

***CHILD-FREE CHOICES AND CONTRADICTIONS:  
NAVIGATING DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES***

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**ABSTRACT**

The choice to remain childless within a marriage continues to be a controversial topic in Indonesia, particularly within Muslim communities. This is due to the belief that it contradicts the intended purpose of marriage as outlined in Indonesian rules, Islamic law, societal standards, and cultural beliefs, particularly those of a religious nature. Social media has recently played a significant role in popularizing the concept of being child-free, thereby contributing to its growing popularity. This phenomenon has elicited diverse viewpoints from Islamic academics and community leaders in Indonesia. This article seeks to explore the perspectives of imams from different madzhab in Islamic law, as well as Islamic legal personalities, regarding the increasing trend of childlessness among young individuals in Indonesia. This work employs a descriptive research methodology, specifically utilizing a literature review strategy. The primary data sources were acquired from written literature, scientific journals, books, and other relevant sources. The study's findings clarify that couples choose to be childfree for various reasons, including financial constraints, educational and health considerations, and a desire to prevent global overpopulation. This phenomenon has garnered global attention since 1972 and continues to do so, not only in Indonesia but worldwide. According to the ulama, childlessness is strictly prohibited in Islam as it involves the deliberate cessation of human reproductive function. Religious leaders should address this issue by educating and motivating young individuals to embrace Islamic spiritual principles. This phenomenon will negatively impact humanity, and every muslim should avoid it as it against Islamic techings. In conclusion this child free trend should countermeasures by education and others effective methods include using the social media to protect humanity in the future, especially children

**Keywords:** *Child free, Contradictions, Diverse, Perspectives*

## INTRODUCTION

Children are a mandate and a gift from God almighty, and they are crucial to the renewal of a nation.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, they have the same rights as other group of citizens, and they must be protected and care for, as mentioned in our constitution.<sup>2</sup> Basically, when someone plans to marry and start a family, the major goal is to follow the apostle's sunnah and avoid wicked activities. Another wise decision is to have offspring in order to perpetuate the family lineage and to raise a quality generation as a hope for the future.<sup>3</sup>

The decision of married couples to remain childless, while not a novel phenomenon, has been referred to as "Child Free" since 1972, as noted by Miftah Alkausar citing Agrillo and Nellini. This choice is influenced by a multitude of factors, including financial, cultural, educational, and health considerations.<sup>4</sup> Some contend that human population levels are excessive (overpopulation) and that numerous infants are abandoned by their parents, despite Allah SWT stating in the Qur'an, Surat Al-An'am verse 151, that He is the one who bestows blessings upon children. The family constitutes the fundamental unit of society, playing a crucial role in national development. The resilience of each family member must be cultivated through fundamental values to navigate diverse challenges.<sup>5</sup>

Childfree refers to the lifelong deliberate decision to refrain from having children, encompassing the avoidance of biological, step, or adopted offspring. Stobert and Kemeny asserted that the childfree demographic comprises individuals who elect not to procreate based on personal preference. This topic has recently gained significant attention due to a statement made by a popular Indonesian YouTuber, along with remarks from other public figures that have elicited responses from the broader community and religious leaders.<sup>6</sup> The predominant perspective among Indonesians is that children are the primary objective of marriage; hence, many childless couples exert considerable effort to conceive. Thus, GS's assertion is regarded as atypical and inconsistent with Islamic teachings.<sup>7</sup> In Islam, children are regarded as a blessing and a source of sustenance, with parents aspiring for the prayers of a virtuous kid upon their demise. This article will examine the perspectives of imams from the Islamic school of law regarding the problem of child-free living and the initiatives to solve this issue in Indonesia.

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<sup>1</sup> Romi Asmara Laila M Rasyid, "Prinsip Adat Aceh Tentang Perwalian Anak Korban Gempa," *Dinamika Hukum* 11, no. 2 (2011): 535–46.

<sup>2</sup> Oleh : Purwanto, "Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Anak Sebagai Korban Tindak Pidana Dalam Perspektif Hukum Positif Indonesia," *Jurnal Idea Hukum* 6, no. 1 (2020): 77–95, <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/>.

<sup>3</sup> Romi Asmara and Laila M Rasyid, "Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Anak Perempuan Korban Kejahatan Kesusilaan Di Kota Lhokseumawe," *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 3, no. 2 (n.d.): 197–215.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Miftah Alkausar and Ita Rahmania Kusumawati, "Child-Free Lifestyle in Muslim Societies: A Review of Islamic Law and Indonesian Kiai Figures Perspective," *Fikri : Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya* 8, no. 2 (November 21, 2023): 138–52, <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v8i2.3862>.

<sup>5</sup> Desi Asmaret, "Dampak Child Free Terhadap Ketahanan Keluarga Di Indonesia," *ADHKI: JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC FAMILY LAW* 5, no. 1 (July 24, 2023): 73–89, <https://doi.org/10.37876/adhki.v5i1.108>.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Miftah Alkausar and Ita Rahmania Kusumawati, "Child-Free Lifestyle in Muslim Societies: A Review of Islamic Law and Indonesian Kiai Figures Perspective."

<sup>7</sup> Desi Rahman et al., "Childfree Dalam Perspektif Islam: Solusi Atau Kontroversi?," *Jurnal Wanita Dan Keluarga* 4, no. 1 (July 13, 2023): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jwk.7964>.

## Literature Review

The phrase "child-free" emerged due to the societal perception of women, which is often evaluated depending on their reproductive output. Over time, women have gained the autonomy to make the decision to remain child-free.<sup>8</sup>

Islam is a religion that it's the doctrine of *rahmatin lil alamin*, as the legal framework established within Islam encompasses all matters, from the minutest to the most significant, due to the comprehensive nature of Islamic teachings. According to the Al-Quran and Hadith, solutions to difficulties throughout time remain applicable as guidance, as Islamic scholars will be safeguarded if they consistently adhere to the principles of the Al-Quran and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah, Shalallahul alaihi wassalam. The concept of being childfree generally entails a resolve to abstain from having children. In the Qur'an, specifically in Surah Ali-Imran verses 14, 38, and 39, it is articulated that: "The love of boundless pleasures, offspring, limitless wealth, gold, cattle, select horses, and livestock is appealing to humanity, alongside the Messenger of Allah." The essence of existence in this world lies in delight, and with Allah is the most favorable destination for return. Surah Ali-Imran, verse 14. This passage articulates the joy of matrimony and the blessing of family. Human beings possess sexual desires that become increasingly challenging to suppress after an individual's cells reach maturity. Couples were established because every individual inherently desires sexual fulfillment. While individuals may experience contentment in solitude during their sexual experiences, this sentiment is not enduring. Intimate and profound relationships with others enhance cellular resilience, enabling individuals to confront adversities more effectively. This is the rationale for human marriage, family formation, community establishment, and nation-building.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, in the verse pertaining to the Marriage Law (QS. Al-Rūm [30]: 21), it states: "Among His signs is that He created for you from among yourselves spouses, so that you may find tranquility in them." He has interposed feelings of love and affection between you. Verily, inside this are evidence of Allah's magnificence for those who contemplate. (QS. Al-Rūm [30]: 21). The term "child-free" encompasses three distinct interpretations. Specifically:

1. Childfree refers to a mutual decision by spouses to refrain from procreation during their marriage.
2. Childfree refers to a decision made by an individual or couple to forgo parenthood.
3. Choosing to be childfree is an aberrant decision that contradicts human nature as a creation of God.<sup>10</sup>

The choice to remain childfree is often influenced by factors such as

1. a challenging economy, which may exacerbate familial burdens and complicate life circumstances.
2. Psychological factors, particularly an unhappy upbringing marked by trauma, may lead an individual to forgo parenthood due to the fear that their offspring would endure similar experiences. Children are regarded as the forthcoming victims.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Mohamad Hadi, Mahdavi Ardakani, and Arezo Rashidi, "Status of Guardianship, Alimony and Inheritance of Illegitimate Children in Islam," *World Scientific News* 44 (2016): 291–301.

<sup>9</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'ān*, Volume 10, hlm. 655

<sup>10</sup> Olga Gouni et al., "Childlessness: Concept Analysis," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 3 (February 1, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19031464>.

<sup>11</sup> Asmaret, "Dampak Child Free Terhadap Ketahanan Keluarga Di Indonesia."

### 3. Health Parameter

Health is typically the primary rationale for a couple's decision to remain childfree. For instance, underage marriage and protracted illness are significant factors. .<sup>12</sup>

### 4. Culture

Indonesia continues to uphold a culture influenced by religion, characterized by societal practices that favor large families, encapsulated in the saying "many children, many fortunes." Consequently, the decision to remain childfree is regarded as a deviation from local customs and cultural norms.

### 5. Human overpopulation

The childfree choice is regarded as a measure to safeguard the planet and depleting natural resources..<sup>13</sup>

6. Environmental circumstances are regarded as a contributing reason for the abandonment of children by their parents, or for the perception of children as an investment for old age. This action is deemed rather egocentric and imprudent. .<sup>14</sup>

## Discussion

In the Qur'anic verse Al Baqarah 187, it is stated, "and seek what Allah has ordained for you (namely, children)." It signifies that Allah SWT instructs us to procreate by participating in biological interactions with one's partner. The Quran serves as unequivocal evidence that Islam ardently promotes procreation within the context of marriage and the biological bond between spouses. Concurrently, it forbids individuals from refusing to procreate when a valid means to do so exists in accordance with Allah's regulations. It is believed that one of the blessings bestowed by Allah SWT is children; thus, procreation is encouraged to increase progeny and broaden the network of future preachers, rendering the choice to remain childless antithetical to Islamic legal principles. The primary objective of marriage is procreation, one of its fundamental purposes.

Apart from being fitrah, the presence of children in a household or family is a means of worship to gain rewards, and gain happiness for their parents in this world and the hereafter. This confirmed by Allah SWT in the Qur'an surah Ali Imran verse 14 " Adorned for humanity's affection towards diverse pleasures manifested through women, children, and the incessant accumulation of money in the guise of gold, silver, select horses, animals, and arable land. The joy of existence in the world, alongside God, is the ideal destination for return. The word *baniina* refers to the presence of children in a house hold as a part of human nature for which we should be grateful.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Any Sani and Rachmad Hidayat, "Childfree : Household Readiness in The Millenial Generation from The Perspective of Islamic Law," *Technium Social Sciences Journal* 50 (2023): 251–56, [www.techniumscience.com](http://www.techniumscience.com).

<sup>13</sup> Gouni et al., "Childlessness: Concept Analysis."

<sup>14</sup> Rahman et al., "Childfree Dalam Perspektif Islam: Solusi Atau Kontroversi?"

<sup>15</sup> Dyah Syifa et al., "Childfree in the View of Fiqh Al-Aulawiyat and Human Rights," n.d., <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/childfree>.

It is essential to comprehend the rationale behind the childfree choice with care and insight to convey the perspectives of scholars from the madzhab and to enlighten the younger generation in the contemporary digital age, which remains susceptible to the influences of social media, Western culture, and prevailing trends.

As already mention above, the most dominant factor actually economic. There is a fear that the parents will not able to provide a decent life to the child and become dzalim to the rights of the child. The mental or psychological factors also one of the reasons. This is also due to lack of knowledge possessed by the couple in educating children and knowledge of becoming parents. So the must done is learning knowledge in educating children and parent, rather than choosing to reject the presence of children (childfree).

The idea of childbirth in Islamic jurisprudence is defined as an agreement to refuse the birth or conception of a child, either prior to or following the child's birth. In the examination of Islamic jurisprudence, there exist other analogous scenarios, specifically the denial of a child's existence post-conception within the woman's womb, which may occur, firstly, by the absence of marriage altogether. Secondly, by abstaining from procreation post-nuptials. Third, by refraining from ejaculation or avoiding releasing sperm into the uterus following penile insertion into the vagina. Fourth, through '*azl*' or the expulsion of sperm outside the vagina.

From the standpoint of supine sexual intercourse, it is not outside the couple's intentions to engage in sexual relations. In fiqh, the term '*Azl*' refers to a practice interpreted linguistically as withdrawal. In this context, '*azl*' denotes the removal of the penis from the wife's vagina during ejaculation to facilitate the unobstructed flow of semen into her vagina, or the use of a device by the wife to prevent semen from entering her vagina. Some scholars oppose this implementation, particularly Ibnul Hazm, who references the hadith: "From Julmadah bin Wahab, brother of Ulkasyah, who stated: I was present with the Messenger of Allah in one of his gatherings and remarked: I nearly prohibited al-Ghailah, but upon reflection on the Romans and Persians, I discovered that their groups typically give birth to their children while pregnant without any repercussions of childbirth." They inquired of the Messenger of Allah on '*azl*', to which he said that '*azl*' refers to the concealed birth of a child.<sup>16</sup>

There are distinctions among the imams of the four schools of jurisprudence regarding the permissibility of '*Azl*'. Imams Malik, Hanafi, and Ahmad bin Hambal permit '*Azl*' with wives during sexual intercourse. For wives who are not slave, it is permissible due to the presence of sexual intercourse with their relatives. Additionally, among the bulls, '*Azl*' is permitted without the need for approval from any party. Imam Syafi'i's school of thought permits '*azl*' unconditionally, viewing it as a banned conduct, and hence does not necessitate specific conditions for the wife or the kid in its application. Nonetheless, the majority of adherents to this ideology assert that this activity is permissible solely under the condition of the wife or child. spouse. The faction endorsing '*azl*' is

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<sup>16</sup> Abu Abdullah Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal, juz III (Beirut): Maktabah al-Islami, t.th, hlm. 68.

founded on the hadith Jabir bin Abdullah reported that the companions of the Prophet practiced *azl* throughout the period of the Qur'an's revelation.”

Bahar stated in his writing that the agreement in marriage not to have children is *Mubah* based on the The Grand Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Sheikh Ali Jumu'ah, stated that being childfree is acceptable (*mubah*) or discouraged (*makruh*). The prophet Muhammad permitted the practice of *azl* to avert pregnancy. The practice of *azl* is permitted by scholars provided there is mutual consent and willingness from the wife. Imam al Ghazali asserts that *azl* is legally allowed; it is neither *makruh* nor *haram*. *Azl* is an action classified as *tarkul afdhal*, which denotes the abandonment of what is preferable, however it does not constitute an unlawful conduct as Imam al-Ghazali articulated in his work, *Ihya Ulum al-Din*.<sup>17</sup> Other scholars, such as Sheikh Muhammad Shalih al Munajjad, argue that the marriage agreement not to have children is contrary to the texts of the shari'a. which instruct muslim to marry to multiply children, and is contrary to the primary purpose of marriage.

Moreover, Childfree status is permissible provided it does not contravene sharia law. According to the *maqasid sharia*, the decision to remain childfree is permissible for reasons related to reproductive health that exclude childbearing. In emergency situations, childfree status is permissible due to the exigent circumstances such as illness that would endanger the health of the wife and potential child if she were to become pregnant.

The decision to remain childfree is a voluntary option that is acceptable under Islamic law; yet, such decisions are often influenced by emotional and egoistic motives that may evolve over time. It is imperative to evaluate this decision by examining the underlying causes and advocating strategies to mitigate the proliferation of the childfree lifestyle among youth, particularly in the current era of ubiquitous internet access. If a significant number of individuals, particularly Muslims, espouse this perspective, it may result in the erosion of Muslim lineage and subsequent generations. Consequently, this trend must be addressed judiciously. The resolution of this issue can be achieved by providing a scientific countermeasure.

1. Muslim scholars can examine and deliberate on this topic to refute any erroneous narratives and enhance awareness for future generations.
2. The function of a religious leader. Religious leaders can instruct their followers by exemplifying the teachings of the Prophet or the ulama from the past, encouraging adherence to Islamic spiritual values and discouraging actions contrary to Islamic teachings.
3. The function of public people and government. Public figures and government utilize regulation, perform research, and comprehend underlying issues to identify solutions, such as providing counseling for families and fostering economic growth

## Conclusion

The meaning of childfree to someone who choose to not having child, and this topic have begun to be viral lately in Indonesia. This is due to the social media information that so easy to access nowadays. Islam is rahmatan lil alamin, which means various things in life are regulated from the samlest things to the largest. To find out the islamic responses to childfree, can reach out various texts and the thoughts of the ulama in interpreting childfree. As one of the purposes of marriage is to have children. It is can conclude that textually is no text in the text that prohibits the choice to be

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<sup>17</sup> Fatimawali Fatimawali, "Childfree in the View of Islam (Qur'an and Hadith)," n.d., <https://jurnal.uindatokarama.ac.id/index.php/iciis/issue/archive>.

childfree if the reason for the choice is daruriyah. in Fiqh prioritis, that the benefit that is certain should not be abandoned because there is damage that just suspected.

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