

THE CHILDFREE PHENOMENON IN JAPAN: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY FROM A CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to explore the childfree phenomenon prevalent in Japan. From year to year, Japan continues to experience a decline in birth rates, which makes it an interesting country to study. From the phenomenon occurring in Japan, the author also wants to find out how the childfree issue is becoming more widespread in Japan, how Islamic law responds to this issue, and how ethics views it.

Methods – This research uses the literature study research method, so this research is complemented by various pre-existing sources and thus can strengthen the data. The research data were obtained from books, articles, and other writings related to the topic of the problem.

Findings – Japan has experienced a decline in birth rates since the 1970s, which has been exacerbated by the emergence of the childfree trend among the younger generation. Economic factors are the reason many young people choose not to have children. In addition, philosophical views related to living a freer life without traditional pressures or social norms that demand a brilliant life, which creates its own burden, also influence this decision. In Islamic law, the practice of childfree by aborting a fetus after four months of pregnancy is prohibited. However, Islam itself is a religion that respects the sanctity of children, as children are the next generation who will become Khalifah on this earth.

Research contribution/limitations – This study's results provide insight into the childfree phenomenon that is rampant in Japan from the perspective of Islamic law. However, this research also has limitations, as the method used is limited to a literature study without going directly to the field.

Originality/value – This research adds references related to childfree from the perspective of Islamic law, where childfree itself is a contemporary study whose practices have been rampant; therefore, Islamic law also offers answers.

Keywords: Childfree, Japan Country, Islamic Law.

Abstrak

Tujuan – Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi fenomena childfree yang marak terjadi di negara Jepang. Dari tahun ke tahun, Jepang terus mengalami penurunan angka kelahiran, hal ini juga yang menjadi menarik Jepang sebagai negara yang dikaji. Dari fenomena yang terjadi di negara Jepang tersebut, penulis juga ingin mencari tahu bagaimana masalah childfree semakin meluas di Jepang dan bagaimana hukum Islam menjawab persoalan tersebut serta bagaimana dalam pandangan etika melihat hal itu.

Metode – Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian studi pustaka, maka penelitian ini dilengkapi dengan berbagai sumber yang sudah ada sebelumnya dan dengan demikian bisa memperkuat data-data yang ada dalam penelitian ini. Data-data penelitian diambil dari buku, artikel, dan tulisan lainnya yang berkaitan dengan topik permasalahan.

Temuan – Negara Jepang telah mengalami penurunan angka kelahiran sejak 1970-an dan hal ini diperparah lagi atas kemunculan tren *childfree* di kalangan generasi muda. Faktor ekonomi menjadi alasan kenapa banyak dari generasi muda memilih untuk tidak memiliki anak. Tak hanya itu, pandangan filosofis terkait menjalani hidup lebih bebas tanpa tekanan tradisional atau norma masyarakat yang menuntut kehidupan harus cemerlang yang hal tersebut membuat beban tersendiri juga turut memengaruhi pengambilan keputusan tersebut. Dalam hukum Islam sendiri, praktik *childfree* yang dilakukan dengan menggugurkan janin di dalam kandungan setelah usia 4 bulan adalah dilarang. Namun, Islam sendiri adalah agama yang menghormati keagungan anak-anak, karena anak-anak adalah generasi penerus yang akan menjadi khalifah di bumi ini.

Kontribusi/keterbatasan penelitian – Hasil penelitian di sini memberikan pandangan perihal fenomena *childfree* yang marak terjadi di negara Jepang dalam perspektif hukum Islam. Adapun demikian, penelitian ini juga memiliki keterbatasan, di mana metode yang digunakan hanya sebatas studi pustaka, tanpa turun langsung ke lapangan.

Keaslian/nilai – Adanya penelitian ini dapat menambah referensi terkait *childfree* yang ditinjau dari perspektif hukum Islam, di mana *childfree* sendiri menjadi suatu kajian kontemporer yang praktiknya sudah marak terjadi, maka dari itu hukum Islam juga menawarkan jawabannya.

Kata kunci: *Childfree*, Negara Jepang, Hukum Islam.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, people have been surprised by the phenomenon of *Childfree*, especially in countries such as Japan. Japan has experienced a decline in birth rates. This can be traced according to statistical reports from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which notes that 27% of women born in 1970 in Japan had never given birth by the age of 50 (Lubis, 2024). Looking further ahead, according to a report from the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research based in Tokyo, 31.6% to 39.2% of Japanese women born in 2000 will remain childless throughout their lives (Averus Kautsar, 2024). However, the *Childfree* phenomenon has existed since the 2000s, and the concept is widely implemented by citizens in developed countries. According to the Oxford

Dictionary (2005), *Childfree* is the condition of not having children.

In other words, being *childfree* is an option to make the decision not to have children, whether as an individual or as a married couple. It is known that with this phenomenon, Japan has recorded a decline in residents over the past few years. The rise of this phenomenon is inseparable from the development of feminist theory in the late 19th century, which offered a true return to women's rights and provided an existence for women. According to Nemoto (2008) in her article entitled 'Postponed marriage: Exploring women's views of matrimony and work in Japan' argues that in the development of the feminism movement in Japan, it seems to receive discrimination; therefore, many women want to show their existence by limiting the number of offspring and even in a more extreme stage prefer not to have

children and focus more on the career world.

The freedom of life offered in the concept of childfree seems to be well-received in Japanese society because of the inherent workaholic culture in Japan, especially among young people. Another factor behind the Childfree phenomenon in Japan is the high cost of living. Although Japan is a country with a developed economy, it does not rule out the possibility of Japanese people still facing difficulties in the cost of living. The cost of living is not cheap, which is a new factor for young people in Japan to choose the way of life with the concept of Childfree (Nugroho, et al., 2022). Furthermore, Wang (2023) describes the childfree phenomenon in Japan. In her writing, she mentions several factors that have contributed to the decline in Japan's birth rate.

First, Cultural Perspective, the role of gender in the childfree phenomenon can be seen when men are positioned as breadwinners and women as caregivers, which delays childbirth. Women today have gradually become aware of their independent personalities and no longer want their lives to revolve around giving birth and caring for their families. Second, Economics Perspective, the high cost of living, especially in urban areas of Japan, has made couples think twice about expanding their families. Rising prices for housing, schooling, and healthcare have placed a greater burden on prospective parents. Consequently, young couples are choosing to delay or

even decide not to have children to maintain economic stability.

Third, Popular Culture, Contemporary Japanese popular culture elements, such as anime, novels (ACGN), games, and idols, are some of the social factors contributing to the decline in Japan's child population. Fourth, Society Pressure, Social pressure from historical influences also plays an important role in this regard. Traditional expectations of academic excellence, career success, and conformity to social norms make the environment more intimidating and discourage young people from starting families.

In household relations, husbands and wives have equal roles and obligations to each other. Although if seen by nature there are differences between men and women, in household affairs, both have roles in the same domestic sphere (Mas'udi, 2021). This is also contained in the Qur'an in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 228, which means '*And women have rights that are equal to their obligations in a ma'ruf manner ...*'. The Childfree concept itself shows the wife's right to choose not to have children and the husband's agreement to accept it. However, in Japan, the concept of Childfree is not only proposed by women; many men also choose to apply the concept of Childfree as a way of life. The Childfree phenomenon has attracted the attention of scholars, who have elaborated on this Childfree issue by providing interpretations of Islamic law.

Ahmad Muntaha Am, a NU Online Islamic Editor, gave his explanation of Childfree. According to him, in *fiqh* studies, there is an equivalent problem, namely rejecting the existence of a child before the sperm is in the woman's womb, either by (1) not getting married at all, (2) refraining from having intercourse after marriage, (3) without *injal* or not spilling sperm in the uterus after inserting the penis into the vagina, or (4) by '*azl* or spilling sperm outside the vagina. Of these four, the substance has similarities with the concept of Childfree from the same side of rejecting the existence of children before they have the potential to exist. Imam Ghazali, an Islamic thinker, explained that the law of '*azl* is permissible, there is no law of impurity or haram.

However, in this case, it seems to have a problem, whether what is intended by Imam Ghazali is indeed in line with the concept of Childfree, which is rife in society. Because the Childfree intended by Imam Ghazali is in substance rejecting the existence of the child before the potential exists, in other words, it is permissible if before the sperm is in the woman's womb. In another opinion of Sheikh Syauqi Alam explaining that Childfree is not a *haram* act, Sheikh Syauqi argues this because according to him there is no such explanation in the Qur'an and also the Prophet's Hadith which explains the obligation to have offspring.

If from a moral study, Haidar Bagir argues, not infrequently due to

unconsciousness and ignorance, lately the necessity to prioritize morality in everyday life has faded. Other priorities, such as the pursuit of power, prosperity, popularity, and hedonism, have led to the neglect of morality. The moral perspective is important for clarifying and restoring human consciousness to realize a balanced life for humans and the universe. This means that the childfree phenomenon is also inseparable from the influence of life in the contemporary era.

Previous research on childfree individuals has been extensive, as can be seen in the following studies: First, Abdul Rahman Ramadhan's research, 'Reproductive Rights and Childfree in Islamic Law: A Juridical and Social Analysis'. This study aims to identify and define the concept of reproductive rights in Islamic law and examine the social implications of a childfree lifestyle. Second, the study by Nur Sodik and Muhammad Chairul Huda, titled 'Understanding Childfree: A Phenomenological Perspective and Islamic Law'. The authors researched the followers of the Instagram account Childfree Life. In this study, the authors aimed to analyze the motives behind childfree actions and how Islamic law views the childfree life. Third, research by Nugroho, Nafila, Kasuwi Saiban entitled 'Childfree Marriage with Regards to Islamic Jurisprudence Principles.' This study discusses the phenomenon of childfree living in general and discusses such contracts as

reviewed from the principles of Islamic jurisprudence.

The three studies have similarities and differences with the current study. The similarity lies in the fact that they all discuss the childfree phenomenon from the perspective of Islamic law, while the difference lies in the fact that the current study also examines Japan in relation to the childfree phenomenon and reviews it from a moral and ethical perspective. Given the existence of these problems, this research aims to uncover the issue of Childfree, which is increasingly widespread in Japan, and its relationship with existing Islamic law. Thus, to address the problems that arise because of the Childfree phenomenon, it is necessary to draw or find the laws contained in Islamic law.

METHOD

This study uses a literature review to examine existing theories related to the research problem. According to Nazir (2003), a literature review can be understood as a data collection technique that involves analyzing books, notes, and various reports related to the problem to be solved. The approach used in this study was also descriptive and qualitative. The descriptive qualitative approach aims to describe and analyze issues related to the Childfree phenomenon that is prevalent in Japan, as viewed from the perspective of Islamic law.

Several techniques were used in conducting this research. In terms of

data identification, we obtained data from official organization reports and news articles. For literature selection, we chose books, journal articles, and other supporting writings. From this data, qualitative analysis was conducted by reading, understanding, categorizing and comparing various perspectives related to the Childfree phenomenon. Subsequently, the data were reviewed from an Islamic legal perspective to assess the compatibility or conflict of the phenomenon with Sharia principles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Marriage from the Perspective of Islamic Law

Etymologically, marriage in Arabic means *nakaha* or *zawaj*. Both terms are commonly used in the daily lives of Arabs and are frequently found in the Quran and Hadith of the Prophet. Al-Nikah has the meanings of *Al-Wath'I*, *Al-Dhommuh*, *Al-Tadakhul*, *Al-jam'u*, or metaphorically '*an al-wath aqd*' which means sexual intercourse, physical relationship, union, *jima'*, and contract. The term '*nikah*' has two meanings: a literal (*hakikat*) and a figurative (*majaaz*) meaning. In its literal sense, '*nikah*' means to come together, while in its figurative sense, it means a contract or a marriage agreement (Irade, et al., 2024). Marriage is also discussed in the Qur'an. One example is in Surah Al-Dzariyat, verse 49, as follows:

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

Meaning: 'And We have created everything in pairs so that you may remember the greatness of Allah.'

From the above legal views, it can be concluded that marriage itself is an activity carried out by men and women who are mixed with love. According to Wahbah Zuhaili in his book *Fiqh Imam Shafi'i*, there are three purposes of marriage: first, to have *zuriat* (posterity or offspring); second, to channel the desires of lust; and third, to obtain pleasure (Yunus et al., 2023). The purpose of marriage is also stated in QS: An-Nisa verse 1, which means:

'O humanity! Be mindful of your Lord, Who created you from a single soul (Adam), and from it He created its mate, and through both He spread countless men and women. Be mindful of Allah—in Whose Name you appeal to one another—and honor family ties. Surely Allah is ever Watchful over you.'

In fiqh, scholars explain that marriage has laws according to the conditions and factors of the parties involved (Irade, et al., 2024):

a. واجب (Wājib)

For those who are capable of marrying, whose desires are pressing, and who fear falling into adultery, it is obligatory for them to marry. Abstaining from unlawful acts is obligatory.

b. سنة (Sunnah)

For those whose desires are strong and who are capable of marrying, but are still able to refrain from adultery, it is sunnah to marry. Marriage is more

important to them than devoting themselves to worship.

c. حرام (Ḥarām)

It is forbidden for someone who is unable to provide for his wife's spiritual and physical needs and whose own desires are not urgent to marry.

d. مكروه (makrūh)

It is *makrūh* for someone who is weak in sexual desire and unable to provide for his wife to marry her. Even though it does not harm the wife because he is wealthy and does not have strong sexual desires.

e. مباح (Mubāh)

For people who are not compelled by reasons that prohibit marriage, marriage is permissible.

The Childfree Phenomenon in Japan

Japan is a developed country located on the Asian continent and is also known as a country that is advanced in its human resources. However, this does not make Japan free from problems. The declining birth rate in Japan has become a serious problem for the Japanese government. Japan has recorded a decline in birth rates since the 1970s. In a report issued by the Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications on 1 January 2023, the population of Japan was recorded at around 124.77 million, this figure is known to have decreased when compared to the previous year's report, in 2022 the population in Japan was recorded at around 125.308 million which was reported on the same day in 2022. The

decline in population in Japan is also of particular concern to the government people in Japan, as it is feared that the birth rate will continue to shrink until there are no more successors to the nation. Fumio Kishida, the Prime Minister of Japan, responded to the population decline, promising to deal with the problem through improved policies.

The decline in the number of citizens in Japan cannot be separated from the Childfree phenomenon that is spreading among Japanese youth. According to Sunarto (2004), population growth in a country has at least three influences: Birth Rate, Mortality Rate (death rate), and out-migration and in-migration (migration). The first factor, the birth rate, is a problem experienced by Japan, where young people prefer to marry without having offspring or children, which is now widely called Childfree. The Childfree phenomenon, which is widely applied by many Japanese residents, is certainly taken with a lot of consideration. The Broke Backpaper states that Japan is included in the category of 10 countries with expensive living costs, and the cost of living in Japan is known to be three times more expensive than that in the US. This is also reinforced by a scientific paper from a Meiji University professor of political science and economics, Kato Akihiko, published in 2018, which found that around 70% of couple respondents in Japan stated that the main factor in

choosing to implement the Childfree concept was financial problems.

Table 1. Cost of Living in Japan

Expense	\$Cost
Rent (Private Room vs Luxury Villa)	\$700 – \$3100
Electricity	\$100
Water	\$30
Mobil Phone	\$60
Gas (per litre)	\$1.28
Internet	\$40
Eating Out	\$10-50
Groceries	\$130
Housekeeper (Less than 10 hours)	\$300
Car Rental	\$800
Gym Membership	\$90
TOTAL	\$2000+

The table above shows the average cost of living in urban areas of Japan, but it can vary according to individual lifestyles. Japanese citizens are known to have a higher interest in working in urban areas than in rural areas. The high cost of living has led the Japanese people to consider overcoming economic problems by implementing the concept of Childfree. Japan is also known for its workaholic culture, and young people in Japan are more interested in working in cities and prefer to work in their career fields. Because of the extraordinary busyness in the career world and the issue of the cost of living in expensive cities, this is the background for the emergence of the Childfree phenomenon in Japan.

Japan has become a country with one of the lowest birth rates in the world, and the number of childfree cases is increasing. The Organisation for

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in an article reported by Japan's Mainichi (2024) shows that about 28.3% of women born in 1975 are childless in Japan, which is the highest percentage among other developed countries. Women of this age who do not have children are more likely to choose a child-free path in life. Data from Worldometer also show that from 2010 to 2025, Japan's population will continue to decline.

Table 2. Japan's population from 2010 to 2025

Year	Population
2025	123,103,479
2024	123,753,041
2023	124,370,947
2022	124,997,578
2020	126,304,543
2015	127,275,872
2010	128,185,275

The Japanese government is also not silent about this phenomenon; to deny Childfree activities, the Japanese government has issued many policies aimed at tackling problems regarding the Childfree phenomenon. The Japanese government issued more financial assistance to its citizens who wanted to have offspring, which can be seen by increasing the baby bonus to 500,000 yen or around \$3,800 starting in April to cover the cost of women giving birth, which is known to average 470,000 yen. The childbirth financial package provided by the Japanese government aims to help with the cost of necessities, such as nappies, milk, clothes, and strollers.

In other research Childlessness in the United at least gives another opinion of couples who choose not to have children, three main reasons for couples to choose and implement the concept of Childfree explained by American doctors and psychologists, such as:

- 1 Choosing to focus on living with their partner instead of their children,
- 2 Based on the concept of freedom and independence, and
- 3 Choosing to focus on one's own life, for example, in terms of interests, needs, and goals, without being overshadowed by children (Freika, 2017).

According to Neal and Neal (2021), having offspring or children can indeed add to one's own happiness in life with a partner, but on the other hand it is possible that it will bring dissatisfaction and a decrease in happiness in life. The decision not to have children is also influenced by psychological factors, where a person chooses to be child-free due to past trauma, extreme anxiety, and mental health problems. In fact, there are couples who choose to be childfree due to their philosophical view of the world, where they feel that the world is no longer safe to live in, and they even think that helping the children around them is enough compared to having their own (Yunus et al., 2023). This is also reinforced by the results of studies on the relationship between parental status and life happiness, which show a positive relationship between being a

parent and achieving life happiness, but in other studies, it is stated that the relationship is not related to life happiness.

Women's Right to Not Reproduce in Islam

Islam is a religion that respects women's rights. This can be seen in Qur'an Surah Al-Hujrat verse 13:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Meaning: 'O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.'

In the verse, we see that Allah, the creator of mankind, does not differentiate between women and men. Glory is not connected to gender, ethnic identity, or nation. Likewise, other women's rights are regulated by Islamic law, including reproductive issues. Dr (Hc) KH Husein Muhammad, often called Buya Husein, expressed his views on the reproductive rights of women. According to him, there are four rights regarding women's reproductive rights: the right to enjoy sexual intercourse, the right to refuse sexual intercourse, the right to pregnancy, and the right to abortion (Muhammad, 2019).

It is the latter right regarding abortion that is at issue in the Childfree concept applied by women. Abortion can be interpreted as an activity that terminates a pregnancy. Abdullah bin Mas'ud once said that the Prophet said: 'Verily, each of you is gathered in your mother's womb for 40 days in the form of 'nuthfah', then in the form of 'alaqah' for that long, then in the form of 'mudghah' for that long, then the spirit is blown into him.' (HR Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Ahmad, and Tirmidzi). In the hadith, it can be explained that having an abortion if the womb is four months old is haram, because when the womb already has a spirit, it causes murder, which is haram. This is also reinforced by the words of Allah SWT in QS. Al-An'am verse 151:

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ عَلَيَّكُمْ إِلَّا تَشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنٌ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّيْتُكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Meaning: 'Say, O Prophet, "Come! Let me recite to you what your Lord has forbidden: do not associate others with Him in worship. Do not fail to honor your parents. Do not kill your children because of the fear of poverty. We provide for you and them. They must not come near indecencies, openly or secretly. Do not take a human life—made sacred by Allah—except with legal right.1 This is what He has commanded you, so perhaps you will understand.' (QS Al-An'am: 151)

Another evidence that abortion when the pregnancy is more than four months old is haram is also found in the hadith of the prophet: 'When the germ (clot of blood) has passed forty-two nights, Allah sends an angel to it, and he molds the germ; he makes its hearing, its sight, its skin, its flesh, and its bones. Then the angel asked, 'My Lord, will you make him a male or a female?' So, Allah decided...' (HR Muslim from Ibn Mas'ud). The hadith explains that in the beginning, the fetus is created, and its limbs are revealed after 20 or 42 nights.

Other scholars have expressed different opinions. Some scholars also firmly state that abortion performed from the moment the sperm and ovum cells meet is already included in the haram action. This is because the preparation and growth of new creatures that have life must be protected and their existence respected. However, scholars who stated that abortion is forbidden because of the meeting of sperm cells with ovum cells had a weak opinion.

However, the concept of Childfree is not only through abortion but can also be achieved by having protected intercourse using safety devices such as condoms or by releasing sperm outside. Imam Ghazali seems to have discussed this in his book 'Ihya 'Ulumiddin:

وَأَنَّمَا قُلْنَا لَا كَرَاهَةَ بِمَعْنَى التَّحْرِيمِ وَالتَّنْزِيهِ، لِأَنَّ
إثْبَاتَ النَّهْيِ إِنَّمَا يُمَكِّنُ بِنَصِّ أَوْ قِيَاسٍ عَلَى مَنُصُوصٍ،
وَلَا نَصَّ وَلَا أَصْلَ يُقَاسُ عَلَيْهِ. بَلْ هَهُنَا أَصْلٌ يُقَاسُ

عَلَيْهِ، وَهُوَ تَرْكُ التَّكَاحِ أَصْلًا أَوْ تَرْكُ الْجَمَاعِ بَعْدَ
التَّكَاحِ أَوْ تَرْكُ الْإِنْزَالِ بَعْدَ الْإِيلَاجِ، فَكُلُّ ذَلِكَ تَرْكٌ
لِلْأَفْضَلِ وَلَيْسَ بِإِزْكَابِ نَهْيٍ. وَلَا فَرْقٌ إِذِ الْوَلَدُ يَتَكَوَّنُ
بِوُقُوعِ الطُّفْةِ فِي الرَّحْمِ

"I am of the opinion that 'azl is not makruh in the sense of *makruh tahrîm* or *makrûh tanzîh*, because to establish a prohibition against something can only be done on the basis of the text or *qiyâs* on the text, whereas there is no text or origin or source of *qiyâs* that can be used as an argument against 'azl. Instead, there is a *qiyâs* origin that permits it by not getting married at all, not having intercourse after marriage, or not *inzâl* or spilling sperm after inserting the penis into the vagina. All of these are acts of abandoning virtue, not acts of prohibition. All of them make no difference because the child will only potentially come into existence with the sperm in the woman's womb" (Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Ihyâ' 'Ulûmiddîn*, [Beirut, Dârul Ma'rîfah], juz II, page 51).

If the concept of Childfree is applied as explained by Imam Ghazali, namely, before the sperm is in the womb of a woman, the law is permissible. In other words, if the application of Childfree is carried out without going through the abortion process according to Imam Ghazali, it is still permissible, because it has no potential to exist in the form of a child

Islam Looks at Descent

In Islam, there are many studies that are in accordance with the problem.

Talking about Childfree itself certainly cannot be separated from the study of issues regarding children. The Qur'an contains many verses that discuss children. One of them is Surah An-Nahl, verse 72:

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ
أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ
يُؤْمِنُونَ وَيَنْعِمَتِ اللَّهُ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ

Meaning: 'And Allah has made for you spouses of your own kind, and given you children and grandchildren through your spouses. He has granted you good and lawful provisions. Are they then faithful to falsehood and ungrateful for Allah's favours?'

In other verses, the Qur'an explains the glory of a child; in Islam, children are a fortune brought by Allah SWT. This is explained in Surah Al-Isra verse 31:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةً إِمَّا يَكُنْ نَزْرُقُهُمْ
وَأَيَّاكُمْ إِن قَتَلْتُمْ كَانَ خَطَاً كَبِيراً

Meaning: 'And do not kill your children because of the fear of poverty. We will provide them for you. Indeed, killing them is a great sin.'

In this verse, Allah, as the creator of mankind, promises in his words that Allah Himself will send down sustenance to each couple who has children. Tafsir Al-Muyassar from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Saudi Arabia interprets the verse Al-Isra verse

31 to explain that if you kill a child on the pretext of fear of poverty then it is a major sin. The hadith also explains marriage and childbearing.

تَزَوَّجُوا الْوُلُودَ الْوُدُودَ فَإِنِّي مُكَائِرٌ بِكُمْ الْأُمَمَ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ

Meaning: 'Marry 'women' who are loving and have many offspring, then indeed I will be proud of the number of you in front of other nations on the Day of Judgement.' (HR. Abu Daud, an-Nasa'i and Ahmad)

The hadith above explains that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) wants his people to marry a fertile woman to have children. Rasulullah SAW wants his people to have as many offspring as possible. Regarding the above hadith, Al-Syaukani in his book Nailul Autar explains 6/125:

وَهَذِهِ الْأَحَادِيثُ وَمَا فِي مَعْنَاهَا تَدُلُّ عَلَى مَشْرُوعِيَّةِ
النِّكَاحِ وَمَشْرُوعِيَّةِ أَنْ تَكُونَ الْمُنْكَوْحَةُ وَلُودًا

Meaning: 'The hadith and its meaning indicate that marriage is recommended and that the woman to be married (is willing) to have many offspring.'

Another recommendation is explained in another hadith:

إِذَا مَاتَ الْإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَمَلُهُ إِلَّا مِنْ ثَلَاثَةٍ مِنْ
صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ وَعِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ وَوَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ

Meaning: "When a man dies all his good deeds come to an end except three: Ongoing charity (Sadaqah

Jariyah), beneficial knowledge and a righteous son who prays for him.”

Responding to the issue of Childfree, KH. Ma'ruf Amin, the former Chairman of MUI and Vice President of Indonesia, also expressed his views. According to him, a child is the successor of the world; therefore, having a descendant is considered important. KH Ma'ruf Amin also emphasized that offspring is part of the function of marriage. Apart from being part of the purpose of marriage, having a child also makes the mission that humans are caliphs on earth, as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 30:

وَاذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّيْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ
خَلِيْفَةًۭ

Meaning: ‘Remember when your Lord said to the angels, “I am going to place a khalifah (successive human authority) on earth...”’

Islam views children as noble. From the birth of a child, it enables regeneration for future generations. Humans must take care of the earth and its contents, and the birth of humans exists because of the marriage relationship that creates a child.

Childfree Choices from an Ethical and Moral Perspective

In the previous sub-chapter, it was studied that childfree is an option for married couples not to have children. There are conditions that are allowed and conditions that are prohibited by Sharia. Apart from the reasons why childfree living is allowed or not,

according to Islamic law, ethical and moral views are no less important to study so that religious values are not dry. Given that the human mentality is not a slave mentality that is programmed like a robot to just not do this and do that, the question then arises: *Is this child-free choice ethically and morally right if normalized by society?*

In terms of ethical and moral studies, the childfree phenomenon needs to be parsed first from a philosophical approach. Within the scope of the philosophy of science, something can be simplified into three aspects: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. In this study, these three aspects are reviewed from the perspective of Islam to be in line with the objectives of this paper, which will be explained in the following description:

1. Ontological Aspect

In terms of ontology, something is studied from its nature or reality. In his book *Philosophy of Science*, Muhadjir explains that ontology discusses what ‘exists’, attempting to find the core contained in every reality, covering all realities, or real things in all forms (Salminawati et al., 2025). In the context of childfree living, the problem arises in the ‘essence of a marriage’ if a married couple chooses not to have children. In Islam, marriage creates peace (*Sakinah*), love (*mawaddah, rahmah*), and continues the lineage or maintains human existence on Earth (*hifdz nasl*). Therefore, the essence of marriage contradicts the childfree decision.

Marriage will only achieve 2 (two) goals: creating peace and love, but the third goal of continuing offspring is not achieved (*hifdz nasl*). The childfree option ontologically overrides the meaning of marriage from a collective function, that is, the continuity of generations, to just an emotional and economic relationship between two humans. Thus, from an ontological perspective, the childfree decision is considered to reduce one of the main existential dimensions of marriage according to Islamic law.

2. Epistemological Aspect

Epistemology in the philosophy of science questions the sources of knowledge (Jasnain, 2022). In the Qur'an, Al-Mu'minun verse 78, it is written: "*He is the One Who created for you hearing, sight, and intellect. 'Yet' you hardly give any thanks.*" It can be understood that human knowledge is obtained from the senses, reason, and conscience. Islam invites humans to use their five senses and intellect, materially and spiritually. Human experience recorded by the senses, sound human logic, and the existence of revelation (the holy Qur'an) as guidance are a combination of knowledge sources to navigate human life daily. Senses and reason complement each other in building knowledge.

In this aspect, childfree decisions are generally built on the basis of modern rational considerations, such as economic (high cost of living and education), psychological (childhood

trauma, parenting concerns), and cultural (influence of individualism and liberalism) (Zidni Amaliyatul et al., 2023). Instead, Islam places revelation (Qur'an and Hadith), *ijtihad*, and *maqashid sharia* as the main epistemological sources for determining the law of an action. From this perspective, the decision not to continue offspring in the absence of *shar'i* obstacles is not fully in line with Islamic epistemology, which emphasizes the continuity of generations as part of the divine mandate and the purpose of Sharia.

3. Axiological Aspect

Axiology is the study of values and ethics. Ethics is the main goal of people who study science (Ajay, 2021). Science works within the frame of the Islamic paradigm, where science comes directly from the text of the Quranic revelation. Therefore, the ethical value contained in Islamic science is in a very close ethical-moral frame. This is because the purpose of ethics is for humans to know and be able to account for their actions. For married couples who choose to remain childfree, the main values pursued are freedom, self-actualization, economic well-being, and quality of life without caregiving responsibilities.

However, in the Islamic framework, marriage is more important than self-interest. In Islam, a child is seen as a gift, a trust, a source of continuing charity, and a means of building the next generation. Thus, from the perspective of Islamic axiology, the decision to go

childfree poses a dilemma: *can the value of individual freedom and comfort be justified when it has the potential to ignore universal values and hinder the progress of the ummah?*

From the previous description, it can be concluded that from the perspective of Islamic law, the decision to go childfree for life raises ontological (the nature of marriage without offspring), epistemological (conflict between Western rationality and Sharia), and axiological (conflict between individual values and universal values of the people) problems. The epistemological, ontological, and axiological analyses show that the childfree phenomenon is not simply a lifestyle choice but is related to the nature of marriage, the source of knowledge legitimacy, and the purpose of marriage itself.

Furthermore, the axiological dimension highlights Islamic values that are essential in human life and cannot be set aside. Hans Jonas (1903-1993), a German philosopher, said that it is humans who have consciousness and responsibility. Humans are the highest beings and the only ones with freedom. He can choose to destroy or preserve nature, including his own descendants. The high status of humans compared to other creatures makes them responsible for the greatest responsibility. Therefore, humans are subject to ethical obligations. The word obligation is a compelling burden. If not forced, humans tend to look for the easy and pleasant way to do things. It is not

enough to think only for today and for oneself; humans are part of the future and a continuous series of generations.

Therefore, Hans Jonas formulated the ethical obligation of the future, which includes two factors. First, the fear factor, and second, the feeling factor. The ethical obligation of the future, combined with the fear factor, encourages humans to feel fear. In Surah An-Nisa verse 9:

“Let the guardians be as concerned for the orphans as they would if they were to die and leave their own helpless children behind. So let them be mindful of Allah and speak equitably”.

The verse emphasizes that people should be afraid of leaving behind a weak person. It could be that future generations become difficult due to the apathy of today's society, who are busy thinking about themselves. Fear encourages people to anticipate a situation and motivates them to find a solution. If not overwhelmed by fear, people tend to do nothing and neglect their responsibilities toward the environment.

Furthermore, future ethical obligations with emotional factors emphasize the need for humans to empathize or feel. If future generations are few in number while the demands of life management are increasing, it will certainly be difficult to live up to them. Likewise, if humans are numerous but powerless, there will be a feeling of worry and discomfort if their children and grandchildren live in such

conditions. Fahrudin Faiz (2024) emphasized that the ethics of future responsibility is not a reciprocal concept because it is impossible to expect future generations to respond to current efforts. The ethics of the future is a responsibility and calling.

If it is associated with the concept of childfree and the preservation of humans and nature in the future, then every time I do something or choose a choice, it is necessary to consider; *"Does what I do threaten the preservation of humans and the environment in the future?"* Therefore, from this moral perspective, the author draws a boundary line for childfree choices with the following considerations.

- 1 Childfree can be chosen if it is not contrary to the principles and foundations of Islamic law, and there is a physical-mental health condition that is not good and vulnerable to worsening if the couple continues to have children. There are also indications of hereditary diseases that endanger the child.
- 2 Childfree becomes unethical if it contradicts Islamic values, in the sense that it rejects the responsibility or mandate from Allah, prioritizes a hedonistic lifestyle, is afraid of falling into poverty, and neglects the call of the future.

Therefore, every human choice has consequences and responsibilities, not only in this world but also in the hereafter. He created our ability to

choose and perform actions. The choice is ours alone, and we must abide by it. However, it is important that we do what God commands. God does not command us to do what we cannot do, nor does He want us to give what we cannot give. There is no point in warning us about our behavior if we cannot do anything to change it. Hans Jonas said, 'act in such a way that the effects of your actions do not damage the possibility of future life'. It is also written in the Qur'an: *It is not proper for a believing man or woman to have a choice in a matter when it has been decided by God and His Messenger* (Qur'an 3:36). It is worth reminding ourselves that it is the nature of human responsibility, as the Qur'an itself says on many occasions, that we are responsible for what we do and also what we do not do.

CONCLUSION

Japan is currently experiencing declining birth rates. This is compounded by the trend of childlessness. The reasons for choosing to remain childless in Japan vary, ranging from the cost of living and psychological factors to philosophical views. In Islam, a childfree lifestyle is permissible if the pregnancy is not terminated after four months. However, if the childfree lifestyle is practiced by terminating a pregnancy that is more than four months old, it is forbidden. However, from an Islamic perspective, children are considered noble, and therefore Islam itself encourages couples

to have children, as they can renew humanity on earth, as humans are deemed to be Allah's vicegerents on earth. From a moral standpoint, being childfree may not contradict Islamic law under certain conditions, but it may also be considered unethical if it is based on a refusal to take responsibility for what has been given by Allah.

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