



## **UNDERSTANDING CHILDFREE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE AND ISLAMIC LAW**

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### **Abstract**

Having children is one of the goals in marriage, but in reality, is that some followers of the *childfreelife* Instagram account are not. This research addresses the following questions: First, what are the motives and actions of childfree? Second, what is the ideal of Islamic law in the *childfreelife.id* account? This study is conducted from the perspective of phenomenology and *maqashid* of Islamic law. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method with a socio-legal approach. Data collection techniques through participation in being followers and in-depth telephone interviews. In order to obtain primary data, and literature studies to acquire secondary data. The findings of this study show the courage of followers to seek justification for childlessness, even though it goes against the purpose of marriage and social norms.

**Keywords:** Childfree, Phenomenology, Islamic law, Maqashid shari'ah.

## **A. Introduction**

Humans receive sexual desire identity from God, channeled through marriage (Al-Mashri, 2016, p.186; Zumaro, 2021, p.141). After marriage, every couple generally longs for offspring, the problem with the factual reality (the being) of the free life. “My Instagram account lies in another way.” Followers voluntarily choose to live a child-free life. However, his actions are against the purpose of marriage (Al-Imam et al. Al-Sindy, 2017, p. 422; Al-Imam As-Sarkhashi, 2000, p. 349). Followers’ actions are not the same as the decision to live without children due to factors outside the will or to delay pregnancy (Maolana & Zaenuri, 2022, pp. 51-63; Tunggono, 2021, p. 17). Followers’ actions are also different from those of celebrities who adopt dolls (Bakry et al., 2022, p. 21). Being childfree is not a taboo in Western countries, but the opposite is true in Indonesia. The cultural construction of each place cannot be equated (Winarto, 2006, p. 4). Thus, this research contributes to realizing humanistic social life by understanding the construction of the meaning of childlessness in child-free life.

## **B. Literature Review**

Referring to Alfred Schutz’s concept of the stock of knowledge, the decision of the followers not to have children depends on their daily experiences (Lebenswelt), which form their motives (Supraja & al Akbar, 2021, p. 166). Whether the meaning of the follower’s actions coincides with the motive need not be questioned; the essential thing in deciding whether to be childfree lies in understanding the follower’s relationship to the living world. The original actions of the

followers orient themselves towards a future fantasy that happens when the followers take an act. The journey from the meaning of childfree to this context within the order takes the form of motive (The Phenomenology of the Social World (Alfred Schutz) (z-Lib.Org) (1), n.d., pp. 86-91).

The childfree goals in the childfreelife.id accounts are different even though the actions are the same. Conversely, some have the same goal but different actions. It is not enough to understand the construction of the meaning of childfree only with an in-order motive. Then, the motive is present to answer the projection of the follower's past to understand the construction of the meaning on a childfreelife.id account (Barber, 2012, p. 45). Imam Ghazali's Maqashid Shari'ah exists as a manifestation of the reality of childlessness, divided into three levels: daruriyat, hajiyat, and tahsiniat (Al-Ghazali, 2021, p.41). Maqashid shari'ah, as a form of Islamic law, is presented to solve problems and ensure justice for children.id account followers wisely under the original terminology "al hukmu."

### **C. Method**

This study used qualitative methods with fieldwork studies and an interdisciplinary socio-legal approach employing an emic perspective paradigm by researchers (Haryono, 2020, p.341; Huda, 2022, p.21). The researcher participated as a follower of childfreelife.id account and in-depth interviews using a phone for data collection (Haryono, 2020, pp. 79-80). The object (locus) of this research is the childfreelife.id Instagram account. Researchers explore information based on the role, status, and actions of followers

without covering their identities. The data analysis of this research, namely data collection, presentation, reduction, and verification (Miles et al., 2018, p. 10). Data validity using triangulation and cross-checking (Morey & Luthans, 1984, pp. 27-36). Researchers used eclectic theories, including social theory, phenomenological theory, and maqashid shari'ah.

## **D. Result and discussion**

### **Circumstances and Social Interactions on Childfreelife.id Instagram Account**

In the modern era, Instagram is a social activity (Musonera, 2018, p. 4). people with the same background and fate can form a community in it. Like child free actors (Child free Life Indonesia (@childfreelife.Id) - Instagram Photos and Videos, n.d.) childfreelife. It is an Instagram account containing some child-free actors in Indonesia. The Childfreelife.id account serves as an information center and a gathering place for people who actively advocate being childfree, although it contradicts the purpose of marriage and societal norms (Al-Imam As-Sarkhashi, 2000, p. 349). Citizens follow the childfreelife.id account to find their allies (Abelia, followers 2022). Followers use child free life.id to share - in Javanese terms, "gangs kawruh" -vent and voice child free to netizens (Sujati et al., 2022, pp. 51-62). Followers do not align with the culture that considers children in a marriage relationship a necessity.

The childfree.Id account contains 2368 followers who unite the frame of mind of actors and participants through broadcasting (Childfree Life Indonesia (@childfreelife.Id)

- Instagram Photos and Videos, n.d.; Prayitno et al., 2021, p. 30). Thus, Instagram perpetuates virtual social movements due to adverse community reactions and citizen justifications (Abelia, 2022; Hanafi & Abd Rahim, 2017, pp. 87-101). The childfreelife.id account feature provides an overview of child free discussion material related to current issues (Veygid et al., 2020, p. 47). Childfreelife.id contains followers from various groups so that interpersonal relationships between followers even lead to marriages between child free (Childfree Life Indonesia (@childfreelife.Id) - Instagram Photos and Videos, n.d.; Veygid et al., 2020, p. 48). The evidence is that followers admitted, "I married my husband, who is also child free, started on Instagram. At that time, my husband direct messenger me, who also followed Instagram childfreelife.id" (Anisa, 2022). The reason is that the child-free group is a minority, while they want to mate with fellow groups. Indeed, followers are anxious if they fail to match with a partner who meets the criteria, as felt by perpetrators of endogenous marriages (Rachman, 2019, p. 44). This research does not judge the followers, regardless of what happens to the childfreelife.id account. Instead, it understands the construction of the meaning of offspring from the perspective of the followers.

### **Child free on the childfreelife.id Instagram account**

Child free actions on childfreelife.id accounts come in two types, permanent and temporary. Permanent child-free means that you choose not to have children for the rest of your life. Meanwhile, temporal child free decides not to have offspring for a certain period and still hopes to have offspring when the reason for child free is under followers' expectations.

Followers have different methods of preventing offspring, namely, temporal and permanent. Permanent childlessness occurs by cutting off the reproductive tract (e.g., vasectomy and tubectomy). As a result, followers cannot have children well, and the couple's harmony decreases (Bahu et al., 2019, pp. 67-77; Mulyanti et al., 2016, pp. 587-593). Meanwhile, the temporal method takes advantage of aids and temporary contraceptives. In order to understand the construction of the meaning of offspring by exploring the context (in order motive) and purpose (because motive) of childlessness, we need to understand the relationship between beliefs and everyday experience (Lebenswelt) (Barber, 2012, p. 44). Furthermore, we will explain the relationship between because motive and in order motive with followers' actions.

### **1. Because motive child free, permanent.**

Followers do not immediately decide to be childless but instead rely on psychological and medical factors, namely intrinsic motivation in the form of self-confidence and personal motivation of individuals and couples. Self-confidence refers to confidence in one's abilities about the "appropriateness" of having children (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002, pp. 871-915). Followers feel insecure with all the burden and responsibility of offspring (Anisa, 2022). Therefore, followers decide to be child-free permanently.

Furthermore, followers want to motivate others to participate in their child-free actions. Followers hope that the audience knows that life does not always have to have offspring and is more free without burden. Followers interpret this action as a struggle

to bring “good culture” to society. Too many couples have children without preparing themselves to be good parents (Victoria, 2022). No one can fully control changes in social decline or development. Changes occur by human nature, which always wants to change and is active, creative, and innovative. Modern and post-modern values will replace traditional social values. It does not matter that changes will occur as long as they bring positive values to society. Ibn Khaldun calls this the cycle theory (Kandiri, 2014, p. 247).

Fathers act as teachers and role models to become new fathers for children because the first teachers in children’s lives are parents (Lismanda, 2017, p. 94). The father’s departure is the starting point for losing the father’s role as a teacher and role model for followers (Abraham, 2022). So, it is an opportunity for followers to become new teachers and role models for their children in the future. Followers do not want to because they cannot become fathers with all their responsibilities and want to avoid becoming fathers just for trial and error without careful preparation (Abraham, 2022). The condition of approaching old age and reproductive organs no longer functioning at peak performance coincides with the wishes of childfree followers (Rosa, 2022). Weber referred to this as an act of instrumental rationalism (Sangadji et al., 2018, p. 6). Moreover, the influence of support from spouses encourages childfree actions (Rosa, 2022).

Followers plan to live in a retirement home rather than worry about relatives who find inspiration in the

stories of other childless actresses. Their mission comes about by saving money after marriage. Even though it is preferable physically, psychologically, and socially to live at home with the family (Siregar et al., 2014, p. 8), Schutz interprets it as a primordial active action because followers consider it as if the distress has occurred now. At the same time, the reality in the future may not be what followers imagine. Descendants and relatives will have their own lives, and if they take care of followers when they are old, they cannot fulfill their needs (Anisa, 2022; Barber, 2012, p. 44). The followers' delusion aligns with Weber, who stated that meaningful action becomes rationally oriented towards values, emotional states, beliefs, and traditions (Barber, 2012, p. 29). Therefore, followers conclude that the meaning of offspring and family is not an investment in the future, and the meaning of life for followers is not to burden others (Anisa, 2022).

Second, belief. Rabi'ah adawiyah's Sufistic stories heard from her parents and Naqasabandiyah qadriyah tarekat recitation colleagues became an extraphysical factor in the childfree decision. The figure of Rabi'ah adawiyah acts as an actor base model, as explained by Windfred Hill that humans will try to imitate (primary reinforcement) due to the tendency to be inspired (Hill, 1960, p. 317). Imitating Rabi'ah adawiyah - who, according to followers, is a "female wali of Allah" - needs to be done in order to taqarub ila Allah. If followers follow the practice of the wali Allah, they will receive blessings (ziyadah fil khair) and even be appointed wali Allah (dewi, 2022). This concept resembles the love triangle between



Allah, the Prophet, and humans, which manifests in the practice of shalwar or sunnah, which the Javanese refer to as the act of 'Derek lamp' (Kristiyanto et al., 2019, pp. 146-152; Zamzami, 2015, pp. 44-66). Beliefs rooted in followers will not be inviolable because they are part of the religious doctrine to which followers adhere.

Furthermore, Rabi'ah Adawiyah possesses - in Max Weber's term - 'charisma' and appears to be a cultural hero, attracting followers to be child-free. Ibn Arabi referred to it as Burhani knowledge or beyond the rational (Huda et al., 2022, pp. 289-309). Believing in Sufi stories and culture, heroes cannot separate themselves from life choices to focus on religion. Tarekat, in which there is loyalty, causes followers to become attached to practices (e.g., dhikr, reading, listening to lectures, discussions) that must be carried out. Offspring will only interfere with the life choices of followers because they will have to provide for them while working (Dewi, 2022). Dhikr must be done every breath and every moment, even though followers are still at the maqam of dhikr by heart (Dewi, 2022). It is not a religious practice mixed with traditional non-Islamic elements as Clifford Geertz says or an extreme path to God by way of Syeh Siti Jenar's "manunggaling kawulo gusti" (Ridlo, 2021, pp. 220-241) (Hasriyanto, 2015, p. 59; Ridlo, 2021, pp. 220-241). Followers' paths to God tend to increase the remembrance of the chant, which Sayyed Hossein Nasr terms the implications of "the experience of the Sacred" in the corridors of social behavior (Dewi, 2022; Nasr, 2003, p. 14).

Followers who are Muslims should have offspring as a form of sunnah practice. Followers feel that they are not like the Prophet's wife, who can take care of children perfectly as the first teacher for children because making offspring is easy, but educating them is difficult. Followers prefer to take care of orphans rather than give birth to offspring because they see the condition of many orphans around the followers. Therefore, followers want to avoid following the sunnah of procreation (dewi, 2022). The Rabi'ah Adawiyah is the teacher of the followers, although she does not directly guide them (Dewi, 2022). Pesantren considers this to be the practice of "learning without sadad" (Sanusi, 2013, p. 61). In the Alala book, the requirements for a student to learn are intelligence, enthusiasm, patience, cost, teacher's guidance, and time. The teacher acts as a transfer of knowledge to students in a coherent manner up to the Prophet (Muhammad bin (Ahmad Nabahan, 2010, p. 2). No one interprets the followers' actions as odd or violating the rules of learning. It means constructing the meaning of the teacher from the disciples' point of view.

In addition, followers have a spiritual teacher to guide them whenever they are in doubt. However, the teacher still has complete control over the child. Followers question the meaning of their heart, which tends to want to decide childfree. The followers' teachers never ordered, forced, or advised the followers to become childless. Therefore, the action cannot reasonably interpreted as following the "dawuh guru" (ANSHORI, 2016, p. 23). The followers' spiritual teacher only told the story of Rabi'ah

Adawiyah and explained that destiny is suitable for anyone. Just like the childfree decision could be a destiny given by God, and followers believe that (Dewi, 2022).

Third, the environment; the purpose of education is to educate the nation's life and develop the whole person, namely, human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have a noble character, have abilities and skills, are physically and mentally healthy, independent personalities, and a sense of community responsibility (Haryanto, 2016, p. 80). Reality is different, and education tends to go in the secular direction (Dewi, 2022). Existing education is quite good because it emphasizes "must be competitive" both in work and intellectually. However, it is better not to maintain the value of noble character if there is a balance between religious and general content (Dewi, 2022). Education should provide the best environment for offspring. No matter how intelligent the offspring are, they will only contribute to adverse environmental changes if they do not have good behavioral values And vice versa. Therefore, existing education needs to adapt to the times. The followers interpret this as a tendency towards secularism, which leads to the decision not to have children. Next, the preservation and balance of the ecosystem must continue for the sake of human survival. Eco-eccentrically, humans and other abiotic objects are interrelated; therefore, the responsibility of morality reciprocally applies to the entire ecological reality (SUWITO, n.d., p. 7). The reality is that the environment where followers live is very concerning.

Followers prefer to protect the environment by being child-free (Abelia, 2022).

Fourth, Personal Followers and their partners are busy in the office, so they need more time to care for their offspring. Followers do not want their offspring to be affected by permissive parenting (Anisa, 2022). This parenting will have a negative impact: first, lack of self-control and independence; second, low self-esteem, lack of maturity, and isolation from family; third, difficulty controlling behavior and aggression (Suteja & Yusriah, 2017, p. 11). Every couple desires good offspring. In their anxiety, followers choose to avoid or change the situation. Ideally, the problem needs to be overcome rather than avoided. Nevertheless, the primary purpose of followers getting married is not to be a father and mother but a husband and wife.

On the other hand, Followers have reached the peak of happiness in households without offspring. The presence of offspring is a destroyer of their happiness (Anisa, 2022). Indeed, followers like children because they are cute and sometimes behave strangely, but that liking cannot change their life choices. Happiness is replaced by nieces and nephews, orphans, and pets because it is easier and less expensive (Victoria, 2022). Followers' actions are similar to those of Japanese people who replace children with pets (petto) as objects of pleasure (Noviana, 2018, pp. 11-17). The relationship between human affection and petto is mutual.

Followers dislike parenting because it is complicated (e.g., frequent toileting, educating, and

financing) and stressful (Victoria, 2022). Furthermore, a public sector career makes her unable to care for offspring. The presence of offspring will impact dual roles in the domestic and public spheres. The stress experienced by mothers with dual roles is fatigue, sleep disturbances, and lack of time with partners, which will interfere with the happiness of followers (Sari et al., 2015, pp. 80-87). Karl Jaspers (Tambunan, 2016, pp. 59-76) explains that human freedom is a form of human existence. It is the same with followers who are free to make choices whether they want to give birth or not. Women are not child-making machines (Victoria, 2022).

## **2. Because motive child free, temporal.**

Followers have several backgrounds in childfree decisions, including Psychological and medical. Sigmund Freud (Bertens, 2006, p. 34) termed anxiety as a half-biological, half-psychological danger sign, precisely like the active primordial actions of followers who are anxious about the dangers of living in old age (Barber, 2012, p. 44). Followers have many relatives, but followers are still determining if they want to care for them in old age. Followers hope for a figure who will take care of them in old age, and if that hope comes true, followers want to end the childfree decision (Zahra, 2022).

In addition, followers' lives depend on medication because doctors have diagnosed them with social phobia. Followers tend to be anxious and even self-conscious about physically meeting another person (Zahra, 2022). However, this is not the phenomenon of hikikomori among

teenagers or young adults in Japan. Nor is it a feeling of anxiety in unfamiliar and embarrassing situations (Supraja & al Akbar, 2021, p. 173; Yaunin, 2012, pp. 234-243). The final limit of her child-free decision is when the disease is cured and it is possible to have offspring.

Second, life experience. Followers grew up with the fear of the pain of childbirth. On the way to adulthood, followers often listen to child free content that rationalizes their child free desires. This does not mean that followers act as permanent child free actors because they are still looking for good and bad choices for them. On the other hand, followers become victims of their parents' struggles in life due to forced marriage (Zahra, 2022). Household harmony is the meeting of physical and psychological elements between husband and wife based on equality and acceptance of each other (Mahfudin & Musyarrofah, 2019, pp. 75-93). Nevertheless, it is reversed; followers are often affected by the release of parental quarrels.

The human capacity to think is shaped by social interaction (Main Theories of Sociology, 2022). In line with followers' decisions, which are formed due to interactions with allies who experience parenting wounds, followers are influenced by the thought that being a parent is not easy because they do not only think about children. Furthermore, followers' thoughts are also formed due to interactions with their siblings who experience a miserable life due to offspring. Followers do not believe in the notion of "marry first, then there will be fortune," which is generally used as a basis for marriage for low-income people. The meaning of offspring is interpreted

as readiness for all the hardships that will be borne. Followers are still in doubt about deciding to be child-free. According to followers, this decision may change when followers are ready to bear the responsibility of children (Zahra, 2022).

Third is the environment. Population density causes social inequality to lead to crime. Furthermore, overcrowding impacts environmental damage, limits employment opportunities, and inhibits human quality improvement. Followers prefer to care for orphans and not contribute to the adverse effects of childlessness. When the Indonesian environment has improved according to followers' expectations, followers will stop making child-related decisions (Zahra, 2022). Based on the ecocentric theory, followers want to play a role in maintaining the ecosystem by not having children (Satmaidi, 2015, pp. 192-105).

Furthermore, the presence of offspring will impact family disharmony due to the distance and time that makes it impossible to meet a partner. The habit of doing all the work leads to mistrust when offspring are cared for by others. Followers feel inadequate and need to be more confident when others carry out their responsibilities (Alifia, 2022). This is similar to the impact of science, which causes a separation between subject and object (discasement) (Supraja & al Akbar, 2021, p. 23). This decision is only sometimes the case. Followers hope their families can gather in one house and have offspring (Alifia, 2022).

### 3. In order motive child free

Followers' goals are generally the same: personal, family, and neighborhood interests. The goal is continuous with the background described above. The goal motive as an amplifier of achieving the results has even been achieved when followers decide to be childfree. These goals include:

They were first achieving physical and mental happiness. The ideal mother can perform her role (Fitriana et al., 2019, p. 132). However, followers cannot take responsibility for caring for offspring because of poor economic conditions, no time to take care of offspring, and not trust when offspring are cared for by others. Followers choose childfree to be happy without physical or mental burdens (Alifia, 2022; Anisa, 2022; Victoria, 2022; Zahra, 2022).

Second, they do not want to add to the burden on themselves or the environment. Followers are not people who are economically deprived, do not have time to take care of children, or do not trust other people. Doctors diagnose followers as having a social phobia disease, which results in sexual dysfunction (Hanifa & Santoso, 2016, p. 230). The goal of childless followers is not to have disabled offspring, and the presence of offspring will harm them. Hence, they have mental disorders like their mother (Alifia, 2022).

Third, Freedom of life. Followers' entire lives do not want to be involved with the good and bad of having offspring. Having offspring is a significant burden and



responsibility (Victoria, 2022). Followers do not like caring for children but instead like caring for animals and orphans (Noviana, 2018, pp. 11-17). In addition, followers fear the pain of childbirth (Zahra, 2022). Followers want to live freely without interference from offspring.

### **Legal ideality and maqashid shari'ah analysis of followers' actions**

The actions of childfreelife.id account followers cannot be labeled as actions that violate the rules of sharia (for example, kafir; crazy; music; bid). More than that, breaking through the meaning construction of the followers' minds is necessary because the followers' motives cannot be equated (Rasid et al., 2021, pp. 190-201). However, the followers' actions are not in line with the purpose of marriage (Al-Imam As-Sarkhashi, 2000, pp. 349-350). It is essential to examine childfree with maqashid shari'ah to align with the law's purpose *li maslahat al ummah*. The law constantly changes according to the times, so it is essential to study it without positioning it as a sacred rule or in the language of *ulumul qur'an* "qoth'i" (taken for guarantee) (Huda et al., 2022, pp. 289-309). They understand the actions of the child.id account should be thoughtful by the original term "al hukm," which in phenomenology is termed as "delay of judgment" (*epoche*). Furthermore, followers' actions must be seen from the goal (Supraja & al Akbar, 2021, p. 159). As previously explained, in general, the childfree decision on the childfreelife.id account is based on multiple personal goals in order to prevent harm. This reason may be done if the motive for action is by *udzur shari'i*, namely traveling, illness, compulsion, forgetting, ignorance, difficult circumstances to

avoid, and shortage (Jalaludin As-Suyuti, 1403, p. 87). The rukhsah is in line with maqashid shari'ah.

The law should provide convenience for human distress *al masyaqqatu tajlibu al ttaisir* (Jalaludin As-Suyuti, 1403, p. 55). Having offspring is not permissible if it is harmful to oneself. The *fiqiyah* rule calls it the *al ddararu yuzalu* rule (Jalaludin As-Suyuti, 1403, p. 60). Society should not negatively justify the actions of followers who need to be understood by others. Followers are more accepting of those around them who want to talk nicely about their actions. Followers hope to be happy physically and mentally for their life choices as a form of benefit.

The law should be able to ensure justice for all humanity because the law seeks to find solutions to human problems (Huda et al., 2022, pp. 289-309). Cicero termed it as *salus propuli supra lex* (Andriansyah, 2020, pp. 300-309). In maqashid shari'ah, the law becomes the benchmark for the law, namely human benefit. Maqashid Shariah should accommodate the benefits of a *childfreelife.id* account followers. Thus, what already exists and is suitable for society, such as having offspring, needs to be maintained while not ignoring new phenomena that have implications for human benefit (Pomalingo et al., 2021, pp. 58-65). *Childfree* actions in the *childfreelife.id* account must contain the benefits of maqashid shari'ah, namely: individual physical benefits (*hifdzu nafs*); freedom and adherence to religion (*hifdzu din*); the benefits of family and offspring (*hifdzu nasbi wa nasl*); the benefits of property (*hifdzu mal*); the benefits of developing the mind (*hifdzu aql*) (Mu'alim, 2022, p. 7).

## E. Conclusion

The phenomenon of childfree on the childfreelife.id account is divided into two motives, namely permanent and temporal. Personal decisions, beliefs, psychology, and the environment influence permanence. At the same time, temporal is influenced by personal, psychological, medical, and past life experiences. The goal of both motives is happiness in life for individuals, families, and the environment. Followers who choose permanent childfree hope that their decision will make them happy with their lives. Meanwhile, they hope that one day they can stop temporarily. The legal ideality that followers can do is to inculcate the value of *al ushul al qamsah: hifdzu nafs, hifdzu mal, hifdzu din, hifdzu aql, hifdzu nasbi wa nasl*. According to Satjipto Raharjo, law aims to find solutions to human problems. The novelty of this research is that the adherents seek justification for their actions with strong courage, even though they are against the purpose of marriage and the norms of society.

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