# ETHICAL AND JURISPRUDENTIAL CONFLICT IN IRANIAN LAW: A DOCUMENTARY STUDY ON CHILD MARRIAGE

# CONFLITO ÉTICO E JURISPRUDENCIAL NO DIREITO IRANIANO: UM ESTUDO DOCUMENTAL SOBRE O CASAMENTO DE CRIANÇAS\*

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to ethical and jurisprudential conflict in Iranian law: a documentary study on child marriage. According to Muslim rulings, it is permissible for girls to marry before reaching the age of puberty, but performing a marital act depends on the girl reaching adulthood but what seems to be contrary to moral principles and values is that some Shiite Muslims believe that any pleasure from an immature spouse is permissible other than sexual intercourse. The present study, which uses the library method as a compilation and is written as a compiler and presentation in an analytical and descriptive manner, seeks to critique this view, which seems to be contrary to ethical standards and by presenting different opinions of Shiite experts on this issue, examine their arguments and examine this issue according to the harms that it inflicts on the child's psyche from the point of view of psychological knowledge and the statements of expert psychologists. The author believes that due to the proven psychological injuries and severe mental disorders that the child is exposed to from this area and the ruling that harmful rulings have been rejected in Islam, enjoying an immature spouse cannot be considered permissible from the point of view of Islamic law and the opinions of some Shiite scholars who have voted for it in the past and present have probably been due to the lack of discovery and non-realization of various psychological damages and the lack of proof of customary and moral ugliness with them otherwise, assuming that these harms and harms were achieved, they would also have issued a fatwa sanctifying this issue.

Keywords: Jurisprudential. Conflict. Ethical. Child Marriage. Iranian Law.

Resumo: O objetivo deste estudo consistiu no conflito ético e jurisprudencial no direito iraniano: um estudo documental sobre o casamento de crianças. De acordo com as decisões muçulmanas, é permissível que as meninas se casem antes de atingirem a idade da puberdade, mas a realização de um ato conjugal depende da menina atingir a idade adulta, mas o que parece ser contrário aos princípios e valores morais é que alguns muçulmanos xiitas acreditam que qualquer prazer de um cônjuge imaturo é permissível para além das relações sexuais. O presente estudo, que utiliza o método bibliográfico como compilação e é escrito como compilador e apresentação de uma forma analítica e descritiva, procura criticar este ponto de vista, que parece ser contrário às normas éticas e apresentando diferentes opiniões de especialistas xiitas sobre esta questão, examinar os seus argumentos e examinar esta questão de acordo com os danos que ela inflige à psique da criança do

<sup>\*</sup> Artigo recebido em 19/05/2021 e aprovado para publicação pelo Conselho Editorial em 25/05/2021.

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ponto de vista do conhecimento psicológico e das declarações de psicólogos especialistas. O autor acredita que, devido aos danos psicológicos comprovados e às graves perturbações mentais a que a criança está exposta a partir desta área e à decisão de que as decisões prejudiciais foram rejeitadas em Islã, gozando de um cônjuge imaturo não pode ser considerado admissível do ponto de vista da lei islâmica e as opiniões de alguns estudiosos xiitas que votaram a seu favor no passado e no presente foram provavelmente devidas à falta de descoberta e não realização de vários danos psicológicos e à falta de provas de feiura habitual e moral com eles de outra forma. Partindo do princípio de que estes danos e prejuízos foram alcançados, também teriam emitido uma fatwa santificando esta questão.

Palavras-chave: Jurisprudencial. Conflito. Ético. Casamento de crianças. Direito Iraniano.

#### Introduction

According to Shiite scholars, the marriage of a young boy and girl who have not yet reached the age of puberty is valid with the permission of the guardian of the father or paternal ancestor and these two people have guardianship over their immature child and crazy adult child and they can take him to another marriage (Klini, 1987 and Harr Ameli, 1989).

Therefore, in principle, the marriage license of minor children and the permission of the father or paternal grandfather, Shiite scholars agree, but many of them have considered this ruling as binding. Some have made marriage permissible subject to the best interests of the child. (Ibn Idris, 1990 and Hali, Mohaghegh; 1988, Ameli Shahid Thani 1993), and some others have made it conditional on the absence of corruption in this marriage (Naraghi, 1995).

The reason for the jurists who have made the guardianship of the guardian conditional on the observance of the best interests of the child is verse 152 of Surah An'am in the Qur'an, which states: "Do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best way." They believe that it should be expedient to seize the property of the child. Accordingly, the priority should be given to expediency in taking possession of the child's future life. They also believe that the guardianship of the father and paternal ancestor is a rational matter, and the wise consider expediency as a fundamental element (Makarem, 1991). Those who have made the province conditional on non-corruption believe in consensus. The late Fadhil Naraqi claims in the Shiite documentary that this marriage should not have any corruption for the child, and if it has any corruption, this marriage is

doomed to be voi (Naraghi, 1995). Some jurists also believe that the existing reasons are not limited to expediency (Al-Hakim, 1984).

The subject of child marriage has been explicitly stipulated by the jurisprudents from long ago in the Shiites' jurisprudential books. Moreover, the subject of minors' enjoyment, as well, has been discussed and pointed out in between the jurisprudential discussions about marriage. On the other hand, the subject of the relationship between jurisprudence and ethics and the jurisprudential verdicts' overlap or conflict with the ethical verdicts is a subject pointed out and discussed since long ago by thinkers like (Shahmoradi, 2015). However, no research was found about the subject of this article, minors' enjoyment, with the exploration of its jurisprudential verdict through adoption of an ethical and normative approach as well as from the perspective of psychological knowledge and educational and social works.

It should be noted that although the diagnosis and opinion of the child's guardian is effective in the expediency or corruption of marriage, but it is clear that many factors can affect the good and corruption of a matter, in other words, expediency and corruption is relative, not absolute. Expediency in the discussion of minor marriage changes and transforms according to the place and time and with the change of social norms. Therefore, in the present time, due to the changing social conditions and the requirements of the time, it is very difficult to accept that immature marriage is considered normal. It would not be an exaggeration to say that today the issue of underage marriage is in most cases against the best interests of the child and leads to the detriment of the child and will usually lead to the child's dissatisfaction in the future. Therefore, it can be said that child marriage in the present and current conditions of society will often lead to child dissatisfaction in the future and divorce, separation and dissolution of cohabitation this certainly causes harm and corruption to their lives, although it may be expedient in some cases, but the legislature often does not prescribe legislation for specific cases where expediency exists, and it refers to the general rules. Of course, it is obvious that in exceptional cases, which in the opinion of the ruler of the Shari'a requires a strong expediency and necessity for the minor to enter into a personal marriage, this is permissible and legally considered without any problems. But this article does not deal with special cases and exceptions.

#### Statement of the problem

Since Islam is a religion of morality and has always made human dignity a priority in its rulings, it is expected that it does not contain immoral rulings and duties. The issue of marrying underage girls is in conflict with moral standards for a number of reasons. The reason why minor marriages were considered permissible by jurists in the past and was also common among the people, should be said that the permission to marry underage girls was due to a reason or expediency or motivation or a social need That this origin and necessity of the permission and prevalence of marriage with a minor in the past, has undergone changes over time and has considered it rationally and customarily logical and it is not unlikely that the origin of the fatwa on the permission and prevalence of marriage with a minor has been a social necessity in the past.

# Marriage to Minors

In jurisprudential resources, no age has been specified for authenticity of marriage and the marriage to minors has been accepted by the majority of the jurisprudents. Numerous narrations have been quoted from the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) signifying that the canonical ruler has not specified a special age range for girl's marriage and the marriage of a girl who has not yet reached nine is considered authentic (Mar'ashi, 1995). According to Imamiyyeh jurisprudents, the marriage of immature boys and girls is authentic but with the permission of the canonical guardian (father or paternal ancestors) and a father or paternal ancestor has guardianship over his minor child in marriage and can allow him or her to get married (Mar'ashi, 1995).

There are also fathers who get their minor girls married to well-known and famous political, religious and social men so that they can get connected to the prominent figures of the society thereby to more rapidly make social growth in future. Privities is one of the common interests driving the minors' marriage and it has also been quite common in our country and culture (La'ali, 2008). In cases that the individuals and the families want to have more comfortable relationship with a girl and stay away from sin perpetration, they create privities to enjoy the interest of the canonical marriage to children and they allow a young girl marry a person without any marriage or family formation and it is in the light of

this marriage that the individuals can stay with one another in private places and enjoy more comfortable relationships (William, 2011).

# Presenting the Jurisprudents' Sayings

In regard of the verdict on minors' enjoyment, some jurisprudents believe in the permissibility of taking all the sexual pleasures (except copulation) in the girls below maturity and even infants,<sup>4</sup> and another set of the jurisprudents believe that the enjoyment of the minors is not permissible for it is contradictory to the ethical principles. Here, the notions and sayings by these two sets of jurisprudents are posited (La'ali, 2008):

The first set includes the jurisprudents who have just ruled the forbiddance of copulation with the minors due to the absoluteness of the generalities in narrations and they have just opined that the other sexual enjoyments of the minors are permissible due to the generalities and absence of rejection by the canonical ruler (La'ali, 2008).

Some jurisprudents like Ayatollah Sayed Sadeq Rowhani, the author of Fiqh Al-Sadeq (PBUH), and the late Sabzevari, the author of Mohzab Al-Ahkam, have also claimed consensus in this regard. As for the enjoyment of a minor wife in cases other than penile insertion such as looking, lustful touching, hugging and intercrural sex, it is believed that they are considered permissible as understood from the surface structure of the proofs even in respect to an infant wife due to the principle of permission and authorization and due to their not being rejected by anyone (Sabzevari, 2009). This set of jurisprudents believes that the other pleasures can be taken in the minor wives for the reason that this verdict has been posited in an absolute form and it only excludes the sexual intercourse and no prohibition and rejection has been mentioned by the canonical ruler about the other sexual pleasures (Tusi and Mahmoudi, 2019). They realize the generalities of the proofs on enjoyment permissibility as the reason for such a saying and the penile insertion of an immature wife has been excluded from the verdict due to the existence of the narrations with the other sexual pleasures remaining under the generalization circle of the verdict (Sabzevari, 2009).

The second set includes a group of jurisprudents who do not accept the minors' enjoyment in regard of permissibility because they consider it as an unpleasant issue as viewed by the intellectuals and, considering the psychological harm and damage that such

an action can impose on the children, they believe in impermissibility of the sexual pleasures in children. Amongst the contemporary jurisprudents, the first person who proposed this verdict is Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi (Mar'ashi, 1995). Considering the harms such an action can cause to the minors as well as the possibility of the emergence of other doubts, he mentions this point in the book 'Al-Nekāh' that 'a group of the recent and contemporary jurisprudents believe in regard of the permissibility of taking sexual pleasures in minor children that the aforesaid verdict is not acceptable with this inclusion and generality because some kinds of the minors' enjoyment are opined heinous and unpleasant by the intellectuals such as taking sexual pleasure in breastfeeding child so the generalities of a minor wife's enjoyment is annulled based on what is commonly exercised and ruled by intellectuals hence not all of the cases can be included". Ayatolah Shabiri Zanjani, as well, does not realize permissible the enjoyments that cause losses to the immature wife and orders that 'the other enjoyments that do not cause losses and harms to a minor wife are permitted ...' Of course, these are also not permissible if they are also found causing harms (Nowruzi et al, 2015).

#### Methodology

The first step in realizing the efficiency and effectiveness of any research is to know its various dimensions. Among these, it is important to know the up-to-date and practical methods of such research, especially in the field of religious studies. The study of religious teachings, especially the verses of the Holy Qur'an, has undergone ups and downs in recent centuries. In the meantime, the emergence of Western ideas, which are generally based on the unbelievable tradition of translation and copying and without considering the Islamic-Iranian culture, is considered a key factor (Tusi and Mahmoudi, 2019).

The research method is a bibliographic one and also analytical-descriptive. In which the authors have used bibliographic sources and documents to study the sources. Myths and legends are collective and impersonal dreams that can accept new meanings at any time according to specific social conditions and situations (Naraghi, 1995). The author intends to investigate the challenging subject of minors' enjoyment in a novel approach and according to the notions of the experts in educational and psychological sciences and through considering the harms and damages child marriage imposes on the psyche and

mind of the children; the assumption chased herein is that the reason for the prescription of such a type of marriage is the jurisprudents' non-verification of the numerous psychological harms for the children (Shahmoradi, 2015).

#### Statement of Shiite scholars (jurists)

Now, after mentioning the notions and expressions by the parties, we deal with the criticism of the proofs all sexual pleasures by those believing in the permissibility of minors' enjoyment. The jurisprudents who believe in the permissibility of minors have mentioned three proofs for their claims and we try criticizing them here:

#### First Proof

The first group are the jurists who, due to the absoluteness of the generals in the narrations, have only ruled on the sanctity of the immature daughter, and the rest consider sexual pleasure from the minor due to the generals and the absence of prohibitions by the shari'ah. These jurisprudents have substantiated in this regard on some narrations. For instance, a narration from Imam Bager (PBUH) has been quoted by Zerareh:

sexual intercourse with wife is impermissible before none or ten years of age. They have concluded that since only sexual intercourse with wife has been suspended in the narrations to a given age and excluded from the generalities, the other pleasures are accordingly permitted (Mar'ashi, 1995). Like enjoying a baby girl.

#### The second proof

The other reason substantiated by some jurisprudents for the permissibility of taking other pleasures (except intercourse) in an immature wife is the principle of permission and authorization; they reason that the principle is originally permissibility and authorization of such types of pleasures unless the canonical ruler happens to reject them. The appearance of the words by some contemporary jurisprudents signifies that the other pleasures (except intercourse) can be taken in the immature wife due to the principle of permission (Mar'ashi, 1995).

#### The third proof

Consensus is one of the reasons substantiated by some proponents like Ayatollah Sayed Sadeq Rowhani, author of Fiqh Al-Sadeq (PBUH), and the late Sabzevari, author of Mohzab Al-Ahkām. They believe that a consensus has been reached about the permissibility of the other pleasures (Helli, 2000).

# Response to and Rejection of the Proponents' Proofs

# Answer to the first proof

From the perspective of Shiite jurisprudents, all of the canonical verdicts have been drawn on certain expediencies and harms meaning that nothing is opined obligatory in the sacred canon of Islam unless there are benefits found therein for the servants and nothing has been opined forbidden unless there are disadvantages found therein for the servants. In fact, harm is the reason for the canonization of the prohibitions as well as the negation of the verdicts meaning that all the things that are harmful to the servants are forbidden in Islam and, according to no-loss axiom which is one of the most well-known jurisprudential rules, every permissible verdict followed by a considerable harm to the human beings is forbidden and prohibited. Based on this axiom, every of the preliminary verdicts that causes the emergence or imposition of loss to the obliges should be removed from jurisprudence.<sup>32</sup> As for the topic of our discussion, considering the fact that the loss is not summarized in the physical harms and includes any sort of damage and disability in an individual, including the psychological and mental harms, if the sexual pleasure and enjoyment of a minor child is found followed by psychological and mental harm to her, its prohibition and impermissibility can be opined based on the foresaid axiom (Khou'ei, 1993).

Based on the investigation of the most credible and most well-known theories on personality in psychology, taking sexual pleasure in children causes the emergence of serious psychological and mental damages to the children and destroys their future personality (Khomeini, 2000).

In addition, according to maturity theory by Arnold Gesell who is considered as the leader of the natural growth proponents, the children's nervous system should undergo sufficient growth at any age so that it can perceive the obligations and assignments in proportion to that age and they should gain domination over those obligations by guiding

the internal factors. He believes that the signs of the children's maturity should be taken into consideration in various stages (Majer et al, 2010).

The stages of "maturity" are seminally physical then affective and, next, psychological and social. Lack of success in the individual's accomplishment of the foresaid stages can cause the creation of disorders in psychological and emotional terms. Based on the personality growth theory by Sigmund Freud as one of the most well-known theories in psychological science, the human beings' personality is mostly formed till the age of five and the preliminary experiences play an important role in the individual's personality growth and their effects are continued in the human beings' subsequent behaviors in life. He believed that the neurotic disorders shown by his patients stem from their childhood experiences. He realized childhood experiences as being so important that he used to say that the adult's personality is firmly formed and crystalized till the age of five (Naraghi, 1995).

The theories by the prominent psychologists worldwide confirm the idea that the individual's personality is formed based on his or her preliminary life experiences and many of the psychoneurotic disorders stem from the childhood experiences not in proportion to the individuals' physical, mental and emotional growth (Naraghi, 1995).

Additionally, the recent progresses in neurology have made it clear that the early life psychological pressure gives rise to the permanent changes in the neural circuits that per se lead to the cognitive imperfections, sensitivity to pain, depression, anxiety and distressed sleep (Sabzevari, 2009).

The child who has been subjected to sexual enjoyment without having a primitive perception of the sexual issues and only happens to find out after maturity that she has been a means for another person's enjoyment and satisfaction of lust would find her veneration and personality questioned disregarding the contingent psychological damages that she might have undergone (Naraghi, 1995). From the perspective of the common sense and ethical regulations, such an action is the distinct example of child abuse and violation of the human veneration because the children should be treated as ruled in common laws and canon in accordance with the childhood principles and regulations and the psychological annoyance and damage stemming from the enjoyment are not to be deemed expedient for her. In the present era that the psychological harms and damages of such an

action has been proved by the experts and specialists, such pleasures and enjoyments are denied and considered heinous hence the permissibility of minors' enjoyment cannot be accepted with the abovementioned generality due to their being ethically and intellectually heinous. Thus, the generalities of a husband's enjoyment of his minor wife are limited to the cases commonly approved amongst the intellectuals hence not encompassing the minors' enjoyment (Sabzevari, 2009). A young girl is a child who, according to custom and sharia, should be treated in accordance with the principles and rules of childhood, and psychological harassment is not in her best interest, and in the present age, the psychological harms and harms of this practice have been proven by experts, it is considered denial and ugliness therefore, the ruling on the permission to enjoy the minor cannot be accepted with the generality that has been said due to its moral and intellectual ugliness, and therefore the generalities of the husband's enjoyment of the wife refrain from cases that are common among the wise and do not include the enjoyment of the minor. And the wise do not accept it.

#### Answer to the second proof

In response to the individuals who have substantiated the permissibility of immature wife's enjoyment on the principle of permission and authorization, the abovementioned reasons can be pointed out. Therefore, considering the absolute governance we believe in for the no-loss axiom in this case, believing in the permissibility of enjoyments lacks the canonical justification and this axiom also governs the principle of permission and authorization. In response to some of the jurisprudents who have substantiated on the principle of permission and authorization for permitting taking other sexual pleasures in the immature wife. With this reasoning that the principle is authorization and permission of such enjoyments unless otherwise is found having been stipulated by the canonical ruler, it has to be stated that the no-loss axiom is also governing the principle of permission and authorization hence there would be left accordingly no room for its ruling (Sabzevari, 2000).

#### Answer to the third proof

The other reason put forth by the proponents of the permissibility of immature wife's enjoyment is the jurisprudents' consensus as believed by Ayatollah Sayed Sadeq Rowhani, the author of Figh Al-Sadeq (PBUH) and the late Sabzevari, author of Mohzab Al-Ahkam. It has to be stated in an answer to this proof that, first of all, many of the precedent and subsequent jurisprudents have not objected to this issue and they have not presented their ideas in this regard and preferred to keep silent. So, how can consensus be claimed? It seems that the consensus claim is controversial because Ibn Janid Eskafi, Sheikh Mofid, Salar Dailami, Sheikh Tusi, Ibn Edris, Mohaqqeq Helli and Allameh Helli have just dealt in their books with the principle of the permissibility of immature girls' marriage and they have not at all objected to the enjoyment. Thus, they cannot be enumerated amongst the proponents of the foresaid issue so as to accept the consensus claim. Secondly, since the document of these jurisprudents' consensus is the numerous narrations about the minors' enjoyment, the achievement of consensus is doubted because the reason posited by these jurisprudents is the very generalizations of these narrations and, since their document and reason is the narration, consensus should be of documentary type and such a consensus lacks justification. For it is not drawn on the sayings by the immaculate Imams hence lacking the required credibility (Sabzevari, 2009).

### Conclusion

From the issues raised and the theories of world-renowned psychologists and experts, it can be concluded that the experiences of everyone, especially the child, should be at the level of his physical, mental and emotional development. If he is treated in a way that is not compatible with his physiological, mental and emotional development, the child will suffer from serious mental injuries, disorders, mental anxiety, depression, and so on.

According to the above experts, the general maxims containing harms and losses that are not limited to the physical harms but also including the psychological, affective and mental harms, as well, and the psychological damages are surely important from the perspective of Islam and they can be used as criteria for issuance of verdicts and the theories by the outstanding psychologists and experts worldwide indicate that enjoyment of children would be followed by numerous psychological and mental damages and harms for them,

therefore, it can be concluded that the use and enjoyment of an immature girl is not allowed, and in terms of its harm, it is illegitimate and haram, and it seems that the opinions of Shiite experts who have voted for it in the past and presently and with the change in the subject and verification of the numerous aforementioned harms, the enjoyment of minor children cannot be permitted through constraining of the generalizations and based on this sure jurisprudential axiom, i.e., no-loss axiom, following which the minors' enjoyment is excluded from the generalities of this proof for its being harmful.

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KAZEMI GOLVARDI, Muhammad Reza; IZADI, Reyhaneh. ETHICAL AND JURISPRUDENTIAL CONFLICT IN IRANIAN LAW: A DOCUMENTARY STUDY ON CHILD MARRIAGE. Lex Humana, v. 13, n. 1, p. 134-147, 2021. ISSN 2175-0947. Disponível em: <a href="http://seer.ucp.br/seer/index.php/LexHumana/article/view/2089">http://seer.ucp.br/seer/index.php/LexHumana/article/view/2089</a>