

Hadiths Concerning Women and Dowries in Imam al-Zamakhshari's (d. 538 AH) Book *Rabi' al-Abrar*: A Contemporary Hadith and Jurisprudential Study Addressing the Problem of Excessive Dowries and the Prevention of Marriage

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Abstract

This study offers a critical hadith and jurisprudential examination of the narrations on women and dowries presented in Chapter Eighty-Four of *Rabi' al-Abrar wa Nusus al-Akhyar* by Imam al-Zamakhshari (d. 538 AH). It seeks to address the contemporary challenges of excessive dowries and the obstruction of marriage (Adhl) by reassessing these classical narrations in light of both Islamic legal principles and modern legal practice.

The research adopts an Inductive and analytical methodology, collecting and evaluating the relevant narrations through the principles of hadith criticism while incorporating jurisprudential and rhetorical analysis. Particular attention is given to the interpretation of the Qur'anic verse concerning Qintar and the well-known report describing a woman's objection to Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab. The analysis indicates that several narrations discussed in this chapter, including those attributed to Aisha and Suwaid ibn Wahb, do not meet the standards of authentic hadith transmission, as their chains range from highly weak to abandoned.

The study further argues that these reports cannot serve as reliable evidence against state regulation of dowries. It also explores the relationship between the classical doctrine of guardianship transfer (Wilayah) and contemporary judicial procedures in personal status courts, using the Saudi Personal Status Law as a representative case. The study concludes that adopting flexible legal regulations for dowries is consistent with the higher objectives (Maqasid) of Islamic law, particularly in promoting marriage, protecting family stability, and reducing the social and economic burdens associated with excessive dowries.

Keywords : Adhl, Fada'il al-A'mal, Maqasid al-Shari'ah, Wilayah, Personal Status Courts, ..Rhetorical Metaphor.

Introduction

Imam Mahmud ibn Umar al-Zamakhshari (d. 538 AH) occupies a distinguished position in the Islamic intellectual tradition because of his substantial contributions to Qur'anic exegesis, Arabic linguistics, and Islamic scholarship. Although *Al-Kashshaf* remains his most influential work, attracting sustained scholarly attention for its linguistic precision and theological insights, his other writings reveal additional dimensions of his scholarly methodology and educational thought (Al-Qifti, 1982; Ibn Khallikan, 1994). Among these works, *Rabi' al-Abrar wa Nusus al-Akhyar* represents a distinctive encyclopedic compilation that combines religious teachings with historical reports, literary narratives, and ethical reflections. Unlike *Al-Kashshaf*, which is primarily devoted to Qur'anic interpretation, this work seeks to cultivate moral values, social awareness, and cultural knowledge through a broad collection of carefully selected materials (Al-Zamakhshari, 1992). As such, it provides an important source for examining how classical Islamic literature addressed practical social and legal questions.

The composition of *Rabi' al-Abrar* reflects the development of the *Adab* tradition during the sixth century AH, when encyclopedic works increasingly brought together religious, historical, and literary knowledge within a single framework. In this literary context, Prophetic traditions were often cited for their ethical and educational value rather than for establishing independent legal rulings. Consequently, some narrations were transmitted with abbreviated wording, alternative versions, or chains of transmission that did not always meet the standards applied in specialized Hadith collections. Their primary function was to reinforce moral lessons, encourage virtuous conduct, and support the educational objectives of the work.

The book itself is divided into ninety-eight chapters, each devoted to a particular aspect of nature, society, or human life. Across these chapters, Al-Zamakhshari combines Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions, historical accounts, proverbs, and poetry to present a comprehensive picture of human experience. Among them, the eighty-fourth chapter is of particular importance because it focuses on issues related to women, marriage, dowries, engagement, divorce, and family relationships. The material collected in this chapter provides valuable evidence for understanding classical Islamic perspectives on family law and social ethics.

Many Muslim societies today continue to face serious challenges arising from the increasing financial burden of marriage, particularly the widespread practice of demanding excessive dowries. What was originally intended as a symbol of respect and commitment has, in many cases, become a major obstacle that delays marriage and contributes to broader social and economic difficulties, including rising rates of delayed marriage and family instability (Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, 1999). Re-examining classical Islamic sources within their proper legal and historical contexts may therefore offer useful insights for addressing these contemporary concerns. In this regard, the discussions preserved by Al-Zamakhshari provide an appropriate starting point for exploring how Islamic teachings sought to facilitate marriage while discouraging unnecessary financial hardship.

Against this background, the present study undertakes a hadith-critical and jurisprudential analysis of the narrations on dowries contained in the eighty-fourth chapter of *Rabi' al-Abrar*. The research combines an examination of the authenticity of the reported chains of transmission with an analysis of the legal implications of these narrations for contemporary family law. Particular attention is given to widely cited historical reports, including the account of the woman who challenged Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab, in order to reassess their evidentiary value and clarify their relevance to current legal debates concerning the regulation of dowries.

Accordingly, the study pursues three main objectives:

To critically evaluate the chains of transmission of the narrations on dowries recorded by Al-Zamakhshari and reassess the reliability of their transmitters in light of the principles of Hadith criticism.

To examine the jurisprudential and rhetorical arguments commonly invoked in support of excessive dowries and clarify their interpretation within the broader objectives of Islamic law.

To explore how classical juristic discussions on the transfer of guardianship (*Wilayah*) may inform contemporary legal procedures in modern personal status courts.

Literature Review

The way Prophetic traditions were presented in Islamic literature changed noticeably with the emergence of Adab encyclopedias during the sixth century AH. Unlike the classical Hadith collections, which were compiled primarily to preserve authentic Prophetic traditions through rigorous examination of chains of transmission and narrator reliability, literary works such as *Rabi' al-Abrar wa Nusus al-Akhyar* adopted a different objective. Their emphasis was not on establishing legal authority but on conveying ethical lessons, cultural knowledge, and moral guidance. As a result, Prophetic traditions were often cited alongside historical reports, poetry, and wise sayings to reinforce educational and literary themes rather than to serve as independent legal evidence.

Previous studies on *Rabi' al-Abrar* indicate that Al-Zamakhshari assembled a wide range of historical narratives, literary materials, and Prophetic traditions without applying the strict authentication procedures commonly found in specialized Hadith works. This characteristic makes it necessary to reassess the narrations before relying on them in contemporary legal or social discussions. Recent scholarship in Islamic legal studies likewise stresses that classical Adab literature should not be treated as a direct source of legal authority without first evaluating the authenticity of its transmitted reports. Otherwise, weak or historically unsupported narrations may continue to influence contemporary understandings of social issues, including the justification of excessive dowries. Accordingly, combining Hadith criticism with jurisprudential analysis provides a more reliable framework for interpreting these texts and assessing their relevance to present-day legal systems.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative analytical methodology that integrates the principles of Hadith criticism with jurisprudential analysis to examine the narrations concerning women and dowries in the eighty-fourth chapter of *Rabi' al-Abrar wa Nusus al-Akhyar*. The research was conducted through three complementary stages.

Inductive Textual Survey and Source Tracing

The first stage involved identifying all narrations relevant to the subject and tracing their original sources in the primary Hadith collections. Since Al-Zamakhshari generally records the narrations without complete chains of transmission, the study reconstructed their Asanid by consulting major Hadith compilations, including the Musnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the Sunan of Abu Dawud, and other early sources. Differences in wording and transmission routes were also examined to establish the textual background of each narration.

Critical Evaluation of the Chains of Transmission

The second stage focused on assessing the reliability of the narrators using the established principles of Naqd al-Rijal. Classical biographical sources, particularly the works of alDhahabi, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, and Ibn Adi, were consulted to evaluate the integrity, precision, and credibility of each transmitter. Special attention was given to identifying weaknesses in the chains, including interrupted transmission, narrator obscurity (Jahalah), and other factors that affect the authenticity of the reports.

4. Comparative Jurisprudential and Rhetorical Analysis

The final stage examined the content of the narrations from both jurisprudential and rhetorical perspectives. The analysis considered the objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-Shari'ah), the linguistic implications of the relevant Qur'anic texts—particularly the verse concerning Qintar in Surah al-Nisa'—and the historical reports frequently cited in discussions of dowries. The findings were then compared with contemporary legal procedures governing personal status matters in order to evaluate the continuing relevance of these classical discussions to modern family law.

First Requirement: The Text of the First Hadith, Biographies of its Narrators, and a Critical Assessment of it

First: The Text of the Hadith and Its transmission: Imam al-Zamakhshari included in his book *Rabi' al-Abrar wa-Nusus al-Akhyar*, in the eighty-fourth chapter dedicated to women's affairs, marriage, and dowries, a hadith with a chain of transmission traceable to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), which he transmitted without mentioning its chain of narrators. It reads: "The most blessed of women are those with the most beautiful faces and the lowest dowries." (Al-Zamakhshari1992) This noble hadith was transmitted with a chain of narrators by the leading scholars of hadith, foremost among them Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal(Ibn Hanbal, 2001) in his Musnad. The wording is his, transmitted through the chain of Yazid, on the authority of Hammad ibn Salamah, on the authority of Ibn Sakhbarah, on the authority of al-Qasim ibn Muhammad, on the authority of Aisha (may God be pleased with her), on the authority of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

Secondly: Biographies of the narrators of the chain of transmission

The first narrator: He is Yazid ibn Harun ibn Zadhi, also known as Ibn Zadhan ibn Thabit alSulami, Abu Khalid al-Wasiti. His grandfather, Zadhan, was a freed slave of Umm Asim, the wife of Utbah ibn Farqad, who then emancipated him. It is said that his origins were from Bukhara. He died in the year 206 AH (Ibn Abi Hatim,1952; Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi,2004), He narrated from Hammad ibn Salamah, Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, and Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaj. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal, al-Fadl ibn Sahl ibn Ibrahim, and Ishaq ibn Rahwayh narrated from him (Al-Mizzi,1992; Al-Maqdisi,1982), Imam al-Dhahabi described him as one of the prominent figures (Al-Dhahabi,1992), and al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani said about him that he was trustworthy, meticulous, and devout (Ibn Hajar,1986)

The second narrator: He is Hammad ibn Salamah ibn Dinar al-Basri, Abu Salamah ibn Abi Sakhr, a freed slave of Rabi'ah ibn Malik ibn Hanzalah from Banu Tamim. It is also said that he was a freed slave of Quraysh, and it is also said that he was a freed slave of Himyari ibn Karama. He was the nephew of Humayd al-Tawil. He died in the year 167 AH (bn Abi Hatim, 1952; Al-Busti, 1973; Al-Maqdisi,1982). He narrated from Hajjaj ibn Artat and Humayd al-Tawil. And Isa ibn Maymun ibn Sakhbara, from whom Asad ibn Musa, Sufyan alThawri, and Yazid ibn Harun narrated(Al-Mizzi,1992). Al-Dhahabi said about him that he was one of the prominent figure (Al-Mizzi,1992), and Ibn Hajar described him as trustworthy, devout, and the most reliable of people in Thabit, though his memory deteriorated towards the end of his life(Al-Mizzi,1992)

The third narrator: He is Isa ibn Maymun al-Madani, known as al-Wasiti, the freed slave of al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr al-Siddiq. He is also called Ibn Talidan, and it is said that he is the one from whom Hammad ibn Salama narrated, and he calls him al-Tufayl ibn Sakhbara. He narrated from al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr al-Siddiq, Nafi, the freed slave of Ibn Umar, and Hisham ibn Urwa. Hammad ibn Salama, Waki' ibn al-Jarrah, and Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Attar narrated from him. Al-Dhahabi said about him that

they considered him weak, and Ibn Hajar described him as weak. However, critical consensus demonstrates that he is more severely classified as a discarded narrator (*matruk al-hadith*). Al-Nasa'i explicitly stated that 'Isa ibn Maymun al-Madini, who narrates from Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazi, is *matruk al-hadith* (Ibn 'Adi, 1997). Furthermore, Amr ibn Ali and Abu Hatim al-

Razi definitively declared him as *matruk al-hadith* (Ibn Hajar, 1907)

The fourth narrator: is al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr al-Siddiq al-Qurashi al-Taymi, Abu Muhammad, also known as Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Madani. Regarding his death, while some reports traditionally cite the year 102 AH (Al-Busti, 1973; Al-Mizzi, 1992; Ibn Sa'd, 1990), the most accurate and critically preferred historical view is that he died in the year 106

AH. This is explicitly corroborated by transmissions indicating that al-Qasim and Salim died, one in 105 AH and the other in 106 AH, with Khalifa ibn Khayyat further asserting that his death occurred at the end of 106 AH or the beginning of 107 AH (Al-Dhahabi, 1992). He narrated from Abdullah ibn Umar ibn al-Khattab, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr al-Siddiq, and Aisha (may God be pleased with her), and it was narrated from him by Hamid Al-Tawil, Salim bin Abdullah bin Omar, and Isa bin Maimun bin Sakhbara (Al-Mizzi, 1992). Al-Dhahabi described him as a jurist (Al-Dhahabi, 1992), and Ibn Hajar noted that he was trustworthy and recognized as one of the jurists in Medina (Ibn Hajar, 1986)

The fifth narrator: is the Mother of the Believers, Aisha bint Abi Bakr Al-Siddiq, the truthful daughter of Al-Siddiq, the wife of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, and the most famous of his wives. Her mother was Umm Ruman bint Amir bin Uwaymir bin Abd Shams bin Attab bin Udhayna bin Subay' bin Dahman bin Al-Harith bin Ghanm bin Malik bin Kinana Al-Kinaniyya. She died, and it was said, in the year fifty-seven, and it was said, fifty-eight of the Hijra. She was a noble companion (Ibn al-Athir, 1994; Ibn Hajar, 2004)

Judging the Hadith

It becomes clear from the scientific examination of the men of the chain of transmission that this hadith has a weak chain of transmission, and the direct reason for this weakness is due to the condition of the narrator Isa bin Maymun al-Madani, known as al-Wasiti or Ibn Sakhbara, because he was the only one to narrate objectionable hadiths that were not followed up on. Rather, Abu Nu'aym reported that most of the scholars considered him weak because he narrated fabricated hadiths on the authority of al-Qasim bin Muhammad (Abu Nu'aym, 1984), and the rulings of the critics of hadith have combined to weaken this chain of transmission; Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut stated that its chain of transmission is weak (Ibn Hanbal, 2001), and al-Dinawari mentioned that its chain of transmission is very weak (Al-Dinawari, 1998). In the rulings of Abu Bakr al-Ishbili, it is stated that its chain of transmission is weak due to the weakness of Ibn Sakhbara (Al-Ishbili, 1993). Al-Hafiz al-Haythami confirmed the weakness, explaining that the hadith was narrated by Ahmad and al-Bazzar, and it includes Ibn Sakhbara, who is considered unreliable (Al-Haythami, 1994). Therefore, the academic conclusion is that the hadith has a very weak chain of transmission, and God knows best.

The Usuli Guideline for Acting Upon Weak Hadiths in Matters of Virtues and Encouragement:

The reports of scholars, both jurists and hadith scholars, have converged in clarifying the methodological guidelines for dealing with hadiths that fall below the level of authenticity. The practice of the imams has settled upon the permissibility and desirability of using weak hadiths and acting upon them in matters of virtuous deeds and areas of encouragement and warning, provided that the weakness of the hadith does not reach the level of fabrication or reprehensibility (Al-Nawawi, 1994). This rule, however, is entirely different in matters of independent legal rulings, such as rulings on what is permissible and forbidden. Marriage and divorce are matters where binding religious and devotional rulings can only be based on sound or reliable texts.

Crucially, the legal framework governing the facilitation of dowry and the reduction of marital costs does not rely on Al-Zamakhshari's weak narration as an independent legislative source (*asl tashri'i*). Instead, this foundational principle is firmly rooted in, and substantiated by, explicit and authentic textual evidence from the prime sources of the Sunnah. Foremost among these is the clear prophetic directive which emphasizes the minimization of material barriers to marriage, commanding a suitor to seek a marital gift even if it is a ring of iron (Al-Bukhari, 2019). Furthermore, this stance against marital extravagance is powerfully reinforced by the foundational tradition where a man informed the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, that he had married a woman from the Ansar for a dowry of four *uqiyahs*. Hearing this, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him,

openly expressed his disapproval of such an excessive financial burden relative to the man's economic situation, rhetorically exclaiming that it was as if they were carving silver from the side of a mountain (Muslim, 2006). From a precise semantic and historical perspective, the term *uqiyahs* serves as the plural of *uqiyah*, specifically referring to the historical weight standard of the Hijaz, which was strictly valued at forty silver dirhams per *uqiyah*, making the total dowry an exhausting one hundred and sixty dirhams for that specific suitor. This crucial lexicographical and contextual definition is firmly established in classical language and jurisprudential commentaries (Al-Nawawi, 1994; Ibn Sallam, 1964). Consequently, because the reduction of dowries is a thoroughly authenticated objective (Maqasid) backed by absolute textual proofs, the specific text compiled by Al-Zamakhshari in *Rabi' al-Abrar* functions perfectly within the established guidelines of virtuous deeds (Fada'il al-A'mal). It does not introduce a novel ruling, but rather acts as a supporting rhetorical witness (shawahid) to promote a canonical virtue that the Sharia has already commanded through authentic transmissions (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). **The text of the second hadith, biographies of its narrators, and a critical assessment of it. First: The text of the hadith and its chain of transmission.**

In his book *Rabi' al-Abrar wa-Nusus al-Akhyar*, in chapter eighty-four, Imam al-Zamakhshari included a hadith traced back to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) with the wording: "Whoever refrains from wearing a garment of beauty, even though he is capable of it, out of humility, God will clothe him with a garment of honor. And whoever marries for the sake of God, God will crown him with the crown of kingship" (Al-Zamakhshari, 1992). This noble hadith was also included by Imam Abu Dawud in his *Sunan*, in the Book of Manners, within the chapter on "Whoever suppresses his anger." The wording mentioned is from the chain of transmission of Uqbah ibn Makram, from Abd al-Rahman (meaning Ibn Mahdi), from Bishr (meaning Ibn Mansur), from Muhammad ibn Ajlan, from Suwaid ibn Wahb, from a man among the sons of the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), from his father. On the authority of the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace (Abu Dawud, 2009).

Secondly: Biographies of the narrators in the chain of transmission

The first narrator: He is Uqbah ibn Mukram ibn Aflah al-Ammi, Abu Abd al-Malik al-Basri, who died in the year 250 AH (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952; Ibn Hibban, 1973; Al-Mizzi, 1992; Al-Mizzi, 1992). He narrated from Abd al-Rahman ibn Mahdi, Wahb ibn Jarir, and Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan. Muslim narrated from him in his *Sahih*, as did Abu Dawud and al-

Tirmidh (Al-Mizzi, 1992). Imam al-Dhahabi said about him that he was a memorizer (Al-Dhahabi, 1992), and al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani described him as trustworthy (Ibn Hajar, 1986).

The second narrator: He is Abd al-Rahman ibn Mahdi ibn Hassan al-Anbari, also known as al-Azdi, and their freed slave, Abu Sa'id al-Basri al-Lu'lu'i, who died in the year 198 AH (Al-Bukhari, 2019; Ibn Hibban, 1973; Al-Maqdisi, 1982). He narrated from Bishr ibn Mansur, Sufyan al-Thawri, and Sufyan ibn Uyaynah. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Uqbah ibn Mukram, and Yahya ibn Ma'in narrated from him (Al-Mizzi, 1992). Al-Dhahabi said about him that he was a learned imam and a memorizer, and that he was more knowledgeable than Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan (Al-Dhahabi, 1992). Ibn Hajar described him as trustworthy, reliable, a memorizer, and knowledgeable about men and hadith (Ibn Hajar, 1986).

The third narrator: He is Bishr ibn Mansur al-Sulaymi, Abu Muhammad al-Basri, father of Isma'il ibn Bishr ibn Mansur and Sulaymah, from the descendants of Malik ibn Fahm of the Azd tribe, died in the year 180 AH (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952; Ibn Hibban, 1973; Al-Mizzi, 1992). He narrated from Sufyan al-Thawri, Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaj, and Muhammad ibn 'Ajlan. Narrators from him include 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Mahdi, 'Ali ibn al-Madini, and Fudayl ibn 'Iyad (Al-Mizzi, 1992). Ibn Abi Hatim said he was trustworthy, and Abu Zur'ah al-Razi said he was trustworthy and reliable (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952). Ibn Hibban mentioned him among the trustworthy narrators (Ibn Hibban, 1973). Al-Nasa'i said he was trustworthy (Al-Mizzi, 1992), and al-Dhahabi described him as a devout and trustworthy worshipper (Al-Dhahabi, 1992). Ibn Hajar said he was truthful, devout, and ascetic (Ibn Hajar, 1986). In conclusion, the narrator Bishr ibn Mansur is trustworthy.

The fourth narrator: Muhammad ibn 'Ajlan al-Qurashi al-Madani, Abu 'Abd Allah, freed slave of Fatimah bint al-Walid ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah ibn 'Abd Shams ibn 'Abd Manaf, died in the year 148 AH (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952; Ibn Hibban, 1973; Al-Mizzi, 1992). He narrated from Anas ibn Malik and Zayd ibn Aslam. And Suwaid ibn Wahb, from whom Bishr ibn Mansur, Sufyan al-Thawri, and Sufyan ibn Uyaynah narrated (Al-Mizzi, 1992). Ibn Ma'in said he was trustworthy (Ibn Ma'in, 1979), and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal said he was trustworthy (Ibn Hanbal,

2009). Al-Ajli described him as trustworthy (Al-‘Ajli, 1985), and Ibn Abi Hatim said he was trustworthy (Ibn Abi Hatim, 1952). Al-Dhahabi mentioned him as a righteous jurist (Al-Dhahabi, 1992), and Ibn Hajar said he was truthful, but that he had confused the hadiths of Abu Hurayrah (Ibn Hajar, 1986). In conclusion, the narrator is trustworthy.

The fifth narrator: He is Suwaid ibn Wahb, and he narrated from a man from among the sons of the Prophet's Companions. Muhammad ibn Ajlan narrated from him (Al-Maqdisi, 1982; AlMizzi, 1992), Al-Dhahabi said he was unknown (Al-Dhahabi, 1992), and Ibn Hajar also described him as unknown in al-Taqrīb (Ibn Hajar, 1986).

The sixth narrator: He is an obscure man from among the sons of the Prophet's companions, may God bless him and grant him peace, and scholars have not found a biography for him.

The seventh narrator: He is his father, the obscure companion, for whom the author of the study did not find a specific biography.

Third: Judging the Hadith

It becomes clear from the systematic examination of the chain of transmission of this hadith that its chain of transmission is weak, and the reason for this weakness is due in detail to the unknown identity of some of its narrators, namely Suwaid bin Wahb, and the apparent ambiguity in the statement regarding a man from among the sons of the companions of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, and his father. Sheikh Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut explicitly stated that this chain of narration is weak due to the unknown identity of the man among the Companions (Abu Dawud, 2009), Imam al-Bayhaqi further clarified that its chain of narration is weak due to the unknown identity of some of its narrators (Al-Bayhaqi, 2003). Furthermore, Imam Ibn al-Athir definitively declared the chain of narration weak for the exact same reason (Ibn al-Athir, 1969).

From an advanced hadith-critical perspective, the structural ambiguity surrounding the unnamed narrator introduces a severe layer of absolute obscurity (Jahalah 'Ayniyyah) within the upper tiers of the Isnad, thereby preventing verification of the transmitters' reliability and the integrity of the chain. Within the established principles of Hadith sciences, an obscure transmission (Hadith al-Majhul) is defined as a tradition transmitted via a chain containing an unverified or unknown narrator. When classical critical authorities declare that a chain is unknown, they explicitly refer to this fundamental defect. Although obscurity (Jahalah) is not treated as a formal or explicit disparagement of a narrator's personal integrity, it serves as a primary, definitive justification for rejecting the report. This is because the canonical acceptance of any prophetic narration strictly requires the verified uprightness ('Adalah) of its transmitters, a criterion that can never be proven for an unknown entity; hence, Jahalah functionally operates in the exact capacity of a formal disparagement (Jarh).

Imam Al-Shafi'i strictly maintained that only well-established and fixed traditions are acceptable, drawing a direct legal parallel to court testimony where only witnesses of known and verified uprightness are accepted, asserting that a tradition whose transmitter is unknown or unverified cannot be accepted as probative evidence in hadith criticism because it completely lacks the prerequisite authentication (Al-Khatib Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, 2004). Furthermore, Imam Ibn 'Adi powerfully corroborated this critical measure, observing that when a transmitter's identity and baseline reliability remain entirely unestablished and unknown, his narrated tradition must naturally share the exact same status of obscurity and structural rejection (Ibn 'Adi, 1997). Consequently, the final technical classification of this specific chain is Da'if Jiddan (very weak), owing to the cumulative effect of multiple unknown transmitters, which prevents the establishment of the conditions required for accepting the chain as evidence. Thus, it is established that the hadith has a weak chain of narration, and God knows best.

The Evils of Exaggerated Dowries and Contemporary Regulatory Mechanisms for Addressing Them

First Point: The Evils of Exaggerated Dowries and Their Social Effects in Contemporary Reality

The problem of exorbitant dowries and the inflation of marriage costs in the contemporary environment is one of the most prominent structural obstacles threatening demographic stability and social security. This phenomenon has transcended the limits of facilitative Sharia measures, transforming into a form of social ostentation and reprehensible extravagance in clothing, banquets, and lavish hotel parties. Undoubtedly, the complexity of these material procedures has created a deep gap between the aspirations of young people for chastity and their actual economic ability to bear the burdens of building a family, a matter that has distressed scholars and wise people alike. This necessitates studying its contemporary negative consequences and effects from an analytical, academic perspective that seeks to minimize the negative impacts and secure the pure benefits for society. The most

significant contemporary social negative effects and harms resulting from this problem are confined to several key areas:

First: The spread of celibacy and the deprivation of women from stability and offspring.

The inability of many men to meet the exorbitant financial costs arbitrarily imposed leads to extremely serious social and psychological repercussions. Foremost among these is the deprivation of many free and chaste women of their natural and legal right to establish the institution of marriage, leaving them widowed in their families' homes without a husband or children. This harm is compounded by contemporary economic transformations, where the financial inability of young men disrupts the healthy development of families and transforms homes into places of psychological and social repression as a result of sacrificing the future of young women for the sake of the greed of newly introduced traditions. This represents a blatant injustice and oppression that completely deviates from the objectives of Islamic law, which is based on mercy, wisdom, and the welfare of people (Islamic University of Madinah, n.d.)

Second: Behavioral and intellectual deviation and loss of potential. Youth

When exorbitant financial demands become a formidable obstacle preventing individuals from fulfilling the religious obligations of chastity and marriage, society faces a direct threat: the spread of vices and the means leading to them. Young people unable to afford such vast sums and the costs of extravagance and ostentation become vulnerable to moral corruption at the hands of evil influences, bad company, and those who incite lust. This contributes to their misguidance, leading them to ruin and loss, and making it easier for them to commit forbidden acts such as adultery and sodomy. This, in turn, leads to the loss of lineage and the disruption of the natural balance of the Muslim community, ultimately resulting in the corruption of their moral and intellectual inclinations and the loss of the nation's young men and women, who represent the cornerstone of its development and progress. Since the means are judged according to the ends in Islamic law, striving to reduce dowries is a necessary means to prevent the perpetration of forbidden acts and contemporary deviations (-Hamdani, n.d.)

Third: Financial Extravagance The expansion of forbidden manifestations that destroy blessings

Jurisprudential opinions have proven that extravagance did not stop at criticism, but was directly linked to the corruption of spending large sums of money in illegitimate ways, such as great lighting that exceeds the limits of moderation, the direct contact of foreign men to serve women in hotels, and the use of loudspeakers all night in a way that disturbs the neighbors. This excessive expansion and extravagance in engagement and marriage banquets represents a reprehensible extravagance and wastefulness that makes the doers brothers of the devils, as it destroys the blessing of marriage, since the most blessed of women are the least burdensome, and it turns the blessing into a cause of estrangement and enmity in people's hearts because of the exhausting financial burden (Muhammad Ibn Ibrmah, 1999)

Discussing the justifications for exorbitant dowries

The general public and some parents base their justification for exorbitant dowries and boasting about increasing the dowry on textual and historical documents which they mistakenly believe to be legitimate arguments permitting them to continue this extravagant practice. One of the most important academic duties is to dismantle these misconceptions and address them semantically and textually according to the rigorous scientific rules established by the leading scholars of Islamic jurisprudence in their works. This is necessary to demonstrate the falsity of these arguments and their inability to counter the numerous texts that urge ease and leniency in marriage.

These misconceptions are limited to two main issues:

First: The interpretation of the verse regarding the qintar (a large amount of wealth) Those who justify exorbitant dowries cling to the words of God Almighty:

وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَآتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قِنْطَارًا فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا ۚ أَتَأْخُذُونَهُ بُهْتَانًا وَإِذَا مُبِينًا

(And if you wish to replace one wife with another and you have given one of them a great amount [of wealth], then do not...)(Surah An-Nisa, 4:20) To claim that it is permissible to demand large sums of money as dowry, and the systematic scientific response to this argument is evident from two points of explanation; The first point is that the verse indicates the permissibility of a wealthy and capable person paying a substantial sum of money willingly. It provides no basis whatsoever for burdening an incapable person with what they cannot bear, nor does it justify guardians preventing their women from marrying suitable and righteous men until they pay this exorbitant amount. This is evidenced by the Prophet's anger and disapproval of Abu Hadrad al-Aslami when he paid a dowry of two hundred dirhams, and of the Ansari man when he married for four uqiyas, as this was

inappropriate for their financial circumstances. The second point is what Abu Hayyan reported in al-Bahr al-Muhit from a group of commentators and Fakhr al-Razi, that the verse does not indicate at all the permissibility of extravagance. The mention of the qintar is merely a metaphor and an exaggeration of a legally prescribed large sum that is not customary. This is similar to the Prophet's saying, "Whoever builds a mosque for God, even if it is as small as a bird's nest,

God will build for him a house in Paradise." It is self-evident that a mosque is not as small as a bird's nest; rather, it is a linguistic expression for emphasis. And since the Prophet's practice, both in word and deed, is the explanation of God's Book and the interpretation of His intent has proven the invalidity of using the verse as a basis for greed and extorting money from suitors (Abu Hayyan, 1992; Ibn Kathir, 1999)

Secondly: The critical and hadith-based stance on the story of the woman's objection to Umar ibn al-Khattab.

The story narrated about the Commander of the Faithful, Umar ibn al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, when he gave a sermon intending to limit dowries, and a woman objected to him, citing the verse of the qintar, and he said, "Everyone is more knowledgeable than Umar," is one of the most famous historical documents that the common people promote to prevent the authority from interfering in regulating dowries. This argument is invalid and rejected from a hadith-based and critical perspective, as the increase in the woman's objection to the leader of the nation has methods and chains of transmission that are not free from criticism and scientific skepticism. The chain of transmission for the hadith narrated by Imam Abu Ya'la, traced back to Muhammad ibn Ishaq on the authority of Mujalid ibn Sa'id, a narrator criticized by several scholars of hadith criticism. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal said of him, "He elevates many things that others do not elevate, and he is worthless." (Ibn 'Adi, 1997), An-Nasa'i said he was weak (Ibn Hajar, 1997). The story also appears through a second chain of transmission in Ibn al-Mundhir's collection, centered on Qays ibn ar-Rabi' on the authority of Abu Husayn on the authority of Abu Abd ar-Rahman as-Sulami. Qays ibn ar-Rabi' is a narrator whose hadiths are rejected. Ali ibn al-Madini said he was very weak (Al-Mizzi, 1992), Yahya ibn Ma'in said he was worthless (Al-Mizzi, 1992). It also appears through a broken chain of transmission narrated by az-Zubayr ibn Bakkar in the context of omitting the surplus from the public treasury. Since the various chains of transmission for the story of the woman's objection, with their multiple additions, are not free from flawed hadith criticism, they are entirely unsuitable for legal argumentation and cannot stand against the authentic and established texts that encourage leniency. Even if we were to concede, for the sake of argument, that the narration is authentic and established from a chain of transmission perspective, the legal and jurisprudential response to it would be to explain the correct interpretation of the verse the woman cited, as a group of scholars have argued. Scholars have interpreted the verse as not indicating at all the permissibility of extravagance in dowries, as the woman and the common people behind her thought. Rather, the intended meaning of the Quranic wording here is to provide an example of exaggeration in quantity, as if the context is saying, "And I gave them this great and towering amount that no one usually gives." This rhetorical style is exactly like the Prophet's saying, may God bless him and grant him peace, "Whoever builds a mosque for God, even if it is as small as a bird's nest, God will build for him a house in Paradise." It is known by necessity, both rationally and practically, that a mosque is not as small as a bird's nest. Rather, the Prophetic wording was given as an example of exaggeration in smallness. Likewise, the qintar in the context of dowry came to exaggerate in size, so it does not undermine the principle of facilitation, especially since it was not reported that any of the prominent Companions disagreed with Umar ibn al-Khattab in his call to reduce dowries and his rebuke of men who exaggerate in the dowries of their wives to the point of causing enmity in their hearts (Abu Hayyan, 1992)

Islamic Law Guarantees in Preventing the Coercion of Women and its Jurisprudential Impact on the Transfer of Guardianship

The merits of Islamic law and its concern for preserving human rights are evident in its profound attention to women's rights. Among the most important of these fundamental rights is the right to marriage. Since the guardian is the one who conducts the marriage contract, there is a fear that he might infringe upon this right by preventing her from marrying for personal reasons, such as greed for her inheritance, or his intention to marry her to someone from whom he will personally benefit, or out of spite and malice. Therefore, Islamic law guarantees this fundamental right of women by prohibiting the guardian from coercing her.

We will explain the details of this jurisprudential guarantee through the following points:

Those who hold this opinion cite as evidence what Abu Dawud narrated on the authority of Aisha (may God be pleased with her) on the authority of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), who said: "Any woman who marries herself without the permission of her guardian, her marriage is invalid, invalid, invalid. If he has consummated the marriage, she is entitled to the dowry for what he has taken of her private parts. If they dispute, then the ruler is the guardian of the one who has no guardian.(Abu Dawud, 2009; Al-Tirmidhi, 1990; Ibn Majah, 1952).

The argument from the hadith is that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, granted guardianship to the ruler in the absence of a guardian. This girl has a guardian, and the matter does not transfer to the ruler unless all parties refuse to allow the marriage, because his statement, "If they dispute," uses a plural pronoun encompassing all. They explained this by saying(Ibn Qudama, 1997):

That the marriage is impossible through the closest guardian, so the next closest guardian takes over, just as if the closest guardian were insane.

And because he commits a sin by refusing to allow the marriage, so the guardianship is transferred from him, just as if he drank alcohol.

The second opinion:

In the case of the closest guardian's refusal to allow the marriage, the right to arrange the marriage passes to the ruler, not to the more distant guardian. If the closest guardian refuses to marry his ward to a suitable match, the ruler or judge will arrange the marriage. This is the opinion of the Malikis, the Shafi'is, and a narration from Imam Ahmad (may God have mercy on him)(Ibn Juzayy, 1975; Al-Subki, 1995; Ibn Qudama, 1997)

They have cited as evidence for this(Al-Subki, 1995; Ibn Qudama, 1997):

The same hadith: "If they dispute, then the ruler is the guardian of one who has no guardian." The reasoning behind this is that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) assigned the right to arrange the marriage to the ruler in cases of guardians disputing and refusing to allow the marriage. If the guardian refuses to arrange the marriage, it is as if the ward has no guardian, and thus the ruler becomes her guardian. This indicates that the right passes directly to him.

They reasoned that this marriage is a right that he has refused to fulfill, so the ruler takes his place, just as if he had a debt and refused to pay it.

The first opinion is more correct because it preserves the order of relatives; the next closest guardian is the original, while the ruler is a substitute who is not resorted to unless the original is unavailable. This is supported by Ibn Qudamah's argument that guardianship requires the attribute of justice, which disappears with coercion, unlike financial debts that never transfer from the debtor

This transition is vividly exemplified in the contemporary legal system of Saudi Arabia under its modern codified family statutes. The statutory provisions explicitly dictate that the jurisdiction to contract a marriage shifts directly to the judiciary if the primary guardian is unable to attend or cannot be formally notified of the proceedings(Saudi Personal Status Law, 2022, Art. 19), Furthermore, the legal framework addresses the classical issue of marriage obstruction by empowering the personal status court to intervene directly once it is proven that a guardian has unjustly prevented a woman from marrying a compatible suitor she has accepted(Saudi Personal Status Law, 2022, Art. 20). In such cases of systemic obstruction, the administrative court retains the full legal authority either to transfer the matrimonial guardianship to the next eligible relative in line or to directly delegate a licensed marriage registrar to execute the marriage contract in accordance with the best interests of the woman(Saudi Personal Status Law, 2022, Art. 20)

Discussion:

The sociological and demographic repercussions of exorbitant dowries in contemporary Muslim societies present a structural crisis that directly threatens community stability and moral security. As demonstrated through historical textual evaluation, classical Islamic principles consistently favored financial facilitation over complexity to support young couples. In contemporary reality, however, the inflation of marital costs has driven high rates of celibacy and delayed marriages, causing deep psychological and social stagnation within families. When financial demands become insurmountable, the higher objectives of law— which prioritize chastity, human preservation, and communal ease—are fundamentally disrupted. This alarming trend often leads to behavioral

deviations among youth, as economic barriers block legitimate paths to family building, making structural regulatory intervention a social necessity .

A critical dimension of this issue involves dismantling the social justifications used by the public to defend excessive dowry demands. Proponents of high dowries frequently misinterpret textual references, specifically the Quranic verse referencing the Qintar, arguing it provides absolute legal validation for limitless financial demands. However, comprehensive analytical evaluation clarifies that the text indicates the permissibility of a wealthy husband voluntarily paying a large sum, rather than justifying the extortion of young suitors or the financial coercion of women. Furthermore, classical theological analyses argue that the mention of Qintar serves as a rhetorical metaphor for emphasis rather than a legislative mandate for extravagance, much like the traditional metaphors used to encourage small-scale charitable deeds .

Similarly, the popular historical narrative regarding a woman objecting to Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab's attempt to limit dowries is widely used to challenge state-level regulation of marriage costs. From a strict critical perspective, this research demonstrates that the transmission chains of this account are technically weak, defective, and entirely unsuitable for independent legal argumentation due to major flaws in the historical reporting lines. Even if the narration were conceded as historically authentic for the sake of argument, jurisprudential consensus clarifies that the text does not endorse financial wastefulness or cultural vanity. None of the prominent historical authorities approved of extortionate practices that breed domestic resentment and economic hardship, thereby invalidating the narrative as a legitimate barrier to modern regulatory policies.

Ultimately, the synthesis of textual criticism and social analysis underscores the legitimacy of contemporary regulatory mechanisms to curb marriage cost inflation. Since the analyzed narrations regarding low dowries are weak, they cannot establish independent binding legal rulings; however, they remain highly valid as supplementary evidence within the established principles of virtuous deeds to encourage social ease. When traditional customs turn marriage into a financial impossibility, modern family law frameworks must introduce flexible legal ceilings and caps tailored to economic realities. Furthermore, if a close guardian acts obstructively by demanding unreasonable sums, jurisprudence provides a clear remedy by transferring guardianship to ensure women's fundamental rights to marriage and stability are fully protected.

Conclusions:

This study provides a comprehensive hadith-jurisprudential and rhetorical evaluation of the narrations concerning women and dowries within the literary encyclopedia Rabi al-Abrar by Al-Zamakhshari. By addressing the critical contemporary issue of marital inflation and the systemic obstruction of marriage, the research yields several pivotal scholarly findings .

First, from a strict hadith methodology perspective, the study confirms that the narrations compiled within classical literary Adab works require rigorous textual and chain verification before being deployed in legal arguments. Specifically, the evaluation of the first tradition reveals that its chain contains Isa ibn Maymun al-Madani, who is definitively classified as a discarded narrator by authoritative critics, rather than merely weak. Furthermore, the second tradition suffers from acute structural discontinuity bordering on absolute obscurity, which severely degrades its canonical reliability .

Second, from a jurisprudential standpoint, this research establishes that the legal principle of facilitating marital dowries is firmly grounded in general, authentic textual evidences from the primary sources, such as the established prophetic traditions in Al-Bukhari. Consequently, the weak or unverified narrations transmitted in Al-Zamakhshari's text do not constitute primary legal foundations, but function exclusively as auxiliary rhetorical reinforcements or moral illustrations .

Third, through a meticulous rhetorical deconstruction of Surah An-Nisa, the study refutes literalist misinterpretations surrounding the term qintar. Utilizing the advanced linguistic frameworks established by classical scholars like Ibn Adil (Ibn Adil, 1998) the research demonstrates that the mention of an immense sum operates as a hypothetical hyperbole. The conditional framing does not validate or encourage financial extravagance in marriage, but rather underscores the absolute inviolability of a woman's financial rights and the strict prohibition against reclaiming her wealth upon divorce. This linguistic reality aligns perfectly with the historical interaction of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab, whose administrative retraction was an enforcement of female financial autonomy rather than a legislative license for exorbitant dowries .

Fourth, the investigation successfully bridges classical Islamic jurisprudence with modern statutory family law. The analysis demonstrates how classical doctrines governing marriage obstruction have been institutionalized within contemporary personal status courts, most notably through specific provisions within the Saudi Personal Status Law¹. In the modern context, the administrative transfer of matrimonial guardianship directly to the judiciary functions as a codified protective mechanism, preventing arbitrary familial coercion and legally securing a woman's fundamental right to marry.

In summary, combating the contemporary socio-economic evil of inflated dowries requires a balanced framework that unites rigorous textual criticism with a profound understanding of Arabic rhetoric and modern judicial interventions. This approach simultaneously alleviates the societal barriers to marriage while preserving the canonical financial protections guaranteed to women under Islamic law.

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