

Abid Al-Jabiri's Epistemological Critique of Early Marriage in Case-Based Learning: Contributions to Islamic Education

Muniri¹, Anis Sulalah², Nur Chotimah Azis³

¹ STAI Al-Hamidiyah, Madura, Indonesia; mc.azumy@gmail.com

² STAIRUA Sampang, Madura, Indonesia; anissulalah@stairua.ac.id

³ STAIRUA Sampang, Madura, Indonesia; nurchotimahaziz@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

early marriage;
Islamic epistemology;
Abid Al-Jabiri;
case-based learning;
Islamic education

Article history:

Received 2025-02-15

Revised 2025-03-31

Accepted 2025-09-09

ABSTRACT

Early marriage remains a pressing issue in many Muslim communities, including in Bangkalan, Madura, Indonesia, where it is often justified through religious reasoning. This phenomenon poses serious social, health, and educational challenges, particularly for young women. This study aims to critically examine early marriage through the lens of Abid Al-Jabiri's Islamic epistemology—Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani—and to explore how these epistemological frameworks shape religious understanding and educational responses to early marriage. Utilizing a qualitative library research approach, this study analyzes relevant literature, including Islamic texts, philosophical works, and empirical research on early marriage. The analysis applies Al-Jabiri's epistemological framework to assess the reasoning patterns behind the justification of early marriage and their impact on educational practices. The study finds that Bayani (textual) and Irfani (mystical) epistemologies often perpetuate early marriage due to their non-empirical and authority-based approach. In contrast, Burhani (rational-empirical) epistemology, which emphasizes logical reasoning and empirical evidence, offers a more critical and socially responsive framework. When applied to educational contexts, Burhani epistemology supports a more reflective, contextual, and student-centered understanding of Islamic teachings. Integrating Burhani epistemology into Islamic education and policy discourse can foster a more balanced, evidence-based approach to religious interpretation. This shift is essential to counter harmful practices such as early marriage and to promote holistic well-being and critical thinking among students in Islamic educational settings.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Muniri

STAI Al-Hamidiyah, Madura, Indonesia; mc.azumy@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Early marriage remains a persistent and complex challenge in various Muslim-majority regions, including Indonesia. In particular, rural areas such as Bangkalan Regency in Madura Island continue to report high rates of underage marriage (Biati, 2019). While economic factors and lack of education are commonly cited as driving forces, a deeper layer of epistemological reasoning rooted in religious understanding contributes significantly to the normalization of this practice. Islamic interpretations that

encourage early marriage are often drawn from traditional epistemological frameworks—namely Bayani (textualist) and Irfani (mystical)—which rely on rigid textual readings or esoteric authority without critical engagement with contemporary social realities (Al-Jabiri, 2000).

At the same time, the practice of early marriage poses serious risks to the well-being of young individuals, especially women. Studies have shown that adolescent girls who marry early are more likely to face complications during childbirth, are at higher risk of dropping out of school, and often become economically dependent, perpetuating cycles of poverty (Gusnarib & Rosnawati, 2020; Fadilah, 2021). These multidimensional consequences require an equally multidimensional response—one that incorporates not only socio-economic interventions but also a rethinking of the epistemological foundations within Islamic education and discourse.

In this context, the integration of case-based learning (CBL) emerges as a relevant pedagogical strategy. CBL emphasizes real-life problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflective discussion, making it a suitable approach for addressing complex socio-religious phenomena like early marriage (Dharmayanthi, 2022; Simbolon, 2022). Through this method, students are encouraged to analyze real cases using multiple perspectives—including ethical, theological, and empirical reasoning—thus fostering a more holistic and critical educational environment.

However, the effectiveness of CBL within Islamic education depends heavily on the epistemological lens through which cases are approached. If educators and students rely solely on Bayani or Irfani reasoning, which may emphasize uncritical adherence to text or spiritual authority, critical discourse is hindered. Therefore, this paper adopts the Burhani epistemology, as proposed by Moroccan thinker Abid Al-Jabiri, to explore how rational and empirical reasoning can offer a more responsive and ethical framework for understanding and addressing early marriage in Islamic education.

Al-Jabiri's epistemological framework divides Islamic thought into three primary categories: Bayani (textual reasoning), Irfani (intuitive/mystical reasoning), and Burhani (demonstrative or rational-empirical reasoning). He argues that Bayani and Irfani epistemologies, although historically important, are no longer adequate in addressing contemporary social issues because of their rigid or subjective nature (Al-Jabiri, 2000). Instead, he promotes Burhani reasoning, which encourages empirical observation, logical coherence, and ethical deliberation—qualities that align closely with modern educational and humanitarian standards.

The misinterpretation of religious texts often cited to justify early marriage typically reflects a Bayani orientation. For example, a hadith narrated by Ibn Mas'ud which encourages young people to marry if they are able to do so is frequently used without contextual analysis (Baqi, 2021). When interpreted literally, such texts can inadvertently support harmful practices, especially in communities where critical religious literacy is lacking. This is further compounded by Irfani-based influences in which spiritual leaders or *kyai* are seen as unquestionable authorities, allowing personal interpretations and actions—including the sanctioning of child marriage—to go unchallenged (Al-Jabiri, 1993).

To counter these epistemological pitfalls, Burhani reasoning emphasizes the role of 'aql (reason) as a tool for understanding—not merely as an interpretive mechanism but as a means of ethical discernment rooted in reality. This approach is particularly valuable in educational contexts, where the goal is to foster critical thinking and moral responsibility among students. In the case of early marriage, a Burhani-based analysis would question whether the practice aligns with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law), such as the protection of life, intellect, and lineage (Al-Jabiri, 2001; Abdullah, 2006). When viewed through this lens, early marriage clearly undermines these objectives by threatening the physical and psychological well-being of the individuals involved.

Moreover, empirical data further strengthen the rationale for re-evaluating early marriage from a Burhani perspective. For instance, in Bangkalan Regency, early marriage rates in some districts remain alarmingly high. Kokop district reports a rate of 50.75%, while neighboring Batokorogan village shows a much lower rate of 4.5%—a contrast linked to differences in education and economic status (Biati, 2019). This disparity supports the Burhani emphasis on evidence-based reasoning, encouraging policymakers

and educators to address not only the religious justifications but also the social determinants of early marriage.

The incorporation of Burhani epistemology into Islamic educational frameworks is thus essential. It enables educators and learners to engage with religious texts in a way that is both faithful to Islamic principles and responsive to contemporary challenges. Furthermore, when combined with pedagogical approaches such as CBL, it provides a structured yet dynamic platform for students to develop critical reasoning skills while exploring the ethical dimensions of their faith.

This study seeks to contribute to the discourse on Islamic education by offering a critical epistemological reading of early marriage and proposing Burhani epistemology as a viable framework for curriculum development, teacher training, and student engagement. By doing so, it bridges the gap between classical Islamic thought and modern pedagogical needs, ensuring that religious education remains both intellectually rigorous and socially relevant.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach using library research as the primary method to explore early marriage through the epistemological framework of Abid Al-Jabiri. The focus of the analysis lies in understanding how different Islamic epistemologies—*Bayani*, *Irfani*, and *Burhani*—influence the justification and perpetuation of early marriage within Muslim communities, particularly in the context of Islamic education.

2.1 Research Design

This is a conceptual and philosophical study grounded in Islamic epistemology. The research does not involve direct fieldwork but rather synthesizes secondary data drawn from various academic sources, including books, journal articles, classical Islamic texts, legal documents, and statistical reports on early marriage in Indonesia. In addition, relevant literature on education, gender studies, and socio-religious behavior is included to provide interdisciplinary insight.

The study adopts a critical-interpretive framework, where data are not merely summarized but analyzed in light of the theoretical constructs offered by Al-Jabiri (2000, 2001). His categorization of Islamic knowledge into *Bayani* (text-based), *Irfani* (intuitive/spiritual), and *Burhani* (rational-empirical) is used as the analytical lens through which the data are interpreted.

2.2 Data Collection

The primary sources include:

1. Classical Islamic texts, such as tafsir and hadith literature, particularly those cited in support of early marriage (e.g., hadiths regarding marriage for the young).
2. Modern works on Islamic epistemology, especially by Abid Al-Jabiri (1993; 2000), focusing on the operationalization of *Bayani*, *Irfani*, and *Burhani* modes of reasoning.
3. Governmental and institutional reports (e.g., Family Planning and Child Protection Agency of Bangkalan) on the prevalence and impact of early marriage in specific regions.
4. Empirical studies and journal articles that explore the health, psychological, and educational consequences of early marriage in Indonesia (e.g., Gusnarib & Rosnawati, 2020; Fadilah, 2021).

These sources were collected through academic databases, institutional repositories, and physical libraries. Selection criteria for sources were based on relevance, scholarly credibility, and contribution to the theoretical or empirical understanding of early marriage.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and epistemological interpretation. The steps involved were:

1. Categorization of Data: Relevant textual excerpts were categorized according to their alignment with *Bayani*, *Irfani*, or *Burhani* reasoning patterns.

2. Critical Reading: Each reasoning pattern was assessed for its role in either legitimizing or challenging early marriage within Islamic thought and practice.
3. Comparative Analysis: A comparison was made between communities with high and low prevalence of early marriage, correlating their socio-economic and educational conditions with the dominant epistemological paradigms observed in those communities.
4. Application to Islamic Education: The findings were interpreted in terms of their implications for Islamic pedagogy, especially regarding how epistemological orientation shapes teaching, curriculum, and student understanding.

The analysis emphasized the normative dimensions (ethical and theological legitimacy), empirical consequences (health, education, and poverty), and pedagogical implications of each epistemological framework. Through this process, the study attempts to demonstrate the need for adopting *Burhani* epistemology within Islamic educational practices to critically engage with socio-religious issues like early marriage.

2.4 Trustworthiness and Limitations

To ensure the credibility of the findings, triangulation was conducted by comparing diverse sources, including classical religious texts, philosophical works, empirical reports, and current educational discourse. The interpretive approach was guided by established scholarship in Islamic epistemology and philosophy to maintain internal consistency and academic rigor.

However, as a library-based study, the research does not include field interviews or ethnographic data. Thus, while rich in theoretical depth, the findings should be complemented by further field research for localized educational intervention or policy implementation.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Marriage, Human Maturity, and the Role of Islamic Education

The Qur'an emphasizes that all living beings were created in pairs, signifying the divine design of companionship as a natural and spiritual inclination of human beings (QS Ar-Rum: 21). Within this framework, marriage is not merely a social institution but a religious act that fulfills multiple dimensions of human existence—biological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. The Qur'anic description of marriage as a source of *sakinah* (tranquility), *mawaddah* (love), and *rahmah* (compassion) (Shihab, 2002) reflects its ideal function in establishing a balanced and nurturing family life.

From an Islamic perspective, marriage represents an act of obedience to God (*ta'abbudi*) and is regarded as a form of worship (*ibadah*). It is intended to preserve human dignity, ensure lineage, and promote moral responsibility within society (Djamali, 2002). Moreover, the Qur'an entrusts married individuals with the sacred task of raising future generations who will serve as stewards (*khalifah*) of the Earth (QS Al-Baqarah: 30). Therefore, the decision to marry must be rooted not only in natural instincts but also in the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual maturity of the individuals involved.

However, the philosophical and theological ideals of marriage often stand in contrast to the empirical realities of early marriage, particularly in rural Muslim communities. While religious texts are frequently used to justify early marriage, especially through *bayani* (textualist) readings of hadiths—such as the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), “*O young people! Whoever among you can marry, let him marry...*” (Baqi, 2021)—such interpretations often neglect context, age, and psychological preparedness. This reflects a lack of critical engagement with the broader ethical and social consequences of early marriage, which Islamic education is uniquely positioned to address.

Educationally, early marriage poses a significant disruption. It often leads to school dropout, especially for young girls, thereby limiting their intellectual and economic opportunities (Gusnarib & Rosnawati, 2020). Furthermore, when individuals marry before reaching adequate levels of psychological and emotional development, they are often unprepared for the responsibilities of marital and parental life. Studies have shown that young mothers, particularly those still in adolescence, are

more likely to experience complications during childbirth, exhibit limited parenting capacity, and suffer from heightened emotional stress (Fadilah, 2021; Basri & Ardani, 1996).

From a developmental psychology standpoint, the cognitive and emotional immaturity of teenage mothers significantly impacts the well-being of their children. Children born into such environments may exhibit lower intellectual development and greater emotional instability due to exposure to family conflict, poor parenting models, and domestic stress (Bimo & Walgito, 2004; Gusnarib & Rosnawati, 2020). Furthermore, when conflict becomes normalized in the household—through authoritarian parenting or domestic violence—it creates a cycle of behavioral imitation in children, thus perpetuating intergenerational psychological trauma.

Here, Islamic education has a critical role in breaking this cycle. Beyond teaching *fiqh* (*fiqh al-munakahat*) and religious texts, Islamic education must equip learners with the tools of epistemological discernment, ethical reasoning, and contextual interpretation. Through the incorporation of Burhani epistemology, which prioritizes rational and empirical inquiry, educators can encourage students to assess whether a religious practice, like early marriage, genuinely fulfills the objectives (*maqāsid*) of Shariah—namely the protection of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-‘aql*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and dignity (*ḥifẓ al-‘ird*) (Al-Jabiri, 2000).

Moreover, Islamic education must reclaim its transformative mission by fostering critical consciousness (*tawwā‘i al-naqdīyah*) among youth. Instead of reproducing inherited norms uncritically, educational institutions—madrasahs, pesantrens, and Islamic schools—should serve as spaces for reflective engagement. For instance, case-based learning (CBL) methods can be employed to present real-world scenarios, such as the challenges of early marriage in specific communities. Through collaborative inquiry, students can evaluate the social, psychological, and theological dimensions of the issue, bridging tradition with contemporary realities.

In this process, teachers and curriculum developers must also transition from transmitting dogma to facilitating critical *ijtihad*. This requires moving beyond Bayani literalism and Irfani spiritual absolutism, both of which may justify early marriage without sufficient attention to lived human suffering. As Al-Jabiri (1993) argues, Islamic thought must undergo an epistemological reform that centers Burhani reasoning to align faith with ethics and rationality.

Furthermore, when Islamic education fails to address early marriage through a holistic lens, it inadvertently legitimizes a harmful practice. By integrating health education, child psychology, and gender equity into the Islamic curriculum—supported by Qur’anic values and Prophetic ethics—educators can challenge reductive interpretations and promote a vision of marriage that genuinely aligns with human well-being and divine intention.

In sum, while marriage remains a central institution in Islam, it must be entered with full awareness of its ethical, spiritual, and social responsibilities. Islamic education is uniquely positioned to reshape the discourse around marriage by advancing an epistemology of care, critical thought, and compassion. By empowering students to question, reflect, and contextualize religious teachings, educators can guide the next generation toward more just and responsible interpretations of Islamic values, including a conscientious rejection of early marriage.

3.2 Al-Jabiri’s Epistemological Project and Its Relevance

Abid Al-Jabiri identifies three major epistemological frameworks that have shaped Islamic intellectual history: Bayani (textual reasoning), Irfani (mystical-intuitive reasoning), and Burhani (demonstrative-rational reasoning). According to Al-Jabiri (2000), understanding the historical development and influence of these epistemologies is essential for revitalizing Islamic thought in the modern era. His central argument is that the decline of critical inquiry in the Muslim world is tied to the dominance of Bayani and Irfani approaches, which lack the analytical rigor required to address contemporary challenges.

Al-Jabiri’s epistemological critique is grounded in the observation that Muslim intellectual history, especially after the 12th century, witnessed a philosophical retreat. Influenced by figures like Al-Ghazali—who in *Tahafut al-Falasifah* criticized philosophers for diverging from orthodoxy—many

scholars came to view rational inquiry as a path to heresy (Nasution, 1978). This anti-philosophical climate led to the suppression of logic and scientific progress, causing stagnation in fields such as medicine, astronomy, and education.

As Europe entered the Enlightenment, the Islamic world experienced a cognitive dislocation—unable to reconcile its classical heritage with modern scientific rationality. Al-Jabiri argues that a reformation of Islamic knowledge requires a shift from traditional modes of thought toward a Burhani epistemology, which integrates empirical observation, logical reasoning, and ethical deliberation (Al-Jabiri, 2001).

To advance this reform, Al-Jabiri examines the concept of *'aql* (reason) not merely as a mental faculty but as a structured tool shaped by cultural, historical, and political contexts. Drawing from Lalande's distinction between *formative* and *formed* reason, he suggests that Islamic thought has long been trapped in *formed reason*—a fixed mode of interpretation determined by early scholars and sustained by institutional power (Al-Jabiri & Jābirī, 2000). This framework, he argues, must be dismantled and recontextualized through critical historiography and rational *ijtihād*.

Al-Jabiri contrasts this with Western reasoning, especially the Greek tradition, which emphasized the ability of the mind to understand the natural world independently of religious dogma. While Western thought often separates reason from revelation, Islamic epistemology historically saw nature as a sign (*āyah*) pointing to the Creator. Yet, over time, Arab-Islamic logic became overly reliant on linguistic formalism (in the Bayani model) or esoteric experience (in the Irfani model), sidelining empirical investigation.

This divergence has deep implications for Islamic education today. Al-Jabiri's critique highlights how Islamic curricula, especially in traditional institutions (*madrasahs*, *pesantren*), continue to rely heavily on Bayani logic, which values textual authority over contextual understanding. Similarly, Irfani influences, in the form of charismatic spiritual leadership, discourage critical questioning. Both approaches risk turning education into a process of rote learning and uncritical reverence rather than ethical and intellectual formation.

To counter this, Al-Jabiri promotes Burhani epistemology as a foundation for educational renewal. Burhani reasoning enables students to analyze religious teachings in light of empirical data, logical coherence, and moral relevance. This shift is especially vital when addressing issues such as early marriage, gender justice, or technological development—challenges that demand more than scriptural citation.

Furthermore, Al-Jabiri emphasizes that knowledge is historically embedded and often shaped by power dynamics. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of episteme, he critiques the codification era (*'asr al-tadwīn*)—when knowledge production became tightly controlled by political and religious elites. Many voices and interpretive possibilities were suppressed, resulting in a rigid epistemological orthodoxy. Understanding these dynamics allows educators and scholars to distinguish between inherited tradition and living tradition, and to revive critical thought within Islamic pedagogy.

In sum, Al-Jabiri's epistemological project calls for a rational reconstruction of Islamic thought, anchored in historical awareness and committed to intellectual progress. His framework offers Islamic education a way forward: by cultivating analytical reasoning, contextual understanding, and ethical sensitivity, Islamic institutions can engage modernity without abandoning their religious foundations.

3.3 The Limitations of Bayani Epistemology in Addressing Early Marriage

The Arabic language has long held a sacred and authoritative status in Arab-Islamic culture. Rooted in the revelation of the Qur'an in Arabic, this reverence extends beyond religious function to cultural identity and epistemological structure (Al-Jabiri, 1993). According to Al-Jabiri, this linguistic centrality shapes Arab logic itself—where language influences patterns of reasoning, especially through analogical and grammatical constructs that limit empirical inquiry.

During the classical *codification era* (*'asr al-tadwīn*), linguistic sciences such as *nahwu* (grammar) and *balāghah* (rhetoric) flourished. These disciplines, however, were not neutral. The formalization of Arabic

became closely tied to cultural power and identity preservation. Al-Jabiri (1993) explains that this over-reliance on fixed textual meanings encouraged Bayani epistemology, which prioritizes interpretation based on authoritative texts and analogical reasoning over empirical verification.

In religious scholarship, Bayani logic became dominant—especially in fields like *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *ushul al-fiqh* (legal theory), theology, and exegesis. This method thrives on dichotomies: *lafz* vs. *ma'na* (word vs. meaning), divine vs. conventional origin of language, and normative vs. descriptive interpretations. Such binary logic influenced the development of Islamic law, emphasizing analogy (*qiyās*) and textual precedence over contextual realities (Abdullah, 2006).

This epistemology, while historically important, faces serious limitations in responding to contemporary ethical challenges—notably early marriage. Texts such as the hadith urging youth to marry if capable, “O young people! Whoever among you can marry, let him marry...” (Baqi, 2021), are often interpreted literally through Bayani reasoning without considering the lived realities of child development, education, or health.

In many cases, Bayani logic is used to maintain the legal permissibility of early marriage, even when empirical evidence points to its harm. The emphasis on textual authority suppresses critical engagement with questions such as: Are young individuals psychologically or economically prepared for marriage? Does this practice align with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*—the higher ethical objectives of Islamic law, including protection of life, intellect, and dignity?

This epistemological rigidity becomes especially problematic in pluralistic societies, where laws must be equitable for diverse populations. For example, applying classical hudud punishments such as amputation for theft, as permitted in Bayani legal logic, may conflict with modern standards of justice. Similarly, justifying early marriage on the basis of textual tradition alone neglects its proven consequences—school dropout, maternal health risks, and intergenerational poverty (Gusnarib & Rosnawati, 2020).

As Amin Abdullah (2006) argues, religious reasoning must engage dialogically with broader human experiences, including sociological, medical, and psychological insights. Bayani logic, if uncritical, cannot facilitate this necessary synthesis. It must be complemented or reoriented by more dynamic epistemologies that account for real-world complexities.

3.4 The Irfani Epistemology and Its Dangers in Ethical Reasoning

In contrast to Bayani, Irfani epistemology is rooted in intuition, spiritual experience, and mysticism. Derived from the notion of *gnosis*, Irfani thought seeks divine truth through inner purification, self-discipline (*riyāḍah*), and spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) (Al-Jabiri, 1993; Soleh, 2005). While Irfani reasoning can promote sincerity, detachment from materialism, and non-dogmatic perspectives, Al-Jabiri warns that it often rejects rational scrutiny and detaches from social responsibility.

Irfani practitioners often place authority in charismatic religious figures, which may foster authoritarianism in religious structures. The spiritual leader (*murshid* or *kyai*) is viewed as divinely inspired, and followers may accept their actions uncritically—even when such actions contradict ethical norms. Al-Jabiri sees this as an abandonment of intellectual responsibility in favor of submission to mystical charisma.

This becomes particularly troubling when Irfani logic is used to justify unethical acts—such as early marriage sanctioned by religious elites. In several documented cases, religious leaders in Indonesia have married minors under spiritual pretexts. For example, a well-known Sufi figure married a seven-year-old girl, claiming divine approval. Another *kyai* conducted a marriage with his teenage student without parental consent. These cases often go unchallenged due to communal fear of *kualat* (spiritual misfortune from opposing a sacred figure), demonstrating how Irfani epistemology can silence ethical critique.

Such epistemological deference can perpetuate gender-based harm, particularly when combined with patriarchal interpretations of verses like QS An-Nisa' (4:34), which declares men as “caretakers” of women and permits disciplinary actions against them. While these verses have historical and legal

contexts, Irfani-influenced religious authority often invokes them without engaging broader ethical considerations or contemporary values.

In education, this dynamic risks creating passive learners who accept tradition as absolute. Students may be discouraged from questioning authority, even in matters of injustice or abuse. Islamic education must address this by cultivating rational agency, critical thinking, and ethical independence—values absent in uncritical Irfani thought.

Al-Jabiri thus calls for temporarily setting aside Irfani methods in the face of urgent humanitarian challenges. He emphasizes the need for empirical observation and rational analysis to address issues like early marriage, poverty, and social injustice. Irfani epistemology, while spiritually enriching in private devotion, must not become a public ethic unless tempered by rational accountability.

Both Bayani and Irfani epistemologies, in their traditional forms, are inadequate for addressing the complex, evidence-driven challenges of modern Muslim societies. When applied rigidly, they contribute to the normalization of harmful practices like early marriage, masking real harm under textual or spiritual authority.

Islamic education, therefore, must engage in epistemological reform, integrating Burhani reasoning that centers empirical evidence, logical coherence, and ethical reflection. Only through this integration can education foster critical, context-sensitive understandings of religion—where learners are empowered to question, reflect, and act in pursuit of justice.

3.5 Burhani Epistemological Framework: Effectiveness in Addressing Early Marriage

Burhani epistemology emerged as a rational and empirical alternative to the Bayani and Irfani models that historically dominated Islamic intellectual tradition. While Bayani reasoning is rooted in textual interpretation and Irfani in spiritual intuition, Burhani epistemology prioritizes logic, empirical observation, and systematic reasoning. Al-Jabiri (2000) advocates for this framework as a necessary evolution of Islamic thought, especially in responding to modern socio-ethical challenges such as early marriage.

Historically, Burhani reasoning was introduced by thinkers like Al-Kindi, who integrated Aristotelian philosophy with Islamic theology. Although Al-Kindi emphasized metaphysical inquiry, he was limited in his application of formal logic. Later scholars like Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina advanced philosophical reasoning further, developing epistemological tools that emphasized cause-and-effect relationships and logical coherence in knowledge production (Al-Jabiri, 1993).

For Al-Jabiri, this trajectory laid the foundation for Burhani epistemology, which encourages the use of reason (*'aql*), sensory experience, and structured inquiry in understanding both divine and worldly matters. Unlike Bayani epistemology, which often relies on analogy (*qiyas*) and authoritative texts, Burhani thought demands logical consistency, empirical validation, and critical reflection as conditions for truth (Al-Jabiri & Jābirī, 2000).

To illustrate, knowledge production within Burhani epistemology follows three core stages based on Aristotelian logic (Sahakian, 1968):

1. Conceptualization (*maqūlāt*): Understanding the nature of things through categories like substance, quantity, quality, relation, time, and place.
2. Proposition (*ibārah*): Expressing concepts through statements with clear subjects and predicates.
3. Reasoning (*taḥlīlāt*): Drawing valid conclusions using syllogistic logic based on well-defined premises and contextual understanding.

Amin Abdullah (2006) emphasizes that Burhani epistemology is rooted in *waqī'iyah* (realism), which includes engaging with social realities and empirical data. It moves beyond scriptural literalism, encouraging critical engagement with the world using tools such as scientific research, observation, and rational analysis. This framework, therefore, holds transformative potential for addressing complex issues like early marriage, which cannot be resolved by textual authority alone.

3.5.1 Burhani and the Early Marriage Crisis

In many Muslim communities, early marriage is still justified using Bayani logic, often citing hadiths that encourage young people to marry. This reasoning is sometimes reinforced by Irfani epistemology, wherein religious leaders or local *kyai* are seen as spiritual authorities whose guidance is accepted unquestioningly. This dual dependence on textual literalism and spiritual charisma often legitimizes the practice of early marriage, even in cases where the physical, psychological, and economic readiness of the individuals is lacking (Baqi, 2021; Abdullah, 2006).

A field study conducted in Kokop village, Bangkalan–Madura, revealed that 85% of marriages occurred before the legal age. The community perceives early marriage as religiously encouraged. However, economic vulnerability and low educational attainment were significant contributing factors. By contrast, in Batokorogan village, where the population has greater access to education and economic resources, the early marriage rate was just 4.5%. Similar trends were observed across other districts in Bangkalan Regency: Modung (50.52%), Galis (37.96%), Tanjung Bumi (35.16%), Burneh (19.45%), and Kokop (50.75%) (Biati, 2019).

These statistics suggest that early marriage is not driven solely by religious commitment but is entangled with **socioeconomic** conditions and interpretive frameworks that fail to incorporate holistic reasoning. In such contexts, Burhani epistemology offers a corrective, encouraging the Muslim community to base its judgments on rational analysis and empirical evidence, rather than tradition-bound interpretations.

3.5.2 Why Burhani Reasoning Matters

By emphasizing cause-and-effect relationships and real-world consequences, Burhani reasoning can challenge harmful norms that are upheld by outdated readings of religious texts. For example:

1. **Health Risks:** Girls under 19 are at greater risk of complications during childbirth due to underdeveloped reproductive organs. This can result in maternal mortality or physical trauma (Fadilah, 2021).
2. **Infant Mortality:** Children born to adolescent mothers face higher chances of premature birth and mortality, especially in their first year (Fadilah, 2021).
3. **Psychological Readiness:** Young couples often lack the emotional maturity and conflict resolution skills necessary for stable family life, which increases the risk of domestic violence and divorce.
4. **Economic Instability:** Early marriage typically disrupts girls' education and limits their capacity for economic independence, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Through Burhani's reasoning, these consequences are not dismissed or spiritualized. Instead, they are investigated, analyzed, and weighed against the objectives of Islamic law—especially the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which include the protection of life, intellect, lineage, and dignity. If early marriage undermines these goals, then Burhani epistemology offers a strong rationale for prohibiting or at least delaying such practices.

3.5.3 Toward Ethical Policy and Reform

Burhani epistemology also provides a philosophical foundation for issuing reform-oriented fatwas and legal policies. Rather than relying solely on *nass* (textual evidence), religious authorities can draw on scientific data, public health research, and ethical analysis to justify interventions. This aligns with the broader objective of *ijtihad*—to seek rulings that ensure justice and well-being in changing contexts (Abdullah, 2006).

Such an approach encourages scholars and policymakers to view early marriage not as a spiritual duty, but as a social issue with tangible harms. By utilizing Burhani logic, Muslim communities can advocate for policies that delay marriage until individuals are physically, mentally, and economically prepared. In doing so, they uphold the ethical spirit of Islam, rather than simply adhering to its historical legal forms.

Burhani epistemology offers a critical and constructive framework for Islamic thought in the modern world. Its focus on rational inquiry, empirical validation, and ethical coherence makes it particularly suited to address issues like early marriage, which cannot be resolved through scriptural literalism or mystical intuition alone. As Al-Jabiri (2000) asserts, reviving Burhani reasoning is not only an intellectual necessity but also a moral imperative—one that enables the Muslim world to reclaim its role in shaping a just and rational society.

The intersection of epistemological orientation and educational approach plays a pivotal role in addressing the persistence of early marriage in Muslim communities. When Islamic education is primarily shaped by Bayani and Irfani epistemologies, it often prioritizes textual literalism or spiritual authority over contextual understanding and empirical evidence. This imbalance perpetuates traditional norms without adequately assessing their real-world consequences. In contrast, Burhani epistemology, although historically underutilized, offers a rational and evidence-based framework that promotes critical thinking, ethical reflection, and social responsibility. It encourages learners to question inherited assumptions and seek knowledge grounded in both logic and lived realities.

One promising pedagogical approach that embodies the Burhani spirit is Case-Based Learning (CBL). CBL enables students to engage directly with contemporary issues, applying religious principles through reasoned deliberation rather than blind adherence. Within this framework, the classroom becomes a space for ethical inquiry, dialogue, and problem-solving. By integrating Burhani reasoning into Islamic education, CBL transforms learning from doctrinal repetition into dynamic engagement with societal challenges. In the case of early marriage, this pedagogical model enables learners to explore the physical, psychological, and social implications of the practice while reinterpreting religious texts in ways that prioritize justice and human dignity.

To institutionalize this epistemological and pedagogical shift, educational reform is essential. Curriculum design must include modules that cultivate Burhani-informed approaches to religious interpretation, ethical decision-making, and social responsibility. These modules should draw upon real-life case studies—such as those involving early marriage—to encourage students to think critically about the relationship between tradition and present-day realities. In parallel, teacher training programs need to emphasize epistemological awareness, enabling educators to facilitate classroom discussions that challenge harmful norms constructively and respectfully. Such training will empower teachers to model critical engagement with religious sources, fostering classrooms where faith and reason coexist.

Community outreach initiatives also play a vital role in bridging educational reform with social transformation. Organizing workshops that involve religious leaders, educators, and parents can foster broader epistemological literacy and promote collective reflection on practices such as early marriage. These programs can help recalibrate community norms by encouraging dialogue between different stakeholders, reducing resistance to change, and promoting a more balanced approach to religious authority and social ethics.

While the present study contributes conceptual clarity and interpretive insight, it remains limited in its empirical grounding. Future research should include qualitative and ethnographic studies, particularly in high-prevalence areas such as Bangkalan, to capture local epistemological discourse and community perceptions. Interviews with educators, parents, religious authorities, and young couples would offer deeper understanding of how different epistemologies operate on the ground. Longitudinal evaluations of CBL-based interventions in Islamic schools could also provide evidence of shifts in student attitudes and decision-making related to early marriage. In addition, comparative studies across regions and cultural settings may reveal correlations between dominant epistemological orientations and marriage practices, contributing to more nuanced policy recommendations.

The findings of this study affirm that the ongoing prevalence of early marriage in conservative Muslim contexts is closely linked to the dominance of Bayani and Irfani epistemologies, both of which often fall short in addressing modern complexities. In contrast, Burhani epistemology offers a transformative framework that reconciles faith with reason and empirical knowledge. When integrated

into Islamic education through methods such as case-based learning, Burhani reasoning equips students with the cognitive tools necessary to critically engage tradition while responding compassionately to contemporary challenges. Such an approach aligns with both the ethical imperatives of Islam and the universal values of human dignity, offering a constructive path forward for communities seeking to reform harmful practices without severing ties to their religious heritage.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the overall findings and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that the persistence of early marriage in conservative Muslim communities is significantly influenced by the dominance of Bayani and Irfani epistemologies, which prioritize textual authority and spiritual experience over contextual and empirical analysis. In contrast, Burhani epistemology offers a more constructive and rational framework by integrating logical reasoning, empirical evidence, and ethical reflection, making it more suitable for addressing contemporary social challenges such as early marriage. When embedded in Islamic education through approaches like Case-Based Learning (CBL), Burhani reasoning has the potential to shift religious pedagogy from dogmatic repetition to critical, context-sensitive engagement. However, the study is limited by its conceptual nature and lack of empirical field data, which restricts its ability to capture local epistemological practices and responses. Therefore, future research should include qualitative fieldwork in high-prevalence areas, such as ethnographic studies and interviews with educators, parents, and religious leaders, to better understand how epistemological orientations shape community attitudes and behaviors toward early marriage, and to evaluate the practical impact of Burhani-based educational interventions.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, M. A. (2006). *Islam sebagai ilmu: Epistemologi, metode, dan etika keilmuan Islam*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Al-Jabiri, M. A. (1993). *Bunyah al-'aql al-'Arabi* [The Structure of Arab Reason]. Markaz Dirasat al-Wihdah al-'Arabiyyah.
- Al-Jabiri, M. A. (2000). *Takwin al-'aql al-'Arabi* [The Formation of Arab Reason]. Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wihdah al-'Arabiyyah.
- Al-Jabiri, M. A. (2001). *Naqd al-'aql al-'Arabi* [Critique of Arab Reason]. Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wihdah al-'Arabiyyah.
- Al-Jabiri, M. A., & Jābirī, A. 'Ā. (2000). *Arab-Islamic philosophy: A contemporary critique*. University of Texas Press.
- Baqi, M. A. (2021). *Mawsu'ah al-Hadith al-Sharif: Sahih al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Basri, H., & Ardani, A. (1996). *Psikologi perkembangan anak*. Bandung: Pustaka Setia.
- Biati, M. A. (2019). *Fenomena pernikahan usia dini di Kabupaten Bangkalan*. Bangkalan: Dinas KB dan P3A Kabupaten Bangkalan.
- Bimo, W., & Walgito, B. (2004). *Pengantar psikologi umum*. Yogyakarta: Andi.
- Dharmayanthi, I. A. (2022). The implementation of case-based learning to improve students' critical thinking. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 29(1), 56–63. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jpp.v29i1.41892>
- Djamali, J. (2002). *Fiqh al-munakahat*. Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada.
- Fadilah, R. (2021). Dampak pernikahan dini terhadap kesehatan reproduksi dan pendidikan perempuan. *Jurnal Kesehatan Reproduksi*, 8(2), 75–88. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jkr.v8i2.2021.75-88>
- Gusnarib, R., & Rosnawati, R. (2020). Early marriage in Indonesia: Causes and impacts. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Konseling (JPDK)*, 2(1), 12–21. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jpdk.v2i1.974>
- Nasution, H. (1978). *Islam rasional: Gagasan dan pemikiran*. Mizan.
- Sahakian, W. S. (1968). *History of philosophy*. New York: Barnes & Noble.

- Shihab, M. Q. (2002). *Wawasan Al-Qur'an: Tafsir maudhu'i atas pelbagai persoalan umat*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Simbolon, N. E. (2022). Case-based learning in religious education to develop students' critical awareness. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 6(1), 34–47. <https://doi.org/10.21043/jie.v6i1.10523>
- Soleh, A. (2005). *Tasawuf dan psikoterapi: Upaya membangun kesehatan mental spiritual*. Yogyakarta: LKiS.