

A Legal and Psychological Analysis of the Validity Conditions of Marriage in the Iranian Legal System, with Emphasis on William Glasser's Choice Theory

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Marriage, as a foundational institution for family formation in the Iranian legal system, is based on legal conditions such as intention, consent, legal capacity, and physical puberty, which are largely derived from Imamiyyah jurisprudence. However, this traditional framework often overlooks psychological dimensions, potentially leading to instability in marital relationships and social harms. Using an interdisciplinary approach, the present study analyzes the validity conditions of marriage from legal and psychological perspectives through William Glasser's Choice Theory. By emphasizing five basic human needs—survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun—as well as the principle of conscious choice, this theory identifies psychological maturity as a key condition for responsible decision-making in marriage. This study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology based on a review of jurisprudential, legal, and psychological literature, together with a comparative analysis of Choice Theory concepts and the provisions of Iran's Civil Code, including Article 1041. The findings indicate that the current focus on physical puberty—13 years for girls and 15 years for boys—is insufficient. Early marriage, particularly child marriage, is associated with adverse psychological consequences, including anxiety, depression, and emotional isolation, which conflict with Glasser's principles of autonomy and personal responsibility. Accordingly, it is proposed that legislators incorporate psychological criteria, such as emotional and cognitive maturity, into assessments of the best interests of marriage in order to protect individual rights and promote family stability. This approach can contribute not only to reducing social harms but also to providing a foundation for legislative reforms and family-centered policymaking.

Keywords: Marriage, validity conditions of marriage, Iranian legal system, Choice Theory

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1. Introduction

Marriage, as one of the principal foundations of family formation, has been examined not only from a legal perspective but also from the standpoint of other disciplines, including psychology. Examining the

validity conditions of marriage through Choice Theory constitutes a novel interdisciplinary approach that analyzes the validity of marriage not only in terms of compliance with legal rules, such as legal capacity and maturity, but also in light of psychological factors, including fundamental needs—love, belonging, and



freedom—identified in William Glasser’s Choice Theory. In the Iranian legal system, given the official status of Islam and the dominance of Shiite jurisprudence, family laws have been influenced by these considerations (Daud & Rosadi, 2021). In other words, because of the predominance of religion and the conformity of laws with religious norms, the validity conditions of the marriage contract have acquired a religious character. However, since marriage is not merely a legal contract but also a conscious and ongoing choice aimed at satisfying fundamental psychological needs, such as love, power, freedom, fun, and survival, ensuring the emotional and social well-being of spouses requires attention to emotional maturity, psychological readiness, and the integration of human sciences, including psychology (Ainiyah & Rosiana, 2025).

As stated above, in the Iranian legal system, the marriage contract is based on conditions such as intention and consent, legal capacity, and the absence of religious impediments. These conditions, which are incorporated into the Civil Code and formulated in accordance with jurisprudence, have been established both to preserve the legal legitimacy of marriage and to ensure its continuity and stability. Like a benevolent father, the legislator sought to establish an institution with a firm framework that would, pursuant to Article 190 of the Civil Code, constitute an enduring and stable bond. Nevertheless, in light of Choice Theory, questions arise concerning emotional maturity, the realization of free will, and the capacity for genuine choice in the process of marriage, particularly in the case of persons such as women and children who may not enjoy equal opportunities for choice. The juxtaposition of this perspective opens new horizons for analyzing traditional rules of marriage, because traditional rules alone do not appear to guarantee the realization of free choice, appropriate marriage, and, consequently, family stability.

Previous studies in the field of Iranian family law have predominantly adopted a jurisprudence-centered approach and examined the institution of the family through the lens of jurists, whereas more recent research has critically examined the institution of marriage and its conditions from psychological, sociology-of-law, and critical-analysis perspectives. Some of these studies, particularly those concerning child marriage and forced marriages, have emphasized the weakness of the legal

system in genuinely recognizing the concept of consent (Akbari Mahmoud et al., 2024). In this regard, analyzing the validity conditions of marriage in Iran on the basis of Choice Theory not only enriches theoretical discussions in the field of family law but also creates the possibility of proposing reforms in family-law policymaking. In the contemporary context, in which legal and social challenges related to marriage are expanding, such analyses play a central role in guiding policymaking, legal reform, and the strengthening of individual rights. Despite scattered efforts to analyze the validity conditions of marriage in the Iranian legal system from a psychological perspective, redefining these conditions on the basis of William Glasser’s Choice Theory remains a major theoretical and research gap. A substantial portion of the legal literature has interpreted consent solely within the framework of the formal expression of will and has neglected to examine its psychological, cognitive, and volitional nature. On the other hand, Choice Theory—which emphasizes conscious will, purposeful choice, and the satisfaction of fundamental needs such as freedom, love, belonging, and power (Sahebi et al., 2015)—occupies a marginal position in Iranian family-law studies and is often introduced superficially or merely as a psychological perspective, without being redefined within a legal framework.

The theoretical objective of this article is to reconsider the validity conditions of marriage in the Iranian legal system through reliance on Glasser’s Choice Theory; a theory that, by focusing on conscious will and the satisfaction of basic needs, enables a deeper explanation of the concept of consent in the marriage contract. The principal question is: How can the fundamental concepts of Choice Theory be integrated into the legal analysis of the validity of marriage, and does the current framework of Iranian civil law possess the necessary capacity to accommodate such a perspective? To answer this question, the article first reviews the relevant jurisprudential and legal literature on the essential conditions of marriage in its first section. The second section explains the foundations and principles of Glasser’s Choice Theory. The third section is devoted to the conceptual application of this theory to the legal requirements of the marriage contract and proposes an integrated analytical model. The fourth section presents a critical discussion of the existing deficiencies in conceptualizing consent in Iranian law and the practical

implications of a choice-oriented perspective. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings, presents proposals for theoretical development and legislative reform, and outlines directions for future research. We now begin the theoretical discussion with a review of the existing literature concerning the validity conditions of marriage in the Iranian legal system.

2. Literature Review and Research Background

The literature review of this study examines various discussions related to the validity conditions of marriage in the Iranian legal system and analyzes their challenges and legal and psychological dimensions. This section first examines the legal conditions required for the validity of a marriage contract under Iranian law and then investigates the influence of psychological theories, such as Glasser's Choice Theory, on the analysis of the validity conditions of marriage. Previous studies in this field are also evaluated, and gaps in earlier research are identified.

2.1. *Validity Conditions of the Marriage Contract in Iranian Law*

In the Iranian legal system, the marriage contract, like other contracts, is subject to the general rules of contracts. However, due to its special nature in establishing the family and its connection with individuals' psychological, physical, and social dimensions, it possesses particular legal characteristics. One of the fundamental concepts in this area is the capacity for a valid marriage, which is defined as marital capacity. This concept encompasses individuals' physical and psychological ability to enter into a marital relationship and perform the role of a spouse (Mousavi et al., 2020).

Article 1210, Note 1, of the Iranian Civil Code, inspired by Imamiyyah jurisprudence, establishes the age of puberty as nine lunar years for girls and fifteen lunar years for boys and regards it as a criterion of legal capacity. However, the failure to distinguish between physical maturity and psychological maturity in this criterion is among the most significant legal challenges in determining the validity of the marriage contract. This issue legitimizes early marriages at ages when an individual has not yet attained adequate psychological, social, and moral maturity. Such incongruity may lead to

psychological, social, and even physical problems for the individual and the family in the future. In particular, marriage at a young age may create problems in spousal relations and even cause physical harm to young persons because of their inability to assume marital responsibilities (Zarei Mahmoudabadi & Zarei, 2021).

The age of marriage, or in other words, the capacity for a valid marriage, has been recognized in the Iranian legal system as a substitute for maturity in the general rules of contracts. In this regard, the minimum age of marriage prescribed by the legislator receives attention. Prominent Imamiyyah jurists have not distinguished between natural puberty and marital puberty and have regarded the attainment of the age of religious puberty—nine years for girls and fifteen years for boys—as the criterion for marital capacity. Accordingly, from the perspective of the majority of jurists, reaching the age of puberty is sufficient for marriage.

However, in the Iranian Civil Code, despite the acceptance of religious rules and the opinions of prominent jurists, a distinction exists between the determination of the age of religious puberty and the legal age of marriage. Iranian legislators have expressed the age of puberty in terms of the capacity for marriage and have established an age different from the age of puberty as the criterion for marital capacity. These legislative changes indicate greater attention to the social and psychological dimensions of the age of marriage, which are not limited solely to physical maturity. In other words, contrary to the view of prominent jurists who consider the attainment of puberty sufficient for marriage, the Iranian Civil Code seeks to determine a minimum age for marriage by taking into account an individual's psychological and social circumstances in order to prevent the social and psychological harms arising from early marriages (Mousavi et al., 2020).

In 1934, the legislator, in Article 1041 of the Civil Code, under the title "capacity for a valid marriage," established the minimum age of marriage as 15 years for girls and 18 years for boys without using the term puberty. Under this article, marriage before these ages was prohibited, except in exceptional cases in which the best interests of the child so required. In such cases, the guardian of the minor could request an exemption from the age requirement from the public prosecutor. After obtaining an opinion from forensic medicine to establish

the minor's physical capacity and examining the child's best interests, the public prosecutor would submit a proposal for granting the exemption to the court. Nevertheless, even where the child's best interests existed, permission for marriage was not issued for girls under 13 years of age or boys under 15 years of age. Parliamentary debates at the time of the adoption of this provision demonstrate attention to the physical and psychological health of spouses. The representatives argued that marriage at a young age, particularly for girls under 13 years of age, could harm the health of future generations and the family due to insufficient physical and intellectual development. It was also emphasized that the age of marriage should be an objective criterion in order to prevent abuses arising from inaccurate civil-registration information.

In 1974, by adopting Article 23 of the Family Protection Act, the legislator adopted a more progressive approach and raised the minimum age of marriage to 18 years for girls and 20 years for boys. This provision prohibited marriage before those ages but allowed an exemption in exceptional cases for girls over 15 years of age, provided that their physical and psychological aptitude for married life was established. Marriage for boys under 20 years of age was not permitted under any circumstances. This law reflected an effort to achieve greater consistency with individuals' social and psychological needs and to reduce early marriages. However, the absence of a precise definition of the child's best interests and the criteria for establishing them created challenges in the implementation of this provision.

Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1982, the legislator revised Article 1041 of the Civil Code, adopted an approach based on Imamiyyah jurisprudence, and added the term "puberty" to the article. In accordance with the view of prominent Imamiyyah jurists, the age of puberty was established as nine full lunar years for girls and fifteen full lunar years for boys. This amendment repealed Article 23 of the Family Protection Act and permitted child marriage with the guardian's authorization and due observance of the child's best interests. This approach, derived from traditional jurisprudence, regarded the marriage of a minor—even before the age of puberty—as valid if the child's best interests were observed (Akbari Mahmoud et al., 2024). The absence of a precise definition of the child's best interests and the lack of clear criteria for

determining them generated extensive criticism because this provision increased the possibility of abuse and the violation of children's rights.

In response to criticism by child-rights advocates and the harms arising from early marriage, a bill to amend Article 1041 of the Civil Code was submitted to the Islamic Consultative Assembly in 2002. The introduction to the bill emphasized that marriage at a young age, particularly for girls, had led to physical and psychological problems and the disintegration of the family, and had also created challenges for the Iranian legal system in international forums. The bill initially proposed setting the age at 14 years for girls and 17 years for boys; however, after review by the Assembly's judicial and legal committees, 15 years for girls and 18 years for boys were approved. The Guardian Council found this resolution inconsistent with Sharia. Ultimately, after referral of the matter to the Expediency Discernment Council, the amended Article 1041 established the minimum age of marriage as 13 full solar years for girls and 15 full solar years for boys. Marriage before these ages was made conditional upon the guardian's authorization, observance of the child's best interests, and the determination of a competent court. This provision adopted a middle-ground approach which, while remaining faithful to jurisprudence, sought to protect children's rights by adding the condition of the child's best interests and judicial supervision.

In 2016, the Women's Faction of the Islamic Consultative Assembly introduced a bill entitled "Increasing the Minimum Age of Marriage," which proposed a minimum marriage age of 16 full solar years for girls and 18 full solar years for boys. The bill prohibited marriage for girls under 13 years of age and boys under 16 years of age. Despite support from child-rights advocates, the bill was rejected by the Assembly's Judicial Committee. This effort reflects continuing concerns regarding early marriage and the incompatibility of existing laws with individuals' social and psychological needs.

2.2. Jurisprudential Considerations Concerning the Age of Marriage

In Imamiyyah jurisprudence and in the jurisprudence of the four Sunni schools—Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali—no specific age has been stated for marriage (Maisarah et al., 2019). In this regard, some jurists maintain that a marriage contract may be concluded for

children who are still in infancy. They advance this view particularly by relying on Verse 4 of Surah Al-Talaq and the report of the Prophet's marriage to Aisha, and they regard these sources as authorizing marriage with children (Maisarah et al., 2019).

In contrast, some Shiite exegetes, including Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Tabarsi, have explicitly stated in their interpretation of Verse 4 of Surah Al-Talaq that the phrase *allā'i lam yahidna* refers to adult women who are of menstruating age but have not yet menstruated, rather than children who have not reached puberty. Accepting that Verse 4 of Surah Al-Talaq indicates the permissibility of marriage with minor girls would conflict with the verse concerning the waiting period following divorce. This verse could concern young girls who have not menstruated only if sexual enjoyment of children were permissible (Mohseni & Ebrahimi, 2023). Therefore, according to these exegetes, this verse cannot constitute evidence for the permissibility of marriage with children who have not reached puberty.

Other Imamiyyah jurists, on the basis of Verse 49 of Surah Al-Ahzab, maintain that marriage in its specific sense is not permissible with prepubescent girls. Jurists agree that no waiting period is required where marital intercourse has not occurred; moreover, intercourse before a girl reaches puberty is not permissible (Mohseni & Ebrahimi, 2023). They argue that this verse demonstrates that puberty is regarded as a necessary condition for marriage, and that although determining the age of puberty is associated with physical signs of growth and readiness for marriage, it also entails the obligation to comply with divine commands and refrain from divine prohibitions (Sajjadi, 2017). This view, which is particularly prevalent among contemporary jurists, emphasizes the necessity of physical and psychological maturity in marriage. Accordingly, when marriage in its specific sense does not exist, divorce and separation likewise have no meaning; this means that an infant cannot enter into a marriage contract.

In recent years, modern views in Imamiyyah jurisprudence, particularly among contemporary religious authorities, have emphasized raising the age of religious puberty for marriage and have considered the psychological and social dimensions of maturity to be key factors in determining the validity of the marriage contract. For example, Ayatollah Mohammad Eshaq Fayadh, a prominent religious authority in Najaf, in a new

fatwa issued in 2021, raised the age of puberty for girls from nine lunar years to 13 lunar years and declared that girls are considered legally obligated and mature only after completing this age or upon the emergence of physical signs of puberty before that age. This change in the fatwa, which is based on jurisprudential rules such as the principle of no harm and attention to temporal and spatial circumstances, demonstrates the attention of dynamic jurisprudence to the psychological dimensions of maturity, in which maturity is not viewed as merely physical but also encompasses intellectual, emotional, and cognitive development (Parsapour, 2011), in order to prevent the potential harms arising from child marriage. Likewise, Ayatollah Yousef Sanei, in his *Tawdih al-Masa'il*, established the age of puberty for girls as 13 full solar years and considered permanent or temporary marriage before that age invalid (Ghiasi Sani & Mousavi Bojnourdi, 2008); this approach emphasizes the necessity of psychological maturity as an essential condition for the validity of marriage.

Contemporary jurisprudential approaches also focus on the invalidity of marriage involving children below a specified age and emphasize psychological and social harms as the principal reasons for its prohibition. In his legal opinions, Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi has declared the marriage of girls under 13 solar years invalid because of the absence of the child's best interests and the existence of physical, psychological, and social harms. He stresses that, in the current era, given scientific advances in child psychology, marriage before the attainment of complete psychological maturity is not valid (Esmaeili et al., 2024). This view, grounded in the principle of the minor's welfare and best interests and in changes in the subject matter of jurisprudential rules, demonstrates the capacities of Shiite jurisprudence in confronting child marriage and proposes that civil laws, such as Article 1041 of the Iranian Civil Code, should be aligned with these modern fatwas in order to protect children's rights against the psychological harms arising from early marriage. Such developments in jurisprudence have not only contributed to raising the age of marital maturity but have also emphasized the multidimensional aspects of psychological maturity, including cognitive and emotional development, as necessary prerequisites for the formation of a stable family.

2.3. Psychological Studies

William Glasser's Choice Theory, with its focus on five fundamental human needs—love and belonging, power, freedom, fun, and survival—and the principle of conscious choice, provides a scientific and psychological framework for analyzing the validity conditions of marriage. This theory emphasizes that personal decisions, such as spouse selection, require psychological maturity and the ability to make responsible choices so that basic needs may be satisfied in a stable and effective manner. Psychological maturity refers to an individual's ability to accept the demanding and complex responsibilities of shared life (Deylam Salehi et al., 2024). In psychology, psychological maturity means an individual's emotional and social development, enabling them to make logical and conscious decisions in different areas of life, including marriage. In other words, psychological maturity gives individuals the ability to manage human relationships appropriately and perform their various roles in shared life properly (Wulansari et al., 2025).

This psychological maturity is generally formed after developmental stages and social experiences. According to psychological theories, marriage will be successful when each party possesses the necessary psychological maturity and is able to accept marital responsibilities, meet the other's emotional needs, and cope with the challenges of shared life (Jafari Harandi & Rajaei Mousavi, 2019).

From the perspective of developmental psychology, Erikson's theory holds that completing the stage of identity versus role confusion—from age 11 to the end of adolescence—is necessary for the formation of an independent identity and readiness for intimate relationships (Omran Pour & Mohammadmoradi, 2011). In other words, one of the fundamental concepts in social psychology is the development of individual identity (Kadhim, 2025). During adolescence and early adulthood, individuals are forming their personal identity. At this stage, they must have a comprehensive understanding of themselves, their values, and their life goals in order to be able to choose a suitable spouse and accept the responsibilities of shared life. This identity plays an important role in determining individual choices in life, including spouse selection (Omran Pour & Mohammadmoradi, 2011). When an individual is at a

developmental stage in which they have not yet achieved a stable identity and are still searching for themselves, they are not fully prepared for marriage (Safavi & Minaei, 2015).

Early marriage, before completion of this stage, can lead to emotional isolation, depression, and an inability to perform marital roles (Pourabbasi et al., 2022). Furthermore, according to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, individuals under the age of 12 lack the ability for formal thought and complex reasoning required for vital decisions such as marriage, which affects the instability of marital relationships. The absence of life skills, such as emotion management, conscious decision-making, and effective interpersonal relationships, among psychologically immature individuals intensifies psychological harms, including social anxiety and emotional disorders (Majdi et al., 2023).

Emotional maturity is another important factor in psychological readiness for marriage. Emotional maturity refers to an individual's capacity to understand, manage, and express emotions correctly and appropriately. A person with emotional maturity can effectively understand their own emotional needs and those of their spouse and can function in a balanced manner in marital relationships (Gholami Gharah Shiran et al., 2022).

Psychological studies show that a person who has not attained emotional maturity may experience problems when confronting the challenges of shared life, including an inability to manage conflicts, failure to understand a spouse's emotional needs, and failure to establish an intimate and healthy relationship. In other words, emotional maturity enables individuals to establish effective and empathetic interactions with their spouse and to avoid unnecessary conflicts. Put differently, marriage at a young age may prevent adequate development in an individual's psychological, social, and emotional domains. At a young age, especially before the attainment of complete psychological maturity, an individual may be unable to properly understand marital responsibilities and the requirements of shared life (Zarei Mahmoudabadi & Zarei, 2021).

By drawing on Glasser's Choice Theory, psychological criteria such as emotional maturity, autonomy, and responsibility may be proposed as validity conditions of marriage (Khatibi et al., 2019). This approach not only

helps reduce the negative consequences of early marriage, such as family instability and psychological disorders, but also, by emphasizing conscious choice, provides a basis for establishing more stable and psychologically healthier families.

2.4. Research Gap

A review of the existing literature concerning the validity conditions of marriage in the Iranian legal system reveals a predominant focus on jurisprudential and legal aspects, especially the criterion of physical maturity, and a relative neglect of psychological and social dimensions. Previous studies have analyzed marital capacity mainly on the basis of physiological signs of puberty, such as menstruation and nocturnal emission, and the religious age of puberty—nine years for girls and 15 years for boys—without systematically assessing psychological and emotional readiness for marriage. This is despite the undeniable negative consequences of early marriage, including psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression, social isolation, and deficiencies in identity formation. Nevertheless, there is a clear absence of a comprehensive theoretical framework for integrating psychological considerations into the evaluation of the validity conditions of marriage, particularly in relation to the marriage of minors. This gap is particularly evident in defining and determining the child's best interests as a legal condition for the marriage of minors under Article 1041 of the Civil Code, because the current criteria lack clear indicators for assessing emotional and social maturity. By employing William Glasser's Choice Theory, which emphasizes five basic needs—survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun—and the role of responsible decision-making in maintaining psychological well-being, this study seeks to address these deficiencies. By presenting a theoretical framework that integrates psychological and social criteria into the assessment of the validity conditions of marriage, this study aims to redefine legal criteria, particularly to reduce the harms arising from early marriage.

3. The Theoretical Foundations of William Glasser's Choice Theory: A Psychological Framework for Analyzing Human Behavior

William Glasser's Choice Theory is a psychological framework that analyzes human behavior from the

perspective of five basic needs—survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun—and identifies these needs as the principal motivations for individuals' conscious actions (Khatibi et al., 2019). This theory is based on the principle that, through responsible and conscious choices, individuals are able to manage their needs in a manner that leads to psychological balance and inner satisfaction (Haji Adineh & Kalhor Nia Golkar, 2019). Unlike traditional psychological paradigms that emphasize unconscious factors or environmental influences, Glasser focuses on individual autonomy and free will in directing behavior and argues that human choices, when accompanied by responsibility and respect for the needs of others, lead to positive psychological and social outcomes. By introducing the concept of the "Quality World," which includes mental images of people, situations, and values that satisfy an individual's needs (Sahebi et al., 2015), this theory emphasizes the importance of decision-making aligned with personal and social goals. Accordingly, Choice Theory is highly significant as a scientific framework for analyzing complex human behavior, particularly in social and family relationships. By emphasizing self-control and conscious choices, this theory provides an effective tool for examining sensitive decision-making. In this regard, the present study uses this framework to analyze behaviors related to key decisions in human relationships.

One of the central principles of Choice Theory is responsibility for one's choices, which enables individuals to make decisions that lead to psychological and social balance by understanding their own basic needs and those of others (Sahebi et al., 2015). Glasser argues that failure to satisfy basic needs, particularly the needs for love and belonging and power, may lead to psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, or emotional isolation, whereas responsible choices contribute to the strengthening of healthy and satisfying relationships. By emphasizing autonomy, this theory presents individuals as active agents in the decision-making process who can select behaviors consistent with their personal and social values through a careful assessment of their needs. For example, in human relationships, satisfying the need for love and belonging through reciprocal and supportive communication strengthens emotional and social bonds. In contrast to deterministic approaches, this perspective emphasizes

individuals' capacity to control their behavior through awareness and choice (Sahebi et al., 2015). Therefore, Choice Theory has broad application as a scientific tool for analyzing human behavior in situations that require conscious and responsible decision-making. Drawing on this principle, the present study analyzes human behavior in the context of social relationships, with emphasis on autonomy.

Glasser's Choice Theory is theoretically consistent with theories of psychological development, including those of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg, and emphasizes the gradual process of cognitive, emotional, and moral development (Ghorbanpour Lofmajani, 2023). Glasser argues that individuals' capacity to make responsible choices depends on the completion of stages of psychological development, and failure to complete these stages may result in an inability to satisfy basic needs, with consequences such as anxiety, depression, or social isolation (Kadhim, 2025). By highlighting the importance of emotional maturity and autonomy, this theory provides a scientific framework for analyzing human behavior in social situations that require coordination between individual needs and collective requirements. Given the theory's emphasis on gradual developmental processes, it may be used as a tool for examining conditions in which conscious decision-making is essential for satisfying basic needs. Using this theoretical framework, the present study provides a scientific analysis of human behavior in social relationships and emphasizes the importance of alignment between basic needs and responsible choices. Accordingly, Glasser's Choice Theory serves as the foundation for explaining human behavior in this research.

4. Child Marriage in Iran: Reproduction of Cycles of Social Inequality

Child marriage, as a phenomenon permitted under Article 1041 of the Iranian Civil Code with the guardian's authorization and a determination of the child's best interests for persons below the legal age—13 years for girls and 15 years for boys—faces complex legal, social, and psychological challenges. This legal institution, rooted in Imamiyyah jurisprudence, lacks precise and scientific criteria for evaluating the child's best interests and often remains dependent on decisions based on custom or economic considerations. This situation is

inconsistent with the principles of children's rights and international conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). From a social perspective, early marriage, particularly in deprived regions, is prevalent under the influence of structural factors such as poverty, gender inequality, and cultural norms, and it deprives children of fundamental rights, including education and individual development (Pourabbasi et al., 2022). This phenomenon reproduces a cycle of social and economic inequalities and hinders the realization of sustainable development.

The consequences of child marriage in Iran can be examined from physical, psychological, and social perspectives and have long-term negative effects on individual and social well-being. From a physical perspective, early marriage, particularly among girls, is associated with medical risks such as complications of early pregnancy, high-risk childbirth, and premature birth, which can lead to physical problems and developmental disabilities in children (Mousavi et al., 2020). From a psychological perspective, children who enter married life before completing the stages of cognitive and emotional development experience psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem because they lack the necessary capacity to perform the complex roles of spouse and parent (Majdi et al., 2023). These findings are consistent with Erikson's theories of psychosocial development, which emphasize the need to complete identity formation before undertaking social responsibilities (Omran Pour & Mohammadmoradi, 2011). An inability to manage emotions and the absence of life skills intensify these consequences (Javadian et al., 2019).

From a social perspective, child marriage results in educational deprivation, reduced employment opportunities, and weakened social networks, and its negative consequences for quality of life and societal development are evident. Children who marry at a young age are often deprived of access to formal education and experience social isolation and reduced autonomy, which lead to economic and emotional dependence on a spouse and diminished decision-making power (Valadkhani et al., 2016). These consequences conflict with the principles of William Glasser's Choice Theory, which emphasizes the importance of satisfying basic needs such as freedom and power. Furthermore, early marriage may reproduce unhealthy family patterns,

including domestic violence and marital dissatisfaction, thereby perpetuating a cycle of social harms (Zarei Mahmoudabadi & Zarei, 2021).

5. The Role of Psychological Maturity in Marriage: Alignment with Fundamental Human Needs

Psychological maturity, unlike physical maturity, refers to an individual's readiness to accept the emotional, social, and psychological responsibilities of shared life. This form of maturity concerns an individual's ability to manage emotions, make conscious decisions, and assume complex roles such as spousehood and parenthood. Since marriage is a long-term and complex commitment, an individual must be able to satisfy both their own fundamental needs and those of their spouse within this relationship. According to Glasser's Choice Theory, human beings are capable of satisfying their basic needs through responsible choices; these needs include survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun. Therefore, psychological maturity enables individuals to make conscious and responsible choices in important areas of life, especially marriage.

6. The Relationship Between Psychological Maturity and Psychological and Social Well-Being in Marriage

Persons who marry at a young age, particularly if they have not yet attained psychological maturity, may lack the capacity necessary to manage emotions and establish healthy relationships. This issue is particularly evident in early marriages, in which the parties are still forming their personal and social identities. In other words, from a psychological perspective, individuals reach a stage during different developmental periods at which they can satisfy their needs independently and in a balanced manner. In this regard, early marriage in the absence of psychological maturity may lead to psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and dissatisfaction with married life (Farahmand et al., 2020). According to Glasser's theory, these problems result from the inability to make conscious choices to satisfy individual and relational basic needs.

7. Psychological Maturity and Competence in Performing Marital and Parenting Roles

One of the fundamental dimensions of psychological maturity is an individual's competence in performing marital and parenting roles. Upon forming a family, spouses encounter a range of responsibilities and must reach mutual understanding on many details of everyday life (Ameri & Vaziri Nasab, 2023). A successful marriage requires an individual's ability to manage conflicts, communicate effectively with a life partner, and create a supportive environment within the family. These needs can be effectively met only when the individual has attained psychological maturity and can understand and manage both their own emotional needs and those of their spouse. According to Choice Theory, which emphasizes the importance of conscious and responsible choices, a person entering married life who has not developed sufficiently from a psychological perspective will not be able to perform marital and parenting duties. Therefore, psychological maturity is a necessary condition for a successful marriage.

8. The Necessity of Considering Psychological Maturity in Assessing the Validity of Marriage Under Iranian Law

Although the Iranian Civil Code emphasizes physical maturity as the principal criterion of eligibility for marriage and has, in this respect, moved somewhat away from jurisprudential principles, this criterion cannot fully guarantee the success or validity of marriage. Many early marriages based on physical maturity are accompanied by psychological and social problems that have long-term negative effects on the parties and their families. In particular, in such marriages, the individual has not attained sufficient psychological maturity to manage the emotional and social needs of married life. According to Glasser's Choice Theory, to ensure success in marriage, the basic needs of the individual and their life partner must be satisfied in a balanced manner. Therefore, in addition to physical maturity, psychological maturity should be incorporated as one of the essential conditions for the validity of marriage in order to prevent the psychological and social harms arising from early marriages.

9. Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that, in the Iranian legal system, the validity conditions of marriage are primarily focused on physical maturity as the main criterion, whereas psychological and social dimensions receive less consideration. Although physical maturity is regarded as a necessary condition from jurisprudential and legal perspectives, it is only one component of marital capacity and cannot alone constitute a complete criterion for assessing an individual's readiness to assume the responsibilities of married life. By using Glasser's Choice Theory, which emphasizes the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, the present study showed that marriage should occur when an individual is able to satisfy these needs, including survival, love and belonging, freedom, power, and fun. This study emphasizes that, in addition to physical maturity, psychological maturity should be regarded as a principal criterion for assessing eligibility for marriage. Indeed, individuals should be able to understand and manage their own psychological needs and those of their life partner in order to make conscious and responsible decisions. Therefore, it is recommended that, in reforms concerning the validity conditions of marriage, the legislator should consider psychological and social maturity, alongside physical maturity, as essential conditions.

The present study emphasizes the importance of considering fundamental human needs, based on Glasser's theory, in the process of assessing the child's best interests in early marriages. Particularly when prospective spouses have not attained psychological maturity, the assessment of the child's best interests should be based not only on the age of physical maturity but also on the individual's ability to meet their own basic needs and those of their life partner. As stated above, these needs include belonging, freedom, power, and fun; if these needs are appropriately satisfied, the success and stability of marriage may be anticipated.

It appears that, to prevent the psychological and social harms arising from early marriage, legal changes should be made that place the satisfaction of individuals' fundamental needs at the center of attention. Such changes may effectively protect the rights of children and adolescents and contribute to the stability of marital relationships and the promotion of the psychological and

social well-being of society. This is because early marriages, particularly in circumstances where psychological maturity has not been fully attained, may lead to psychological and social crises for the individual and the family.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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