

Childfree, millennial marriage disorientation, and Islamic family law perspectives

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Abstract

Childfree refers to the conscious decision of an individual or couple to abstain from parenthood, independent of biological or adoptive possibilities as a lifestyle choice unrelated to fertility. This study investigated childfree contents on social media, specifically in Instagram, among millennials. Additionally, it delved into Islamic family law perspectives on childfree living. Utilizing qualitative content analysis, the chosen Instagram account for examination was Childfree Life Indonesia @childfreelife.id. The research identified some reasons for embracing childfree living, including past trauma, personal autonomy, happiness pursuit, career focus, financial considerations, and environmental preferences. Benefits encompass career advancement, reduced responsibilities, financial stability, improved mental health, emotional fulfillment, personal time, flexibility, and expanded leisure. Conversely, drawbacks involve the potential lack of support in old age, loneliness, absence of family legacy, no parenting experience, no successors, societal judgment, limited social network, a sense of family incompleteness, and diminished social support. Islamic family law emphasizes the marriage goal of progeny for societal strength, deeming permanent and unjustified childfree choices as prohibited (haram). However, temporary and justified childfree decisions may align with Islamic principles. This study contributes scholarly insights into millennial marriage dynamics, incorporating media and Islamic family law perspectives, with practical implications for fostering a nuanced understanding of Islamic teachings and societal trends among millennials, averting behaviors incongruent with religious norms.

Keyword: Childfree; millennial marital disorientation; Islamic family law

1. Introduction

Childfree refers to the state in which an individual or couple consciously opts not to have children, regardless of biological or adoptive possibilities. This term refers to adults or couples choosing to remain childless, a decision unrelated to fertility health but purely a matter of lifestyle (Yuniarti & Panuntun, 2023). Childfree decisions often intertwine with feminist issues, granting women who forego motherhood significant opportunities to explore social roles beyond the family, such as pursuing careers and education.

Choosing childfree involves a deliberate decision not to have children after marriage, with no attempts at natural conception or plans for adoption. Despite the recent emergence of this concept, the term "childfree" gained prominence in the late 2000s and has become increasingly popular in a number of developed countries. Commonly cited reasons for embracing childfree living include its perceived effectiveness in curbing overpopulation (Oktavia, 2021).

In Indonesia, the childfree phenomenon has triggered debates and gone viral on social media. Notably, a Muslim influencer and YouTuber openly acknowledged her and her husband's decision to remain childfree, sparking discussions and controversies (Sapinatunajah et al., 2022; Asmaret, 2023).

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This trend reflects a growing disorientation towards marriage among the millennial generation. According to the 2022 National Socio-Economic Survey (SUSENAS), approximately 8% of Indonesian women identify as childfree, nearly equivalent to 71,000 individuals. The upward trajectory in the number of childfree women over the past four years suggests a potential increase in the coming years. If this trend persists, Indonesia risks losing a specific segment of its population pyramid (Yuniarti & Panuntun, 2023). The rise in childfree women is attributed to the discovery of safe contraceptive methods, increased educational opportunities, and the widespread advocacy for gender equality (Doyle et al., 2013).

Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, exhibit unique characteristics distinct from previous generations. Considered a transitional generation from analog to digital, millennials are defined by their heightened internet and social media usage, engaged in various activities from socializing to content creation, politics, and business. Despite these positive aspects, issues such as digital illiteracy and the side-lining of moral and ethical values are notable concerns (Sari, 2019).

Experts widely agree that millennials, growing up in the digital era, wield significant influence over technological and popular culture developments. While recognized for their social and environmental activism, millennials also grapple with negative issues such as the proliferation of pornography, gadget addiction, bullying, deviations in sexual orientation, and the childfree phenomenon.



Given the diverse phenomena associated with millennials, previous research has explored various aspects, including marriage, family issues, and childfree phenomenon (Sutisna et al., 2019; Masruhan, 2019; Tanjung et al., 2022; Saputra & Agustina, 2021). Notably, studies specific to the childfree phenomenon among millennials have been conducted by Yuniarti & Panuntun (2023), Sapinatunajah et al. (2022), and Asmaret (2023). Yuniarti & Panuntun (2023) delved into tracing the childfree phenomenon in Indonesia, estimating that around 8% or approximately 71,000 women opt for a childfree lifestyle with the prediction of a continuing rise in subsequent years. Sapinatunajah et al. (2022) employed content analysis to investigate a YouTuber's open statements about choosing childfree living and the audience's responses to the viral content. Lastly, Asmaret (2023) explored the gender-based family resilience impacts of childfree behaviour, concluding that the decision not to have children negatively affects women's reproductive health and can detrimentally impact the physical and psychological health of couples if not effectively communicated to partners and family.

Given the extensive exploration of millennials, marriage, and the childfree phenomenon in previous studies, there is a need for further research offering a novelty in addressing millennial marital disorientation represented through social media, particularly concerning childfree decisions and Islamic family law views. This study aims to explore the childfree content on Instagram among millennials, analysing the content of the Childfree Life Indonesia account @childfreelife.id using qualitative content analysis. Additionally, it reviewed literature to understand Islamic family law perspectives on childfree issues. The academic contribution was also envisioned to enrich the discourse on millennial marriage dynamics from media studies and Islamic family law perspectives with practical implications for enhancing millennial understanding of Islamic teachings and societal phenomena, thus preventing behaviours misaligned with religious norms.

2. Methodology

The methodology employed in this study integrated qualitative content analysis (QCA) and literature review methods. QCA was applied to discern content tendencies within the Instagram account Childfree Life Indonesia @childfreelife.id. The qualitative content analysis method utilized in this study followed an approach developed by Schreier (2012). QCA exhibits its principal strength by enabling researchers to analyse and articulate the most pivotal characteristics across a multitude of data. As outlined by Schreier (2012), the QCA method achieves this precision by reducing and summarizing research materials, proving invaluable in addressing the potential loss of the diversity of meaning contained in research materials.

The research focus was selected from the Childfree Indonesia Instagram account. Data collection involved sampling from the Instagram account of Childfree Indonesia. Qualitative content analysis yielded themes related to choosing Childfree, discerning content from posts and comments on the account. Subsequently, the emerging themes were analyzed. The content analyzed in this research comprised posts and comments on the Childfree Life Indonesia account (@childfreelife.id). The unit of analysis used included recurrent themes on the account, namely reasons for choosing

childfree, perceived benefits after embracing childfree, acknowledged drawbacks following childfree living, and the orientation and meaning of marriage for those practicing childfree.

After obtaining an overview of the Instagram account's content, this study conducted a literature review from various sources to examine how Islamic family law views the childfree phenomenon. Drawing from the Holy Qur'an, Hadiths, and references by Islamic scholars, this method was employed to explore the Islamic viewpoint on Childfree. The literature review here aimed to enrich the understanding of the Islamic perspective on childfree living, complementing the insights gained from the qualitative content analysis of the Instagram account. This comprehensive methodology integrated qualitative content analysis with Islamic family law perspectives, contributing to a holistic exploration of the childfree phenomenon within the millennial generation.

3. Results and Discussion

The Instagram account Childfree Life Indonesia (@childfreelife.id) is one of the social media accounts that encapsulate the attitudes, perspectives, and experiences of the millennial generation who opt for a childfree lifestyle. The account profile explicitly identifies itself as the "Information centre & gathering place for people who decide not to have children." As of December 2023, the account boasts 3,042 followers and follows 123 accounts. Despite having a relatively modest number of posts, totalling 42, the content has garnered thousands of likes and hundreds of comments from netizens. This account is owned or created by @keisavourie. The following provides a qualitative overview of the content found on @childfreelife.id.

3.1. Reasons for Choosing Childfree, Perceived Benefits, and Acknowledged Drawbacks

Thematically, the content on the Instagram account Childfree Life Indonesia (@childfreelife.id) illustrates the account owner's perspective on their choice of a childfree lifestyle along with various accompanying comments. Several main themes emerge from this account, revolving around the reasons for choosing childfree, the perceived benefits experienced after embracing a childfree life, and the acknowledged drawbacks anticipated following the decision to live childfree. The following offers a qualitative depiction of the content themes on this Instagram account as shown in Table 1.

From Table 1, it can be observed that there are various factors that serve as reasons for the adherents of Childfree, including: not liking the presence of small children, having childhood trauma, personal selfishness, personal freedom, choosing personal happiness, plans to pursue personal goals, focusing on a career, financial and economic considerations, and a preference for sustainable environmental factors.

In the view of the followers of Childfree Life Indonesia, marriage with the presence of children will entail responsibilities of parenting and other consequences that later on will be faced. The responsibility towards children to fulfil their needs, both physical and psychological, is substantial. This significant responsibility for parenting and attention to children leads the childfree life community to decide to be free

from having children. As stated by Dikaeverisma:

"I've realized since elementary school until now that my behaviour towards small children has never been excessive. Not interested in playing with them, but also not hating them. As I grow older, especially now that I'm married, the liking for small children has not yet emerged, and I finally realize that I am not interested in small children at all. It's difficult for people like us who are not interested in small children to socialize in society. Sometimes, we have to pretend to be happy to see babies even though in reality, it's just normal. Unfortunately, in Indonesia, if we are not interested in small children, we are immediately labelled as evil, strange, or hating children. Although, with all due respect, I absolutely do not hate them. But fortunately, my wife and I have a mutual understanding, both of us are not interested in having/caring for children. Finally, the two of us decided to be childfree and focus on each other." (@Dikaeverisma, "Many people like to dictate other people's choices", February 18, 2023, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 2, 2023.)

Table 1. Content themes in the childfree life Indonesia Instagram account

| Theme | Instagram Content |
|---|---|
| • Reasons for Choosing Childfree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disliking the presence of small children • Childhood trauma • Personal selfishness • Personal freedom • Pursuit of personal happiness • Goals for personal achievement • Career focus • Financial and economic considerations • Preference for sustainable environmental practices |
| • Perceived Benefits After Choosing Childfree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for career pursuit • Freedom from responsibilities • Improved financial stability • Better mental health • Fulfilled emotional needs • More personal time • Time flexibility • Travel flexibility • More time for hobbies |
| • Perceived Drawbacks Acknowledged After Choosing Childfree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support in old age • Potential loneliness in old age • Absence of family legacy • Lack of parenting experience • Absence of offspring as successors • Potential social judgment • Lack of social network in old age • Feeling incomplete as a 'family' • Lack of social support |

A similar statement was also conveyed by a childfree adherent who, along with their partner, has been following this choice for 5 years and 8 months. They admitted to like small children but feel incapable of nurturing and caring for them. As expressed in one of their reasons for being childfree:

"We like sweet and smart children, but we are not strong enough to hear their cries, whining, and screams." (@Childfreelife.id, "Story of the childfree couple" @cibicious and @ariefmaulanawiranegara", August 28, 2018, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 3, 2023.)

On the other hand, there are childhood trauma reasons. The negative influence of parental education in the past has turned out to have a very important impact on the psychological health of a child. Where a child has to survive with physical and

emotional violence, as well as the poor financial condition of parents in the past, it can become traumatic when they become parents in the future. As stated by a childfree adherent in the comment section on one of the posts on the Instagram account of Childfree Life Indonesia:

"Coincidentally, I am a woman who is a victim of a toxic mother and cannot imagine having children and then meeting her grandmother's parenting pattern. Or even inheriting her grandmother's traits. A nightmare." (@Mooniiique, "People who choose to be childfree have a dark history with parents or their past", October 1, 2018, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 6, 2023.)

In addition to factors related to the presence of small children, ranging from disliking them to traumatic experiences in childhood, personal selfishness becomes one of the main factors in the millennial childfree community on the Instagram account Childfree Life Indonesia. With the consideration that there are unfulfilled aspirations, they are afraid of sacrificing their child due to not maximizing the role of being a father/mother. As told by a netizen uploaded through Instagram Childfree Life Indonesia:

"I become a teacher for children, why then do I not want to have children? My reason is simple. I can't be a father. There are aspirations that I have to sacrifice when becoming a biological father. There is a moral responsibility that I cannot take over by becoming a parent. Instead of my children later becoming victims of my selfishness, I prefer not to have children at all." (@Childfreelife.id, "Selfish", October 1, 2018, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 2, 2023.)

A similar statement was also made by Kei Savourie, the owner of the Instagram account Childfree Life Indonesia: *"Childfree couples are selfish because they don't want to sacrifice their freedom to take care of a child." (@Childfreelife.id, "People who decide to be childfree are very selfish", September 5, 2018, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 13, 2023.)*

The personal selfishness acknowledged by childfree adherents is also related to several other more specific factors, such as wanting to enjoy personal freedom, choosing personal happiness, plans to pursue personal goals, and focusing on a career.

Upon observation, it can be noted that the above factors are only related to the internal situations of childfree adherents, while the external factor strongly driving millennial followers of the Instagram account "Childfree Life Indonesia" towards childfree is the consideration of financial and economic needs. With economic considerations, they believe that without the presence of children, they are freer from financial burdens. As expressed by Kei Savourie in one of her Instagram highlights:

"Preparing financially and calculating the cost of raising a child doesn't mean we equate it with a child. Instead, it is one of the signs of love for the child. Ensuring that the child's needs are met, without any shortages and not burdened with financial demands." (@Keisavourie, Highlight, "Parents-children", April 13, 2021, Instagram. Accessed on June 13, 2023.)

Based on various reasons for choosing childfree as outlined above, a serene perception regarding the perceived benefits after practicing childfree was also obtained. Certainly, this perception is subjective. Some that emerge in posts and

comments include: the opportunity to pursue a career, not burdened by responsibilities, more stable finances, better mental health, fulfilled emotional needs, more time for oneself, time flexibility, travel flexibility, and more time for hobbies.

The perception that financial conditions are more assured when practicing Childfree is quite dominant in the content of this Instagram account. Childfree life is considered to lead to an interesting reality, namely guaranteed financial certainty. Financial fulfilment becomes one of the main factors for childfree because with the absence of the burden of children, the followers of childfree on the Instagram account "Childfree Life Indonesia" think that they can focus more on allocating their resources entirely to build a stable and prosperous economy, allowing them to invest for their old age, as stated by a doctor who is one of childfree adherents on the Childfree Life Indonesia account:

"People who insult me because I'm Childfree are now borrowing money to buy milk for their children. I just block them, don't want to argue. I am happy to live without burdens and still have many ambitions. Nice, fat bank account, can shop without thinking. My parents support Childfree. What's important to them is that I am happy. When I'm old, what do I want to do? Yes, do what I want. My plan is to enter a 5-star nursing home abroad, anyway, I have a lot of savings." (@Abelina_md, "How do you assume my life means because I have children?", February 18, 2023, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 2, 2023.)

A similar statement was also made by another follower of the Instagram account "Childfree Life Indonesia" who is concerned about people with limited finances having children. She wrote:

"I often lend money, always with reasons for school fees, sick children, children need this, children need that. Honestly, I don't understand someone's mindset who has limited financial conditions but dares to have children." (@Vera.gunawan, "How do you assume my life means because I have children?", February 18, 2023, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 2, 2023.)

Childfree adherents on the Instagram account "Childfree Life Indonesia" also experience freedom in married life, free to spend time, and free to do something that can make them happy. As felt by Jenna Johnson, a childfree adherent from the United States, quoted in one of the posts on the Instagram account "Childfree Life Indonesia":

"There are many advantages for those who don't have children. I can do these things: buy things I want but don't really need, plan vacations with my parents, have plenty of time for myself, go through days without noise, send things to nieces and nephews, learn new languages, hang out suddenly just for drinks with friends." (@Childfreelife.id, "Time the childfree life", August 25, 2018, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 6, 2023.)

A similar statement was also conveyed by Maura, a millennial childfree adherent and follower of the Instagram account "Childfree Life Indonesia," describing her liberated life after practicing childfree in the comments section of one of the posts on Instagram "Childfree Life Indonesia":

"I better use my time and money to please myself, travel, eat

well, and take care of myself. If someone says it's selfish. It's my pleasure, this is my life." (@Wildblackberrys, "How do you assume my life means because I have children?", February 18, 2023, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 18, 2023.)

On the other hand, perceptions regarding the realized disadvantages after implementing childfree can also be found on this Instagram account. Some of them include a lack of support in old age, the potential for loneliness in old age, the absence of family inheritance, the lack of experience as a parent, the absence of descendants as successors, the possibility of facing social judgments, the potential lack of a social network in old age, feeling incomplete as a 'family', and a lack of social support.

The majority of childfree adherents share a common complaint, characterized by pressure from those closest to them, encompassing probing questions and piercing criticisms, spanning from family to neighbours. As articulated by a millennial childfree follower and Instagram user of Childfree Life Indonesia:

"I don't mind if the nature of the questions and the questioners are genuinely curious about (this childfree choice). I am happy to explain why I choose to be childfree because it's not a common choice, and by explaining my point of view (POV), they understand why some people choose childfree. What I dislike is, they've asked, I've explained, but they don't accept the explanation, don't accept other people's POV and opinions, then impose their own opinions, even to the extent of insulting, cursing, shaming, guilt-tripping, and so on." (@Kharinamilla, "When to have children?", September 3, 2021, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 17, 2023.)

A similar sentiment was echoed by another childfree follower, having implemented childfree for 12 years, as written in the following comment:

"I've been called selfish, violating God's nature, insulting ancestors, insulting parents, and so on. Because he is older, I better just give in." (@Justinlm99, "Happy new year childfree people", January 4, 2019, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 17, 2023.)

On the flip side, the presence of a child can serve as a remedy for loneliness in family life in general. Disoriented by the concept of marriage without children, the followers of the Instagram account "Childfree Life Indonesia" actually feel the absence of a child's figure in family life until old age. As written by someone commenting on the Instagram account:

"But at least in old age, there is someone who cares for us. And it really hits when neighbours or relatives gather with children and grandchildren on holidays. And we two are just daydreaming." (@Ahametiqlbal, "Children are not a solution to loneliness in old age", August 26, 2018, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 18, 2023.)

A similar sentiment was expressed in another comment:

"Like anything else in life, there are ups and downs. And when we feel lonely, 'me time' (spending time with our partner) can be a solution. Like going for a walk or to a coffee shop with a partner." (@Chilfreelife.id, "The story of Childfree couple @cibicious and @ariefmaulanawiranegara", August 28, 2018, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 3, 2023.)

From a different perspective, it turns out there are also

childfree adherents who still experience the challenges of marriage even without children. The challenges of being a mother are, in fact, a consideration for childfree adherents before deciding not to have children. Although this aspect is not entirely exempt from one millennial childfree adherent, as conveyed by someone in the comments section of a post on the Instagram account "Childfree Life Indonesia"; she has been childfree for one year:

"I still feel the challenges of being a mother in caring for nieces. Ironically, those who are childfree truly nurture children even though they are not their own." (@Sayyica11, "Childfree people must hate small children", August 27, 2018, Instagram, source. Accessed on June 19, 2023.)

The various examples of posts and comments above illustrate that, subjectively, childfree adherents also have perceptions regarding the realized disadvantages to be faced after implementing childfree, alongside perceptions related to the benefits experienced after embracing Childfree.

3.1. Millennial Marriage Disorientation among Those Choosing Childfree

The orientation of marriage based on societal norms and religious teachings (especially Islam), which has been traditionally recognized, undergoes a shift among millennials when examining the content of posts and comments on the @Chilfreelife.id account. A qualitative overview can be gleaned from the following Table 2.

Table 2. Themes of marriage orientation on childfree Indonesia instagram account

| Theme | Instagram Content |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage Orientation for Those Choosing Childfree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on couple closeness • Commitment to personal growth • Support for individual dreams • Openness in communication • Building a strong relationship • Loyalty to freedom • Emphasis on intimate relationships • Focus on individual development • Exclusive commitment between partner • Choice to pursue personal interests |

This table encompasses diverse themes related to marriage orientation among individuals who embrace a childfree lifestyle, as gleaned from the content on the Childfree Indonesia Instagram account. The thematic analysis presented in Table 2 illuminates a distinct shift in marriage orientation among millennials who adopt the childfree lifestyle. Traditional societal and religious norms, particularly within the context of Islam, have historically defined the parameters of marital expectations. However, the content analysis of @Chilfreelife.id indicates a qualitative transformation in the perception of marriage.

The research findings indicated that the orientation of childfree adherents towards marriage is primarily focused on the theme of "Focus on Individual Development." This theme prominently highlights the emphasis on personal growth and the pursuit of individual interests, signifying a departure from the conventional perspective of marriage primarily centred on familial responsibilities. The shift towards prioritizing individual development challenges the traditional narrative surrounding marital unions.

Additionally, there is a noticeable trend in the orientation of

marriage towards "Loyalty to Freedom." The commitment to freedom emerges as a crucial aspect of the marriage orientation discussed in the content, underscoring the importance placed on autonomy within the marital relationship. The conventional expectations of sacrificing personal freedom for the sake of familial duties seem to be replaced by a commitment to preserving individual liberties.

On another note, there is also an orientation towards marriage that emphasizes "Intimate Relationships." The content reflects a notable emphasis on building a strong and intimate relationship between partners. This focus on emotional and relational intimacy contrasts with the conventional emphasis on procreation and extended family responsibilities, suggesting a redefinition of marital success beyond traditional benchmarks.

Furthermore, there is an orientation towards marriage that highlights "Exclusive Commitment between Partners." The commitment to exclusivity between partners stands out as a significant departure from the extended family-centric orientation. This shift indicates a re-evaluation of the marital unit as a self-contained entity, emphasizing the importance of the spousal relationship over extended familial obligations.

Lastly, the orientation towards marriage apparent in the content on Instagram predominantly focuses on the "Choice to Pursue Personal Interests." The acknowledgment of the choice to pursue personal interests further underscores the shift towards autonomy and self-determination within marital relationships. This challenges the societal expectation that marriage necessitates a collective sacrifice of personal aspirations. The themes identified in the content analysis suggest a nuanced and transformative shift in millennial marriage orientation, particularly among those choosing a childfree lifestyle. This shift challenges conventional norms and underscores the importance of individual autonomy, personal growth, and the exclusive commitment between partners in the contemporary understanding of marital success.

3.1. Islamic family law perspectives on the childfree phenomenon

Based on a literature study of the Quran, hadiths, and works by Islamic scholars, explanations regarding the Islamic Family Law perspectives on the childfree phenomenon are found. In Islam, one of the objectives of marriage is to multiply descendants, as stated in

فَالَّذِينَ بَشَرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَعُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ

"And seek what Allah has ordained for you (that is, children)." (Al-Baqarah:187)

In the interpretation by Ibn Jarir, Abu Hurairah, Ibn Abbas, Anas bin Malik, and others from among the Tabi'in, they explained the verse, "what Allah has ordained for you," as referring to children. It means that Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala commands us to seek children through engaging in biological relations with one's spouse. The verse serves as a clear evidence that Islam strongly encourages us to have children through marriage and the biological relationship between husband and wife. Simultaneously, it prohibits those who refuse to have children when there is a legitimate way to obtain them according to Allah's regulations (At-Thabari, 2001).

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, further emphasized this by prohibiting one of his companions from marrying a barren woman, as narrated in a hadith by Ma'qil bin Yasar:

عن معقل بن يسار قال: جاء رجل إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال: إني أصبْتُ امرأة ذات حسنٍ وجمالٍ، وإنها لا تلد، فأترجمها؟ قال: لا، ثم أتاه الثانية فنهاه، ثم أتاه الثالثة فقال: تزوجوا الودود الودود، فأني مكاثر بكم الأمم

Ma'qil bin Yasaar reported: A man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said, "I have fallen in love with a woman of noble status and beauty, but she cannot bear children. Should I marry her?" The Prophet replied, "Do not marry her." He came to him a second and third time, and the Prophet said to him, "Marry a loving and fertile woman, for I will boast of your great numbers before the other nations on the Day of Judgment." (Sulaiman bin As-Asy'aš bin Ishaq As-Sijistani, Sunan Abu Dawud no.2050.)

In the context of marriage, it is permissible to make agreements between both parties, the husband and wife, to build a good and healthy family, as stipulated in the Compilation of Islamic Law: "At the time or before the marriage takes place, both prospective spouses can make a written agreement, certified by the marriage registrar, regarding the position of assets in the marriage." (Article 47, paragraph (1) Compilation of Islamic Law)

In Islam, a marriage agreement is not only related to property, as mentioned in the above article, but various other aspects are also recommended to build a good family. In the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence, this is known as "ashartu fi an-Nikah," which refers to the conditions agreed upon by both prospective spouses before the marriage contract, as long as these conditions do not invalidate the marriage's legitimacy. (<https://www.almuheet.net/post/129198>. Accessed on February 15, 2023.) Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said:

صُلِحَ جَائِزٌ بَيْنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ إِلَّا صُلِحَ حَرَامًا حَلَالًا أَوْ أَحَلَّ حَرَامًا وَالْمُسْلِمُونَ عَلَى شُرُوطِهِمْ إِلَّا شَرَطُوا حَرَمًا حَلَالًا أَوْ أَحَلَّ حَرَامًا

Reconciling with fellow Muslims is permissible except when the reconciliation involves permitting something prohibited or prohibiting something permissible. Muslims must fulfil the agreed-upon conditions, except for conditions that prohibit something permissible or permit something prohibited (Muhammad bin Isma'il Al-Bukhari, Al-Jami' as-Shahih, No. 2721).

Scholars explained that agreements fall into the categories of valid and invalid, and there are both permissible and impermissible conditions in agreements. Conditions that contradict the essence of marriage or are specifically prohibited, such as posing harm to a party, such as a spouse stipulating not to have children, are not allowed (Syarifuddin, 2016).

Marriage that results in offspring serves as a vessel for regeneration. Just as Allah created Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) before the emergence of the human species on Earth,

then created his partner, and ordained marriage to produce successive generations of humanity, as the purpose of marriage is not solely the fulfilment of desires (Al-Busaidi, 1996). From the perspective of Islamic law, the behaviour of childfree couples is considered forbidden if it involves permanently disabling the reproductive system.

If the action involves permanently disabling the reproductive system, it is considered forbidden. As stated in the hadith when responding to a companion's desire to castrate himself, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) forbade it:

عن ابن مسعود رضي الله عنه قال: كنا نغزو مع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ولم نيس لئلا نساء، فقلنا: يا رسول الله، ألا نستخصي؟ فنهانا عن ذلك

From Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, he said: "We once fought alongside the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), and there were no women with us. So, we asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, should we practice castration?' He prohibited us from doing so" (Al-Bukhari, Al-Jami' as-Sahih, no. 5071).

Examining childfree practices from the perspective of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, it can be attributed as qiyas awlawy (a legal analogy wherein the ruling of one case is transferred to another due to similarities, and the ruling of the first case is considered more authoritative) derived from the law of tahdid an-nasl. Tahdid an-nasl involves limiting the number of children to a desired quantity without a valid excuse. Therefore, permanently disabling the reproductive system to prevent having children is deemed more strictly forbidden, and its prohibition is absolute (At-Tayyar, 2015).

On the other hand, in Islamic law, the decision not to have children is permissible if there is a valid legal reason (udzur) for it. The choice to remain childless, if done temporarily, is allowed, provided there is a legitimate excuse, such as illness or something that would endanger the health of the wife and potential child if she were to become pregnant. This aligns with the fatwa issued by Sheikh Bin Baz:

يَكُونُ الْحَمْلُ عَلَى وَجْهِ لَا يَضُرُّهَا وَلَا يَضُرُّ أَوْلَادَهَا، كَمَا أَبَاحَ اللَّهُ الْعَزْلَ لِهَذِهِ الْمَضَاعِ وَأَشْبَاهِهَا

A pregnant woman should not endanger herself or her child. Just as Allah permits 'azl (withdrawing the male organ from the female's vagina before ejaculation) or similar methods (to prevent pregnancy) for the sake of well-being (Bin Baz, 2007). If there is no valid legal reason, it is not allowed. For instance, choosing not to have children due to reasons such as a dislike for young children, childhood trauma, selfishness, or merely fearing financial inadequacy is strictly prohibited.

Islam explicitly prohibits the choice of childfree when the reasons are not based on valid legal grounds, as explained above. This aligns with various previous research findings that have detailed the adverse effects of childfree marriages not grounded in reasons justified by Islamic law. Asmaret's study (2023) concluded that the decision not to have children has a negative impact on women's reproductive health. This can adversely affect the physical and psychological health of the

husband and wife, disrupting family resilience. If this phenomenon continues consistently, Indonesia risks losing a specific demographic segment in the population pyramid (Yuniarti & Panuntun, 2023). The choice of childfree contradicts the Islamic concept emphasizing that having offspring is one of the purposes of marriage (Sapinatunajah, et al., 2022).

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that qualitative content analysis of the Instagram account @childfreelife.id reveals several reasons why childfree followers choose not to have children in their marriages, namely: Childhood trauma, Personal egoism, Personal freedom, Choice for personal happiness, Plan to pursue personal goals, Focus on career, Financial and economic considerations, and Preference for sustainable environment. Additionally, there is a perception related to the perceived benefits of implementing Childfree, namely: Opportunities to pursue a career, Unburdened by responsibilities, More stable financials, Better mental health, Fulfilled emotional needs, More time for oneself, Time flexibility, Travel flexibility, More time for hobbies. On the other hand, there are perceptions related to the recognized disadvantages to be faced after implementing Childfree, namely Lack of support in old age, Potential loneliness in old age, Lack of family heritage, No experience of being a parent, Lack of descendants as future generations, Potential for social judgment, Possible lack of social networks in old age, Feeling incomplete as a 'family', and lack of social support.

Based on the literature review related to the Islamic family law perspective on the childfree phenomenon, several important conclusions can be drawn: (1) In Islam, one of the purposes of marriage is to increase offspring to form a strong Islamic society and civilization; (2) The choice of childfree without a valid reason according to Islamic law and done permanently is considered haram and (3) The choice not to have children, if there is a valid reason according to Islamic law and is not permanent, can be allowed in Islamic law.

This research recommends that the government, especially relevant ministries, pay attention to the emerging phenomenon of marriage disorientation among the millennial generation in the form of childfree, which has the potential to harm Indonesia's population structure in the future. Strategic programs should be developed to prevent this trend. Various educational and advocacy programs are crucial and should be continued by the Ministry of Religion, the Ministry of Education and Culture, community organizations, Islamic advocacy organizations, scholars, preachers, educators, and parents to continuously educate the millennial generation about marriage orientations that align with religious and societal norms. Subsequent research can be expanded to various aspects of preventing childfree in society, especially related to the use of digital media.

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