



The Phenomenon of Childfree Marriage in the Perspective of *Maqashid Ashliyah* on Islamic Marriage

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the Islamic legal perspective on the childfree phenomenon, which has become a trend among certain celebrities and communities in Indonesia. This study was inspired by several viral childfree cases involving celebrities, such as influencer GS (initials) and her husband, who decided not to have children because happiness for them does not necessarily require having children. This is certainly different from the concept of Islamic marriage, whose main purpose is to have children, as desired by the Prophet Muhammad, who was proud of the large Muslim population, in addition to other additional purposes for happiness and peace of mind. This study uses the library research method with written data sources obtained from books, journals, newspapers, and so on. The analysis was conducted using a qualitative approach. The findings of this study show that the childfree phenomenon is caused by, among other things, the desire to be free from the burden of raising children, economic burdens, childhood trauma, and the desire to have fun in marriage. Childfree behavior is a form of misunderstanding of Islamic marriage law. The primary (*ashliyah*) purpose of Islamic marriage is to have children in order to preserve the continuity of the generation (*hifzh al-nasl*), in addition to the complementary purpose of obtaining pleasure and happiness. Prioritizing the complementary purpose of marriage over the primary purpose is permissible if there are significant sharia reasons, such as the threat to a person's life if she becomes pregnant.

Keywords: Childfree, Marriage, *Maqashid ashliyah*, *Hifzh al-nasl*, Islamic law

Introduction

Some time ago, an influencer who graduated from Free University of Germany and her husband decided not to have children, or what is known as childfree. The couple's decision was captured in a video uploaded to social media and has received mixed responses from netizens (Sunarti, 2023). The woman named GS (initials) made a decision that she considered difficult during her life. The reason Gita did not want to have children was because she was worried that she would not be able to take responsibility for them, both physically and emotionally. In fact, in Indonesia, women who do not have children are labeled negatively by society, especially with the stigma that having many children means having more fortune. The childfree phenomenon has become a global issue,



especially in countries with high mobility. In countries where people are busy with work and afraid of being burdened with children, such as in Europe (Ulum 2025).

Childfree is not a new concept. Childfree began in 1901, but in 2020, a number of public figures in Indonesia made the decision not to have children, and that is when the term childfree began to gain popularity (Cahyani 2013). However, considering that Muslims have been taught from an early age that marriage is one of the missions and means to perfect their religion, this contradicts noble values because one of the missions of marriage is to give birth to righteous children. Every couple has the right not to have children for various reasons that oppose this choice. Starting in 2020, the term childfree became a trend in Indonesia after experiencing an increase in cases in the current generation and because there were several public figures who decided not to have children (Zakiyyah, 2023). The percentage of women choosing to remain childfree in recent years in Indonesia has increased. Although the number of cases declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage has fallen again in subsequent years. The decision to have children appears to be influenced by work-from-home policies. However, given the upward trend, it cannot be denied that the childfree phenomenon has contributed significantly to the decline in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Indonesia.

Marriage in Islam is in accordance with the commands of Allah SWT and as the Sunnah of His Messenger, Muhammad SAW. The purpose is to have children and find happiness (Wijayanto & Faisol, 2024). In line with this, Sayyid Sabiq, in his book *Fiqh Sunnah*, mentions the importance of marriage, one of the virtues of which is having children (Sabiq, 2002). In the study of *maqashid al-sharia*, the goal of seeking happiness without wanting offspring only exists at the level of *maqashid al-tabi'iyah*, not the original intention of the command to marry (Busyro, 2017). Therefore, the childfree phenomenon that has emerged today needs to be studied comprehensively from all angles, including religious, social, economic, demographic, and so on.

Childfree is an interesting topic, as evidenced by the large number of studies on this phenomenon from various perspectives. Research on childfree from the perspective of Islamic law has been written by Fahdillah (2022), Zakiyyah & Mursalin (2023), Fauzan (2022), Suryatama & Syarifuddin (2025). Research that specifically examines *maqashid sharia* includes the following Syarif & Furqan (2023), Fahrani & Ramadhan (2024) dan Saogi et al. (2025). This phenomenon is also viewed from the perspective of human rights, as written by Pantow & Nahidloh (2024). Whereas Hadi et al. (2022) looking at it from the perspective of Islamic education. Not only that, previous researchers have also written about the relationship between being childfree and family resilience, as written by Yuni & Nunung (2023) and Syahriar et al. (2023), in addition to other studies linking it to social and demographic dynamics, as found in the article by Hidayah et al. (2023). These studies generally describe the Islamic legal perspective on this issue, although there are differences in their conclusions. The author looks at another side of the childfree phenomenon that has not been touched upon by previous researchers, namely the achievement of the *ashliyah* (primary) purpose of marriage.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the childfree phenomenon from the perspective of the *ashliyah* (primary) purpose of marriage as prescribed by Allah SWT and as the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. The research

question here is how Muslim couples today consider not having children in marriage and how their considerations are viewed from the aspect of the *ashliyah* (primary) purpose of marriage as desired by Allah SWT and His Messenger. This research is important so that Muslims do not simply follow their desires, but rather delve deeper into the deepest desires of the creator of this law, namely Allah SWT. (Busyro, 2019).

Method

This research is a library research study using a qualitative approach (Abdussamad, 2021). In line with this, the data collection technique was based on primary and secondary data using descriptive methods, namely collecting research information sourced from literature such as books, notes, reports, and journals relevant to the topic being studied in order to obtain relevant information. In line with this, the data collection technique was carried out by collecting data sourced from books and journals, then reducing the data, and finally sorting the data according to the topic being discussed. The data obtained was then analyzed using the deductive-inductive method, which examines childfree from the perspective of *maqashid sharia*.

Result and Discussion

The Childfree Phenomenon in Indonesian Society

Childfree in Indonesia can be more easily illustrated by female fertility statistics, namely the number of children born to women during their lifetime, as the population census shows that Indonesia's total fertility rate (TFR) is declining. TFR is the average number of children born to women during their reproductive years, i.e., women aged 15-49 years (Ulum, 2025). The childfree lifestyle can be considered a growing trend in some communities around the world, including among certain groups in Indonesia. This trend has become passive as more and more individuals are considering the option of not having children for various reasons and factors. These reasons then become the basis for the decision to be childfree and also serve as arguments to counter the negative responses of many people.

However, considering that Muslims have been taught from an early age that marriage is one of the missions and means to perfect their religion, this contradicts noble values because one of the missions of marriage is to give birth to righteous children. Every couple has the right not to have children for various compelling reasons (Zakiyyah, 2023). The Quran and the hadith of the Prophet provide reasons for opposing this choice. Therefore, having children and continuing the human race is one of the purposes of marriage.

The term childfree is used specifically to describe the condition of voluntarily not having children. Childfree is a well-known expression in the feminist movement, and refers to women's decision to choose a career path or to be stylish women with ideal body types. Childfree refers to couples who truly do not desire children, whether in terms of lifestyle, location, or situation. The idea of not having children at all is a phenomenon that has existed since the 1500s and only occurs in Western societies (Europe, such as France, England, and the Netherlands) (Tunggono, 2021).

In the beginning, during the era of ignorance, the process of regeneration was clouded by fear. At that time, there was a kind of marginalization of women, so that

baby girls were killed for the sake of honor. This was contrary to Islamic values and Sharia law. In Islam, children are a gift that must be protected as best as possible (Al-Makki, 2002). However, reality seems to have shifted back, with the era of ignorance seemingly reincarnated, albeit in a slightly different form. For example, some couples are going to great lengths to avoid having children. Noviar Daris Saputro, in his research, explains the concept of child-free and provides a critical analysis of Queen Victoria's thinking. According to him, Queen Victoria's arguments for being child-free include feminism, personal arguments, psychological arguments, medical arguments, philosophical arguments, and economic arguments. Therefore, the author is interested in examining the reality of being child-free from the perspective of Islamic law. In line with this, based on the background of the issue, this study focuses on the *maqashid sharia* perspective on people who choose to be child-free (Tunggono, 2021).

In reality, it is considered new in Indonesia because it conflicts with religious and cultural norms. Childfree is viewed by Human Rights (HAM) as everyone's right to privacy. Social problems and disturbances arise when this phenomenon gains attention and appears to be supported. Similar to abstaining in elections, childfree campaigns should also be prohibited in Indonesia (Irawan, 2016). However, supporters of childfree also have valid opinions. Those who believe that having children can cause financial and economic difficulties for families cite burdens and fears as the main reasons. Therefore, some choose not to have children because they are afraid of not being able to properly care for or provide for their children.

It is undeniable that every married couple who chooses not to have children has different motivations and experiences. The influence of cultural shifts in the social environment and a shift in thinking towards modernity are also the primary factors that lead couples to choose to be childfree, thereby giving society more leeway in making decisions (Ibny, 2023). In accordance with this, from a sociological perspective, childfree has both positive and negative impacts, such as reducing human population growth, eliminating selfish behavior among parents, eradicating poverty, and reducing infant mortality rates.

Meanwhile, the negative aspects include failing to experience the joy of being a mother or parent, a lack of commitment from the outset that leads to family disputes, losing the opportunity to receive blessings from righteous children, losing the next generation of the nation and religion, and feeling lonely after divorce because children are the foundation of a household and it goes against our nature as humans who are gifted with the ability to produce offspring (Ulum, 2025). Another reason given by couples who choose to remain childfree includes:

a. Children are a huge burden and responsibility

Children are a big responsibility because they require attention and the fulfillment of a wide range of needs, including physical, emotional, and social needs. Parents are responsible for providing an environment that supports holistic growth. The commitment of parents to provide the best for their children is a very important role (Lubis, 2023). This is a major commitment that requires time, effort, and sacrifice from parents to ensure the healthy growth and development of their children and to build good relationships with them. This has led to the stigma that children are a burden. As Rina Nose said, "After discussing it with my husband, we felt that life already has many problems, and having a child would only add to those problems" (Richardo, 2022). Rina sees

that not having children will reduce problems. From the above statement, children are a big responsibility for parents, a burden, and a source of other problems. If having children is considered a burden, then by deciding to be childfree, they consider reducing the burden on the family. Where families will certainly not escape the complexities of life.

b. Want to live happily with just my spouse

Some people believe that children are not the only source of happiness in life. Happiness can come from various aspects, including a good relationship with a partner, personal achievements, close social relationships, or peace of mind in daily life. Although children bring happiness to some people, happiness can be found in many things in life (Fikriyah, 2023). GS (initials) revealed, "From the beginning, I just wanted to focus on being happy with my husband because I could find inner peace, become a calmer person, and be content with just eating and chatting together. All of that made me feel that I didn't need anything else in my life." Before that, her husband said, "Happiness itself is enough with Gita, by doing many things in my life. Since being with him, I no longer think that happiness depends on material things and offspring" (Maulida Rohmatul Laili *et al.*, 2023). From Gita's statement above, finding happiness with a partner is a great source of satisfaction in life without having to have children. Every couple has different views on priorities in life. Some believe that having children is not a top priority in their lives and choose to focus on living happily with their partner.

c. Disappointed and traumatized by childhood

Disappointment or dislike of childhood occurs for various reasons. Perhaps some people had bitter or difficult experiences during that period that still affect their feelings today. This is also one of the reasons why some people choose to be childfree (Ulum, 2025). Victoria Tunggono said, "I didn't like my childhood, I didn't like my teenage years, and I realize that when I become a parent, I will experience the same emotions. But as a child who rebelled against my parents, one day I will become a parent who is scolded by my children, and I don't want that" (Tunggono, 2021). Raising children comes with no guarantees. Even though parents try their best, children do not always live up to expectations, but that does not mean that parents have failed. The most important thing is to give them unconditional support and love.

d. Economic difficulties

Economic difficulties can be one of the factors influencing a person's decision not to have children. The high costs associated with raising children, such as education, health care, childcare, and daily necessities, can be an important consideration for those facing financial constraints (Islam Ali, 2023). Kei Savourie said on his Twitter account, "It turns out that raising a child to adulthood costs 3 billion rupiah. This is also the reason why my partner and I decided not to have children or to be childfree" (Ja'far, 2022). Financial constraints can make it difficult for people to provide the life they want for their children, including access to a good education, adequate healthcare and a financially stable environment. Some people may choose not to have children in order to ensure they can focus on meeting their own financial needs.

Childfree in the Perspective of the *Maqashid Ashliyah* of Islamic Marriage

Islamic law, often referred to as Sharia, is a legal system based on the teachings of Islam that governs various aspects of Muslim life. In line with this, the purpose of establishing laws, known as *maqashid sharia*, is an important concept in Islamic legal studies (Paryadi, 2021). In the Qur'an, verses that refer to childfree are not mentioned directly and explicitly. However, there are implicit verses that indicate that Islamic law requires offspring and marriage through a husband and wife relationship. Husband and wife who agree to be childfree are certainly not in line with the law, which requires children in a marriage. Marriage, sexual intercourse, and the birth of children are mechanisms that Allah has established through the institution of marriage. Therefore, in the Qur'an, Allah has hinted at this through the understanding of Q.S al-Baqarah: 187. Sexual intercourse for the purpose of having children is based on the explanation of the scholars that having children is the main purpose of marriage.

Marriage is a phase that is usually passed by someone who has reached the right age to marry, both biologically and constitutionally. In addition, marriage is also a sunnah of the Prophet SAW which is considered to have many virtues, apart from its function as a shield against unpraiseworthy deeds, such as to avoid adultery. Marriage is not only a very honorable way to rely on family life and children, but it is also considered a way for some groups to get to know and communicate support for one another (Santoso 2016). After the marriage contract is executed, the husband and wife are committed to creating a harmonious and well-organized household, both painful and enjoyable, bowing and bending, so that they can unite as one. After having children from a legal relationship, their children will start a new household and have new children, and so on. Islam states that a marriage must be with a valid marriage contract and accompanied by at least two witnesses. It is even recommended that neighbors and close family members participate in the wedding by holding a party (Irawan 2016). This shows that one of the most important foundations for a perfect and dignified relationship between men and women is marriage.

Imam al-Razi identified that the main purpose of sexual intercourse in marriage is to have children. Therefore, other purposes such as satisfying sexual desires are secondary. This is because Allah has determined that sexual intercourse is a means of procreation. In line with this, marriage cannot be separated from sexual activity between husband and wife in their household. If the sexual intercourse between husband and wife is not for the purpose of having children, it is certainly contrary to Islamic law (Razy, 1981). According to Busyro, marriage in Islam has two purposes, namely the primary purpose (*ashliyah*) and the secondary purpose (*tabi'iyah*). The primary purpose of marriage is to have children, while the secondary purpose is for pleasure, peace of mind, or in other words, to achieve happiness. This secondary purpose is only to motivate Muslims to be enthusiastic about marriage in order to carry out the commands of Allah SWT and the Sunnah of His Messenger, not to deviate from the primary purpose (Busyro, 2017).

Even if there are hadiths that explain the permissibility of sexual intercourse, it is not for the purpose of having children, as stated by a companion of the Prophet who had sexual intercourse with his female slave, but he did not want to have children from her. This is understood not to mean that it is absolutely permissible, but in order to limit offspring, not to eliminate them. Then, the Prophet provided a

solution by means of *'azl* (Syarifuddin, 2011). In the dictionary *Lisan al-'Arab*, al-Zuhri explains that *'azl* is when a husband separates his sperm from his wife during intercourse so that she does not become pregnant (Al-Mishri, n.d.). Therefore, the method of *'azl* is one of the ways to limit pregnancy that is permitted by the Prophet and must be understood in the context of regulating or limiting pregnancy, not just for pleasure. This hadith is an indication that it is permissible not to have children during intercourse, but in order to regulate the timing of birth (Hakim, 2021).

Marriage and having children are Islamic goals in marriage. Islam even prescribes and regulates marriage in order to preserve the lineage (Sari & Tarihoran, 2025). The tendency to have children is human nature, because in general humans desire and love the presence of children as a source of happiness and joy in life. If love is not embedded in the human heart, especially the desire to have children, then the purpose of having a spouse, which is to have offspring, which is the goal of Islamic law, namely *hifzh al-nasl*, will not be achieved (Kafutra, 2025). Meanwhile, with the encouragement of having children, the family lineage will continue and become the next generation of the nation's population.

If a family embraces the childfree lifestyle and this understanding continues to spread to other families, it will have an impact on the population growth of a country (Hidayah et al., 2023). Without children, the lineage will be cut off. Meanwhile, Islam itself emphasizes the importance of having children or descendants so that Islam has strength in various sectors. Thus, it is human nature for a person to have children when they marry. Couples who adhere to a childfree lifestyle violate human nature and violate one of the *maqashid sharia* in marriage, which is to preserve the lineage.

Conclusion

The childfree phenomenon among today's Islamic generation has various reasons, ranging from not wanting the burden of raising children, economic burdens, childhood trauma, and simply wanting to enjoy marriage. These simple reasons certainly cannot be accepted in Islamic law, especially when linked to one of the principles of Islam to preserve the continuity of the generation (*hifzh al-nasl*). In Islam, marriage and having children are the objectives of Islam in a marriage, and this is the *ashliyah* (primary) objective of a marriage. This *ashliyah* (primary) purpose cannot be taken lightly except for significant reasons that are in accordance with Sharia law, such as the existence of a danger that threatens a person's life if they become pregnant. The tendency to have children is human nature, because in general, humans desire and love the presence of children as a source of happiness and joy in life in this world, as well as to carry out the commands of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger to preserve the continuity of the generation (*hifzh al-nasl*). Childfree without a Sharia-compliant reason is not permitted because it undermines the original purpose of marriage in Sharia, namely *hifzh al-nasl*.

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