

CHILDFREE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC SHARIA AND OFFICIAL RELIGIONS IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

In 2024, approximately 8.2% or equivalent to 71 thousand women of productive age, chose not to have children either biologically or through adoption. This study aims to analyze the laws and religious views of each religion regarding the decision not to have children. The method used in this study is a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach. Data were collected through literature studies from various sources relevant to the study, including books, journals, articles, and other references. The results show that Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Hinduism view the decision not to have children as contrary to the main purpose of marriage, which is to continue the lineage. Meanwhile, Buddhism and Confucianism tend to allow room for this personal choice, provided that the decision is based on sincere intentions and moral responsibility. This study confirms that the choice not to have children can be justified under certain conditions, but a deep understanding of religious teachings is essential before making such a decision.

Keywords: *Childfree, Islamic Law, Official Religion*

Abstrak

Pada 2024, sekitar 8,2% atau setara dengan 71 ribu perempuan usia produktif memilih untuk tidak memiliki anak baik secara biologis ataupun adopsi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hukum dan pandangan keagamaan dari masing-masing agama terhadap keputusan untuk tidak memiliki keturunan. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis. Data dikumpulkan melalui studi pustaka dari berbagai sumber yang relevan dengan penelitian, termasuk buku, jurnal, artikel, dan referensi lainnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Islam, Katolik, Protestan, dan Hindu memandang keputusan untuk tidak memiliki anak sebagai sesuatu yang bertentangan dengan tujuan utama pernikahan, yaitu untuk melanjutkan keturunan. Sementara itu, agama Buddha dan Konfusianisme cenderung memberikan ruang terhadap pilihan pribadi ini, dengan syarat bahwa keputusan tersebut didasarkan pada niat yang tulus dan tanggung jawab moral. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa pilihan untuk tidak memiliki anak dapat dibenarkan dalam

kondisi tertentu, namun pemahaman yang mendalam terhadap ajaran agama sangat penting sebelum mengambil keputusan semacam ini.

Kata Kunci: Childfree, Hukum Islam, Agama Resmi

INTRODUCTION

Since 2020, the birth rate has begun to decline (from 4.69 million to 4.62 million in 2023), and the childfree phenomenon has begun to gain attention. Many couples are considering not having children due to economic reasons, past trauma, or negative childhood experience. Studies also show that raising children requires full preparedness from parents in terms of energy, time, and emotional capacity.¹ This phenomenon has sparked pros and cons, and from a religious perspective, opinions vary depending on the principles of each religion. Research on childfree began to develop in Northwestern Europe in the 1970s, driven by contraception, feminism, and the role of women. This phenomenon has become more widespread in the 21st century, including in Asia, such as Japan and Indonesia, where it began to appear in 2020.

In Islam, the main purpose of marriage is to preserve and continue the lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), which is part of the five main objectives of Sharia law (*maqashid al-syari'ah*).² Scholars such as al-Ghazali and al-Syathibi emphasise that maternal and paternal instincts are natural urges to give birth to and raise children.³ The family is also considered the main foundation for building society; if the family is good, then society will also be good.⁴ In Indonesia, the pronatalist culture is still strong, where social pressure to have children immediately after marriage is very high. Children are considered to bring blessings and positive social status.

Fatwa councils in the Islamic world have stated that reluctance to have children is not a sin, but if a husband and wife agree not to have children without a clear reason, then this is contrary to Sharia law. Such an agreement is permissible if it is for the sake of benefit or to prevent harm, such as if the wife's health is at risk or there are serious economic reasons. This agreement must be made with the consent of both parties and there should be no difference in their wishes. However, collectively, a total ban on having children is not permitted.⁵ Meanwhile, in Hinduism, the decision not to have children is contrary to its teachings because

¹ Farrencia Nallanie and Fhelincia Nathanto, 'Childfree Di Indonesia, Fenomena Atau Viral Sesaat?', *Syntax Idea* 6, no. 6 (2024): 2663–73, <https://doi.org/10.46799/syntax-idea.v6i6.3457>.

² Ismail Firano, 'Objectives of Islamic Marriage: A Study of the Primary and Subsidiary Objectives: Maqāṣid Az-Zawāj Asy-Syar'iyyah: Dirāsātun Li-Ahamm Maqāṣid Az-Zawāj al-Aṣliyyah Wa at-Tabi'iyyah', *Dirasah International Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2024): 1–35, <https://doi.org/10.59373/drs.v2i1.21>.

³ Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Lakhmī al-Gharnātibī as-Shātibī, *L-Muwāfaqāt Fī Uṣūl al-Sharī'ah* (Dar Ibn Affan, 1977).

⁴ Dr Azra Parveen, 'Ahamiyyatu Al-Usrah Fi al-Islām Wa al-Tahaddiyāt Allati Tuwājihu Nizāma al-Usrah: The Importance of Family in Islam and the Challenges Facing the Family System', *Articles, AL-IDRAK JOURNAL* 3, no. 1 (2023): 108–120, <https://www.alidrak.com/ojs3303/index.php/alidrak/article/view/67>.

⁵ Fatri 'Azīzah Fākhīrah Fatūrā, 'Zāhirat Al-Imtinā' 'an al-Injāb 'inda Majālis al-Iftā' Fī al-'Ālam al-Islāmī' (Master's Thesis, Syarif Hidayatullah Islamic State University Jakarta, 2023), 90.

offspring are considered the purpose of life and a source of family blessings and can have a negative impact on married life.⁶ In the Evangelical Christian view, couples who choose to be childfree must have valid reasons. If the reason is simply to avoid responsibility, then it is not justifiable. However, if it is related to past trauma or psychological disorders, then recovery or therapy is necessary.⁷ Unlike Buddhist teachings, the decision not to have children is considered a valid personal choice, as long as it is done consciously and does not harm others. Buddhism emphasises individual freedom, responsibility, and the attainment of enlightenment without requiring birth or offspring.⁸

Several previous studies have discussed the concept of childfree from an Islamic, Catholic, and Hindu perspective, but few have compared the six perspectives of these religions. This study offers a new perspective by comparing the concept of childfree according to Islamic Sharia with that of the five other official religions in Indonesia.

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach. Data was obtained through interviews and literature studies covering various relevant sources such as books, journals, articles, and other references. The focus of the study is formulated in three main questions: how the concept of childfree is understood, how it is applied in Indonesia, and how Islamic Sharia and other official religions in Indonesia view this concept.

Through this problem formulation, this study aims to identify the concept of childfree along with the factors that influence and impact it, analyse how the childfree phenomenon emerged and developed in the Indonesian context, and compare the views of Islamic Sharia with other official religions regarding the concept of childfree.

This research is expected to benefit researchers by broadening their insight and knowledge regarding the views of Islamic Sharia and other religions on the issue of childfree, increasing public understanding of this phenomenon, and providing clear information to couples in Indonesia regarding the views of official religions, including Islam, on the decision not to have children. This research also supports the vision and mission of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in realising national unity towards a Golden Indonesia.

⁶ Arseila Dias Safitri et al., 'Fenomena Childfree Di Era Gen-Z Menurut Pandangan Agama', Articles, *Moderasi: Jurnal Kajian Islam Kontemporer* 1, no. 01 (2023), <https://journal.forikami.com/index.php/moderasi/article/view/475>.

⁷ David Maysusanto Pilipus et al., 'FENOMENA GAYA HIDUP CHILDFREE DALAM PANDANGAN ETIKA KRISTEN', *Voice of Wesley: Jurnal Ilmiah Musik Dan Agama* 6, no. 1 (2022): 18–30, <https://doi.org/10.36972/jvow.v6i1.161>.

⁸ *Min Muḥāḍarati Imām Al-Būdhiya Fī Majlis Budhāyānā Indūnīsiyā Bi-Sūrābāyā*, n.d.

DISCUSSION

Concepts, Factors, and Impacts Resulting from the Childfree Phenomenon

The term childfree refers to individuals or couples who consciously choose not to have children, even though they are biologically capable of doing so. They call themselves 'childfree' rather than 'childless' because they do not feel deprived, but rather free from the loss of time, energy, money, and personal freedom that is usually taken up by raising children.⁹ This choice is considered a valid lifestyle and is not always rooted in medical inability. According to Peter Berger's social construction theory, the childfree phenomenon is a new form of social reality constructed by individuals or groups who choose a path different from societal norms. They create a new perception that not having children is not taboo, but rather an equal life choice. On the other hand, this change reflects a shift in values in society, which has begun to view children not as a necessity, but as a huge responsibility that requires full preparedness.¹⁰

From a sociological perspective, the childfree phenomenon is also an indicator of gender equality in marital relationships, where the decision to have children is made fairly between husband and wife.¹¹ In psychology, the decision not to have children is seen as an individual right or a shared right of the couple, which can be influenced by childhood experiences (inner child), trauma, or fear of the great responsibility of being a parent.¹² Dr. Tri R. Andayani, a social psychology expert, emphasises the importance of involving the extended family in this decision because marriage in Indonesia generally involves two large families. She also suggests that couples build their readiness to parent (parenting self-efficacy) even during the marriage preparation period, as many childfree couples feel less confident in their role as parents.¹³

The choice not to have children, or to be childfree, is often associated with the use of contraception, which in Islamic history has been known and discussed by scholars such as Ibn Sina and Imam al-Ghazali. The companions of the Prophet are also known to have practised 'azl (coitus interruptus) for certain reasons, such as health and economic factors.¹⁴ From a modern perspective, the childfree

⁹ 'The Childfree-by-Choice Pages', accessed 2 December 2025, <http://childfree.net/>.

¹⁰ Friskila Ningrum Yusuf, 'Menilik Fenomena Childfree dari Perspektif Sosiologi', *Headline, identitas Unhas*, 30 April 2023, <https://identitasunhas.com/menilik-fenomena-childfree-dari-perspektif-sosiologi/>.

¹¹ - NOFRA KHAIRON, 'Eksistensi Fenomena Childfree Di Indonesia: Studi Analisis Normatif Dan Sosiologi' (thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, 2024), <https://repository.uin-suska.ac.id/80397/>.

¹² Firdhaniaty Rachmania et al., 'Fenomena Childfree Ditinjau dari Sudut Pandang Psikologi dan Islam', *Al-Qalb : Jurnal Psikologi Islam* 15, no. 1 (2024): 19–31, <https://doi.org/10.15548/alqalb.v15i1.6490>.

¹³ Syah Ghina Rahmi Lubis, 'Childfree Pada Perkawinan Dalam Perspektif Teori Feminisme Dan Fatwa Darul Ifta Mesir' (masterThesis, Fakultas Syariah dan Hukum UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2023), <https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/70515>.

¹⁴ Afnan Rifa'i, 'HUKUM 'AZL MENURUT YUSUF AL-QARADHAWI DAN WAHBAH AZ-ZUHAILI' (Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2024), <http://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/68369>.

phenomenon is also seen in Japan, where the pressures of life, high costs, and focus on careers lead many couples to choose not to have children. A similar concept has been known since the late 1980s under the term “DINK” (Double Income, No Kids).¹⁵ Conversely, in some African countries, cultural and religious values still place childbirth as a moral obligation, so women who choose not to have children often experience social stigma and marginalization. In South Africa, for example, childfree women face pressure from family and society, but they have developed various strategies to survive and negotiate their life choices.¹⁶

In the United States, female fertility rates reached their lowest point in history in 2023, with many women aged 25–44 having never had children. Some of them never wanted to have children, while others were hesitant or unsure. Common reasons cited include the desire for freedom, career development, financial stability, and the opportunity to live a more flexible and fulfilling life. This phenomenon indicates that childfree women are increasingly being accepted as part of the diversity of life choices.¹⁷ Unlike the United States, France has a lower percentage of childless citizens. This is likely due to strong state support for families and a good welfare system. However, social pressure to have children remains, and the childfree trend continues to grow among the younger generation. Although many of them are delaying having their first child, they may have children at a more mature age, so France's national fertility rate remains stable.¹⁸

Although Indonesia has a relatively high birth rate, Generation Z is beginning to view having children as a big decision influenced by difficult economic conditions. This view is becoming more accepted in society, and there is even support for the childfree lifestyle, as demonstrated by content creator Gita Savitri and the ‘Childfree Life Indonesia’ community on Instagram.¹⁹ SUSENAS data shows that around 8% of married women aged 15–49 who have never had children and do not use contraception choose not to have children, with the figure estimated to be higher if contraceptive users and unmarried women are included. Most of them are highly educated or face economic difficulties. While this has a short-term

¹⁵ Nabila Utami Sandra Dewi et al., ‘FENOMENA CHILDFREE DI JEPANG DALAM PERSPEKTIF TEORI FEMINISME EKSISTENSIALIS’, *Regalia: Jurnal Riset Gender dan Anak* 1, no. 2 (2022): 61–72, <https://doi.org/10.31629/jga.v1i2.5118>.

¹⁶ Primrose Z. J. Bimha and Rachelle Chadwick, ‘Making the Childfree Choice: Perspectives of Women Living in South Africa’, *Journal of Psychology in Africa* 26, no. 5 (2016): 449–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2016.1208952>.

¹⁷ Anna Brown, ‘Growing Share of Childless Adults in U.S. Don’t Expect to Ever Have Children’, *Pew Research Center*, 19 November 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/11/19/growing-share-of-childless-adults-in-u-s-dont-expect-to-ever-have-children/>.

¹⁸ Dirk Konietzka and Michaela Kreyenfeld, eds, *Childlessness in Europe: Contexts, Causes, and Consequences*, 1st ed. 2017, Demographic Research Monographs, A Series of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Springer, 2017), 92, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-44667-7>.

¹⁹ Ajeng Wijayanti Siswanto and Neneng Nurhasanah, ‘Analisis Fenomena Childfree Di Indonesia’, *Bandung Conference Series: Islamic Family Law* 2, no. 2 (2022): 65, <https://doi.org/10.29313/bcsifl.v2i2.2684>.

positive impact by reducing the government's burden, in the long term, childfree women could become a burden on the state in old age.²⁰ Artist Ariel Tatum also stated that having children is not a priority for her due to emotional reasons.²¹

Many couples who choose not to have children view this decision as a personal human right that cannot be imposed by anyone. Common reasons often cited include concerns about population explosion and the influence of the body freedom movement, which emphasizes that a woman's body is her own.²² The factors that drive this decision fall into several categories. Personal factors include a reluctance to face the responsibilities of parenthood, concerns about body changes after pregnancy, and a desire to focus on one's career. Some individuals also feel uncomfortable with the presence of children and prefer to live their lives without them. In a healthy and supportive relationship, this decision can be the best choice for the couple.²³

Psychological factors are one of the strongest reasons for choosing to be childfree. Many people who have experienced childhood trauma or a bad relationship with their parents are afraid of repeating the same parenting patterns, so they choose not to have children as a form of self-protection. Lack of mental preparedness is also an important consideration, as poor parenting due to psychological unpreparedness can have a negative impact on a child's development. In addition, emotional instability also makes some people worry that they will not be able to provide adequate love and attention.²⁴ On the other hand, economic factors also play a big role. The rising cost of living and education make many couples feel unable to bear the financial burden of raising children, so they choose to be childfree as a form of financial prudence and more rational life planning.²⁵

Another influencing factor is concern about environmental damage caused by population growth, as well as the influence of Western culture, which is increasingly spreading among millennials and Gen Z through the media and overseas education. In addition, advances in science and widespread access to information have encouraged critical thinking about the decision to have children.

²⁰ Yuniarti and Panuntun, Satria Bagus, *Menelusuri Jejak Childfree Di Indonesia*, Edisi 2023.01-1 (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), n.d.), https://tagar.co/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2023_01_1_Menelusuri_Jejak_Childfree_Di_Indonesia.pdf.

²¹ Liputan6.com, 'Ariel Tatum Memilih Childfree, Ini Alasannya', liputan6.com, 5 February 2025, <https://www.liputan6.com/showbiz/read/5908787/ariel-tatum-memilih-childfree-ini-alasannya>.

²² Eva Fadhillah, 'Childfree Dalam Pandangan Islam', *Al-Mawarid Jurnal Syariah Dan Hukum (JSYH)* 3 (June 2022): 72, <https://doi.org/10.20885/mawarid.vol3.iss2.art1>.

²³ Kembang Wangsit Ramadhani and Devina Tsabitah, 'Fenomena Childfree Dan Prinsip Idealisme Keluarga Indonesia Dalam Perspektif Mahasiswa', *LoroNG: Media Pengkajian Sosial Budaya* 11, no. 1 (2022): 17–29, <https://doi.org/10.1234/lorong.v11i1.2107>.

²⁴ Muhamad Parhan, 'Childfree Dalam Perspektif Islam: Solusi Atau Kontroversi?', *Jurnal Wanita Dan Keluarga*, ahead of print, 13 July 2023, 5–6, <https://doi.org/10.22146/JWK.7964>.

²⁵ Fadlan Nugraha Nur Pangestu and Jenuri Jenuri, 'FENOMENA CHILDFREE PADA KELUARGA MILENIAL DALAM PANDANGAN ISLAM: KONTROVERSI ATAU SOLUSI?', *Tahdzib Al-Akhlaq: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6 (December 2023): 325, <https://doi.org/10.34005/tahdzib.v6i2.3412>.

Psychologist Christina Dumayra says that the current generation's more profound and critical way of thinking has led them to question the purpose of having children and their readiness to raise them.²⁶ All of these factors are interrelated, but researchers argue that psychological factors are the main drivers in couples' decisions to live without children.

The absence of children in a couple's life is often considered to have positive effects, such as greater freedom to engage in activities without the responsibility of childcare. Many couples feel more free to enjoy time together, strengthen their relationship, and allocate their spending to other needs or investments, thereby increasing financial satisfaction.²⁷ However, if the childfree phenomenon continues to spread in Indonesia, the country could face serious consequences, such as a decline in human resources. This could lead to changes in the productive age and retirement age structures, as well as demand for an increase in the quality of available human resources²⁸. On the other hand, from a psychological point of view, couples without children are potentially prone to loneliness and emotional stress, especially in old age, as evidenced by various studies in China, the United States, and Canada.²⁹

From a reproductive health perspective, the decision not to have children needs to be carefully considered, especially for women. According to Dr Dina Dirdamisia, an obstetrician-gynaecologist, women who continuously delay or avoid pregnancy are at higher risk of ovarian cancer due to the continuous cycle of ovulation. Conversely, pregnancy and breastfeeding are known to reduce the risk of ovarian, breast, and endometrial cancer due to hormonal influences that suppress the ovulation cycle. Therefore, although the decision not to have children may provide short-term freedom and comfort, there are long-term impacts that need to be considered, both socially, psychologically, and medically.³⁰

Islamic Sharia Perspectives on Marriage, Children, and the Childfree Concept

In Islam, marriage is a sacred bond (*mītsāqan ghalīẓan*) that has various purposes, not only to produce offspring, but also to fulfil social, spiritual, economic, legal, and even political roles in the formation of a family. Scholars from the four schools of thought have different definitions of marriage, but agree that it is a valid

²⁶ *Fenomena Childfree Di Kalangan Masyarakat Indonesia*, (Metro TV, n.d.), <https://youtu.be/7e4lOjKmhg?si=HSC3jmOzySCQ5Qk6>.

²⁷ Miwa Patnani et al., 'Bahagia Tanpa Anak? Arti Penting Anak Bagi Involuntary Childless', *Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi Terapan* 9, no. 1 (2021): 117–29, <https://doi.org/10.22219/jipt.v9i1.14260>.

²⁸ Nallanie and Nathanto, 'Childfree Di Indonesia, Fenomena Atau Viral Sesaat?', 2670.

²⁹ Dewi Haniah and Fania Mutiara Savitri, 'Studi Interdisipliner Fenomena Childfree Dalam Prespektif Dakwah', *Lentera* 6, no. 1 (2024): 79–90, <https://doi.org/10.32505/lentera.v6i1.8216>.

³⁰ Zidni Amaliyatul Hidayah Biologi, 'CHILDFREE : MENGURANGI POPULASI MANUSIA UNTUK KESEJAHTERAAN DALAM PANDANGAN ISLAM DAN SOSIAL SAINS', *Konferensi Integrasi Interkoneksi Islam Dan Sains* 5, no. 1 (2023): 179, <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/saintek/kiiis/article/view/3705>.

contract that legalises the relationship between a man and a woman. The original ruling on marriage is *sunnah*, but it can change to obligatory, *sunnah*, *haram*, *makruh*, or *mubah* depending on individual circumstances. Scholars also agree that marriage is a highly recommended part of Islamic law because it brings many benefits.³¹

In Islam, children are the adornment and joy of this world, as well as a gift from Allah that must be protected. Children are not only a trust, but also sustenance and a blessing. Islam pays great attention to the rights of children, starting from before birth, through the selection of good parents. The Prophet Muhammad SAW stated that every child is born in a state of *fitrah*, and it is the parents who shape their beliefs. Therefore, parents have a big role in shaping the religion and morals of their children. According to Prof. Amani Lubis, children must receive proper education and care, both physically and psychologically, because the position of children is very important in the family.

Islam encourages marriage and childbirth as part of human nature and the main purpose of marriage, as confirmed in the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Although the original law does not require every couple to have children, Islamic law strongly encourages procreation to maintain the continuity of the *ummah* and legitimate lineage. In *fiqh*, the decision not to have children is equated with the practice of *'azl* (avoiding pregnancy), which is permissible as long as there is agreement and a valid reason. However, if done without a valid religious reason, it contradicts the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, particularly in preserving offspring.³²

A fatwa from Dar Al-Ifta Egypt also states that there is no explicit prohibition in the Qur'an regarding childfree, but the decision must be based on mutual benefit and agreed upon by both parties³³. Meanwhile, Prof. Amany Lubis from the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) considers childfree to be the wrong choice because it contradicts the basic values of the family in Islam and is considered a form of rejection of the social and religious responsibilities inherent in the institution of marriage.

The Views of Official Religions Other Than Islam Regarding Childfree

According to Catholic teaching, marriage is a lifelong union between one man and one woman based on an irrevocable personal consent, intended for mutual love and the formation of a family. Father Anton, head of the Xaverian Society

³¹ Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Hubayrah al-Shaybānī, *Ikhtilāf Al-A'immaḥ al-'Ulamā'* (Dār Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2002), 120.

³² Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn 'Āshūr al-Tūnisī, *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah* (Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1425).

³³ Shawqī Ibrāhīm 'Allām, 'Ḥukmu Ittifāqī Al-Zawjayni 'alā 'Adam al-Injāb', Mawqī' Dār Al-Iftā' al-Miṣriyyah, accessed 2 December 2025, <https://www.dar-alifta.org/ar/fatwa/details/14993/-حكم-اتفاق-الزوجين-على-عدم-الإنجاب>.

Scholasticate, stated that the main purpose of marriage is procreation (bearing children) and love between husband and wife. Catholic marriage has four main characteristics: it is monogamous, reflects God's love, is irrevocable, and aims for the well-being of the couple and the raising of children.

In the Catholic faith, children are seen as the future of the Church and a gift that reflects the faith, hope, and love that God has given to His people. Faith helps humans to hope in God, so that love can bear fruit. Children are the result of God's work in human life, so they must be cared for and nurtured with full responsibility. Therefore, having children is considered one of the main purposes of marriage, because through offspring, husband and wife take part in God's work of creation and form a family that is considered a 'small church' based on love.

The Catholic Church firmly teaches that having children is one of the main purposes of marriage, and consciously rejecting this purpose is considered contrary to the teachings of the faith. According to Father Anton, the decision to be childfree is not in accordance with God's plan as written in the Book of Genesis, and shows a rejection of openness to God's grace. The Church believes that married couples must be in harmony with God's will, not just follow their personal desires. Pope Francis, in *Amoris Laetitia*, also emphasises that Catholic families are called to be open to life, to love and to raise children. Therefore, the decision not to have children is considered a form of irresponsible freedom and is not in line with the nature of Catholic marriage.³⁴

In Christian ethics, marriage is not merely a feeling of youthful love, but rather God's means of forming two individuals to serve Him through the bond of family. God must be the head of the Christian family so that the marriage remains strong even in the face of challenges. Christian marriage is a divine covenant, not merely a human promise, and its purpose is not only happiness, but mutual growth that will result in happiness.³⁵ According to Pastor Suyadi from the Iman Jakarta School of Theology, the main purpose of Christian marriage is to carry out the cultural mandate in the Book of Genesis, to be helpmates to one another, and to realise the value of love that continues to grow.

In the Bible, children are seen as a gift from God that brings joy and responsibility. They must be loved, valued, and respected like adults, and must not be hurt because they are important in the Kingdom of God. Children also have a responsibility to respect, care for, and obey their parents. Welcoming children into the family is not only a blessing, but also a mandate to raise them in the Christian

³⁴ Largus Nadeak et al., 'PERKAWINAN TANPA ANAK YANG DISENGAJA: Tidak Sesuai Dengan Kodrat Perkawinan Katolik Menurut Seruan Apostolik *Amoris Laetitia*', *LOGOS*, 30 August 2023, 116, <https://doi.org/10.54367/logos.v20i2.2991>.

³⁵ Rut Novita Lay et al., 'Etika Kristen Dalam Memandang Pernikahan Dini Pada Masyarakat Madura', *Discreet: Journal Didache of Christian Education* 3, no. 2 (2023): 74–80, <https://doi.org/10.52960/jd.v3i2.284>.

faith and values. Parents are responsible for shaping their children's character according to the teachings of the Gospel, making the family the primary environment for spiritual and moral education. Children do not belong entirely to their parents, but are entrusted by God to be cared for and guided with love and responsibility.³⁶

In Protestant Christian teachings, the Bible commands married couples to have children as written in Genesis 1:28. However, the decision not to have children is permissible if it is based on strong and responsible reasons. The command to be fruitful and multiply is understood as a general mandate for humanity, not an individual obligation. In Matthew 19:12, Jesus explains that there are people who do not marry or have children for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, birth control or choosing to be childfree is not considered sinful, as long as it does not reject life entirely. Pastor Suyadi emphasises the importance of understanding the meaning of having or not having children, and according to him, the decision to be childfree for the sake of convenience alone should be avoided.³⁷

According to Colonel (Ret.) I Nengah Dana, Chairman of the Sabha Walaka Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia Pusat, the family in Hinduism is a sacred institution that must fulfil four main functions: First, Dharma-Rati, which is to legitimise the loving and sexual relationship between husband and wife. Second, Dharma-Praja, which is to produce good offspring. Third, Dharma-Sampatti, which means carrying out religious obligations together. Fourth, Dharma-Patni, which is maintaining harmony, love, and loyalty in the household.

In Hindu tradition, children play a central role in the family. Their presence is considered a source of hope and happiness, as well as a determinant of family honour. Every Hindu family longs for the birth of a 'suputra'—a virtuous, intelligent, and wise child—who is able to uphold the dignity of their parents and community. The Nitisastra text (śloka 3.14) states that the presence of a good child can bring happiness and honour to the entire family. In addition, children also have important spiritual responsibilities, such as performing the Śrāddha ritual to free the souls of their ancestors from suffering in the afterlife. Therefore, having children is seen as the fulfilment of spiritual and social obligations in Hindu family life.³⁸

In Hindu teachings, having offspring is considered an important spiritual obligation. The concept of *praja* or having children is mentioned in the Vedas as one of the main purposes of marriage, which is to continue the lineage and fulfil obligations to ancestors. The Atharvaveda states that one can 'cross the ocean of life'

³⁶ 'Keluarga Kristen Yang Berbahagia', <https://bpkpenabur.or.id/tangerang/smak-penabur-kota-tangerang/berita/berita-bpk-penabur-jakarta/keluarga-kristen-yang-berbahagia#:~:text=Di%20dalam%20Alkitab%2C%20anak%20Danak,127:3%2C%20Mat.>

³⁷ Suyadi Tjhin, 'Interview with a Lecturer at the Jakarta School of Theology, Jakarta', 14 January 2025.

³⁸ Tim Mimbar Hindu et al., 'Mendidik Anak Suputra dalam Keluarga', Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 29 May 2023, <https://kemenag.go.id/hindu/mendidik-anak-suputra-dalam-keluarga-eoVRk>.

by having good offspring (*suputra*), who not only protect the family but also save the souls of ancestors from suffering in the afterlife. The Manusmriti asserts that men and women were created to be fathers and mothers, and marriage is considered a means to achieve this goal. In the story of 'Sang Jarātkaru', it is mentioned that a man married and had children to save his ancestors from suffering in the afterlife. Therefore, in Hindu tradition, the decision not to have children is considered contrary to spiritual and social dharma (duty).³⁹

In Buddhist teachings, marriage is a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman that aims to form a happy family based on Dharma. Although it is not a religious institution directly regulated by Buddhist teachings, marriage is considered a worldly agreement that can be a means of paying karma for a better life. The main purpose of marriage in Buddhism is to achieve welfare and happiness (*hita-sukhaya*), in line with the Buddhist goal of achieving nirvana. According to Vijaya Henry Gunawan Chandra from the Indonesian Buddhist Council, there is no obligation in Buddhist teachings to marry, as everything is a life choice. Marriage that is not lived wisely can be a source of suffering, not happiness.

In Buddhist teachings, children hold an important position alongside other aspects of life. However, from a Dharma perspective, children can also be seen as a form of attachment (bondage) that may hinder spiritual progress. In the story of Siddhartha Gautama's life before he became the Buddha, his son was named Rahula – which literally means 'fetters' – symbolizing the strong emotional bonds that can act as obstacles to inner purity. As a result, some Buddhists choose not to have children to focus more on their spiritual journey and self-development without the distractions of worldly attachments.⁴⁰

In Buddhist teachings, there is no spiritual requirement to have children, since the Buddha never taught that having offspring is necessary to attain virtue or happiness. The most important thing is to live with full awareness, compassion, and freedom from suffering. Buddhists are free to decide whether to have children, if their decision is made with pure intentions and not out of hatred, coercion, or an attempt to escape responsibility. According to Henry, in Buddhism there are no absolute commands or prohibitions, because Buddha taught to follow what is good and avoid what is bad. Children and family are not the ultimate source of happiness; rather, they are dual in nature – they can bring both happiness and suffering. Therefore, choosing not to have children is a valid and free decision for every Buddhist.⁴¹

³⁹ Hari Harsananda and Mery Ambarnuari, 'Child Free Perspektif Agama Hindu', *Sphatika: Jurnal Teologi* 13 (September 2022): 162–74, <https://doi.org/10.25078/sphatika.v13i2.1988>.

⁴⁰ U.P. Sutta Vijaya Henry Gunawan Chandra Chandra, 'Interview with U.P. Sutta Vijaya Henry Gunawan Chandra from the Indonesian Buddhayana Council', Desember 2024.

⁴¹ *Childfree Dalam Pandangan Orang Buddha*, directed by Hendra Lim, n.d., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=by9-Im7t7TM>.

In Confucianism, children play a very important role as part of the moral and social structure of the family. They are responsible for maintaining the good name of the family and performing rituals to honour their ancestors. Therefore, having children is seen as a moral responsibility to continue the family line and maintain social harmony through an orderly family system. At the time of the birth of Confucianism, the socio-economic conditions of society were heavily dependent on agriculture, animal husbandry and hunting, so the presence of children was considered important, not only as heirs, but also as a labour force supporting the family's economic activities and their survival.

In Confucianism, not having children is not explicitly a sin or a religious violation. Although classical Confucian tradition emphasises the importance of having offspring as a form of filial piety towards parents and ancestors, the core of its teachings emphasises moral values such as loyalty, respect, justice, and social responsibility. Therefore, in modern interpretations, the decision not to have children can be accepted as a personal choice if it is based on ethical principles and respect for social and family structures. According to the Chairman of Matakini, the decision not to have children should not be judged rigidly, because what is more important is the existence of successors who can realise the ideals of their ancestors, even if they are not biological descendants.⁴²

CONCLUSION

The childfree phenomenon refers to the choice of individuals or couples not to have children even though they are biologically capable. This lifestyle reflects the view that families do not necessarily have to include offspring, and those who choose it feel free from the responsibilities of raising children, which are considered to be time-consuming, costly and energy-sapping. The term childfree differs from childless, which carries a connotation of loss. This choice is influenced by various factors, particularly psychological ones, and while it offers freedom and financial benefits, its spread could have negative impacts on demographics and the well-being of the elderly in the future.

In Indonesia, although the birth rate is still high, Generation Z is beginning to view having children as a big decision, mainly due to economic pressures. Public figures such as Gita Savitri have openly supported the childfree lifestyle, backed by online communities such as 'Childfree Life Indonesia'. Around 8% of married women aged 15-49 choose not to have children, with this figure expected to continue to rise, especially among the highly educated. From a religious perspective, views on childfree vary: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Hinduism emphasise the importance of offspring, while Buddhism and Confucianism allow

⁴² Santoso Xs. Budi, 'Interview with the Chairman of the Indonesian Confucian Supreme Council', Desember 2024.

freedom of choice as long as the decision is based on good intentions and moral responsibility.

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