
CHILDFREE PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Recently, there has been a childfree phenomenon that is being discussed, especially in Indonesia. It causes various questions regarding the views of the pros and cons of childfree itself, then how does Islam respond to it? What are the childfree problems and their solutions from Islamic view? Islam is one of the religions that can answer current problems based on the Al-Quran and Sunnah. As the basis of religion, the Qur'an and the sunnah have discussed many childfree problems. Therefore, this study is aimed to determine the problem of childfree and its solution in the view of Islam. This research used the Library Research method or literature review with a qualitative research approach. This data collection technique was to identify discourse from books, articles, journals, the web (internet), or other information related to this research. The results of this study, in the view of Islam, married couples who choose childfree include acts that are against nature because having children is a blessing and as human nature. Islam also responds to child freedom with several arguments about the primacy of kids in the family.

KEYWORDS

Childfree, Children, Islam



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INTRODUCTION

In Islam, marriage is sacred worship, following the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, and carried out based on sincerity and responsibility (Wibisana, 2016). Marriage in Arabic

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namely *An-nikah* which has several meanings. According to the language, the word marriage means together, unite and relate.

Allah SWT has explained in the *Qur'an*, that He will give to His servants who marry because of Him. Allah says in Surah An-Nur 32:

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيْمَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۚ إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُعْطِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَسِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Means: And marry the women and men and the improved ones of your male slaves and your female slaves among you who are single. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His Virtue. And Allah is All-Embracing (His Bestowals, His Blessings are abundant), All-Knowing.

Marriage is a worship that is highly recommended and encouraged by the Prophet SAW to his people to multiply offspring (Rukmana, n.d.). Imam Ghazali in his book *Ihya Ulumuddin* explained that efforts to have children (marriage) become worship from four sides, namely seeking Allah's pleasure by producing offspring (Aslami, 2016), seeking the love of the Prophet SAW by increasing the human population that he is proud of, blessings from a pious child after he dies, hoping for intercession because of the death of a small child who preceded him, and last is strong enough that the importance of offspring in a marriage.

Having a child is a blessing and a human nature (Islam, n.d.). The fear of married couples to have children, the current phenomenon is called childfree. According to Henri Salahuddin, senior researcher at the Institute for the study of Islamic thought and civilizations (INSISTS), childfree is a product of the short-sighted generation. The term childfree is the intention to get married but do not want to have children.

In Islam, pious children become investments in the afterlife for parents. And also be a charity for their parents. Of course, this priority is not obtained by the childfree concept. Some of the reasons for childfree include personal, financial, family background, concerns about the child's growth and development, and the environment. Al-Qur'an has explained that among the purposes of marriage is to find peace in one's life between husband and wife (*litaskunu ilaiha*). In addition to obtain tranquility and peace, it can also maintain offspring (*hifdzu al-nasli*). Allah SWT said (QS an-nahl: 72).

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْزَلِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ أَفَبِالْبِطْلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِعَمَتِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ

Means: "And Allah hath given you wives of your kind, and hath given you, from your wives, sons, and grandsons, and hath made provision of good things for you. Is it then in vanity that they believe and in the grace of Allah that they disbelieve?"

Based on the description of the problem of free children, there are concerns in terms of finance, environment, and other factors, the researcher's curiosity arises to further discuss children's problems and their solutions from an Islamic perspective. The focus of discussion in this study is the issue of child freedom in the view of Islam in addressing the issue of child freedom. This research is expected to provide new insights and new views regarding childfree in the perspective of the Islamic religion.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is library research or literature review. This research used qualitative research by using a descriptive qualitative approach because the data collected is in the form of written words. It is a series of activities related to the methods of collecting library data, reading and taking notes, and processing research

materials. This data collection technique was to identify discourse from books, articles, journals, the web (internet), or other information related to this research. To analyze the data, the researcher used content analysis, which is a method that can be used to analyze all forms of communication including concepts, opinions, theories, principles, newspapers, books, poetry, films, folklore, regulations, statutes, or scriptures.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Child-free problems in the view of Islam

The child-free trend which is a life choice or agreement between a husband and wife not to have children after marriage, whether biological children, stepchildren, or adopted children continue to be discussed and becomes interesting discussion material. Of course, many people agree with this and some are against it with their arguments and reasons. What must be questioned now is the problem of what will happen if the childfree trend continues to be applied in life. Humans are indeed extraordinarily complex creatures, every human being has experienced existential anxiety, was born struggled, and finally died. That's how humans life, then many questions will arise, who are we? where did we come from? After death where will we go? why is there life and death? why so and so? and there were still many questions that keep raging inside.

Therefore, many people find themselves in absurd situations, fixated on these absurd questions, as a result, many are trapped in that absurd state, which will later be referred to as nihilism, which assumes that nothing in this world is meaningless. There was no meaning, there was no essence, and of course, the impact is on the despair and indifference among the nation's generation.

Despair and indifference are one of the causes of the emergence of the childfree trend, in essence, the problems, challenges, tests, and trials in marriage are to increase our belief towards *haqqul yaqiin* (true belief), especially if all human beings understand the purpose of marriage is towards *sakinah mawaddah wa rahmah*.

From many arguments, of course, we have to draw a common thread to be able to reflect on the main problem of the childfree trend if it continues in our lives in the view of Islam.

In a *hadith* about the phases of human creation, narrated from Abu Abdurrahman Abdullah bin Mas'ud, he said, The Messenger of Allah said, when the spirit is breathed into man, Allah commands the angels to determine four things, namely: determining his sustenance, his death, his deeds and his accident or happiness (Al-Bugha & Mistu, 2017).

The sustenance here means something that brings benefits to humans. Sustenance is divided into two: sustenance to uphold the body and sustenance to uphold religion. The sustenance for upholding the body is eating, drinking, clothing, housing, etc, while the sustenance for upholding religion is knowledge and faith (Muhammad, 2012).

Muslims believe that Allah SWT is a form of the Richest, Most Perfect, which of course does not need anything. Therefore, why was man created? what was the purpose of his creation? Does God's creation have a purpose? If it doesn't have a purpose, it means that God's actions are in vain?

In reality, Allah created nothing in vain, no product failed in His creation, everything has a meaning and purpose. As Allah said:

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ

"Then do you think that We created you to play (without any purpose and that you will not be returned to us?"

In *Al-Qur'an* Allah SWT explained at least some verses of the Qur'an that have indications about the purpose of the creation of humans, some words which are contained in the Qur'an such as the expression: *al-Ibadah*, *al-khilafah* (caliphate), and *al-amanah*.

These three words, namely *al-Ibadah*, *al-khilafah* (caliphate) and *al-amanah* which are contained in the Qur'an regarding the purpose of human creation, then the most appropriate thing to be associated is *fitrah*, human nature after a long process of creation, *fitrah* is a tendency innate nature from birth, which since the first creation, humans have a natural innate nature, namely the nature of monotheism, because Islam itself is a religion of nature.

It becomes urgent for humans to understand their nature, because with that, humans is aware to take care of them, so they don't deviate and stay straight on their holy nature until they return to their Lord. Because if humans deviate from the nature, then humans must be responsible for the nature that has been given by Allah SWT.

In the Qur'an, it is clearly stated how Allah created humans with His power. None other than to worship Him by making humans as caliphs on earth. In the Qur'an Surah Ad-dzariyat verse 56, Allah said:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"And I did not create the *jinn* and human except that they might worship Me."

In the sentence *Illa liya'buduun* the meaning of worship here is very broad, so we cannot say that worship is only obligatory worship that has been prescribed by Allah, such as prayer, zakat, and fasting. However, the meaning of worship here is all practices whose purpose is *lillah*, including the concept of marriage and having offspring which are human nature, then the childfree trend means that it is contrary to human nature. Moreover, getting married and having children is the *sunnatullah* and his messenger, so in a *hadith* from Aisha r.a, she said, Rasulullah SAW said:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "النِّكَاحُ مِنْ سُنَّتِي فَمَنْ لَمْ يَعْمَلْ بِسُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَتَزَوَّجُوا فَإِنِّي مُكَاتِّرٌ بِكُمْ الْأُمَّمَ وَمَنْ كَانَ ذَا طَوْلٍ فَلْيَنْكِحْ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَعَلَيْهِ بِالصِّيَامِ فَإِنَّ الصَّوْمَ لَهُ وَجَاءٌ" (رواه ابن ماجه)

"Marriage is part of my *sunnah*, whoever does not practice my *sunnah*, then he is not following my path. Get married, because I make you proud of the rest of the people, whoever has wealth, then get married, and whoever can't afford it, let him fast, because fasting is a shield for him (Narrated by Ibn Majjah).

Indeed, getting married and having children is a choice and a right for each human being. In fact, in Islam, there is nothing that is forced, all good deeds must be present with the intention of the heart *لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ* which means there is no compulsion in (adhering to) the religion of Islam. So, getting married and having children is not a compulsion, but a form of worship to the Lord of its creator.

The meaning of the family itself in Islam is the smallest unit that is responsible for realizing the creation of a peaceful and civilized society (Amri & Tulab, 2018). The family must be a fortress that provide protection because building a family is the same as half a religion, keeping it is the implementation of faith, fighting all plagues that threaten it is a form of jihad, caring for the fruit that is born from it is a form of religious symbols.

By getting married, humans also continue to maintain their nature, and develop the potentials that Allah SWT has given to humans through their nature. How can a person be able to apply a lifestyle to refuse to give birth or have offspring even though he is given healthy reproductive abilities? Maintaining this nature will certainly support the implementation of the function of his caliphate on earth. So in Surah al-Baqarah verse 30, Allah says:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ
نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“And when thy Lord said unto the angels: I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: Wilt thou place therein one who will harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not.”

The word *ja'ala* means to make something that already existed before. Then in the sentence *إني جاعل في الأرض خليفة* that Allah made humans on earth as caliphs, named after his creation on earth.

Being a caliph on earth, of course, there is a burden of mandate on the shoulders of each human being, because the caliph is a substitute for Allah who regulates His affairs in human life. In addition, the caliphate can also be understood as "a regeneration that takes turns in which they are tasked with prospering the earth". Thus, the caliph is a servant of Allah who is assigned to be the benefit and welfare of the world. So, of course, humans have a great mandate on their shoulders as caliphs on this earth. As explained in the Qur'an Surah Al Ahzab Verse 72 Allah says:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ
ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

“Surely We did offer the Trust (the Spirit) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains but shrank from bearing it and feared from it and human under-took it. Surely it (the soul) very tyrants, very ignorant.”

From the verse above, it is clearly commands humans to fulfill the mandate, a mandate that cannot be given to any other creature. Because humans have been given the advantage of reason by their Lord, reason to carry out the mandate to be leaders and enforce the law in the fairest way possible on this earth. For this reason, every human being must be aware, whether male or female, to better understand his nature and *maqoom*, both as an *imam* or as a mother in a family. Considering the important role of a family for the future of the *ummah* is as a *da'wah* baton. For this reason, collaboration is the most important thing in building a *sakinah, mawaddah, warohmah* families.

So, with a bit of the phenomenon of the end of time and the real problems that are happening now, as the young generation of Islam living in Indonesia, we should be firm and not swallow down on the emerging trends, one of which is childfree, in fact, human thoughts and conditions always change over time because humans are dynamic. So, it would be better if we didn't make a fuss about things that can change (Luthfi, 2018).

Because the future of world civilization depends on the future of young women who will start it from home. Getting married and having children is not an easy thing, an educated wife will lead to the success of her husband, a broad-minded mother will give birth and educate a generation to be proud of (Tanjung, 2021). And of course, the presence of children is the hope of the people to continue the *da'wah* relay struggle.

B. Islamic solutions in addressing childfree problems

In practice, childfree is not new in this world. Childfree has long been used by westerners who don't want to have children during their marriage. In Islam, childfree is also not a new thing. Many scholars have discussed and concluded whether it is permissible or not. But most Muslims prefer to have children than not, because of the many virtues in educating children and can also lead them to heaven from the child's good deeds (Zarman, 2011). That is why so many Muslims do not approve of the childfree.

In the Qur'an, Allah does not force anyone to follow His teachings without understanding the contents of these teachings (Muhammad Quraish Shihab, 2008). Every command and prohibition that Allah has sent down has been written in the Quran and

Sunnah along with their explanations (Qardhawi, 2010). Even if it's about understanding to have children or not to have children.

عن معقل بن يسار قال: (جاء رجل إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال: يا رسول الله؛ أصبت امرأة ذات جمال وحسب، وإنها لا تلد أفاتزوجها؟ قال: لا، ثم أتاه الثانية فنهاه، ثم أتاه الثالثة فقال: تزوجوا الودود الودود، فإني مكاثر بكم الأمم) رواه أبو داود النسائي والحاكم وصححه. ورواه الطبراني باللفظ المزبور عن أنس قال الهيثمي: (Ibnu khalifah, 1996). ورجاله رجال الصحيح إلا حفص بن عمر وقد روى عنه جمع

The above *hadith* describes a person who came to the Prophet to ask whether it is permissible if he marries a woman who is beautiful but he cannot have children, and the Prophet did not allow it and at the end of the *hadith* the Prophet said "marry you to a woman who is full of love and fertile because I am proud of the number of my people". The purpose of this *hadith* is a recommendation to marry and have children or multiply offspring.

However, this *hadith* is widely opposed by the current situation of many Muslims and also the many divisions between them. This is one of the reasons a Muslim chooses to be childfree or not have children.

Several verses in the Qur'an also explain the responsibility of parents to their children, which means that if you are unable, you do not need to have it (M Quraish Shihab, 1996).

As in the letter At-Taghabun verse 14 which reads:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ وَإِنْ تَعَفَّوْا وَتَصَفَّحُوا وَتَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

"O, believers! Indeed, some of your spouses and children are enemies to you,1 so beware of them. But if you pardon, overlook, and forgive 'their faults', then Allah is truly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful (At-Taghabun 64:14)".

The verse above is an illustration of how the responsibility of Muslims if they cannot educate and care for their spouses and children. Getting married and having children is a choice that must be considered carefully so as not to cause harm later (Amalia, 2018). Because like the verse above that wives and children can also be enemies for a Muslim.

The background of the revelation of this verse relates to the wife and children of a person who is going to jihad and emigrate and they prevent it by feeling difficult to separate (Fuadi, Antika, & Rofiudin, 2020). And if the person who will emigrate follows the words of his wife and children, he will be left behind and cannot do good deeds. The verse is followed by a verse:

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

"Indeed, your wealth and your children are only a trial (for you), and with Allah a great reward (At-Taghabun 64:15)."

The verse is a continuation of the previous verse which explains that wealth and children become a trial that can forget us from the afterlife (Safaat, 2018). Yet these things are a great reward from Allah.

From the three arguments above, it can be explained that a person may choose not to have children, due to their fear of responsibility for the child. Examples are fear that later they will not be able to educate their children properly, or with the excuse that they do not have enough assets to take care of their children.

From the arguments above, it can be explained that the person had a choice to choose childfree and they may choose it if they have good reason based on their capability and condition of the parent.

However, from some of the things that have been explained above regarding the absence of a childfree prohibition, there is not even a single verse that obliges a husband and wife to have children but recommends it by explaining several virtues or in other words a solution to the fear of people who choose not to have children. As already mentioned in surah Al-Isra verse 31:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطَاً كَبِيرًا

"And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We are the ones who provide sustenance to them and you. Killing them is indeed a great sin (Al-Isro '17:31)."

Some of them choose to be childfree because one of the reasons is the fear of poverty or lack of wealth. The above verse answers people who choose not to have children for fear of poverty. Allah SWT guarantees the sustenance of these children. Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Kahf Verse 46:

زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا... الْخ وَالْبُنُونَ أَلْمَالُ

"Wealth and children are the jewels of life." (Al-Kahf 18:46)

The point is that having children is not a disaster that results in poverty, but having children is expensive jewelry that must be maintained and cared for properly.

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "إذا مات ابن آدم انقطع عمله إلا من ثلاث: صدقة جارية، أو علم ينتفع به، أو ولد صالح يدعو له" رواه مسلم

In virtue of that, apart from being a valuable adornment for a child, a child can also carry on a good reward after death. The above *hadith* says that after death a person will be cut off from his deeds, except for three, one of which is a pious child who prays for his parents.

CONCLUSION

Every couple wants a perfect marriage to achieve *mawaddah warrohmah*. In Islam, marriage is one of the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and the Prophet SAW encouraged his people to multiply offspring. Based on the discussion that has been described, it can be concluded that the problematic form of child freedom in the Islamic view is that parents who choose childfree are an act that has been against nature because having a child is a blessing and as human nature. As for Islam addressing the problem of childfree is as follows:

Islam recommends having children and multiplying offspring with a *hadith* that reads,

عن معقل بن يسار قال: (جاء رجل إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال: يا رسول الله؛ أصيبت امرأة ذات جمال وحسب، وإنها لا تلد أفأنزوجه؟ قال: لا، ثم أتاه الثانية فنهاه، ثم أتاه الثالثة فقال: تزوجوا الودود الولود، فإني مكاتر بكم الأمم) رواه أبو داود النسائي والحاكم وصححه. ورواه الطبراني باللفظ المزبور عن أنس قال الهيثمي: ورجاله رجال الصحيح إلا حفص بن عمر وقد روى عنه جمع.

The responsibility of parents to their children, Allah SWT says

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَرْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَنْوَ لَكُمْ فَأَحْذَرُوهُمْ وَإِنْ تَعَفَّوْا وَتَصَفَّحُوا وَتَغَفَّرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Do not be afraid to have children for fear of poverty, indeed Allah is the provider of sustenance, as Allah SWT has said in Surah Al-Isro verse 31

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطَاً كَبِيرًا

Children are expensive jewelry and a wisdom that has many benefits. Allah SWT says in Surah Al Kahf verse 46.

زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا... الْخ وَالْبُنُونَ أَلْمَالُ

A pious child who prays for his parents will be a recompense for him even though

he has died. The *hadith* of the Prophet SAW reads:

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "إذا مات ابن آدم انقطع عمله إلا من ثلاث: صدقة جارية، أو علم ينتفع به، أو ولد صالح يدعو له" رواه مسلم.

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