

CHILDFREE IN THE QUR'AN: REINTERPRETATION OF AL-NAHL VERSE 72 WITH *MA'NĀ CUM MAGHZĀ* APPROACH

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Abstract: *Childfree can be interpreted as the view of a husband and wife who decide not to have children, which is often considered contrary to the one purpose of marriage in the Islamic perspective to have children. It is crucial to explain how the Qur'an responds to the polemic of childfree. At the same time, the Qur'an strongly echoes the urgency of having children. This article employed qualitative descriptive research with a socio-religious approach. It used the hermeneutic theory of cum maghza as an analytical tool. This paper aims to analyze Surah al-Nahl 72 related to how the Qur'an talks about the pros and cons of childfree. It is done to prove that the Qur'an *ṣahīḥ li kulli zamān wa makān* (relevant for every time and place) is used as a reference in solving contemporary problems. This research finds out that Surah al-Nahl verse 72 clearly explains that one of the purposes of marriage is to have children. At the same time, the child-free decision contradicts the absolute purpose of marriage in the Qur'an. Still, it is permissible to decide to be child-free if it is not possible to have children, such as a disease that endangers the mother's life when pregnant and giving birth to a child. Still, suppose it is only a matter of parents worrying about not being able to educate and raise their children correctly. In that case, it is prohibited because, in al-Nahl verse 72, Allah will also guarantee fortune for the children in a family.*

الملخص: عدم وجود الأطفال (childfree) باتفاق بين الزوج والزوجة يعتبر في كثير من الأحيان مخالفًا لهدف الزواج. فكذلك اهتم هذا البحث في نظر سورة النحل آية ٢٧ لحصول

الاجبابة في مسألة *childfree*. هذا المقال عبارة عن بحث وصفي نوعي اعتماداً منهج اجتماعي ديني بحيث يستخدم نظرية التأويل *ma'na cum maghza*. وجذب هذا البحث أن سورة النحل الآية ٢٧ توضح بوضوح أن أحد مقاصد الزواج هو الإنجاب، بينما قرار الخلو من الأطفال يتعارض مع الهدف المطلق للزواج في القرآن، لكن في بعض الحالات إن لم يكن لحصول الأولاد بسبب من الأسباب الشرعية كمثل المرض الذي يعرض حياة الأم *.childfree* فيجوز اتخاذ قرار بفعل

Abstrak: *Childfree merupakan salah satu fenomena terbaru dalam kehidupan masyarakat modern saat ini. Childfree dimaksudkan sebagai keputusan seorang suami istri untuk tidak memiliki seorang anak. Tentu saja fenomena ini mendapatkan beragam reaksi dari berbagai komunitas muslim khususnya sebab dianggap bertentangan dengan salah satu tujuan pernikahan, yaitu melangsungkan keturunan.* Artikel ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan sosio-religius dan menggunakan teori hermeneutic cum-maghza sebagai alat analisis. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis surah al-Nahl ayat 72 terkait dengan bagaimana al-Qur'an berbicara tentang pro dan kontra persoalan *childfree*. Hal ini dilakukan untuk membuktikan bahwa al-Qur'an sahīh li kulli zamān wa makān untuk digunakan sebagai referensi dalam memecahkan masalah kontemporer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam surah al-Nahl ayat 72, melestarikan keturunan (memiliki anak) merupakan fitrah manusia dari adanya pernikahan, sedangkan praktik *childfree* bertentangan dengan tujuan asal pernikahan. Akan tetapi dalam beberapa kondisi tertentu dan terdapat alasan-alasan yang syar'i seperti penyakit yang membahayakan nyawa ibu dan sebagainya, maka keputusan *childfree* dapat dibenarkan.

Keywords: *Childfree, marriage, maqāṣid šhari'ah, Ma'na Cum Maghza.*

INTRODUCTION

A fascinating topic that has surfaced as a hot topic of discussion in recent years, particularly in Indonesia, is the concept of a child-free lifestyle. This topic is not new and has historically been discussed in

other wealthy nations. However, the concept of childfree became a significant topic of conversation in Indonesia after a public figure by the name of Gita Savitri openly admitted on her social media platform that she adhered to childfree concepts. Since then, the trend of pursuing a child-free way of life has started to witness an upward trend, particularly among members of the millennial generation in Indonesia.¹

Many different variables go into the decision-making process for millennials in Indonesia to adhere to the philosophy of childfree living, with economic considerations and financial capability ranking among the highest on the list.² When regarded from the perspective of the culture of Indonesian society as a whole, the phenomenon of childlessness is also contradictory to the culture's noble values, which hold that children are sustenance, as exemplified by the "banyak Anak, banyak rezeki." In addition, this situation starkly contrasts the religious ideals of the majority of Indonesians, who are Muslim, believing that having children is one of the blessings of Allah. God provides us with different rizq (well-being), health, and offspring.³

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إذا تزوج العبد فقد استكمل نصف دينه، فليتق
الله في لنصف الباقي

the Prophet (a.s) has said: "When a person gets married, he or she has completed half of religion, then fear God in the other half of it" (al-Baihaqi).

In Islam, a Muslim is obligated to follow the sunnah done by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), such as getting married and having children. Besides, marriage is considered a kind of worship since it is intended to complete religious practice. Furthermore, raising and bringing up a Muslim child is one of the greatest spiritual works.

¹ Uswatul Khasanah and Muhammad Rosyid Ridho, "Childfree Perspektif Hak Reproduksi Perempuan Dalam Islam," *Al-Syakhsiyah: Journal of Law & Family Studies* 3, no. 2 (2021): 104–28, <https://doi.org/10.21154/syakhsiyah.v3i2.3454>.

² Tiara Hanandita, "Konstruksi Masyarakat Tentang Hidup Tanpa Anak Setelah Menikah," *Jurnal Analisa Sosiologi* 11, no. 1 (2022): 126–36, <https://doi.org/10.20961/jas.v11i1.56920>.

³ M. Irfan Farraz Haecal, Hidayatul Fikra, and Wahyudin Darmalaksana, "Analisis Fenomena Childfree Di Masyarakat: Studi Takhrij Dan Syarah Hadis Dengan Pendekatan Hukum Islam," in *Gunung Djati Conference Series*, vol. 8, 2022, 219–33.

Whatever one teaches one's child, one will receive the reward of whatever they do without diminishing their reward.⁴ From this background, the author is interested in further studying this topic by examining a different approach, namely the *cum maghza* approach, as the basis for interpreting Surah al-Nahl verse 72.

In Indonesia, although until now, childfree is still considered taboo, more and more couples are choosing to be childfree. As reported from the kemenpppa.go.id page *Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak* (The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection) recently in collaboration with the Central Statistics Agency, released research on the Number and Trends of Population aged 0-17 years.⁵ 32.24% or 83.4 million people in Indonesia in 2016 were children. This condition is still a demographic bonus for Indonesia. It is predicted that the proportion of children in Indonesia in the successive few periods will not experience significant changes. It means that almost one in three Indonesians are children. Data Results In general, Indonesia's population projection from 2016 to 2022 will increase, while in 2023, it will begin to decline from 84,323,000 to 84,032,000.⁶ No data yet presents the number of Indonesian residents who practice childfree. However, based on the data above, it can be concluded that the longer the number of childbirths in Indonesia decreases, which could be due to childfree behavior and restrictions.

There have been several previous studies examining childfree from various perspectives. For instance, an article by Shofita, "Childfree Problems and Their Solutions from an Islamic Perspective," concluded that choosing to be childfree by married couples is prohibited by Islam because it contradicts the *maslahah* of marriage while having a child is a blessing and considers human nature.⁷ An

⁴ Abdul Hadi, Husnul Khotimah, and Sadari, "Childfree Dan Childless Ditinjau Dalam Ilmu Fiqih Dan Perspektif Pendidikan Islam," *JOEL: Journal of Education and Language Research* 1, no. 6 (2022): 647–52.

⁵ Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, "DIPREDIKSI, TAHUN 2023 ANGKA KELAHIRAN ANAK MENURUN," <https://kemenpppa.go.id/index.php/page/read/31/1671/diprediksi-tahun-2023-angka-kelahiran-anak-menurun>.

⁶ <https://kemenpppa.go.id/index.php/page/read/31/1671/diprediksi-tahun-2023-angka-kelahiran-anak-menurun>.

⁷ Nailis Shofita et al., "CHILDFREE PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE" 1, no. 12 (2021): 1389–96.

article entitled "Analisis Fenomena Childfree di Masyarakat: Studi Takhrij dan Syarah Hadis Dengan Pendekatan Hukum Islam," written by Haecal, revealed that child freedom is makruh, which can be shifted to permissible if there is '*illat*.⁸

Then, an article written by Muhammad Khatibul Umam entitled "Childfree Pasca Pernikahan: Keadilan Hak-Hak Reproduksi Perempuan Perspektif Masdar Farid Mas'udi dan al-Ghazali" showed that choosing to be childfree is permissible but must be accompanied by primary solid reasons, including an agreement from both parties (husband and wife) so that it does not harm them.⁹ Thus, this article differs from previous studies, as mentioned earlier, because this article will be focused on the reinterpretation of Surah al-Nahl verse 72 through the *ma'na cum maghza* approach.

Hence, the decision of childfree must be examined following the principle of maqashid al-shariah. In this framework, Imam al-Syatibi discusses the goals and objectives of Islamic law in *al-Muwafaqat*. He explained that the Sharia has five objectives, commonly described as *kulliyatul khamsah*. These objectives are as follows: *hifdz al-din* (protecting religion), *hifdz al-nafs* (protecting the soul), *hifdz al-aql* (protecting the mind), *hifdz al-nasl* (protecting offspring), and *hifdz al-maal* (protecting (protecting the property).¹⁰ It is from these five that Islamic law is administered; one item that should be stressed here is *hifdz al-nasl* (protecting offspring).

In this regard, marriage is counted as ibadah in Islam, which is the only method to care for and raise children properly. It contributes to achieving other Sharia objectives, such as managing and preserving religion.¹¹ Thus, as long as human reproduction continues, the world's nature will be maintained and satisfy the aim of maqashid al-shariah.

This study employed a qualitative approach by using library research. The research was primarily concerned with critically

⁸ Haecal, Fikra, and Darmalaksana, "Analisis Fenomena Childfree Di Masyarakat: Studi Takhrij Dan Syarah Hadis Dengan Pendekatan Hukum Islam."

⁹ Muhammad Khatibul Umam and Nano Romadlon Aulya Akbar, "Childfree Pasca Pernikahan: Keadilan Hak-Hak Reproduksi Perempuan Perspektif Masdar Farid Mas'udi Dan Al-Ghazali," *Al-Manhaj: Journal of Indonesian Islamic Family Law* 3, no. 2 (2021): 157–72, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-manhaj.v3i2.5325>.

¹⁰ Agung Kurniawan and Hamsah Hudafi, "Konsep Maqashid Syariah Imam Asy-Syatibi Dalam Kitab Al-Muwafaqat," *Al Mabsut* 15, no. 1 (2021): 29–38.

¹¹ Eva Fadhilah, "Childfree Dalam Perspektif Islam," *Al-Mawarid: Jurnal Syari'ah & Hukum* 3, no. 2 (2022): 71–80.

examining material derived from primary (surah al-nahl verse 72) and secondary resources, including textbooks, journal articles, seminar papers, newspapers, and relevant data from supporting documents to the topic. In this study, the authors used the *maqasid al-shariah* from Imam al-Syatibi based on his book, *al-Muwafaqat*. Then, the data gathered from the findings were analyzed descriptively. Then, the author examines childfree from the perspective of the interpretation of Surah al-Nahl verse 72 because most previous studies have used many legal verses as a benchmark. Meanwhile, surah al-Nahl verse 72 is not included in the category of legal verses but verses that contain stories of the Prophets.

APPLICATION OF THE *MA'NĀ CUM MAGHZĀ* APPROACH IN SURAH AL-NAHL VERSE 72

The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam in the form of a text that is used as a guide by its adherents. Efforts to understand these guidelines are carried out through text studies, which are included in the scope of the literature. Understanding the Qur'an as a text impacts the use of various methodologies to understand it. As with other texts, the Qur'an is understood with literary tools such as Hermeneutics. Using Hermeneutics as a methodology for interpreting the Qur'an has been carried out. It has become a tradition of Muslim scholars.¹²

According to Nasaruddin Umar,¹³ The dynamics of society are constantly changing, especially in the last decade. In contrast, the text of the Qur'an will never change. So it takes a dialogical process between text and context. Thus, considering the introduction and actualization of the Qur'an in society must be considered sustainable (an ongoing process). To be able to have a dialogue between the text and this context is the work of commentators and scholars who convey their understanding to the public in various ways, either directly or indirectly (through their writings).

¹² Zuraidah Kamaruddin et al., "AN ANALYSIS OF THE METHOD OF PROBLEM SOLVING BY SIS THROUGH A MODEL OF QUR'ANIC HERMENEUTICS FROM AN ISLAMIC THOUGHT PERSPECTIVE, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human, Academy of Islamic Studies . University of Malaya . Email : Zuraidah_ " 14 (2013): 33–50.

¹³ Nasaruddin Umar, *In the Preface of the Book Tafsir Sosial: Mendialogkan Teks Dengan Konteks* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press, 2005), xxi.

The *ma'nā cum maghzā approach* is contextual in developing hermeneutic discourse, especially in Indonesia, which Sahiron Syamsuddin initiated.¹⁴ *Ma'nā cum Maghza* has several views that follow the Islamic *aqidah*. Of course, this method views the Qur'an as a revelation of God as a mercy to humans and nature as a whole (*mashalih al-nas*). In this case, the Qur'an is not the words or ideas of the Prophet or any other human being. It is a revelation in Arabic that comes directly from Allah without any possibility of human error.

In developing this methodology, Sahiron did not apply *naskh*. Still, he considered each verse (a collection of verses) had its context, as it is well known that Salaf scholars also have ikhtilaf in this issue. The difference between them occurs not only in the use of *naskh* or not but also in the number of verses in the text.¹⁵ This approach adheres to the principle of *al-muḥāfaẓah ‘ala al-qadim al-ṣalih, wa al-akhḍ bi al-jadid al-aṣlah*, which is to maintain the tradition of interpretation of the salaf scholars, in this case, the Ulumul Quran, and take other traditions that are passionate about the Qur'an which helps. Interpretation with this approach is directed to achieve human benefit, not to cause chaos. Interpretation is dynamic and constantly evolving. The truth of an interpretation is relative. The absolute is God and knowledge.

Specifically, *ma'nā cum maghzā* is an approach in which one explores or reconstructs the historical primary meaning and message, namely the meaning (*ma'nā*) and the primary message/significance (*maghzā*) which the author of the text may mean or understand by the historical audience, and then develop the significance of the text for the context of the present.¹⁶ This approach begins with a study of the analysis of the meaning of the surah al-Nahl verse 72. Thus, there are three essential things that an interpreter should look for, namely (1) historical meaning (*al-ma'nā al-tārikhī*), (2) phenomenal historical significance (*al-maghzā al-tārikhī*), and (3) dynamic phenomenal significance (*al-maghzā al-mutaharrik*) for the context in which

¹⁴ Adi Fadilah, "Ma'nā-Cum-Maghza Sebagai Pendekatan Kontekstual Dalam Perkembangan Wacana Hermeneutika Alquran Di Indonesia," *QUHAS* 8, no. 1 (2019).

¹⁵ Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Metode Penafsiran Dengan Pendekatan Ma'nā Cum Maghza*, "in Pendekatan Ma'nā Cum Maghza Atas Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis: Menjawab Problematika Sosial Keagamaan Di Era Kontemporer, Sahiron Sy (Ladang Kata dan AIAT se-Indonesia, 2020).

¹⁶ Sahiron Syamsuddin, 8–13.

the Qur'anic text is interpreted. To explore the historical meaning (*al-ma'nā al-tārikhī*) and the phenomenal historical significance (*al-maghzā al-tārikhī*), analysis of the Arabic language of the Qur'an. Second, it examines intra-textuality (by referring to the Qur'an) and intertextuality (in comparison with texts outside the Qur'an). Third, it reviews the context of micro and macro history. Fourth, it captures the Qur'an's *maqsad* (the real meaning).¹⁷

1. Language Analysis

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَرْوَاحًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَرْوَاحِكُم بَيْنَ وَحْدَةً وَرَقْمً
مِّنَ الْأَطْيَبِتِ أَقِيلُ الْبَطْلِي يُؤْمِنُونَ وَيَنْعَمِتُ اللَّهُ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ

“Allah has made for you wives of your kind and has made for you from your wives children and grandchildren, and has provided you with good things. So why do they believe in falsehood and deny Allah's favor?”

In verse above, Ibn Kathir interprets that Allah favors his servants by giving wives (making humans in pairs/marriage of husband and wife) so that they feel at ease with them and making for them. Their wives are their children to cool their eyes. The children also serve their parents and solve the needs of their parents and can be useful for parents in many ways.¹⁸ Allah gives good sustenance to His servants' food, drinks, and various external pleasures that servants cannot count on. “Then why do they believe in falsehood” means if they believe in the falsehood that was not previously something that has been mentioned, then it is disgraceful for those who deny these pleasures.¹⁹

The word that needs to be highlighted in this verse is بَيْنَ and حَدَّةً. What is meant by بَيْنَ and حَدَّةً in this verse is: children and grandchildren who will continue the human lineage on earth as

¹⁷ Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Metode Penafsiran Dengan Pendekatan Ma'na Cum Maghza*, in Pendekatan Ma'na Cum Maghza Atas Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis: Menjawab Problematika Sosial Keagamaan Di Era Kontemporer.

¹⁸ Ismā'il Ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Aṣīm* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1990), 435.

¹⁹ Abdurrahman Bin Naṣīr al-Sa'di, *Tafsīr al-Sa'di*, Vol-5 (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House King Fahd University, 2018), 221–28.

caliphs, and they will immediately help and pray for their parents).²⁰ According to Quraish Shihab in this verse, Allah confirms that Allah has made wives for men so that you can get peace of life (*sakinah*) from them. In this case, what is meant is husband and wife marriage.²¹ Meanwhile, marriage is a form of sacred relationship as the origin of the formation of a family institution which is the foundation of the people and society and is a form of development of nature that God has entrusted to every human being and animal.²² Suppose there are no normative rules for marriage, then in terms of meeting the biological needs of humans. In that case, there will be no difference with animals because each will take a path without rules and at will. If so, he is no longer a human being equipped with reason, given priority over other creatures, and appointed as caliph on earth. Besides, it is God's provision for humans to regulate nature with marriage to avoid chaos. On the other hand, humans also tend to live forever. Seeing no possibility for him personally to survive forever, the only way to maintain that survival is through descendants who are an extension of his life.²³ Based on it, it can be understood that having children is human nature. One of the goals of marriage is to preserve human offspring.

2. Intratextuality and Intertextuality Studies

Surah al-Nahl verse 72, in addition to explaining the denial of Allah's favor, also indirectly explains the purpose of marriage (continuing human offspring by having children).²⁴ The study of intra-textuality in Surah al-Nahl: 72 can be seen and studied from the following verse, which is contained in verse 73, wherein Allah further explains that He has given them sustenance in excellent and useful food and drink.²⁵ Therefore, humans should not be afraid of difficulties in obtaining

²⁰ Muḥammad bin Aḥmad bin Abī Bakr Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr Al-Qurṭubī, al-Jāmi‘ Li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, Vol.1 (Qāhirah: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 1964), 632.

²¹ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah, Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian al-Qur'an*, IV Ed, VOI (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2011), 714.

²² Wahbah Zuhaily, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir* (Damaskus: Dar al-Fikr, 2009).

²³ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah, Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian al- Qur'an*.

²⁴ Khoridatul Mudhiah, Ahmad Atabik, "PERNIKAHAN DAN HIKMAHNYA PERSPEKTIF HUKUM ISLAM," *Yudisia* 05, no. 02 (2014): 291.

²⁵ Muḥammad bin Aḥmad bin Abī Bakr Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ Li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*.

sustenance because of children. Instead, they must educate the children so that they will be able to carry out their duties as caliphs on earth later when they grow up.²⁶ The contents of the verse are also the contents of the letter al-Ra'd verse 38. It shows the intertextual of the verse:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَدُرْرِيَّةً وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِي بِبَيِّنَاتٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ لِكُلِّ أَجْلٍ كِتَابٌ

“And verily We sent messengers before you, and We gave them wives and offspring. And an Apostle has no right to bring forth a verse (miracle) except with Allah's permission. For every age, there is a (certain) Book.”

Based on this verse, there have been many examples of marriage by the prophets and apostles, with the aim that the offspring will continue.²⁷ In addition, other goals are to obtain peace and tranquility in life. It shows that family life and descent are natural and are *sunnatullah* for His creatures who live on this earth. This *sunnatullah* also applies to His prophets and messengers.²⁸ Family life should not be considered an obstacle in the struggle for personal, community, and national progress.

3. Reviewing the Micro and Macro Historical Context

a. Asbab Nuzul-Micro History Context

Knowing the *asbab al-nuzul* (the reason for the revelation of the verses of the Qur'an) is very important to obtain a proper understanding of the interpretation of certain verses.²⁹ Al-Wahidi even said, “People can't know the interpretation of the verse of the Qur'an without understanding the story and the information regarding the revelation of the verse.³⁰ The context of the micro-history in Surah al-Nahl verse 72 comes from the reality of the Arab community who perform *khurafat jahiliyyah* (a belief about

²⁶ Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik, Membangun Keluarga Harmonis* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2008), 27.

²⁷ Nawawi Al-Bantani, *Tafsir Marah Labiid*, Vol. 2 (Bandung: Syirkah al-Ma'arif, n.d.), 71.

²⁸ Nawawi Al-Bantani, *Tafsir Marah Labiid*, Vol. 2.

²⁹ Rosihon Anwar, *Ilmu Tafsir* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2015), 33.

³⁰ Ahmed Ragab, “*Asbāb Al-Nuzūl*,” *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*, 2021, 211–22, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315885360-23>.

something that does not provide benefits or harm and is not under common sense and existing reality). They separate some of God's sustenance given to them and then give them a fake God.³¹ Even though God has provided abundant sustenance, among the greatest sustenance and grace that God has given to his servants is a dynamic pair between a man and a woman (husband and wife). Then God provides sustenance in the form of children and grandchildren who will continue the human generation.³²

b. Historical Context

Surah al-Nahl is a Makkiyah letter (sent down in Mecca), which al-Nahl letter is almost the same as another Makkiyah letter, namely providing solutions to various problems related to the basic human creed, namely *Uluhiyah* (the oneness of God), revelation, and day of resurrection.³³ But this letter of al-Nahl is compiled in other themes which relate to all themes. Then this letter also connects the problem of monotheism to the problem of *mu'amalah* (social relations), which includes *al-'adl* (justice), *Ihsan* (good deeds), *infaq* (alms), and other good deeds related to standing morality, above monotheism. In this case, if it is contextualized with the Childfree issue, many considerations must be made so as not to violate the concept of *ubudiyah* and also *mu'amalah*.³⁴

4. Capturing the *Maqṣad* (True Meaning) of the Qur'an

This stage can be carried out, and the *maqṣad* or *maghza* verses can be explored because the previous stages have been completed, or it can be understood that this stage is an accumulation of the meaning of the interpreted verses of the Qur'an. To reveal *maghza*, it takes accuracy in conducting observations and reasoning in terms of language and micro and macro-historical approaches. Explicitly in the verse of the Qur'an, it has been explained that in Surah al-Nahl verse 72 regarding marriage relations and having children. The analysis of this verse is found in words, which can be seen further in their historical context, which is further explained in intra-textuality

³¹ 'Abdurrahman bin Naṣir al-Sa'di, *Tafsīr al-Sa'di*.

³² Wahbah Zuhaily, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir*.

³³ Muhammad Ibn Yusuf al-Syahid bi Abi Hayyan al-Alusi, *Tafsir Bahr Al-Muhib* (Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-'Alamiyah, n.d.), 331.

³⁴ Ismā'il Ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'an al-'Azīm*.

and intertextuality. It can be understood that Surah al-Nahl describes the order of sustenance that Allah gives to his servants, which are in the form of wives (mate and husband and wife marriage), then having children as successors of descendants, and also as a sedative for his parents.

CONSTRUCTION OF PHENOMENAL DYNAMIC SIGNIFICANCE IN SURAH AL-NAHL VERSE 72

In this section, the researcher tries to contextualize the moral ideas obtained previously with the current context.³⁵ The debate about childfree will never end. Most pros will argue that overpopulation and the ecological crisis are reasons for doing childfree, as well as childfree supporters who use scientific pretexts, while those who reject childfree under the pretext of religion.

Based on several findings, a woman refuses to get pregnant for several reasons, including the high cost of living, does not want to be a single mother, worries about reduced sex life, childbirth being considered painful, worries that her body is no longer suitable, does not want and cannot take care of children, focus pursue a career.³⁶ So psychological and economic factors are the main reasons and are considered normal to be childfree. From the point of view of Fiqh, Childfree to delay having children (not that there is no desire to have children at all) is still allowed. Still, if childfree is meant to break the reproductive function, then childfree law is unlawful or prohibited.³⁷

Surah al-Nahl verse 72 indicates that the verse is categorized into the verses of the prophet's stories and the previous people. It has been explained above that this verse tells about the denial of Allah's favors carried out by the Arabs at that time, even though Allah had given favors to His servants in the form of husband and wife, then children, and also food. Suppose it is drawn in the context of children. In that case, child-free behavior certainly includes denial of God's

³⁵ Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Metode Penafsiran Dengan Pendekatan Ma'na Cum Maghza*, "in Pendekatan Ma'na Cum Maghza Atas Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis: Menjawab Problematika Sosial Keagamaan Di Era Kontemporer.

³⁶ Ahmad Fauzan, "Childfree Perspektif Hukum Islam," *Jurnal Studi HUkum Islam Dan Pendidikan* 15, no. 2 (2022): 3–6.

³⁷ Ahmad Muntaha AM, *Hukum Asal Childfree dalam Kajian Fiqih Islam*, NU Online, accessed from: <https://islam.nu.or.id/nikah-keluarga/hukum-asal-childfree-dalam-kajian-fiqih-islam-CuWgp>

favor. At the same time, this is interpreted textually without looking at the social and maqāṣid conditions when the verse was revealed. The purpose of *maqashid* sharia is to achieve *mashlahah* (goodness).³⁸ However, suppose it is contextualized with the current situation, where people are childfree because the health factor for pregnant women is hazardous. In that case, childfree is not against the purpose of marriage and does not include denial of God's favor. But in the current phenomenon, most people only do childfree because of their worried about having the right to regulate themselves to have children. Some even have reason to worry about not being able to become good parents due to unstable financial conditions, even worse. The reason is to live alone with their partner. Of course, these reasons can not be justified to do childfree.

In more detail, the author examines Surah al-Nahl verse 72, which contains the following meaning messages:

- 1) The *zahir* means Allah sustains his servants through a wife (husband and wife), children, and good food.
- 2) Inner meaning, every human being is given different and varied sustenance, one of which is a mate, having children, and sufficient food.
- 3) The *hadd* means guarding themselves for those who believe not to deny the favors of Allah.
- 4) The *muthla'* meaning, the sustenance God gives to his servants, varies. God gives sustenance in the form of a wife, children, and good food, which cannot be denied but must be grateful for.

ANALYSIS OF SURAH AL-NAHL VERSE 72 IN THE CONTEXT OF CHILDFREE

The Interpretation of Surah al-Nahl verse 72 clearly explains the favors of Allah and the relationship between marriage and having children. It can be used as a basis that one of the goals in marriage is to continue the human generation, especially the Muslim generation. However, this verse can be reinterpreted by using a *ma'na* approach. Cum Magza to produce a more comprehensive understanding of reinterpretation. Childfree by choice is allowed as the legal basis

³⁸ Nūr al-Dīn al-Khādimī, *'Ilm al-Maqāṣid al-Syarī'Ah* (Beirut: Maktabah al-Abīkan, 2001), 81.

of marriage is permissible (*mubah*) and can change according to conditions.

Childfree on the grounds of *maṣlahah darūriyyat* (primary needs) is recommended. Meanwhile, child-free is prohibited if it contradicts *maqāṣid shari’ah*. *Maqāṣid shari’ah* refers to the highest objective of Allah and His Messenger in constructing Islamic law. Wahbah al Zuhaili, on the other hand, defines *maqāṣid shari’ah* as the principles and objectives of *syara’* that are implied in all or most of its regulations. The principles of *al-Shari’* in law determine the values and purposes considered objective and confidential sharia.³⁹

Genealogically the design of *maqashid* thought is not a new finding. Maqashid shari’ah is not the result of the achievements of contemporary scholars because, in the classical ushul fiqh tradition, the term *maqāṣid* has been found in books written by classical ushul fiqh scholars. However, it is still summarized and scattered in the discussion of *qiyyas*. Childfree has implications for household harmony, social relations with family, and society consisting of the environment in which to live, work, and friendships.

According to al-Ghazali opinion that a person’s unwillingness to have children has 5 reasons, not all of which are prohibited by religion. Among them: first, in the past, human slavery was still in effect, so the master, who incidentally was a male, only manipulated his female slave through ‘azl (not put sperm into the vagina) so as not to have children, with this condition the master still made the enslaved woman his property, such a motive legal in fiqh. Second, to maintain the appearance of the wife and the quality of her body when she is pregnant or after giving birth, the shape and face of the wife change. Third, they are worried that if they have offspring, they have to be more active in earning a living, and finally, they are afraid to do things Islam forbids.⁴⁰

If childfree is practiced for fear of making his life more difficult, disrupting his career, very afraid of making trouble for his children in the future, very afraid of genetic disorders affecting his children,

³⁹ Achmad Soediro and Inten Meutia, “Maqasid Syariah as a Performance Framework for Islamic Financial Institutions,” *Jurnal Akuntansi Multiparadigma* 9, no. 1 (2018): 70–86, <https://doi.org/10.18202/jamal.2018.04.9005>.

⁴⁰ Abu H̄amid al-Ğazali, *Iḥyā’ ’Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma’rifah, 1997), 516–17.

fearing the intensity of his sexual activities will decrease, seeing thousands of neglected children, overpopulation, then here's the writer's opinion. There are not enough reasons to forbid it because they are contrary to *tawakkal* (surrendering to Allah after maximum effort).

CONCLUSION

Facing various problems in this contemporary era, Muslims must adhere to the values and teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith because they contain solutions to various human problems. One issue that emerged in this era was the issue of child freedom which caused a lot of debate, some were allowed and supported, and some were expressly opposed.

The Qur'an is always following the times and places that provide signs of addressing contemporary issues by interpreting the Qur'an in depth. In Surah al-Nahl verse 72, Allah explains human sustenance: a mate, children, food, and drink. It explains that having children is sustenance and *fitrah* (human nature). Using the ma'na-cum-maghza approach, the verse can also be understood that, in some cases, the decision to be child-free must be considered for its permissibility and prohibition. Childfree is allowed for reasons justified by the *maqāṣid* *shari'ah*, such as disturbing women's reproductive health when pregnant and giving birth. But suppose the reason is not following the *maqāṣid* *shari'ah*, for example. In that case, it is only afraid of being unable to finance the child financially. The reason is not justified because it is contrary to *tawakkal*.

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