

The Concept and Practice of Childfree in Tafsir *Al-Miṣbāḥ*

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Abstract

Childfree is the view of married couples who decide not to have children. Childfree also became the talk of the Indonesian people when Gita Savitri, an influencer promoted the childfree campaign in Indonesia. Childfree has two perspectives: some view childfree as something that is allowed, and some reject it. In addition to causing various perspectives among the public, childfree also causes differences of opinion among people who are experts in Islamic science. Therefore, with the differences in opinions, views, and laws, the author is interested in making childfree a research problem that needs to be discussed. According to the Qur'anic verses, the author chose Tafsir Al-Miṣbāḥ to find the perspective of childlessness. The purpose of this research is to complement the shortcomings of previous studies from the religious side. Data processing in this article is through the taḥlīfī method. The taḥlīfī method itself is an analysis of the verses of the Qur'an studied from one verse, or letter, whose order is adjusted to the systematics of the Uthmānī muṣḥaf. Tafsir Al-Miṣbāḥ views children from three perspectives, namely lust, humans are created in pairs, and children are sustenance.

Abstrak

Childfree adalah pandangan pasangan suami istri yang memutuskan untuk tidak memiliki anak. Childfree sempat menjadi perbincangan masyarakat Indonesia, ketika Gita Savitri, seorang influencer yang menggalakkan kampanye childfree di Indonesia. Childfree memiliki dua perspektif, ada yang memandang childfree sebagai sesuatu yang diperbolehkan dan ada pula yang menolaknya. Selain menimbulkan berbagai macam perspektif di kalangan masyarakat, childfree juga menimbulkan perbedaan pendapat di kalangan orang-orang yang ahli dalam ilmu keislaman. Oleh karena itu, dengan adanya perbedaan pendapat, pandangan, dan hukum tersebut, penulis tertarik untuk menjadikan childfree sebagai masalah penelitian yang perlu dibahas. Penulis memilih Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ untuk menemukan perspektif tidak memiliki anak menurut ayat al-Qur'an. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melengkapi kekurangan penelitian sebelumnya dari sisi agama. Pengolahan data dalam artikel ini melalui metode taḥlīfī. Metode taḥlīfī merupakan analisis terhadap ayat-ayat al-Qur'an yang dikaji dari satu persatu ayat, surat, yang urutannya disesuaikan dengan sistematika muṣḥaf Uthmānī. Tafsir Al-Miṣbāḥ memandang anak dalam tiga perspektif, yaitu sebagai syahwat, manusia diciptakan berpasang-pasangan, dan anak adalah rezeki.

Keywords

Childfree; Marriage; Tafsir al-Misbah, Tahlili Methode; Childfree Decision



Introduction

Childfree can be defined as the view of a husband and wife who decide not to have children.¹ Meanwhile, childless, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is having no children or a condition where someone cannot have children due to physical or biological disorders.² The term Childfree began to be recognised in the 1900s, however, in the 1970s feminists began to use the term more widely.³ The term is used by society to refer to women who voluntarily do not have children.⁴ According to a Pew Research Center study in 2021 in the United States, 44% of people aged 18 to 49 do not feel like having children.⁵ Similarly, according to 2020 research conducted by YouGov, more than 50% of 35- to 44-year-olds who do not have children would never want to have children. The trend shows that more and more adults in Western countries are actively discouraged from having children.⁶ The above picture shows that being child-free in Western countries is commonplace among people.

Childfree is also a hot topic of conversation in Indonesian society. The conversation recently went viral when Gita Savitri, an Influencer and writer who promotes childfree campaigns in Indonesia. Gita promotes the child-free campaign through her Instagram social media account.⁷ Gita mentioned that the secret of her looking younger or youthful is her decision to be child-free or choose not to have children. The child-free decision is considered to improve one's sleep quality. Gita states that she can sleep 8 hours a day comfortably and calmly without hearing the sound of screaming or crying children, which puts one's sleep quality in the good category.⁸ The comment started when one of her followers' Instagram accounts complimented Gita's youthful face even though Gita herself had entered the age of three. The phenomenon above shows the problem of childlessness that needs to be understood carefully.

Childfree or childless is still a controversial discussion among the public, especially in Indonesia. In addition to causing various opinions or perspectives among the public, childfree also raises other perspectives among scholars. Ulama has various perspectives on punishing childfree in

¹Maisyatusy Syarifah and Hudzaifah Achmad Qotadah, "Childfree In The Qur'an: Reinterpretation of Al-Nahl Verse 72 With Ma'nā Cum Maghẓā Approach," *Al-Tahrir* 22, no. 2 (2022): 325–42.

²Abdul Hadi, Husnul Khotimah, and Sadari, "Childfree dan Childless Ditinjau dalam Ilmu Fiqih dan Perspektif Pendidikan Islam" 6, no. 1 (2022): 77–86.

³Maddy Savage, "The Adults Celebrating Child-Free Lives," 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20230208-the-adults-celebrating-child-free-lives>.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Anna Brown, "Growing Share of Childless Adults in U.S. Don't Expect to Ever Have Children," 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/11/19/growing-share-of-childless-adults-in-u-s-dont-expect-to-ever-have-children/>.

⁶YouGov, "YouGov Results - Children," 2020, <https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/rlr520dbhu/YouGov - Choosing not to have children Result.pdf>.

⁷Gita Savitri, "Talking about the Freedom and Independence," n.d., <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CoO9M7eqxJa/?igsh=em9zeDk4Z2wxamk3>.

⁸Dian Lestari Ningsih, "Gita Savitri Sebut Childfree Bisa Membuatnya Awet Muda, Benarkah? Ini Kata Para Ahli," 2023, <https://www.viva.co.id/gaya-hidup/kesehatan-intim/1572647-gita-savitri-sebut-childfree-bisa-membuatnya-awet-muda-benarkah-ini-kata-para-ahli?page=2>.

terms of goals and choices in households. Scholars who are pro-childfree such as Habib Ja'far, say that childfree in Islam is permissible as long as it does not arise from egoism but arises from a condition or *uzursyar'i*, such as when someone is financially unable, but if it becomes a choice, it is not called *uzur syar'i*.⁹ Meanwhile, scholars who are against childfree such as Ustadz Adi Hidayat have the view that childfree is a wrong idea or deviates from the nature and purpose of marriage. In addition, the hope of getting offspring is the goal in households.¹⁰ The description above shows that child freedom is still a matter of dispute in various circles, not only among the community but also among scholars.

The issue of child freedom has been studied by several experts from various perspectives. *First*, in terms of social aspects such as research by Ajeng Wijayanti, Siswanto and Neneng Nurhasanah that there are several reasons in society for choosing to be childfree, namely personal, psychological or medical, economic, philosophical, and environmental.¹¹ *Second*, in terms of social and cultural, such as research by Mohammad Rindu Fajar Islamy, public acceptance of the childfree phenomenon is divided into two parts, namely accepting and rejecting childfree. Someone choosing childfree must have positive and negative impacts.¹² *Third*, in terms of the phenomenon of being childfree in Indonesia, such as research by Sitti Muliya Rizka and Taat Kurnita Yeniningsih, the reason some parents think that having children is a difficult reason or perception that most parents lose control of themselves and their future. In addition, parents are responsible for the financial and educational future of their children.¹³ *Fourth*, in terms of psychoanalysis, pronatalism, and queer theory, such as Rebecca Harrington's research, women who choose to be childfree reason because of their own choices, such as egoism, hating children, and not being able to find a husband.¹⁴

Previous research explains childfree only in terms of social, cultural, geography, and psychology. The research has explained in detail about childfree in terms of the aspects discussed. However, previous research has not discussed religion. Religion is the foundation of a person, where life decision-making requires religion as a guide in living social life. Without religion, a person will not have a grip on social norms. Social norms are a control within a person where, without norms, it will be out of control and will not be directed. In addition, religion also functions as a means of controlling humans' behaviour and as a basis for making decisions. This illustrates that religion is an important pillar for every human being when making decisions related to child welfare.

⁹Jeda Nulis, "Kamu Caper Karena KrisisEksistensi," 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZqgG9y257c>.

¹⁰ Adi Hidayat Official, "Childfree.....Ingat Kembali Pencerahan UAH - Ustadz Adi Hidayat," 2023, n.d., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_i_mQudKsQ.

¹¹Ajeng Wijayanti Siswanto and Neneng Nurhasanah, "Analisis Fenomena Childfree Di Indonesia," *Bandung Conference Series: Islamic Family Law*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.29313/bcsifl.v2i2.2684>.

¹²Mohammad Rindu Fajar Islamy et al., "Fenomena Childfree Di Era Modern: Studi Fenomenologis Generasi Z Serta Pandangan Islam Terhadap Childfree Di Indonesia," *Sosial Budaya* 19, no. 2 (2022): 81–89.

¹³Sitti Muliya Rizka and Taat Kurnita Yeniningsih, "Childfree Phenomenon in Indonesia," 2021.

¹⁴ Rebecca Harrington, "Childfree by Choice," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (2019): 22–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15240657.2019.1559515>.

The purpose of this paper is to complement the shortcomings of previous studies from a religious perspective. Childfree is still a debate among the public. Many people think that childfree violates the nature of the purpose of marriage. However, scholars differ on this matter and need further discussion. The discussion in terms of religion needs to be further detailed through interpretation. One of the interpretations that can be used as a foothold in this paper is Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ*. Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* was chosen because it has advantages over other classic commentaries such as Tafsir *al-Ṭabarī* and *Ibn Kathīr*. Tafsir *al-Ṭabarī* explains the verse that discusses childfree with the interpretation of several mufassirs. On the other hand, the interpretation is not accompanied by detailed information related to the theme the absence of *asbabun nuzul* and the conclusion of the verse regarding childfree. While Tafsir *Ibn Kathīr* discusses the verse about childfree with the existence of *asbāb al-nuzūl* and is associated with hadith, the hadith here is only a reinforcement of the verses about childfree. Meanwhile, Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* in interpreting verses related to childfree uses language that is easy to understand, explains from several points of view systematically and explains in detail the contents of the verse that discusses the theme of childfree.

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This article is written using the *tahḥīlī* method, often used by mufassirs to analyse the Qur'an. This method is a way of interpreting Qur'anic verses and describing and elaborating from various perspectives. In addition, the *tahḥīlī* method also explains the meaning and content of the Qur'anic verses that are expressed or implied. This article uses the *adābī al-ijtimā'ī*, where the adabi style is a study consisting of details of each diction, which contains a *mujmal* verse arrangement. The *adābī al-ijtimā'ī* style is an adabi style with a study consisting of details of each diction, which contains a

mujmal verse arrangement. The *adabī al-ijtimāʿī* style analyses in detail to get a solution to the problem of childfree. Thus, this article uses the *taḥlīlī* method with *adabī al-ijtimāʿī* style to analyse childfree in Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* by Quraish Shihab.

Childfree and Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ

Childfree can be defined as an agreement or consensus agreed upon by a husband and wife to ensure the couple does not have children during their marriage for certain reasons.¹⁵ Childfree is a decision not to have children, where the decision is a condition agreed upon by a man and woman in a marriage bond, and both have the same vision and mission, where each partner has their own goals and reasons.¹⁶ In English literature, such as Collins, the dictionary understands childfree as having no children (no children), childless (without the presence of children), and especially by choice (not having children by choice).¹⁷ The scholarly landscape defines childfree as a state of childlessness in a household, where the decision is made based on the agreement of husband and wife.¹⁸ Childfree can also be said to be an agreement and consensus made between a married man and woman to free themselves from having offspring. Furthermore, childfree can also be defined as an agreement or consensus between couples not to have children.¹⁹

Several factors underlie the reasons why a person with a partner has the view to be child-free. These factors include economic, psychological, personal, environmental, medical, and educational.²⁰ Economic factors are the most important thing in the decision to have children; when having children, a person has material responsibility and requires careful preparation in terms of finances.²¹ Proper financial management will later improve family welfare, where married couples no longer think that having children will burden family finances in the future.²² Psychological factors also make someone choose to be childfree, including anxiety, trauma, and fear, which can even disturb a person's psyche and cause disruption and hinder activities in daily life.²³ Personal factors are one of the decisions of married couples when deciding to be childfree, where these factors are influenced by the couple's

¹⁵Eva Fadhilah, "Childfree Dalam Perspektif Islam," *Al-Mawarid: Jurnal Syari'ah & Hukum*, 2022.

¹⁶Vania Kartika Artanti, "Konstruksi Sosial Perempuan Menikah Tanpa Anak (Childfree)," *Brawijaya Journal of Social Science* 2, no. 02 (2023): 185–201, <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.bjss.2023.002.02.5>.

¹⁷Tika Nadila, Syarifah Mudrika, and Angraini Ramli, "Childfree Dalam Perspektif Hadis," *Al-Bukhari* 5, no. 2 (2022).

¹⁸Rindu Fajar Islamy et al., "Fenomena Childfree di Era Modern: Studi Fenomenologis Generasi Z Serta Pandangan Islam Terhadap Childfree Di Indonesia."

¹⁹Alya Syahwa Fitria et al., "Jurnal Wanita Dan Keluarga Childfree Dalam Perspektif Islam : Solusi Atau Kontroversi ?" 4, no. 1 (2023): 1–14.

²⁰Ibid, 1-14.

²¹Yuni Safira H. Hasyim and Nunung Susfita, "Tinjauan Hukum Keluarga Islam Tentang Fenomena Childfree Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Ketahanan Keluarga," *Mahkamah: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 54, <https://doi.org/10.24235/mahkamah.v8i1.13068>.

²²Flasa, Indania, Whedy, Prasetyo, and Hendrawan Putra, "Pengelolaan Keuangan Rumah Tangga Untuk Meningkatkan Keharmonisan Dan Kesejahteraan Keluarga," *Akuntabilitas Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-Ilmu Ekonomi* 16 (2024): 28–38.

²³Siswanto and Neneng Nurhasanah, "Analisis Fenomena Childfree di Indonesia."

decision without involving the surrounding environment or other problems.²⁴The decision was made by an influential couple named Gita Savitri, who recently became controversial in Indonesia.

In addition to the three factors above, environmental factors also influence the child-free decision. Some argue that the number of humans on earth can be said to be increasing.²⁵ Someone can make a child-free decision because of the overpopulation issue, where, according to him, the earth's Population is increasing. Therefore, they think that adopting a child is a good choice for now.²⁶ In addition, medical factors also influence the decision to be child-free, where these factors can occur due to medical disorders such as impotence and PCOS. The next factor that makes someone decide to be child-free is education, where women with higher education are usually more selective. This is based on consideration of the number of children and the busyness in pursuing their academic careers.²⁷ Thus there are several factors that can influence childfree both internally and externally.

This interpretation is the writing of one of the most famous mufassirs in Indonesia. The mufassir is named Quraish Shihab, known as Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ*: Message, Impression and Harmony of the Qur'an. The background of the writing is due to Quraish Shihab's concern for the Indonesian Muslim community, who are only amazed by the melodious chanting of the Qur'anic verses, which indicates that the Qur'an is only to be read. The essence of reading the Qur'an must be accompanied by tadabbur and understanding with the use of reason and heart to capture the messages of the Qur'an to be applied and become a guide in life.²⁸ In addition, the background of his writing is based on the many correspondences he received from the Indonesian people to publish tafsir with various topics and social issues that are complete and simple.²⁹ Called *al-Miṣbāḥ*, this designation in terms of language has the meaning of illumination, the meaning shows that every word of God can be a guide and light in every human life on earth.³⁰ Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* is identical to the interpretation at each beginning of the surah there is a description related to the fundamental topic of the letter.³¹

In addition, the uniqueness of *al-Miṣbāḥ* is that it has five sources of thought, including the *Kalām Allāh* as the main guide, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* Sunnah where the Sunnah or what is familiarly called hadith contains the sayings and actions of the Prophet, *ijmā'* is the agreement of the companions and also the

²⁴Alya Syahwa Fitria et al., "Jurnal Wanita Dan Keluarga Childfree Dalam Perspektif Islam : Solusi Atau Kontroversi ?" 4, no. 1 (2023): 1–14.

²⁵ Ibid., Analisis Fenomena Childfree di Indonesia.

²⁶Rizky Silvia Putri, "Jurnal GeoCivic" 7, no. 1 (2024): 109–20.

²⁷Insharie Amarylis Sagita and Lukman Santoso, "Fenomena Childfree Di Kalangan Selebritas Perspektif Maqasidy Dan Utilitarianisme," *Mahakim: Journal Of Islamic Family Law* 8, no. 1 (2024): 23–40.

²⁸Aisyah Aisyah, "Menelaah Mahakarya Muhammad Quraish Shihab: Kajian Metodologis dan Penafsirannya dalam Tafsir Al Misbah," *Ulumul Qur'an: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 1, no. 1 (January 14, 2021): 43–65, <https://doi.org/10.58404/uq.v1i1.12>.

²⁹ Ibid, 43–65.

³⁰ Ibid, 43–65.

³¹Yusuf Budiana and Sayiid Nurlie Gandara, "Kekhasan Manhaj Tafsir Al-Mishbah Karya M. Quraish Shihab, Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas, Vol 01, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2021," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 1, no. 1 (2021): 85–91.

tabi'in after the Prophet died, the agreement is considered correct and can be responded to, the majority of linguists agree on the Arabic Language Rules in Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ*. In addition, there is also ijtihad, which is an agreement of most scholars based on theories, arguments, data, and rules that can be scientifically accounted for.³² The general method used in tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* are arranged starting from the earliest letter in the *kalām Allāh*, namely the opening surah called *al-Fātiḥah* to the closing surah called surah *al-Nās*. The order is adjusted to the order in the *Uthmānī Muṣḥaf*.³³ Meanwhile, the description used in Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* is accompanied by a detailed explanation in terms of various aspects: the causes of the revelation of the verse (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), linguistic aspects (language), the connection of verse by verse and surah by surah (*munāsabah*), as well as the connection in these various aspects.³⁴ Thus, Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* is a detailed interpretation of the light discussion, which makes it easy to understand the interpretation of the Qur'anic verse.

Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ*, in explaining each verse, is explained with the selection of words that are easy to understand and a detailed explanation.³⁵ In addition, tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* has an *alibi al-intimate* style 'The adobe style is a study consisting of details of each diction, which contains a mujmal verse arrangement. This mujmal verse still requires assistance in the form of all Arabic linguistic and grammatical rules. Ijtima'i pattern is to interpret each verse in the word of Allah by focusing on customs.³⁶ In addition, Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* also has specificity in terms of interpreting verses in the Qur'an, wherein interpreting verses tahlili is used as the method.³⁷ *Tahlili* is used to interpret verses and analyse them in detail. The *Tahlili* method is a way of interpreting verses in each Qur'an, where one verse is explained in detail, followed by the next verse, while the sequence of verses used in Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* is adjusted to the *Ustmanī muṣḥaf*.³⁸ Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* has its advantages in finding the true meaning of the verse. It is intended that the meaning of the verse remains by the times.³⁹ In addition, in terms of Qur'anic hermeneutics, there are three patterns in interpreting the Qur'an in Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* including quasi-objective modernist, quasi-objectivist traditionalist, and subjective.⁴⁰ Thus, Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* is distinctive in terms of method and style of interpretation and the completion of previous interpretations.

³² Ibid, 85-91.

³³ Ibid, 85-91.

³⁴ Ibid, 85-91.

³⁵Ibid., MenelaahMahakarya Muhammad Quraish Shihab: Kajian Metodologis dan Penafsirannya Dalam Tafsir Al Misbah.

³⁶Muhammad Faisal, "Karakteristik Corak Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Dalam Surat Al-Fatihah Perspektif Tafsir Al-Azhar Dan Tafsir Al-Misbah," *AT-TURAS: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 9, no. 2 (2022): 263–81, <https://doi.org/10.33650/at-turas.v9i2.4481>.

³⁷Lufaei Lufaei, "Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Tekstualitas, Rasionalitas Dan Lokalitas Tafsir Nusantara," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 21, no. 1 (2019): 29, <https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v21i1.4474>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹Aisyah, "Menelaah Mahakarya Muhammad Quraish Shihab: Kajian Metodologis Dan Penafsirannya Dalam Tafsir Al Misbah," *Ulumul Qur'an: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 1, no. 1 (2021): 43–65, <https://doi.org/10.58404/uq.v1i1.12>.

⁴⁰Ibid., Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Tekstualitas, Rasionalitas Dan Lokalitas Tafsir Nusantara

Childfree in the view of Tafsir *al-Misjba>h*

1. Three Perspectives on Childfree

The main source of law is *kalām Allāh*, which also discusses childfree. The Qur'an itself also discusses childfree and can be categorised into three parts: human nature has lust, pairs, and children are a gift and sustenance. According to research which explains that lust is the sexual relationship between husband and wife as an individual human right in which men and women have the same sexual characteristics.⁴¹ This explains that there is no difference in biological desire because there is no type of identity, drive, or tendency towards certain sexual behaviours in either sex. Islam explains that desire or sex is honourable, not just a biological function but a concrete manifestation of the sacred relationship between two people.⁴² So the distribution of lust is a need that cannot be separated from the human spiritual element.⁴³ One of the functions of desire or reproduction is to continue offspring, as did the previous prophets.⁴⁴ The verses that explain human nature having desire are found in QS. al-Baqarah 187, QS. *Ali-Imrān* verse 14, QS. *al-Nahl* verse 72. The explanation is as follows:

أَجَلٌ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ ۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ هُنَّ ۗ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۗ فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَتَّبِعُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ۗ ثُمَّ أَتُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ ۗ وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ ۗ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا ۗ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لِنَاسٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

Meaning: "It is lawful for you on the nights of the fasting month to have intercourse with your wives; they are clothing for you, and you are clothing for them. Allah knows that you could not restrain your lusts, so He forgave you and pardoned you. So now mix with them, follow what Allah has ordained for you, and eat and drink until the white thread appears to you from the dawn of the black thread. Then complete the fast until the night (comes), (but) do not mix with them while you are in *i'tikaf* in the mosque. That is the prohibition of Allah, so do not approach it. Thus Allah explains His verses to men, that they may fear."

The verse described by Quraish Shihab in Tafsir *al-Misjba>h*, also mentions in QS. al-Baqarah verse 187 explaining that Allah allows husbands to touch their wives at night in the fasting month. This can be interpreted that Allah understands that humans cannot restrain their lust during the month of Ramadan.⁴⁵ The verse is interpreted more deeply to explain the nature of harmony in the household. So it can be concluded that the relationship between husband and wife has a close relationship with household harmony, if someone does childfree then the relationship between husband and wife can be reduced. In QS. *Ali-Imrān* verse 14 is also explained

⁴¹Fina Mega Oktaviana, "Telaah Penafsiran Kata Seks, Hawa Dan Nafsu," *Jurnal Al-Mashadir: Journal of Arabic Education and Literature* 2, no. 02 (2023): 73–94, <https://doi.org/10.30984/almashadir.v2i02.431>.

⁴²M. Quraish Shihab, *Pengantin Al-Qur'an Dan Nasehat Untuk Anak-Anakku*, ed. 3 (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2022).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005).

زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْأَحْرَثِ ۗ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَآبِ

Artinya: "It is made beautiful in the eyes of man the love of what is desired, namely: women, children, many treasures of gold, silver, horses, cattle, and fields. That is the joy of living in the world, and it is in the sight of Allah that the good place of return (paradise)."

The verse does not explain specifically what is meant by "beautiful." Before explaining beauty, one must first look at what is beautiful, such as examples of love for lust, sons, wealth, and livestock. In this verse, there is no mention of girls because, at that time, the people of Jahiliyyah craved boys.⁴⁶ In terms of interpretation, childfree in this verse can be said to violate destiny. This is because humans love various desires including lust for the opposite sex, property, and livestock. In other verses, it is also explained for example in QS. al-Nahl verse 72

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَيْنَ وَحَفْدَةً وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ ۗ أَفَبِالطَّلِيلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِعَمَتِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ

Meaning: "Allah made for you wives of your own kind and made for you from your wives children and grandchildren, and gave you sustenance from good things. So why do they believe in what is false and deny the favours of Allah?"

Allah has created for you partners of your kind. Marriage is a form of sacred bond or covenant that originates from the creation of a family, which is a fundamental foundation for people and society. Marriage is one of the forms of development of fitrah entrusted by Allah.⁴⁷ This verse explains the gift of offspring. This is because a person has desires, such as sexual desires, that have been born into human instincts. So, it becomes a sexual urge that is very difficult to stem. So, choosing not to have children must be considered permissible and forbidden. It can be concluded that childfree is not by human nature to fulfil its desires.

The next category is that Allah created humans in pairs. According to the mufassir, one of the proofs that Allah is all-powerful is the creation of humans in pairs, where humans with each other complement each other's shortcomings and also advantages.⁴⁸ In addition, marriage is nature, the nature of marriage is a form of life exemplified by the Prophet, where there is one story from a friend, there is a friend who does not follow the sunnah of the Apostle as well as marriage, the Apostle admonishes him not to do that.⁴⁹ The meaning of this can be interpreted as marriage is something more important for humans, especially Muslims. One of the purposes of marriage is to protect oneself

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ kafrawi, Achmad Abubakar, And Halimah Basri, "Konsep Maqāsid Al-Syarī'ah Tentang Term(زوج) Nikah dalam Alquran," *Al-Musfla: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman Dan Kemasyarakatan*, 2023.

⁴⁹ M. Quraish Shihab, *Pengantin Al-Qur'an dan Nasehat Untuk Anak-Anakku*, ed. 3 (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2022).

from things that are not forbidden by Allah, such as adultery. This is stated in QS. *al-Nisā's* verse 1 and QS. *al-Rūm's* verse 21. The explanation is as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

Meaning: "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from a single person, and he created his wife; and from them, He multiplied men and women. And fear Allah, by whose name you ask one another, and maintain the bonds of friendship. Verily, Allah is always watching over you."

Allah encourages His servants to love and care for each other and the commandment of piety. This verse explains the context of the origin of human creation and the creation of humans consisting of two genders: male and female.⁵⁰ This verse explains the truth that humans were created by Allah from one creature, namely the Prophet Adam, who then created Eve to be his partner; after that, Allah made humans in pairs. Another verse that discusses humans in pairs is QS. *al-Rūm* verse 21

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

Meaning: "And among the signs of His power is that He created for you wives of your kind, so that you may tend to them and feel secure in them, and He made between you love and affection. Indeed, in such things, there are signs for the thinking people."

Allah's creation of human beings is a form of Allah's compassion. Humans are created by Allah from among your kind, and affection is created between them.⁵¹ Meanwhile, according to scholars, the birth of children from a married couple who love each other is also included in the form or form of Allah's love. So that when someone decides to be childfree, then he is the same as rejecting a form of Grace from Allah.

On the other hand, the verse about childfree can be categorised as children are a gift and sustenance. Allah created humans in pairs to receive peace in life or Sakinah; besides that, the creation of children, grandchildren, and further descendants is a gift and fortune for married couples.⁵² Children or offspring are an ornament of worldly life for parents, and everyone yearns for children, including the prophets.⁵³ In addition, children are a mandate for both parents to educate and teach religion and morals. Therefore, the more children, the heavier the responsibility of the parents; therefore, the ulama' allows husband and wife to plan offspring, not in terms of denying the existence of children or calling the term childfree.⁵⁴ As stated in QS. *al-Isrā'* verse 31 and QS. *al-An'ām* verse 151. The explanation is as follows:

⁵⁰M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵²Baharul Ulum, "Childfree Menurut Imam Al Ghazali Dan M . Quraish Shihab (Studi Komparatif)" 1, no. 3 (2024): 394-404.

⁵³M. Quraish Shihab, *Pengantin Al-Qur'an dan Nasehat Untuk Anak-Anakku*, ed. 3 (Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati, 2022).

⁵⁴Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah, Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian al-Qur'an*, vol. 10 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2011).

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

Meaning: "And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We will provide for them and you. Verily, killing them is a great sin."

The matter of human sustenance has been regulated by Allah in such a way that it is not permissible for humans to eliminate the lives of their children just for fear of falling into poverty.⁵⁵ Whereas in QS. *al-An'ām* verse 151 explained

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَنِ اتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ عَلَيَّكُمْ ۗ أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ ۗ شَيْئاً ۗ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۗ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ ۗ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ ۗ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا أَلْفُوحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ ۗ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّيْتُكُمْ بِهِ ۗ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Meaning: "Say: "Let me recite to you what your Lord has forbidden to you, viz: "Let me recite to you what your Lord has forbidden you: associate nothing with Him, and do good to your parents, and kill not your children for fear of poverty; We will provide for you and them, and approach not the abominable deeds, whether apparent or hidden and kill not the soul which Allah hath forbidden except with a just cause. This is what you have been commanded so that you may understand."

The verse also discusses the same thing. This verse explains five prohibitions from Allah, and the first is prohibited from worshipping other than Allah, the second child must have good character or behaviour towards parents. This action is called *bir al-walida'in* the third parent is not allowed to eliminate the child's life for fear of falling poor. Sustenance has been arranged by Allah, the fourth prohibition of adultery, and the fifth prohibition of killing.⁵⁶ It can be concluded that one of the reasons someone decides to be *child-free* is because they are afraid of the child's sustenance and future. This has been arranged in such a way by Allah because, in fact, humans, since the age of four months of the womb, have been determined by their sustenance, and Allah has guaranteed the sustenance of every creature and has sufficed but also requires effort. If someone thinks that having children will add to the burden of life, then this perception is not in line with what Allah has determined.

In terms of the three perspectives above, the child-free perspective, according to *Kalām Allāh*, can be categorized into three perspectives. The first perspective, childfree, is not following human nature because humans have lust. Second, humans were created by Allah in pairs to love each other. Third, children are a gift and sustenance. Children as a gift can be an investment for both parents when they die. As an example, children can pray for their parents when they die; children are also helpers on the Day of Judgment where which is specifically for parents who educate their children following good and correct religious teachings and make them pious children. In addition, children are sustenance for parents because Allah guarantees every creature its sustenance. So when a child is born, it is certain that it will receive sustenance from Allah, which means that parents do not need to worry about experiencing economic difficulties.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

2. Childfree violates *Sunnat Allāh*

Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* reviews childfree in three ways. First, human nature has lust; second, pairs; third, children are a gift and sustenance. The *sunnat Allāh* referred to here is that it already exists and is inherent in humans, where humans have urges that cannot be regulated by reason. This urge or desire from within humans that cannot be controlled by reason is what is meant by lust. In this world, Allah created all things in pairs, both animals and humans. Humans in pairs make nature for the growth of affection. Meanwhile, the existence of marriage is one of continuing offspring; the existence of children in marriage is a gift and sustenance; this is because Allah has guaranteed every living being with their respective sustenance as well as humans. Thus, these three things are human nature and *sunnat Allāh* that cannot be changed.

Childfree in Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* violates human nature for the three things above. According to Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ*, humans have lust. Therefore, there is a need for a marriage contract with the aim of channelling lust. As explained in the book of *Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn* by Imam Ghazali, the benefits of marriage are to protect oneself from shaytan, solve longing, reject the agitation of lust, close the eyes, and maintain the genitals.⁵⁷ Marriage is a fortress from the temptation of the devil, where through marriage, it can channel sexuality following the law because basically, humans have desires or desires in terms of sexuality and also, through marriage, can keep their eyes from things that are forbidden.⁵⁸ In addition, marriage can be interpreted as a way for humans to channel their biological desires to continue offspring or have children.⁵⁹ The existence of children or offspring can be pious offspring, which in the future can be an intercessor or helper for both parents. Judging from the two studies above, it can be understood that marriage is a bulwark against free sex and is a way for humans to channel their lust through a path that is by sharia. If someone decides to be childfree, then this is not following the purpose of marriage because someone who makes a childfree decision will do everything possible to reduce his desire. Thus, if someone chooses childfree, then the aim is not because of Sharia, then it is not allowed.

Some choose to be childfree based on several things, including fear of overpopulation, while Islamic law views this with various perspectives, such as if a pregnant woman threatens her life, then it is allowed to be childfree. Childfree decisions in Islam must first determine the illat or reason for the

⁵⁷Imam Ghazali, *Terjemah Iḥyā' Ulūmuddīn*, ed. Moh. Zuhri (Semarang: Penerbit CV. Asy-Syifa' Semarang, 2003).

⁵⁸Reno Ismanto, "Maqasid Pernikahan Perspektif Imam Al-Gazali Berdasarkan Kitab Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn," *Islamitsch Familierecht Journal* 1, no. 01 (2020): 46–65, <https://doi.org/10.32923/ifj.v1i01.1569>.

⁵⁹Fikri Afrianto and Muhammad Nurul Fahmi, "Diterbitkan Oleh Sekolah Tinggi Agama Jurnal Al-Fawa'id : Jurnal Agama Dan Bahasa Perjanjian Tidak Dipoligami Dalam Pernikahan Menurut Mazhab Syafii Dan Hukum Positif Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Al-Fawa'id: Jurnal Agama Dan Bahasa* 13, no. 1 (2023): 39–55.

law.⁶⁰ If the ill in deciding childfree is different, it will result in different childfree laws as well. If the ill of the law has fulfilled the *ḍarūriyat* category, then childfree can be called permissible.⁶¹ Therefore, one may decide to go child-free if there are dharuriyat issues that negatively affect one or both partners.

In addition to discussing lust, Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* also discusses the purpose of human creation in pairs. In Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* it is explained that the purpose of humans in pairs is as a form of affection and also a form of harmony in the household. The form of household harmony is to build a good understanding between husband and wife, which understanding can produce the best decision for the family.⁶² Second, husband and wife must have mutual tolerance and also always continue to remember that humans are weak creatures, where humans need each other and most importantly humans need God. Third, married couples have a reasonable attitude, where loving and loving their partners should not be excessive. This is because everything that is implemented excessively will have a bad impact and even cause disappointment. Disappointment in the context of households can lead to divorce. In addition to the form of harmony in the household, married couples who have an agreement to be childfree in terms of positive aspects can improve four aspects, namely communication, namely assertive communication will be able to increase intimacy by doing activities together, leisure activities, financial management, namely the opportunity to save more and children and parenting, namely burden-free without children will be maximally fulfilled.⁶³ These four aspects will be maximally fulfilled in married couples who decide to be child-free.⁶⁴ So if viewed by humans who are created in pairs, the child-free decision has two views, there are positive and negative views, this is based on the decision of each husband and wife.

In Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ*, children are a gift and sustenance for married couples. In addition to grace and sustenance, children are also a comfort to the hearts of both parents. The existence of children is desired for married people in general. This is because children can be a refreshment and jewellery of the world for their parents. However, as parents, if you want to want pious children, of course, you must be able to educate children with good religious education because according to the Quran, children can be a test, and children are enemies for both parents.⁶⁵ In daily life, children can be interpreted as comforters of the heart, which can also be comforters of parents. Therefore, parents need to create a learning environment that is loving and supports the growth of creativity, innovation,

⁶⁰Muhammad Indarta and Imanuddin Abil Fida, "Childfree Dalam Perspektif Islam Dan Sosiologi," *USRAH: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 4, no. 1 (2023): 46–67, <https://doi.org/10.46773/usrah.v4i1.633>.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Subairi, "Keharmonisan Rumah Tangga Perspektif Hukum Islam," *Mabahits* 2, No. 2 (2021).

⁶³Amalia Adhandayani et al., "Kepuasan Pernikahan Tanpa Anak: Sebuah Studi Fenomenologi," *Journal Psikogenesis* 10, no. 1 (2023): 76–88, <https://doi.org/10.24854/jps.v10i1.2846>.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Nurhasanah, Syafruddin, and Rehani, "Kedudukan Anak dalam Al-Quran Serta Implikasinya dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Jipai: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 2 (2023).

and motor skills in children.⁶⁶ As for children, as jewellery of the world, children are a gift that requires moral education, Islamic values and *ubudiyah*. This will make the child a religious and moral person and can place themselves in a social environment.⁶⁷ The concept of the child as a test teaches that education does not only focus on science but also the formation of morals and Islamic values. The perspective of children as enemies requires parents to be wise in managing conflicts, emphasising the importance of Islamic learning in directing children to goodness and devotion so that children realise that life in the world is only temporary.⁶⁸ Thus it can be concluded that if someone decides to be childfree, they will not get the pleasure of caring for children and seeing their growth and development.

Childfree, in the view of Tafsir *al-Misbāh*, is not completely prohibited, but sometimes Childfree is allowed because of the *illatdhorruriyyah*. According to Meivannie's research, a couple chooses Childfree due to concerns about whether conceiving will be harmful to the mother or fetus. The reason that concerns life, of course, is allowed by sharia. However, if the child-free decision is taken only because of the couple's egoism, such as fearing that having children will reduce the economy, being unable to have a career, experiencing stress because of taking care of children, and being unable to participate in social activities.⁶⁹ This reason is not justified because, as the Koran explains, children are a gift, a comfort for the heart, and also a bearer of sustenance. Therefore, children are not a hindrance to one's career and a cause of economic decline, but the existence of children will bring grace and blessings to parents.

Conclusion

Childfree is a phenomenon that still has pros and cons in the community. Meanwhile, Tafsir *al-Misbāh* views childfree from three perspectives. In terms of lust, being childfree is a contradictory situation because it can limit lust; however, if there is a *Hurriyat ill*, then it is permissible to be childfree. In terms of pairs, childfree is an agreement agreed upon by the husband and wife, where when a decision that is not mutually agreed upon can create estrangement between the two parties. In terms of children, it is a gift, and childfree sustenance will eliminate the joy of educating, taking care of, and seeing the growth and development of children. Another reason someone chooses childfree is in terms of the economic side where in the future they are afraid of inability in terms of sustenance. Of course, this reason is contrary to the *nash* in the word of Allah, commonly known as *Al Qur'an*. Meanwhile, seen from the social side, someone who chooses to be childfree will easily reach a career, especially

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹Meivannie Aurielle Eldi et al., "Faktor Kepuasan Hidup Wanita Yang Memilih Untuk Childfree" 1, no. 3 (2023): 35–45.

women. However, with children, one can also achieve a career and participate in various social activities if one communicates well with a partner.

Childless is different from childfree, which is a person's decision not to have children due to certain factors. These factors are usually influenced by medical conditions such as impotence, PCOS, or other factors. Meanwhile, regarding the law, childfree or childless is still a pro and con. Pro scholars argue that the decision to be childfree or childless is allowed because of the presence of *ufuzursyar'i*, not because of the egoism of the couple. Meanwhile, scholars who oppose childfree and childless argue that these reasons violate the nature and purpose of marriage. Tafsir *al-Miṣbāḥ* itself implicitly states that it is neutral towards the decision of childfree or childless, provided that the married couple has a strong reason and is justified by sharia. So, it is also mentioned that the virtue of having children is a gift of extraordinary sustenance. That statement illustrates Quraish Shihab's thinking about choosing a middle ground that does not corner married couples who make decisions childfree or childless.

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