



CHILDFREE BY CHOICE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW ON ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES AND SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The childfree lifestyle has emerged as a controversial phenomenon in Indonesia, particularly among millennials, challenging traditional Islamic values that emphasize procreation and family continuity. This study systematically explores the childfree phenomenon within an Islamic framework, examining its theological permissibility and adoption patterns in Indonesia. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method with content analysis, this research systematically reviewed 25 journal articles published between 2018 and 2023, selected through PRISMA guidelines. The analysis reveals that while Islam permits temporary birth control methods such as 'azl and contraceptives for legitimate needs within maqasid shari'ah (the objectives of Islamic law), the deliberate and permanent decision to be childfree contradicts the principle of hifz al-nasl (protection of progeny). However, some scholars allow childfree in specific contexts involving urgent needs (masalah daruriyyah). In Indonesia, the adoption of childfree lifestyle is driven by financial concerns (economic instability and high child-rearing costs), personal desires (preservation of marital intimacy and physical appearance), Western liberal ideologies promoting individualism and population control, and psychological factors including various phobias related to pregnancy and parenting. This creates significant tension with traditional Islamic values emphasizing family continuity. This research contributes to the discourse by bridging Islamic teachings and contemporary socio-cultural dynamics, offering guidance for addressing the challenges posed by the childfree phenomenon in Muslim communities while highlighting the need for balanced approaches that consider both religious principles and modern social realities.

Keywords: Childfree, Islamic Perspektif, Practice in Indonesia.

Abstrak

Gaya hidup childfree telah muncul sebagai fenomena kontroversial di Indonesia, khususnya di kalangan milenial, menantang nilai-nilai Islam tradisional yang menekankan prokreasi dan kelangsungan keluarga. Penelitian ini secara sistematis mengeksplorasi fenomena childfree dalam kerangka Islam, mengkaji kebolehan teologisnya dan pola adopsinya di Indonesia. Menggunakan metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) dengan analisis konten, penelitian ini meninjau secara sistematis 25 artikel jurnal yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2018 hingga 2023, dipilih menggunakan pedoman PRISMA. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa Islam mengizinkan

penggunaan metode pengendalian kelahiran sementara seperti 'azl dan kontrasepsi untuk kebutuhan yang sah sesuai dengan prinsip maqasid shari'ah (tujuan hukum Islam), namun keputusan untuk tidak memiliki anak secara permanen bertentangan dengan prinsip hifz al-nasl (perlindungan keturunan). Meskipun demikian, beberapa ulama memperbolehkan childfree dalam konteks tertentu yang melibatkan kebutuhan mendesak (masalah daruriyyah). Di Indonesia, adopsi gaya hidup childfree didorong oleh pertimbangan ekonomi (ketidakstabilan ekonomi dan tingginya biaya membesarkan anak), keinginan pribadi (mempertahankan keintiman pernikahan dan penampilan fisik), pengaruh ideologi liberal Barat yang mempromosikan individualisme dan kontrol populasi, serta faktor psikologis termasuk berbagai fobia terkait kehamilan dan pengasuhan anak. Hal ini menimbulkan ketegangan signifikan dengan nilai-nilai Islam tradisional yang menekankan kelangsungan keluarga. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dengan menjembatani ajaran Islam dan dinamika sosial-budaya kontemporer, menawarkan panduan untuk menghadapi tantangan yang ditimbulkan oleh fenomena childfree dalam komunitas Muslim sambil menyoroti perlunya pendekatan seimbang yang mempertimbangkan prinsip agama dan realitas sosial modern.

Kata Kunci: *Childfree, Hukum Islam, Praktek di Indonesia.*

A. Introduction

In recent times, a noteworthy subject has surfaced, particularly in Indonesia, and it revolves around the idea of leading a child-free lifestyle (Supriatna, 2023). Although the notion of living without children is not novel and has been a topic of discussion in affluent nations throughout history (Agrillo & Nelini, 2008), it has garnered considerable attention in Indonesia following the public revelation by Gita Savitri, a prominent figure, who openly declared on social media her choice to live without children. Subsequently, there has been an increasing trend in adopting a child-free lifestyle, particularly among the millennial generation in Indonesia (Syarifah & Qotadah, 2022; Usman et al., 2023).

Amy Blackstone, a sociologist affiliated with the University of Maine, outlines diverse motives behind the decision of individuals or couples to forgo parenthood. One factor is influenced by their observations of the transformative life shifts experienced by others after becoming parents. Another factor is the desire of child-free couples to preserve the intimacy within their relationship, as they anticipate that this dynamic will undergo changes and limitations with the introduction of children (Syafi et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, the choice of millennials to adopt a child-free lifestyle is influenced by various factors, with economic considerations and financial capacity standing out as particularly pivotal elements in the decision-making process (Hanandita, 2022; Supriatna, 2023).

In the Islamic faith, adherents are encouraged to emulate Prophet Muhammad's lifestyle, which includes entering into matrimony and procreating. Marriage is also viewed as a type of devotion since its objective is to fulfil religious obligations (Kelley et al., 2020). Moreover, nurturing and instructing Muslim offspring is regarded as a supreme spiritual endeavour (Bensaid, 2021). The teachings imparted to children result in rewards for the individual, and these rewards do not diminish any previously earned merits (Syarifah & Qotadah, 2022).

Embracing a child-free lifestyle sparks controversy in Indonesia, particularly because the majority of the population adheres to Islam. This choice is perceived as conflicting with prevalent societal norms in Indonesia, where the prevailing view associates the purpose of marriage with procreation. Indonesia, boasting a birth rate of 2.26, is recognized as a nation supportive of childbirth, and the presence of children is considered crucial in marital relationships by 93% of the population. This perspective is rooted in the belief that children contribute to various societal, economic, cultural, religious, and psychological benefits, serving as a source of peace, social status, income security, cultural succession, fulfilment of religious mandates, and family satisfaction (Azizi et al., 2020; Patnani et al., 2021; Pelu & Dakhoir, 2021).

The exploration of the child-free lifestyle has become a prominent subject in the current era of digitalization, mainly due to its recent emergence in society. As a result, researchers have delved into various facets of child-free living, with studies conducted by Siti Nurjannah and Iffatin Nur examining this lifestyle through the lens of Islamic law (*maqasid as-shari'ah*) via a literature review (Nurjanah & Nur, 2022). Another investigation by Imam Syafi'i et al. focused on child-free perspectives from NU scholars as part of their *bahtsul masail* (Syafi et al., 2023). Furthermore, Ahmad Rezy Meidina and Mega Puspita explored child-free practices in Indonesia based on the perspectives of Islamic organizations in the Kebumen region (Meidina & Puspita, 2023). Finally, Ma'isyatusy Syarifah and Hudzaifah Achmad Qotadah aimed to delve into the child-free concept from the perspective of the Quran (Syarifah & Qotadah, 2022).

From all the conducted studies, it is evident that childfree has been extensively examined from the perspective of the Quran and various Islamic viewpoints, including the views of Islamic scholars and organizations. The current research seeks to involve elements of Islamic education as a foundation for understanding the childfree phenomenon. In this context, the study aims to explore child-free in Islam and its practices in Indonesia.

B. Methodology

This study employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method utilizing content analysis, systematically examining factual text data from several articles on childfree in Islam and its practices in Indonesia. The literature data sources utilized in this research are accredited journals.

1. Literature Search

To search for literature relevant to the research topic, this study employed several data analysis steps, beginning with 1) Formulating the research problem related to childfree in Islam and its practices in Indonesia, 2) Searching for literature on relevant articles, 3) Screening literature based on the research topic, 3) Categorizing and coding instruments, 4) Analyzing and evaluating the collected data, and 5) Concluding.

2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The literature search process in this research began by specifying keywords, namely childfree, childfree in Islam and its Practices in Indonesia, in the main databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar using the Publish or Perish search tool, with the criteria of articles published from 2018 to 2023. The subsequent stage involved determining the inclusion and exclusion criteria for articles focused on the theme, as indicated in the following table:

Table 1.
Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Journal Articles	Book chapters, books, proceedings, reviews
Articles published from 2018-2023	Unpublished articles between 2018-2023
Articles related to childfree, childfree in Islam.	Articles not related to childfree, childfree in Islam

JAS: Volume 7 Nomor 2, 2025

Table 1 illustrates the selected articles for further consideration based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The full text of each article was downloaded, and articles meeting the exclusion criteria were excluded. In other words, articles meeting the inclusion criteria will be reviewed and analyzed in-depth to address the research questions. Thus, the determination of inclusion and exclusion criteria is crucial for creating a high-quality research study. The next stage involves the selection process following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), resulting in the identification of 25 articles related to childfree.

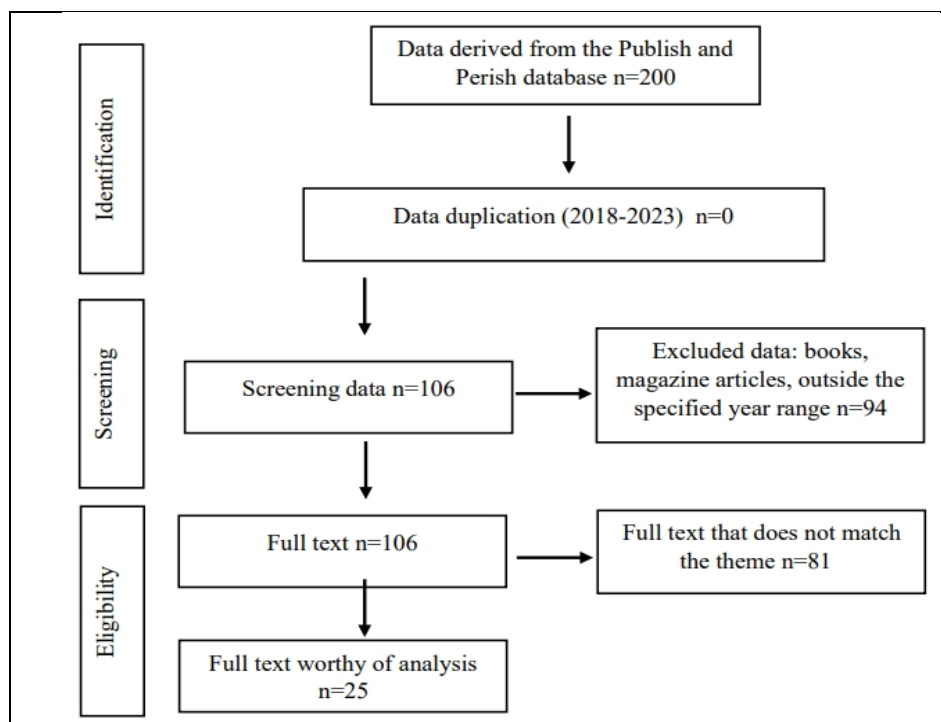


Figure 1. PRISMA Chart for Childfree in Islam

C. Result and Discussion

1. Childfree in Islamic Perspective: An Analysis Through *Maqasid Shari'ah* Framework

Islamic jurisprudence is fundamentally guided by *maqasid shari'ah*, which encompasses the highest objectives set by Allah and His Messenger in establishing Islamic law. Wahbah al-Zuhaili defines *maqasid shari'ah* as the implicit principles and goals of Sharia found in most of its rules, establishing values and objectives considered as the essence and hidden meanings of Sharia (Soediro & Meutia, 2018). Among the five essential objectives (*al-daruriyyat al-khamsah*) are the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), progeny (*hifz al-nasl*), and property (*hifz al-mal*). The principle of *hifz al-nasl* (protection of progeny) serves as the primary lens through which the childfree phenomenon must be analyzed within Islamic jurisprudence. Islam is a compassionate religion that values the parent-child relationship as part of human nature (Bensaid, 2021). This innate connection needs to be understood by the objectives of Sharia, especially in preserving and protecting the offspring (Saputra & Busyro, 2018). Islam encourages every individual to have children through legitimate marriage, and parents also have the responsibility to prepare for education and provide full attention to their children (Meidina & Puspita, 2023). As mentioned in Surah An-Nisa' verse 9, Allah states: "Let those who fear lest they leave behind weak offspring, seek a pact with Allah and say what is right." This verse emphasizes that the encouragement to have many offspring must be accompanied by attention and well-being for the children to live a good life in this world. One way to ensure optimal child education is by managing the spacing between their births (Alimni et al., 2022). However, this does not imply rejecting the existence of children and choosing to be childfree.

Within the framework of *maqasid shari'ah*, the discourse surrounding childfree must distinguish between temporary birth spacing (*tandhim al-nasl*) and permanent rejection of children. The former aligns with legitimate needs (*maslahah*) when based on valid reasons such as health concerns, economic hardship, or educational priorities for existing children. The latter, however, directly contradicts *hifz al-nasl* when it represents an ideological rejection of procreation without compelling justification within Islamic principles.

The ongoing discourse surrounding the choice of a child-free lifestyle, where married couples mutually decide against having children, persists. Opinions on this matter vary, with some supporting the idea, asserting it as the prerogative of each

couple and presenting various arguments. Conversely, some dissent, contending that the essential purpose of marriage is to procreate (Meidina & Puspita, 2023).

To analyze the permissibility of childfree practices, Islamic scholars reference three key mechanisms for birth control, each with varying degrees of acceptability depending on their temporary or permanent nature:

First, *'azl* (coitus interruptus) involves the withdrawal of sperm (pulling out the penis) outside the woman's reproductive organ when a man is about to reach orgasm during sexual intercourse. The intention is to block sperm from reaching the uterus, to prevent fertilization and avoid conception. This idea dates back to the era of the Prophet, as evidenced by a companion seeking guidance from the Prophet on the matter of *'azl*. The concept is also reflected in the stances of Nahdlatul Ulama regarding Family Planning (Syafi et al., 2023).

Similar opinions have also been issued by Sheikh Ali Jum'ah. He stated that not having children (child-free) could be permissible (*Mubah*) or considered makruh, depending on the differences of opinion among scholars. This is because Prophet Muhammad allowed the practice of *'azl* to prevent pregnancy. This is based on a Hadith from Prophet Muhammad narrated by Jabir: "We used to practice *'azl* during the time of the Prophet, and this news reached him, but he did not forbid us" (HR. Muslim)(Bahar, 2022).

Second, modern contraceptive methods include various tools such as intrauterine devices (IUD), implants, injections, condoms, female sterilization (tubectomy), and male sterilization (vasectomy). These tools are utilized to hinder pregnancy or fertilization, as illustrated in the pronouncements of Nahdlatul Ulama concerning Family Planning, encompassing vasectomy, tubectomy, and the usage of spiral contraceptives (IUD) (Syafi et al., 2023). Third, pharmaceutical contraception involves the consumption of pills or other substances capable of delaying or preventing pregnancy. This practice is governed by the decisions of Nahdlatul Ulama regarding Family Planning and contraception, including the use of a vaccine targeting male sperm (Syafi et al., 2023).

In connection to these three key terms, it is crucial to emphasize that the temporary prevention of pregnancy does not equate to a permanent inability to conceive. Moreover, it is essential to ensure cleanliness in the use of the associated materials, including sperm, as they are not deemed repulsive.

Similarly, adopting a child-free lifestyle based on the essential needs (*maṣlaḥah ḍarūriyyat*) is encouraged. Conversely, if the decision to be child-free

contradicts the *maqasid shari'ah*, it is deemed prohibited. *Maqasid shari'ah* encompasses the highest objectives set by Allah and His Messenger in establishing Islamic law. Wahbah al-Zuhaili, on the other hand, defines *maqasid shari'ah* as the implicit principles and goals of Sharia found in most of its rules. These Sharia principles within the legal framework establish values and objectives considered as the essence and hidden meanings of Sharia (Soediro & Meutia, 2018).

It is crucial to emphasize that these three mechanisms are permissible only when they represent temporary prevention of pregnancy, not permanent inability to conceive. The scholarly consensus distinguishes between:

- a. Permissible (*Mubah/Ja'iz*): Temporary birth spacing based on legitimate needs (*darurat* or *hajat*) such as the wife's health conditions, economic difficulties requiring time to stabilize finances, or spacing children for optimal care and education. This aligns with *maslahah daruriyyah* (essential welfare) or *maslahah hajjiyyah* (complementary welfare) within *maqasid shari'ah*.
- b. Prohibited (*Haram*): Permanent rejection of children (childfree as ideology) without valid Islamic justification, as this directly contradicts *hifz al-nasl* and the prophetic tradition encouraging procreation. As mentioned in several hadiths, the Prophet Muhammad encouraged his followers to "marry and multiply, for I will be proud of your numbers among the nations on the Day of Judgment."
- c. The application of *maqasid shari'ah* to childfree thus reveals that Islam accommodates practical needs for birth spacing while maintaining the fundamental principle of protecting and continuing progeny. The key distinction lies in the intention (*niyyah*) and permanence of the decision: temporary spacing for legitimate welfare (*maslahah*) is different from ideological rejection of procreation, which violates the objectives of Islamic law.

2. Legal Status and Ideological Tensions: Childfree in Contemporary Islamic Discourse

Creating laws on contemporary issues demands extensive effort, not only relying on the perspectives of scholars but also incorporating social and cultural values as integral components (Dahlan et al., 2019). Given that childfree represents a relatively new phenomenon in Indonesia requiring fresh *ijtihad* (legal reasoning), understanding its legal status necessitates examining both its ideological foundations and its incompatibility with core Islamic principles.

Two crucial aspects distinguish the childfree phenomenon from traditional Islamic family planning. First, childfree transcends mere lifestyle choice and constitutes an ideological position that fundamentally rejects childbirth, adoption, or having children for married couples, even when they possess healthy reproductive organs and are capable of conceiving (Alkausar & Kusumawati, 2022). This decision is made proactively by the spouses from the outset, shaping their principles and influencing various aspects of their lives (Nurjanah & Nur, 2022; Septiana, 2022). This stands in stark contrast to the positions advocated by classical scholars like Imam Ghazali, contemporary authorities like Sheikh Ali Jumah, and Indonesian organizations like LBMNU (Lajnah Bahtsul Masa'il Nahdlatul Ulama), which focus on birth spacing or regulation while maintaining openness to the possibility of having children in the future. The fundamental difference lies in the finality and ideological nature of the childfree decision versus the temporary and need-based nature of Islamic family planning.

Second, the concept of childfree originated in Western contexts, driven by the expansion of liberal individualist ideologies that prioritize personal autonomy and self-actualization over communal and familial obligations (Gouni et al., 2022). This includes Western perspectives on population control, environmental concerns (anti-natalism), and the redefinition of children's role within the family from essential members to optional lifestyle choices (Chrastil, 2019). These ideological foundations fundamentally clash with Islamic values that view children as amanah (sacred trust), qurrata a'yun (coolness of the eyes), and sources of ongoing rewards (sadaqah jariyah) through righteous upbringing. To some extent, widespread adoption of childfree ideology could lead to depopulation, loss of working-age population, and disruption of intergenerational social structures—outcomes that contradict the Islamic emphasis on ummah (community) continuity and strength.

From the Islamic jurisprudential perspective, there exists no analogous term to childfree as an ideological rejection of children, particularly for married couples capable of reproduction. The protection of progeny (*hifz al-nasl*) constitutes one of the five essential objectives (maqasid al-daruriyyah) of Islamic law, making its preservation obligatory rather than optional (Nasrulloh et al., 2021; Syafi et al., 2023). While Islam permits birth spacing for legitimate reasons within the framework of maslahah, it does not accommodate the permanent and ideological rejection of procreation that characterizes the childfree movement.

The legal reasoning (*istinbat al-hukm*) regarding childfree must therefore consider:

- a. The distinction between means and ends: contraceptive methods are permissible means for legitimate ends (health, economic stability, optimal child-rearing), but become impermissible when employed toward the end of permanent childlessness without valid justification.
- b. The principle of *sadd al-dhara'i* (blocking the means to harm): even if individual childfree choices might seem personally justifiable, their normalization as a social trend threatens the collective welfare (*maslahah 'ammah*) by potentially undermining demographic stability and weakening the Muslim ummah.
- c. The balance between individual rights and collective obligations: while Islam recognizes individual autonomy in certain matters, the continuation of progeny represents a communal obligation (*fard kifayah*) for the Muslim community as a whole, which individual choices should not systematically undermine.

Contemporary Indonesian Islamic scholars face the challenge of formulating legal positions (*fatwa*) that address childfree while respecting both timeless Islamic principles and evolving social realities. This requires: (1) Distinguishing clearly between permissible temporary family planning and impermissible permanent rejection of children, (2) Addressing the underlying socio-economic pressures (high cost of living, inadequate social support systems, career demands) that drive childfree choices, (3) Developing Islamic alternatives that accommodate legitimate welfare concerns while maintaining commitment to *hifz al-nasl*, (4) Engaging with the Western liberal ideological foundations of childfree to articulate an authentically Islamic vision of marriage, family, and procreation

The formation of new legal frameworks must thus navigate between rigid conservatism that ignores genuine hardships and liberal accommodation that compromises fundamental Islamic principles.

3. Factors Causing Married Couples to Choose Childfree in Indonesia: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis

The adoption of childfree lifestyle in Indonesia reflects complex intersections of economic pressures, cultural shifts, psychological factors, and Western ideological influences. Understanding these factors requires moving beyond

surface-level categorization to examine the deeper socio-cultural dynamics at play in contemporary Indonesian society.

Numerous factors contribute to the decision of married couples to opt for a child-free marriage. First, financial and economic considerations play a significant role. In contemporary Indonesia, the rising cost of living, particularly in urban centers like Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung, has made child-rearing financially prohibitive for many young couples. Data from the Indonesian Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that the cost of raising a child from birth to university graduation in major cities can exceed 1 billion rupiah, placing enormous pressure on middle-class families. This includes historical instances of slavery, where men practised "azl" with their female slaves to avoid offspring, allowing them to retain ownership of the female slaves. Economic concerns also come into play, as individuals worry that having children might make their lives challenging, requiring increased effort and potentially leading to involvement in illicit activities (Daulay et al., 2023; Indah & Zuhdi, 2022). Furthermore, the precarious nature of millennial employment characterized by contract work, gig economy participation, and limited job security creates uncertainty about long-term financial stability necessary for responsible parenting. The fear that children would necessitate financial sacrifices compromising quality of life, career advancement, or personal goals drives many couples toward childfree decisions.

Second, considerations related to sexuality, physical appearance, and marital dynamics contribute to the choice of a child-free lifestyle. Couples may opt for this path to preserve the wife's physical attractiveness and the quality of her body for enduring and satisfying sexual activities, while also mitigating the risks associated with childbirth (Meidina & Puspita, 2023; Sani'atin & Hidayat, 2023). This factor reveals the influence of consumer culture and beauty standards that valorize youthful appearance and sexual desirability over maternal identity. The medicalization of pregnancy and childbirth, highlighting potential complications, body changes, and health risks, also contributes to anxiety about motherhood. Additionally, some couples prioritize preserving marital intimacy and romantic connection, fearing that children would transform their relationship from partners to co-parents, reducing quality time, spontaneity, and mutual attention.

Third, cultural and gender-based misconceptions, though less prevalent in contemporary Indonesia, still influence some childfree decisions. Traditional patriarchal attitudes that devalue daughters or fear female offspring as financial

burdens persist in certain communities, though this has diminished significantly with increased education and gender equality awareness. This belief system, rooted in ancient Arab customs of killing daughters, reinforces a sense of male dominance over females, perpetuating a cultural perception that has relegated women to secondary roles for centuries. More significantly, contemporary gender dynamics create pressure particularly on women, who face the "double burden" of career expectations and traditional maternal roles. The societal expectation that women should sacrifice professional ambitions for motherhood, combined with inadequate workplace support for working mothers (limited maternity leave, lack of childcare facilities, discrimination against pregnant employees), pushes some women toward childfree choices as a form of resistance against gendered expectations.

Fourth, psychological factors and phobias, which are psychiatric disorders characterized by intense fear of specific objects or situations, serve as another reason for choosing a child-free lifestyle. The most clinically significant phobia related to childfree decisions is tokophobia (fear of pregnancy and childbirth), which affects approximately 14% of women globally and can range from mild anxiety to severe panic disorder requiring psychiatric intervention. Various phobias experienced by individuals who opt for a child-free existence include Aphenphosmophobia (fear of touch), acrophobia (fear of irregularity or regularity), atelophobia (fear of imperfection), atychiphobia (fear of failure), ecophobia (fear of home), ephebiphobia (fear of teenagers), gamophobia (fear of marriage), tokophobia (fear of pregnancy), obesophobia (fear of weight gain), philophobia (fear of love), pedophobia (fear of children), and tokophobia (fear of childbirth) (Meidina & Puspita, 2023; Pertiwi et al., 2023). Beyond clinical phobias, broader anxieties about parental adequacy, fear of repeating negative childhood experiences, concerns about bringing children into an uncertain world (climate change, political instability, pandemic threats), and perfectionist tendencies that make the enormous responsibility of parenting overwhelming all contribute to childfree decisions.

Fifth, the role of social media and digital culture cannot be overlooked in contemporary Indonesia. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have created spaces where childfree lifestyles are normalized, celebrated, and defended through online communities that provide validation and counter-narratives to pro-natalist social pressure. Influencers like Gita Savitri who publicly embrace childfree choices create visible role models for younger Indonesians questioning traditional life scripts. The exposure to Western lifestyle trends through digital media

accelerates the adoption of individualist values emphasizing personal fulfillment, career achievement, and lifestyle freedom over familial obligations. Simultaneously, social media amplifies the perceived difficulties of parenting through viral content about sleepless nights, financial strain, loss of personal time, and marital stress, creating a negative framing of parenthood.

Sixth, urbanization and changing value systems fundamentally alter how Indonesians conceptualize family and success. The migration from rural to urban areas shifts individuals from extended family structures with built-in childcare support to nuclear family arrangements requiring more intensive parental involvement without communal assistance. Urban lifestyles emphasizing career achievement, consumerism, travel, and personal development compete with the time and resource demands of child-rearing. The erosion of traditional communal values (*gotong royong*, multigenerational households) means that childcare becomes a privatized burden rather than a shared community responsibility, making parenthood more isolating and demanding. For urban professionals, children represent opportunity costs missed promotions, career interruptions, reduced earning potential that rural agricultural societies did not face in the same way.

Finally, the tension between global liberal values and local Islamic traditions creates ideological conflicts for Indonesian Muslims navigating modernity. The childfree phenomenon reflects broader anxieties about Western cultural imperialism, secularization, and the erosion of Islamic identity in an increasingly globalized world. For some conservative Muslims, childfree represents not merely a lifestyle choice but a symbolic rejection of Islamic values in favor of Western individualism. However, for progressive Muslims, the question becomes how to reconcile Islamic teachings with contemporary realities of women's education, career participation, economic pressures, and changing gender roles. The absence of clear, widely-accepted Islamic frameworks for addressing these modern dilemmas leaves many young Muslims feeling caught between religious obligations and practical impossibilities.

This multi-dimensional analysis reveals that childfree decisions in Indonesia rarely stem from a single factor but represent complex negotiations between economic realities, cultural expectations, psychological well-being, gender politics, digital influences, and religious commitments. Addressing the childfree phenomenon therefore requires holistic approaches that tackle underlying socio-

economic conditions (affordable housing, childcare support, workplace flexibility, healthcare access) while also providing Islamic guidance that acknowledges these genuine challenges without compromising core principles of *hifz al-nasl*.

D. Conclusion

This systematic literature review reveals several critical findings regarding the childfree phenomenon from an Islamic perspective and its practice in Indonesia: First, regarding Islamic jurisprudence, the study establishes that Islam does not recognize childfree as a permanent ideological rejection of children, but permits temporary birth regulation practices such as *'azl*, contraceptive devices, and pharmaceutical methods, provided they align with the principles of *maqasid shari'ah*. The fundamental distinction lies between permissible temporary birth spacing (*tandhim al-nasl*) for legitimate needs (*maslahah daruriyyah* or *hajjiyyah*) such as health concerns, economic hardship, or optimal child education and impermissible permanent rejection of procreation that contradicts *hifz al-nasl* (protection of progeny). While some scholars permit childfree in extraordinary circumstances involving urgent needs (*maslahah daruriyyah*), the mainstream position maintains that permanent, ideological childlessness fundamentally conflicts with the objectives of Islamic law and prophetic tradition.

Second, regarding ideological tensions, the research highlights that childfree as practiced in Indonesia represents not merely a personal choice but an imported Western liberal ideology emphasizing individual autonomy, self-actualization, and freedom from traditional obligations. This ideology fundamentally clashes with Islamic values viewing children as *amanah* (sacred trust), sources of ongoing rewards (*sadaqah jariyah*), and essential for ummah continuity. The normalization of childfree could lead to demographic shifts depopulation, loss of working-age population, weakening of intergenerational bonds that undermine both family structures and societal cohesion, raising concerns about collective welfare (*maslahah 'ammah*) beyond individual rights.

Third, regarding factors driving childfree adoption in Indonesia, the analysis identifies multiple interconnected dimensions: (a) Economic pressures: rising costs of child-rearing in urban Indonesia, precarious millennial employment, and financial anxieties about providing quality life for children; (b) Gender and marital dynamics: desires to preserve physical appearance and sexual intimacy, resistance against gendered expectations placing disproportionate burdens on women, inadequate workplace support for working mothers; (c) Psychological factors:

particularly tokophobia (fear of pregnancy/childbirth) and broader anxieties about parental adequacy, world uncertainties, and perfectionist concerns; (d) Cultural shifts: urbanization eroding extended family support systems, social media normalizing childfree choices and amplifying negative parenting narratives, exposure to Western lifestyle values through digital platforms; (e) Value conflicts: tensions between Islamic obligations and modern realities of education, career participation, economic pressures, and changing gender roles.

Fourth, this research contributes to Islamic scholarship by providing a comprehensive systematic review that integrates classical Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), maqasid shari'ah framework, and contemporary socio-cultural analysis. It offers guidance for Muslim communities, scholars, and policymakers in addressing childfree challenges through balanced approaches that: (a) distinguish clearly between permissible temporary family planning and impermissible permanent rejection of children; (b) acknowledge legitimate socio-economic hardships driving childfree decisions while maintaining commitment to Islamic principles; (c) develop holistic solutions addressing underlying structural issues (affordable housing, childcare support, workplace flexibility, healthcare access) rather than merely condemning individual choices; (d) articulate authentic Islamic alternatives to Western liberal frameworks that can accommodate modern realities without compromising *hifz al-nasl*.

Limitations of this study include: (a) potential bias in literature selection limited to English-language journals published 2018-2023, which may exclude important Indonesian-language sources and earlier historical perspectives; (b) absence of direct empirical data from Indonesian couples who have chosen childfree lifestyles, meaning the analysis relies on secondary sources rather than lived experiences; (c) limited geographical scope focusing primarily on urban contexts, potentially overlooking rural perspectives; (d) lack of longitudinal data to assess whether childfree decisions remain permanent or evolve over time.

Future research directions should include: (a) qualitative studies directly engaging Indonesian childfree couples to understand their decision-making processes, lived experiences, and evolving perspectives; (b) comparative analysis across different Indonesian regions (urban vs. rural, Java vs. outer islands) and religious communities (NU vs. Muhammadiyah perspectives); (c) examination of Islamic educational institutions' approaches to teaching family planning and parenthood in ways that address contemporary challenges; (d) development of

Islamic counseling frameworks for couples navigating decisions about childbearing in modern contexts; (e) policy analysis of how Indonesian laws and workplace regulations could better support Muslim families' ability to fulfill both religious obligations and economic necessities.

In conclusion, addressing the childfree phenomenon in Indonesian Muslim communities requires moving beyond simplistic condemnation or uncritical acceptance toward nuanced engagement that preserves Islamic principles while acknowledging genuine challenges faced by contemporary Muslims navigating modernity.

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