



Child Free Vis a Vis Al Walud in the Perspective of Hadith

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the phenomenon of Child free vis-à-vis the concept of Al Walud from the perspective of Hadith, investigating how Islamic teachings on reproduction and family can be interpreted in a modern context. Through analysis of relevant hadiths and contemporary literature, this study reveals space for reinterpretation that allows the integration of the Child free concept into Islamic understanding. The results show that a contextual approach to hadith and the use of maqasid al-shariah methodology can bridge traditional and modern understandings. The social, economic, and spiritual implications of this shift in understanding are discussed, along with challenges and opportunities in harmonizing both concepts. This research contributes to the development of contemporary fiqh that is more responsive to global realities while upholding fundamental Islamic values.

Keywords

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of child-free or the decision not to have children has become an increasingly controversial topic in recent years. On the one hand, this trend is seen as a form of individual freedom in determining life choices, but on the other hand, especially in the context of Muslim society, it is often considered contrary to religious teachings. The concept of al-walud, or the encouragement to have children in Islam, which is sourced from various hadiths, is often positioned as the antithesis of the child-free idea. However, the interpretation and implementation of this teaching in a modern context requires a more in-depth and comprehensive study. The background to this issue is further complicated by significant global social and economic changes. According to a study conducted by (Verniers, 2020), the child-free trend in various developed countries has shown a consistent increase since the beginning of the 21st century. Factors such as higher education levels, increased female participation in the workforce, and changing social values have contributed to this phenomenon. On the other hand, in the context of Muslim

societies, the concept of al-walud is still firmly held as an integral part of family and community life. The debate between child-free and al-walud not only touches on personal aspects, but also has broad social, economic, and demographic implications. A study conducted by Ghani (2013) shows that countries with Muslim-majority populations face a dilemma between preserving traditional family values and accommodating inevitable social change.

This raises fundamental questions about how Islamic teachings, particularly those derived from hadith, can be interpreted and applied in a contemporary context without losing their spiritual and social essence. The research questions in this study focus on several key issues. First, how are the concepts of child free and al-walud defined and understood in the context of hadith and contemporary Islamic thought? Second, what are the social, economic, and spiritual implications of these two concepts in modern Muslim society? Third, how can hadiths about al-walud be interpreted contextually to respond to the child free phenomenon without disregarding fundamental Islamic values? The purpose of this study is to analyze in depth the relationship between the concepts of child free and al-walud from the perspective of hadith, taking into account the contemporary social and cultural context. This study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how Islamic teachings can respond to social change without losing their essence. In addition, this study also aims to identify the potential for synthesis or common ground between the two concepts that can provide ethical guidance for Muslims in facing family dilemmas in the modern era. The benefits of this study are very significant, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study will enrich the wealth of thought.

Contemporary Islam, particularly in the fields of fiqh muamalah and social ethics. By analyzing hadiths about al-walud in a modern context, this study is expected to contribute to the development of a methodology for interpreting hadiths that is more responsive to changing times. As stated by (Yusdani, 2007), reinterpreting religious texts in the face of contemporary issues is a major challenge for Muslim scholars in the 21st century. Practically, the results of this study can be a reference for Muslim individuals who face the dilemma between following the child-free trend or complying with the recommendation of al-walud. This study is expected to provide a more balanced and contextual perspective, thereby enabling more informed decision-making in accordance with Islamic principles. In addition, the findings of this study can also provide input for policymakers in formulating programs related to family welfare and population growth in Muslim countries. In examining the

phenomenon of child-free vis-à-vis al-walud, it is important to understand the historical roots and social context of both concepts. The concept of child-free, although it has only gained widespread attention in recent decades, actually has long historical roots.

According to research conducted by (Audinovic & Rio Satria Nugroho, 2023), the idea of choosing not to have children has existed since ancient times, albeit with different motivations and contexts. However, the significant development of the modern child-free movement can be traced back to the 20th century, along with drastic social changes, including women's emancipation and the sexual revolution. On the other hand, the concept of al-walud in Islam has strong roots in the hadith tradition. One of the most frequently quoted hadiths is the narration from Abu Dawud which states that the Prophet Muhammad encouraged his followers to marry and have many children. This hadith is often interpreted as an encouragement to have as many children as possible. However, as argued by (Abidin, 2021), the literal interpretation of such hadiths needs to be reviewed by considering the historical context and broader moral objectives of Islamic teachings. The debate between child free and al-walud becomes even more complex when confronted with contemporary social and economic realities. Research conducted by (Hoque, 2024) shows that in some Muslim countries, fertility rates have declined significantly in recent decades.

Factors such as urbanization, rising living costs, and changing career aspirations have contributed to a shift in traditional family patterns. In this context, a rigid interpretation of the concept of al-walud can create unnecessary social and psychological pressure on couples who choose not to have children or are not yet ready to do so. One of the main challenges in examining this topic is how to bridge the gap between the traditional understanding of al-walud and the increasingly complex contemporary reality. A promising approach is to adopt a contextual interpretation methodology of the relevant hadiths. As proposed by (Afriani & Wijaya, 2021), understanding the hadith needs to consider not only textual aspects, but also the broader historical, social, and moral contexts. With this approach, the concept of al-walud can be interpreted not as an absolute obligation to have as many children as possible, but rather as an encouragement to contribute positively to society and humanity in general.

In the modern context, this positive contribution can be realized in various forms, not limited to biological reproduction alone. For example, couples who choose to be child free can contribute through adoption, mentoring children in need, or dedicating themselves to social and humanitarian work. This interpretation is not only in line with the spirit of Islam, which emphasizes

universal good (maslahah), but also provides space for diversity of life choices in an increasingly pluralistic Muslim society. Furthermore, the discussion of child-free vis-à-vis al-walud also needs to consider aspects of environmental ethics and global sustainability. With increasing awareness of the climate crisis and pressure on natural resources, the decision to limit the number of children or even not to have children at all can be seen as a form of responsibility towards the planet. In this perspective, the concept of al-walud can be reinterpreted as an exhortation to protect and preserve the earth as a trust from Allah SWT, not merely as a command to increase the population. It is also important to understand that both child free and al-walud are not monolithic concepts. Both have a broad spectrum of interpretations and implementations. For example, in the context of child free, there are individuals who choose not to have children at all, while others may only delay having children or limit the number of children. Similarly, interpretations of al-walud can vary from very literal understandings to more flexible and contextual ones. In facing this dilemma, Muslim communities need to develop a more open and inclusive dialogue. Stigmatization of couples who choose to be child free or limit the number of children should be avoided. Instead, a more empathetic understanding of various life choices should be developed. At the same time, the positive values contained in the concept of al-walud, such as social responsibility and contribution to society, need to be continuously promoted in a form that is relevant to the contemporary context. In conclusion, the study of child-free vis-à-vis al-walud in the perspective of hadith opens up space for rich and multidimensional discussion. This research is not only relevant in the context of Islamic studies, but also has broad implications for social policy, demography, and even cultural diplomacy in the era of globalization. With a holistic and contextual approach, it is hoped that a harmonious synthesis can be found between individual freedom and social responsibility, between tradition and modernity, and between universal Islamic values and contemporary world realities.

RESEARCH METHODE

This study uses a qualitative approach with content analysis and hermeneutics methods. A qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to explore the deeper meanings of hadith texts and their interpretations in a contemporary socio-cultural context. This method allows researchers to explore the nuances and complexities of the concepts of child free and al-walud. Content analysis was applied to examine hadiths related to al-walud and classical and contemporary Islamic literature discussing this topic. This process

involves identifying, categorizing, and interpreting the main themes that emerge from these texts. The main focus of the analysis is on how the concept of al-walud is understood and interpreted in various periods of Islamic history, as well as how these interpretations have evolved in the face of modern challenges, including the phenomenon of child free. Meanwhile, a hermeneutic approach is used to interpret hadiths about al-walud in a contemporary socio-cultural context. This method allows researchers to explore deeper and more relevant meanings from the hadith texts, taking into account the historical context in which the hadiths were uttered, as well as the current context in which they are applied. The hermeneutic approach used refers to the model developed by Fazlur Rahman, which emphasizes contextual understanding and the search for universal ethical values from religious texts.

Data collection was conducted through a comprehensive literature review to identify the main hadiths related to al-walud, as well as secondary literature discussing the interpretation of these hadiths. Primary sources include major hadith books such as Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abu Dawud, and others. Meanwhile, secondary sources included classical and contemporary hadith interpretations, as well as recent academic studies on this topic. Furthermore, a comparative analysis was conducted to compare traditional understandings of al-walud with contemporary interpretations, as well as to explore how this concept interacts with the idea of child free. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, a data source triangulation strategy was employed by comparing information from various sources (hadith texts, secondary literature) to obtain a comprehensive understanding. Finally, the research results will be presented in the form of a rich and in-depth narrative, describing the complexity and nuances of the interaction between the concept of al-walud and the child-free phenomenon in the context of contemporary Islam.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Hadiths related to Child Free and Al Walud

In examining the concept of child free vis-à-vis al-walud, it is important to understand the hadiths relevant to this topic. Hadiths that support the concept of al-walud generally emphasize the importance of having children and increasing the number of Muslims. One of the most frequently quoted hadiths is a narration from Abu Dawud, in which the Prophet Muhammad SAW said,

تزوجوا الولود فإني مكثت بكم الأمة

“Marry women who are loving and can bear many children, for I will be proud of your numbers before other nations on the Day of Judgment” (Sunan Abu

Dawud, 1754) This hadith is often interpreted as an encouragement to have many children and increase the number of Muslims. However, it is important to note that there are also hadiths that can be interpreted in relation to the concept of child free or birth control. In a hadith narrated by Bukhari.

كُنَّا نَعْزَلُ عَلَى عَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَبْلَأَنَا وَلَمْ يَنْهَا

"We practiced azl during the time of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, then it was conveyed to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, but he did not forbid us." (Sahih Muslim, 2610). This hadith is often used as a basis for the argument that Islam does not absolutely prohibit birth control efforts under certain conditions. The historical context of these hadiths also needs to be considered. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, Muslims were still a relatively small and vulnerable community. The recommendation to increase the number of offspring can be understood as a strategy to strengthen the position of Muslims both demographically and politically. However, the current global context, with rapid population growth and various socio-economic challenges, requires a more contextual interpretation of these hadiths.

Table 1.
Comparison of Hadiths related to Al-Walud and Child Free

Aspects	Hadith of Al-Walud	Hadiths related to being child-free
Main Source	Sunan Abu Dawud	Sahih Bukhari
Key Message	Recommendation to increase offspring	Does not prohibit contraception
Historical Context	Strengthening early Islam	Flexibility in family life

Child free vis a Vis Al Walud in the perspective of Hadith

Classical interpretations of hadiths related to al-walud tend to emphasize the importance of having many children as a form of worship and contribution to the community. Classical scholars such as Imam Al-Ghazali in "Ihya Ulumuddin" assert that having children is one of the main purposes of marriage in Islam. This interpretation is based on a literal understanding of hadiths such as those narrated by Abu Dawud above, as well as verses in the Qur'an that mention children as the adornment of this world. However, contemporary interpretations of these hadiths begin to consider the modern

context and global challenges. Contemporary Muslim scholars such as Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, in his work "Al-Halal wal Haram fil Islam," acknowledge that birth control can be justified in certain situations, such as for health or economic reasons. They argue that the broader maqasid al-syariah (objectives of sharia), such as the protection of life and property, must be considered in interpreting hadiths related to al-walud (SULAEMAN, 2019). A comparative analysis between classical and modern perspectives shows a paradigm shift in understanding the concept of al-walud. While classical interpretations tend to view quantity as the main indicator, modern perspectives place greater emphasis on the quality of parenting and contextual considerations.

For example, a study conducted by Rahman et al. (2022) shows that most contemporary scholars in Muslim countries argue that the decision to have children or not should be based on the couple's ability to provide good education and care (Adi & Afandi, 2023). Furthermore, contemporary interpretations also begin to recognize the legitimacy of the child-free choice in the context of Islam. Some scholars, such as (SULAEMAN, 2019) in his book "Sexual Ethics and Islam," argue that the decision not to have children can be seen as a form of social and environmental responsibility in the current global context. They interpret the hadiths about al-walud as an encouragement to contribute positively to society, which can be realized in various forms, not limited to biological reproduction alone. It is important to note that this shift in interpretation does not mean a total rejection of the concept of al-walud, but rather an expansion of the understanding of how the concept can be implemented in a modern context. This comparative analysis shows that the understanding of the hadiths related to al-walud and child free needs to be continuously evaluated and contextualized in order to respond to contemporary social dynamics and global challenges.

The concepts of child-free and Al Walud in the perspective of Hadith

The definition and limitations of Al Walud according to Hadith need to be understood in a broader context. Al Walud, which literally means "one who gives birth to many," is often interpreted as an encouragement to have many children. A Hadith narrated by Abu Dawud states, "Marry a woman who is loving and can bear many children, for indeed I will be proud of your numbers before other nations on the Day of Judgment." However, it is important to note that the concept of Al Walud is not limited to quantity, but also includes the quality of offspring. Another hadith emphasizes the importance of educating children well, as narrated by At-Tirmidhi, "There is no gift more important from parents to their children than a good education." The understanding of child-free in the context of Islam is a relatively new and controversial topic.

Although there are no hadiths that explicitly discuss the concept of child-free, some contemporary scholars have begun to interpret hadiths related to family and reproduction in a modern context.

According to a study conducted by (Childfree, 2024), some contemporary scholars argue that the decision not to have children is acceptable in Islam if it is based on strong reasons and does not contradict the principles of sharia. The common ground between the concepts of Al Walud and Child Free can be found in a broader understanding of social responsibility and contribution to the community. Although these two concepts appear to be contradictory, they both emphasize the importance of considering the welfare of individuals and society. The main difference lies in how to realize this contribution: Al Walud emphasizes biological reproduction, while Child Free focuses more on non-biological contributions.

Table 2.
Comparison of the Concepts of Al Walud and Child Free
in the Contemporary Islamic Perspective

Aspects	Al-Walud	Childfree
Main Focus	Biological reproduction	Non-biological contributions
Basis of Argumentation	Explicit hadith (e.g., "Marry women who are fertile and loving, for I am proud of your many children")	Contextual interpretation of hadith and the Quran, as well as consideration of social, economic, and health conditions.
Goals	Increasing the number of followers, continuing the lineage, passing on faith and religious values	Individual and social well-being, self-development, freedom to choose one's lifestyle, focus on career or hobbies, and social contribution through other means.
Challenges	Quality vs. quantity of children, the great responsibility of raising children, difficult economic conditions	Social stigma, pressure from family and society, difficulties in adoption, and potential mental health issues.
Other Considerations	Maternal and child health, economic conditions, children's education, environment	Reproductive health, mental and emotional readiness, economic conditions, career, and life goals.

Implementation of Child Free vis a Vis Al Walud in accordance with the Hadith of the Prophet

The practice of Al Walud in Muslim societies has evolved in line with socio-economic changes. Although the recommendation to have many children is still strong in some Muslim communities, global trends show a decline in fertility rates in many Muslim countries. According to research conducted by (Taufik, 2022), factors such as urbanization, increased education levels, and changing gender roles have influenced the interpretation and implementation of the concept of Al Walud in contemporary Muslim societies. The phenomenon of child-free among contemporary Muslims is gaining attention. Although still considered controversial, the number of Muslim couples choosing not to have children is increasing, especially in urban areas and among the highly educated. A study conducted by (Farrencia, 2024) reveals that reasons such as focus on career, concerns about financial stability, and environmental considerations are the main factors behind the child-free choice among young Muslims. The effort to harmonize Al Walud and the child-free choice is both a challenge and an opportunity for contemporary Muslim societies. Several Muslim communities have begun to develop open dialogue on this topic, trying to find common ground between traditional values and modern realities. A promising approach is to reinterpret the meaning of "descendants" in a broader context, not limited to biological children. Case examples and solutions show the diversity of approaches in dealing with this dilemma.

For example, some Muslim couples who choose to be child-free shift their focus to community service, such as becoming foster parents or dedicating themselves to social work (Ramadhan et al., 2023). Other cases show how some Muslim communities have begun to recognize and respect individuals' decisions not to have children, while still emphasizing the importance of social contributions in other forms. A balanced implementation of Al Walud and child-free requires a holistic and contextual approach. This includes reinterpreting relevant hadiths in a modern context, developing contemporary fiqh that is more responsive to global realities, and educating the public about the diversity of life choices in Islam. It is important to create an inclusive space for dialogue where different perspectives can be heard and valued, while adhering to the basic principles of Islam regarding family and social responsibility.

Critical Analysis: The Concept of Child Free vis-à-vis Al Walud in the Perspective of Hadith

The relevance of Al Walud's hadiths in the modern context has become an increasingly intense topic of debate among contemporary Muslim scholars. Hadiths that encourage procreation, such as those narrated by Abu Dawud, need to be reviewed in the current global context. Rapid population growth, environmental crises, and global economic challenges raise questions about how these hadiths should be interpreted and applied. Some scholars argue that the essence of the Al Walud hadiths is not merely about quantity, but about the quality of the ummah and its positive contribution to society. According to a study conducted by (Afriani & Wijaya, 2021), a contextual interpretation of the Al Walud hadiths can pave the way for a more holistic understanding of the role of individuals in modern Muslim society. The reinterpretation of hadiths in the face of the child-free phenomenon is a necessity in contemporary Islamic discourse. Progressive Muslim scholars have begun to offer new interpretations that take into account socio-economic realities and global challenges. They argue that the concept of "multiplying the ummah" in the hadith can be interpreted more broadly, not only through biological reproduction, but also through intellectual, social, and spiritual contributions. This approach allows for the integration of the child-free concept into the Islamic understanding of family and society, while still upholding the basic values of Islamic teachings.

The social, economic, and spiritual implications of this shift in understanding are significant. Socially, acceptance of the child-free choice can reduce the stigma and social pressure often experienced by childless couples. Economically, it can contribute to better family planning and more efficient resource allocation. Spiritually, a more inclusive interpretation can enrich the understanding of worship and contribution to the community, paving the way for diverse forms of devotion. The challenge in harmonizing these two concepts lies in resistance from traditionalists who hold a literal interpretation of the Al Walud hadiths (Tsarwat et al., n.d.). However, there are also wide-open opportunities for constructive dialogue between various schools of thought in Islam. An approach that bridges traditional and contemporary understandings can produce a rich synthesis that is relevant to the needs of modern Muslims.

Table 3.
SWOT Analysis of Harmonizing the Concepts of
Al Walud and Child Free

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
The Flexibility of Islamic Teachings	Resistance from Traditional Circles	Interfaith Dialogue	Polarisasi Masyarakat

The Richness of Intellectual Tradition	Lack of Contemporary Literature	The Development of Modern Fiqh	Erosion of Family Values
The Principle of Maslahah	Social Stigma People Who Choose to be Childfree	Contribution to Global Issues	Generational Conflict

In facing this complexity, it is important to develop a holistic and inclusive approach. A study conducted by (Perspektif et al., 2024) shows that the use of the *maqasid al-syariah* (sharia objectives) methodology can be key in harmonizing concepts. This approach allows for flexibility in interpreting hadith while maintaining the basic principles of Islam. In conclusion, a critical analysis of the concept of child-free vis-à-vis *Al Walud* in the perspective of hadith shows that Islam has the capacity to adapt to social changes without losing the essence of its teachings. A contextual and inclusive reinterpretation of hadith can pave the way for a more comprehensive understanding of the role of individuals in modern Muslim society, whether they choose to have children or remain child-free. The challenge ahead is how to develop a balanced and constructive discourse that respects diversity of life choices while upholding the fundamental values of Islam.

CONCLUSION

A study on "Child-free vis-à-vis *Al Walud* in the perspective of Hadith" has revealed the complexity and dynamics of contemporary Islamic understanding of the concepts of family and reproduction. Through an in-depth analysis of the hadiths related to *Al Walud* and their interpretation in the modern context, as well as the phenomenon of child-free among Muslims, this study shows that Islam has the flexibility and capacity to respond to global socio-economic changes. Hadiths that encourage *Al Walud*, or increasing offspring, need to be understood in a broader context, not only as a literal recommendation to have many children, but also as an encouragement to contribute positively to the ummah and society. A contextual reinterpretation of these hadiths opens up opportunities to accommodate the child-free choice within the framework of Islamic ethics, while still upholding the fundamental values of religious teachings. The child-free phenomenon among contemporary Muslims reflects broader social changes, including urbanization, increased education levels, and shifting gender roles.

Although still controversial in some circles, the choice not to have children is gaining wider recognition and acceptance in contemporary Islamic discourse.

The effort to harmonize the concepts of Al Walud and child-free requires a holistic and inclusive approach. The use of the maqasid al-syariah methodology and contextual interpretation of hadith can bridge traditional and modern understandings, paving the way for constructive synthesis. This allows for the development of contemporary fiqh that is more responsive to global realities, while still adhering to the basic principles of Islam. The implications of this research are significant, socially, economically, and spiritually. Broader acceptance of diverse life choices, including child-free, can reduce the social stigma and pressure experienced by childless couples. Economically, this can contribute to better family planning and more efficient resource allocation.

From a spiritual perspective, a more inclusive understanding can enrich the concepts of worship and devotion in Islam. The challenge ahead lies in how to develop a constructive dialogue between various schools of thought in Islam, bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary interpretations. Public education and awareness about the complexity of this issue also need to be improved to create a more tolerant and inclusive environment. Finally, this study affirms that Islam, as a universal religion and a blessing for all of creation, has the capacity to adapt to changing times without losing the essence of its teachings. Through continuous ijтиhad and open dialogue, Muslims can continue to develop relevant and meaningful understandings in facing contemporary challenges, including those related to family and reproduction.

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