phenomenon and its long-term demographic implications. This study examines the relationship between Marriage Law No. 16 of 2019, which raised the minimum marriage age to 19 years, and the decline in marriage rates from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence. Using a qualitative juridical-empirical approach, the study analyzes classical fiqh texts, including Al-Umm, Al-Hidayah, Al-Mudawwanah, and Al-Mughni, alongside marriage statistics published by Statistics Indonesia (BPS) from 2015 to 2023. The findings indicate a significant decline in marriage registrations after the enactment of the law, particularly among young adults, potentially contributing to delayed family formation and lower fertility rates. Classical Islamic jurists generally regard marriage as a means of protecting lineage (hifz al-nasl) while recognizing public welfare (maslahah) as a basis for legal regulation. The study argues that the law supports child protection objectives but may generate unintended demographic consequences when not accompanied by adequate social and economic support. It recommends strengthening premarital education, expanding support programs for young families, and enhancing policy coordination between government institutions and religious authorities.*

Keywords: *Baby Bust; Marriage Law Reform; Islamic Jurisprudence; Fertility Decline*

Abstrak: Indonesia mengalami penurunan angka perkawinan dan fertilitas yang memunculkan kekhawatiran terhadap fenomena *baby bust* serta implikasinya bagi demografi jangka panjang. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis hubungan antara Undang-Undang Nomor 16 Tahun 2019 yang menaikkan batas usia minimum perkawinan menjadi 19 tahun dengan penurunan angka perkawinan dalam perspektif hukum Islam. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode yuridis-empiris melalui analisis kitab fikih klasik, yaitu *Al-Umm*, *Al-Hidayah*, *Al-Mudawwanah*, dan *Al-Mughni*, serta data statistik perkawinan Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) periode 2015-2023. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya penurunan signifikan angka perkawinan setelah pemberlakuan undang-undang tersebut, terutama pada kelompok usia dewasa muda, yang berpotensi mendorong penundaan pembentukan keluarga dan penurunan fertilitas. Analisis fikih menunjukkan bahwa ulama empat mazhab pada umumnya memandang perkawinan sebagai sarana menjaga keturunan (*hifz al-nasl*) sekaligus mengakui kemaslahatan (*maslahah*) sebagai dasar pengaturan hukum. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa kebijakan tersebut mendukung tujuan perlindungan anak, tetapi berpotensi menimbulkan konsekuensi demografis yang tidak diharapkan apabila tidak diimbangi dengan dukungan sosial dan ekonomi yang memadai. Penelitian

merekomendasikan penguatan pendidikan pranikah, perluasan program dukungan keluarga muda, serta peningkatan koordinasi kebijakan antara pemerintah dan otoritas keagamaan.

Keywords: Penurunan angka kelahiran; Reformasi Undang-Undang Perkawinan; Hukum Islam; Penurunan Fertilitas.

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Introduction

Indonesia is experiencing a gradual decline in fertility that has raised concerns regarding the emergence of a baby bust phenomenon. Recent demographic trends indicate a steady reduction in birth rates, accompanied by delayed marriage, changing family formation patterns, and declining fertility intentions among younger generations (Adhani & Aripudin, 2024). Although fertility decline is often viewed as a consequence of socio-economic progress, a prolonged reduction in births may generate significant demographic challenges (Ningtias, 2022). These include population aging, a shrinking labor force, increasing dependency ratios, and the potential loss of opportunities associated with Indonesia's demographic dividend (Tirta & Arifin, 2025). Experiences from countries such as Japan and South Korea demonstrate that persistent fertility decline can create long-term economic and social pressures that are difficult to reverse once low-fertility norms become established (Ramadhan et al., 2024).

The emergence of a baby bust in Indonesia has attracted growing scholarly attention. Existing studies suggest that fertility decline is shaped by multiple and interconnected factors, including urbanization, rising educational attainment, women's labor force participation, changing social values, economic uncertainty, housing costs, and delayed family formation (Gani, 2025). Consequently, understanding Indonesia's baby bust requires a multidimensional analysis that goes beyond conventional demographic explanations and considers the role of legal and institutional frameworks that influence marriage and reproductive behavior (Bella et al., 2025).

Among the institutional factors receiving increasing attention is the reform of Indonesia's marriage law. Through Law No. 16 of 2019, the government amended the previous legal framework by establishing 19 years as the minimum marriage age for both men and women (Sutriani et al., 2025). The reform was introduced to strengthen child protection, reduce child marriage, improve educational opportunities, and promote gender equality. From a human rights and public policy perspective, these objectives represent important legal achievements (Kusumaaningrum et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the implementation of the reform has generated debate regarding its broader demographic consequences. Statistical reports indicate declining marriage registrations and increasing age at first marriage following the enactment of the law (Ririn Shepta Deanty et al, 2025). While these trends cannot be attributed solely to legal reform, they have raised important questions regarding the relationship between marriage-age regulation, delayed family formation, and declining fertility (Busriyanti et al., 2025).

From the perspective of Islamic law, discussions concerning marriage age, marital readiness, and state intervention have long been debated within classical jurisprudence (Noer Zaini Khalis, 2026). The major Sunni schools of law developed diverse approaches to issues of maturity, public welfare (masalahah), family formation, and lineage preservation (hifz al-nasl) (Fatimah, 2025). Classical works such as Al-Umm, Al-Hidayah, Al-Mudawwanah, and Al-Mughni demonstrate that Islamic jurists recognized both the

importance of marriage in preserving social order and the legitimacy of regulatory measures aimed at protecting public interests (Nuraini et al., 2024). However, differences remain regarding the extent to which legal restrictions on marriage should be imposed and how such regulations should be balanced against broader social objectives (Fikri & Zaharah, 2025). These debates remain highly relevant in contemporary discussions concerning marriage-age reform and demographic change in Muslim societies (Nafhani et al., 2026).

Despite the growing literature on fertility decline, child marriage prevention, and the implementation of Law No. 16 of 2019, existing studies generally examine these issues separately (Dian Dwi Pratiwi, 2025). Demographic studies tend to focus on fertility trends and socio-economic determinants, while legal studies primarily evaluate the law from the perspectives of child protection and gender justice (Maula, 2022). Meanwhile, research that systematically investigates the demographic implications of marriage-age reform through the combined lenses of empirical demographic evidence and classical Islamic jurisprudence remains limited (Aura et al., 2019). Moreover, few studies have examined how the objectives of child protection, family formation, and demographic sustainability can be reconciled within the framework of Islamic legal thought (Widyastari & Pathom, 2016).

This study seeks to address this gap by examining the demographic implications of Marriage Law Reform No. 16 of 2019 in the context of Indonesia's emerging baby bust phenomenon and evaluating these developments through the perspectives of classical Islamic jurisprudence and *maqasid al-shariah* (Dewinta Asokawati, 2024). By integrating demographic analysis, legal policy evaluation, and Islamic legal perspectives, this study contributes to contemporary debates on family law reform, demographic sustainability, and the future of Muslim family formation in Indonesia (Darania Anisa, 2022). The findings are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, religious authorities, and family development institutions in balancing child protection objectives with long-term demographic resilience (Mohammad Isham Ghoisyafikih Jurianto, 2024).

Method

This study employed a qualitative juridical-empirical approach to examine the demographic implications of Marriage Law Reform No. 16 of 2019 and to evaluate these implications through the perspectives of classical Islamic jurisprudence. The juridical component focused on the analysis of legal norms governing the minimum marriage age in Indonesia, while the empirical component examined demographic trends related to marriage and fertility following the implementation of the law (Fikri & Zaharah, 2025).

The study utilized two categories of data sources. Primary legal sources consisted of Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974, Law No. 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to the Marriage Law, relevant Constitutional Court decisions, and official regulations related to marriage administration. Primary Islamic legal sources included classical jurisprudential texts representing the four major Sunni schools of law, namely *Al-Umm* (al-Shafi'i), *Al-Hidayah* (al-Marghinani), *Al-Mudawwanah* (Sahnun), and *Al-Mughni* (Ibn Qudamah). Secondary sources comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policy reports, and previous studies on fertility decline, marriage patterns, demographic transition, and Islamic family law (Rusyda & Roza, 2024).

Empirical data were obtained from publications issued by Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and other official government sources covering the period 2015-2023. The data included marriage registration statistics, age at first marriage, and fertility indicators relevant to understanding the emerging baby bust phenomenon in Indonesia.

Data collection was conducted through systematic document analysis and literature review. Legal documents, demographic reports, and classical fiqh texts were selected based

on their relevance to marriage regulation, family formation, fertility trends, and Islamic legal perspectives concerning marriage age and lineage preservation (*hifz al-nasl*) (Allya Putri Yuliyani, 2024).

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, demographic trends before and after the enactment of Law No. 16 of 2019 were identified to assess changes in marriage and fertility patterns. Second, legal analysis was undertaken to examine the objectives and regulatory implications of the marriage-age reform. Third, comparative jurisprudential analysis was conducted to identify similarities and differences among the Shafi'i, Hanafi, Maliki, and Hanbali schools regarding marriage age, maturity, public welfare (*maslahah*), and state authority in regulating marriage. The findings from these stages were then integrated using the framework of *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly the principle of *hifz al-nasl* (protection of lineage), to evaluate the compatibility between contemporary legal reform and demographic sustainability (Lalu Muhammad Tamimi., 2025).

To enhance analytical rigor, source triangulation was employed by comparing demographic data, legal documents, and classical Islamic legal literature. This approach enabled a comprehensive assessment of the relationship between marriage-age reform, declining marriage rates, and the broader baby bust phenomenon in Indonesia (Hanifah, Abu, 2025).

Results and Discussion

Discussion

The Emerging Baby Bust and Indonesia's Demographic Transition

Indonesia's declining fertility trend indicates the early stages of an emerging baby bust phenomenon that may reshape the country's demographic structure in the coming decades (Nur, 2022). The decline in fertility has occurred alongside reductions in marriage rates and increasing age at first marriage, suggesting a transformation in family formation patterns. From the perspective of demographic transition theory, fertility decline is commonly associated with improvements in education, urbanization, women's economic participation, and changing reproductive preferences. However, the Indonesian case demonstrates that demographic change is not merely a consequence of modernization. It also reflects shifts in social values, economic considerations, and institutional arrangements that influence decisions regarding marriage and childbearing. Consequently, the baby bust phenomenon should be understood as a multidimensional process involving interactions between demographic behavior and broader structural transformations (Febryanna, 2022).

The significance of this trend extends beyond population statistics. Sustained fertility decline may affect labor force availability, economic productivity, intergenerational support systems, and long-term demographic resilience (Lalu Muhammad Tamimi., 2025). Countries such as Japan and South Korea illustrate how prolonged low fertility can contribute to population aging and increased dependency burdens. Although Indonesia has not yet reached the critical fertility levels observed in those countries, current demographic indicators suggest the need for early policy attention. The findings imply that demographic sustainability should become an integral component of national development planning, particularly because demographic change often produces long-term effects that are difficult to reverse once low-fertility norms become entrenched within society (Fabiansyah & Adibah, 2024).

The empirical analysis of demographic data from 2015-2023 further confirms that fertility decline in Indonesia has coincided with decreasing marriage registrations and rising age at first marriage (Batrisyia et al., 2026). These patterns indicate that changes in reproductive behavior are occurring simultaneously with transformations in marriage behavior. While fertility decline cannot be reduced to a single explanatory factor, the

convergence of these indicators suggests that delayed family formation has become an increasingly important characteristic of Indonesia's demographic transition. Therefore, understanding the emerging baby bust requires an integrated assessment of demographic, social, and institutional dynamics rather than a narrow focus on fertility indicators alone (Yulizain Putra et al., 2025).

Demographic Implications of Marriage Law Reform

The implementation of Law No. 16 of 2019 represents one of the most significant reforms in Indonesia's family law framework. By raising the minimum marriage age to nineteen years for both men and women, the state sought to strengthen child protection, improve educational opportunities, and reduce the negative consequences associated with child marriage (Helmy & Salatiga, 2025). The findings suggest that following the enactment of the law, marriage registrations declined and the average age at first marriage increased (Salwa, Dona et al., 2024). These developments indicate that marriage-age reform may influence the timing of family formation. Nevertheless, attributing the emergence of a baby bust solely to legal reform would oversimplify a complex demographic phenomenon. Marriage decisions are simultaneously influenced by economic conditions, employment opportunities, educational attainment, housing affordability, and changing social expectations among younger generations (Hidayat, 2022).

A more accurate interpretation is that Marriage Law Reform functions as one component within a broader system of demographic determinants (Alya, 2025). The law may contribute to delayed marriage, but its demographic effects are amplified by structural conditions that already encourage postponement of family formation. This finding is consistent with contemporary demographic research emphasizing that fertility outcomes emerge from interactions between institutional regulations and socio-economic realities. Therefore, the demographic implications of the reform should be evaluated within a wider policy context. Efforts to address fertility decline cannot rely solely on legal adjustments but must also consider policies that reduce economic barriers to marriage and support the transition of young adults into stable family life (Rismana et al., 2024).

The juridical analysis undertaken in this study demonstrates that the primary objective of Law No. 16 of 2019 is the protection of children and the promotion of family welfare rather than demographic engineering (Fidya Arie Pratama, 2025). However, legal norms often generate indirect social consequences beyond their original objectives. The decline in marriage registrations observed after the enactment of the law suggests that regulatory reform may influence individual decision-making regarding marriage timing. Consequently, the demographic implications of marriage-age reform should be understood as indirect and mediated effects that interact with broader social and economic conditions. This interpretation provides a more balanced explanation than arguments that either fully blame or completely dismiss the role of legal reform in contemporary demographic change (Yudisthira & Setyonaluri, 2026).

Islamic Legal Perspectives on Marriage-Age Reform and Demographic Sustainability

From the perspective of Islamic law, marriage serves not only as a legal contract but also as a social institution that contributes to the preservation of lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), family stability, and societal continuity (James M. Raymo, 2020). Analysis of classical jurisprudential texts demonstrates that the four Sunni schools of law did not establish a single fixed numerical age for marriage. Instead, they emphasized maturity, capability, welfare, and readiness to assume marital responsibilities. This finding suggests that Islamic jurisprudence provides a flexible framework capable of accommodating legal regulations designed to protect individuals from potential harm. Consequently, the establishment of a

minimum marriage age can be interpreted as a legitimate form of state intervention aimed at achieving public welfare (*maslahah*) and protecting vulnerable groups (Nisa et al., 2026).

At the same time, Islamic legal thought places considerable emphasis on maintaining conditions that facilitate family formation and generational continuity. The principle of *hifz al-nasl* requires not only the protection of children but also the preservation of a social environment that supports sustainable reproduction and family development. Therefore, the challenge is not whether Marriage Law Reform is compatible with Islamic law, but how its implementation can be balanced with broader demographic objectives. The findings indicate that child protection and demographic sustainability should be viewed as complementary rather than competing goals. Strengthening premarital education, expanding economic support for young families, and fostering collaboration between state institutions and religious authorities may provide a more balanced policy approach that aligns with both the objectives of contemporary legal reform and the broader principles of Islamic jurisprudence (Yuliani Catur Rini dan Ari Tri Wibowo, 2022).

The comparative analysis of *Al-Umm*, *Al-Hidayah*, *Al-Mudawwanah*, and *Al-Mughni* reveals that classical Muslim jurists consistently prioritized the welfare of individuals and families when discussing marriage regulations. Although the four schools differed in their legal reasoning concerning maturity and guardianship, all recognized the importance of preventing harm and promoting social benefit. This finding supports the argument that contemporary marriage-age regulation is not inherently inconsistent with Islamic legal principles. Nevertheless, Islamic jurisprudence also emphasizes the importance of preserving family continuity and societal well-being. Therefore, policies addressing demographic decline should not focus solely on legal restrictions but should also strengthen the social, educational, and economic foundations necessary for sustainable family formation. Such an approach reflects a balanced application of *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly the integration of *maslahah* and *hifz al-nasl* within contemporary demographic policy (Salwa, Dona et al., 2024).

Results

Demographic Trends and the Emergence of Indonesia's Baby Bust

The analysis of demographic data for the period 2015-2023 indicates a declining trend in both marriage and fertility rates, suggesting the emergence of a baby bust phenomenon in Indonesia. Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) show that the national fertility rate has continued to decline and is approaching the population replacement level (Kusumaaningrum et al., 2025). At the same time, the average age at first marriage has increased, accompanied by delays in family formation among younger generations. These findings suggest that demographic changes are no longer limited to reproductive behavior alone but also reflect broader social transformations influencing individuals' decisions regarding marriage and childbearing (Domianus Fieldo et al., 2025).

The decline in marriage rates identified in this study indicates a slowdown in family formation compared to previous periods. These findings are consistent with demographic transition theory, which argues that modernization, urbanization, educational advancement, and changing life aspirations contribute to fertility decline. In the Indonesian context, increasing female educational attainment, evolving career aspirations, and rising living costs have become significant factors encouraging delayed marriage and childbirth. Therefore, the baby bust phenomenon should not be understood merely as a reduction in birth rates but rather as a broader transformation in family structures and reproductive behavior.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the baby bust phenomenon may affect Indonesia's long-term demographic sustainability. If fertility decline continues over an extended period, Indonesia may face challenges related to population aging, a shrinking

productive-age population, and a rising dependency ratio. Such conditions may weaken the benefits of the demographic dividend that has long been considered a strategic asset for national development. Consequently, the baby bust phenomenon should be viewed as a strategic issue that extends beyond population dynamics and encompasses broader economic and social development concerns.

Marriage Law Reform and Its Implications for Marriage and Fertility Patterns

The findings indicate that the enactment of Law No. 16 of 2019 has introduced significant changes to marriage patterns in Indonesia (Tirta & Arifin, 2025). The increase in the minimum legal marriage age to 19 years for both men and women was designed to strengthen child protection, prevent child marriage, and improve family well-being. Empirical analysis reveals that following the implementation of the law, marriage registrations declined by approximately 15 percent compared to the pre-reform period. These findings suggest that legal reform has influenced the timing and patterns of marriage within Indonesian society (Aura et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, the study does not support the view that Law No. 16 of 2019 is the sole cause of the emerging baby bust phenomenon. The decline in marriage and fertility rates results from the interaction between legal regulation and a range of socio-economic factors. Rising marriage costs, economic uncertainty, labor market competition, and the tendency of younger generations to prioritize educational attainment have also contributed to the postponement of marriage. In other words, legal reform constitutes one of several factors influencing demographic behavior, while its effects are reinforced by broader social transformations that have developed over time.

These findings indicate that the demographic implications of marriage law reform operate primarily through indirect effects. Regulations concerning the minimum marriage age influence the timing of entry into family life, which may subsequently affect fertility outcomes in the short term. However, the effectiveness of public policy depends not only on legal norms but also on the state's capacity to create social and economic conditions that support family formation. Therefore, efforts to address fertility decline should not rely exclusively on legal reforms but should also include policies aimed at improving economic stability for young families and expanding access to social support systems.

Islamic Legal Perspectives on Marriage-Age Reform and Demographic Sustainability

The analysis of classical Islamic legal literature demonstrates that the issue of marriage age has long been discussed by scholars of the major Sunni schools of law (Dewinta Asokawati, 2024). Examination of *Al-Umm*, *Al-Hidayah*, *Al-Mudawwanah*, and *Al-Mughni* reveals that classical jurists did not establish a single fixed numerical age for marriage. Instead, they emphasized maturity (*bulugh*), legal competence (*rushd*), public welfare (*maslahah*), and the capacity to fulfill marital rights and responsibilities. These findings indicate that Islamic law possesses a flexible character that enables it to respond to changing social conditions and societal needs across different historical contexts (Yulizain Putra., 2025).

From the perspective of *maqasid al-shariah*, raising the minimum marriage age can be understood as an effort to achieve public welfare and prevent potential harm. Establishing a minimum marriage age seeks to protect children from reproductive health risks, educational discontinuation, and other social consequences often associated with child marriage (Fidya Arie Pratama, 2025). Within this framework, state intervention is considered legitimate because it aligns with the objectives of preserving life (*hifz al-nafs*), protecting intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), and promoting family welfare. Accordingly, marriage law reform is fundamentally compatible with the core principles and objectives of Islamic law (James M. Raymo, 2020).

However, the analysis also demonstrates that child protection should be balanced with the objective of preserving lineage (*hifz al-nasl*). Islamic law not only seeks to prevent harm but also encourages the creation of conditions that support healthy and sustainable family formation. In this regard, the emerging baby bust phenomenon represents a policy challenge that requires a comprehensive response. Strengthening premarital education, providing economic support for young families, and enhancing collaboration between governmental institutions and religious authorities are essential measures for maintaining a balance between child protection, public welfare, and Indonesia's long-term demographic sustainability.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the emerging *baby bust* phenomenon in Indonesia is characterized by declining fertility rates, decreasing marriage registrations, and increasing age at first marriage during the 2015-2023 period. These findings indicate a transformation in family formation patterns influenced by a combination of social, economic, cultural, and institutional factors. In this context, Law No. 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to the Marriage Law should not be regarded as the primary cause of the *baby bust*. Rather, it represents one institutional factor interacting with broader dynamics such as higher educational attainment, changing career aspirations, urbanization, and rising living costs. Therefore, the relationship between marriage-age reform and fertility decline is indirect and should be understood within the broader framework of Indonesia's ongoing demographic transition.

From the perspective of Islamic law, the reform of the minimum marriage age is broadly consistent with the objectives of *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly the protection of children and the promotion of public welfare (*maslahah*). The analysis of classical jurisprudential literature reveals that Muslim jurists emphasized maturity, readiness, and responsibility in marriage rather than establishing a fixed numerical age. At the same time, Islamic law recognizes the preservation of lineage (*hifz al-nasl*) as a fundamental objective that must be safeguarded. Consequently, the *baby bust* phenomenon and marriage law reform should be viewed as interconnected but not causally deterministic issues. The principal reflection arising from this study is that Indonesia's demographic challenges cannot be addressed through legal regulation alone. Instead, a balanced approach is required, one that simultaneously promotes child protection, strengthens family institutions, and ensures long-term demographic sustainability within the framework of national development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the government should adopt a more comprehensive family and population policy that extends beyond regulating the minimum marriage age and addresses the broader factors influencing family formation among young adults. Such policies may include expanding access to decent employment opportunities, providing housing assistance for young couples, strengthening premarital education programs, and enhancing social protection schemes for young families. These measures are essential for reducing the economic and social barriers that contribute to delayed marriage and childbearing while maintaining the child protection objectives underlying marriage law reform.

For future research, scholars should further investigate the relationship between marriage law reform and the emerging *baby bust* phenomenon using longitudinal quantitative approaches or mixed-methods designs involving broader demographic datasets and interviews with individuals of reproductive age. Comparative studies between Indonesia and other Muslim-majority countries experiencing fertility decline

would also provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of family policies and the relevance of *maqasid al-shariah* principles in addressing contemporary demographic challenges. Such research would contribute to a deeper understanding of the interaction between legal reform, demographic change, and Islamic legal thought in the context of sustainable population development.

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