

Childfree Lifestyle Among Indonesian Millennials in the Perspective Maqashid Sharia

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|| Submitted: February 25, 2025 || Accepted: May 18, 2025 || Published: July 12, 2025 ||

Abstract: This study examines the childfree lifestyle among Indonesian millennials from the perspective of maqasid sharia within the framework of Islamic family law, with particular attention to the principle of hifz al-nasl. Existing studies on childfree practices have largely focused on sociological change, demographic trends, and individual rights, while limited attention has been given to normative Islamic legal analysis, especially in relation to maqasid sharia, creating a clear gap in contemporary Islamic legal scholarship. This research aims to analyze millennial Muslim perceptions of the childfree lifestyle and to assess how these perceptions align with or challenge the objectives of Islamic family law. The study employs a qualitative normative-empirical legal research approach, combining in-depth interviews with Indonesian Muslim millennials and normative analysis of classical and contemporary Islamic legal sources on family law and maqasid sharia. Informants were selected purposively to represent diverse levels of religious engagement. The findings indicate that most respondents perceive childfree choices as a form of personal autonomy; however, normative tension emerges when such choices are evaluated against the objective of preserving lineage. Respondents with stronger religious commitment tend to view childfree decisions as conditionally permissible or legally problematic, depending on intention and social responsibility. These results demonstrate that the application of maqasid sharia to contemporary family issues remains interpretatively contested and insufficiently contextualized. This research contributes to Islamic legal studies by reaffirming maqasid sharia as a dynamic analytical framework for addressing emerging family law issues among Muslim millennials in Indonesia.

Keywords: Childfree Lifestyle, Islamic Family Law, Indonesian Millennials

1. Introduction

The emergence of the childfree lifestyle among the millennial generation in Indonesia represents a significant social phenomenon that deserves serious academic attention. In recent years, an increasing number of young couples have chosen to delay or completely reject parenthood, framing reproduction as a personal preference rather than a social or religious responsibility. This shift is influenced by multiple factors, including economic pressures, career aspirations, environmental concerns, gender equality discourses, and the strong influence of global culture disseminated through digital media. In Indonesian society,¹ which has long emphasized family continuity and procreation as social norms, this trend challenges deeply rooted cultural and religious values. From an Islamic perspective, the institution of family and the presence of children are central elements of moral and social life.² The objective of preserving lineage (hifz al-nasl) within maqāṣid al-sharʿah highlights the importance of offspring for the

¹ Elizabeth A. Hintz and Clinton L. Brown, "Childfree and 'Bingoed': A Relational Dialectics Theory Analysis of Meaning Creation in Online Narratives About Voluntary Childlessness," *Communication Monographs* 87, no. 2 (April 2, 2020): 244–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2019.1697891>.

² Erfaniah Zuhriah et al., "Childfree, the Digital Era, and Islamic Law: Views of Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Gender Activists in Malang, Indonesia," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 3 (September 22, 2023): 1606, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i3.17753>.

sustainability of the Muslim community. The growing acceptance of the childfree lifestyle among millennials therefore raises important questions about how Islamic family values are perceived and negotiated in contemporary society.³ This makes the phenomenon not only socially relevant but also normatively significant within the context of Islamic family law.

A number of previous studies have addressed the childfree lifestyle from various perspectives, yet several limitations remain evident in the existing literature. Some studies approach the issue from an Islamic legal standpoint, focusing on the permissibility of childfree choices through concepts such as *maslahah mursalah* or reproductive rights.⁴ Other studies examine the phenomenon sociologically, emphasizing generational change, individual autonomy, and shifting family norms among millennials.⁵ While these works contribute valuable insights, they tend to concentrate on normative legal analysis or descriptive social explanation.⁶ Few studies explicitly examine how values related to family and reproduction are formed, transmitted,⁷ and internalized among Muslim millennials.⁸ In particular, the role of Islamic education—both formal and non-formal—in shaping perceptions of the childfree lifestyle has received limited scholarly attention.⁹ As a result, the literature lacks a comprehensive explanation of how educational processes influence the way millennials understand Islamic teachings on family and lineage. This gap indicates the need for a more integrative approach that connects legal norms, social realities, and educational practices.

An evaluation of previous studies shows that most research positions the childfree lifestyle either as a legal deviation from Islamic norms or as a consequence of broader social transformation. Such approaches often treat Islamic family law as a fixed framework while overlooking the dynamic process through which religious values are interpreted by younger generations.¹⁰ Moreover, existing studies rarely explore how Islamic teachings are contextualized within educational settings to address contemporary lifestyle choices.¹¹ This study positions itself differently by viewing Islamic education as a key mediating factor between normative teachings and lived social experience. Rather than focusing solely on legal judgments, this research evaluates how Islamic family law values—particularly the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl*—are conveyed and understood through educational interactions.¹² By doing so, the study situates its

³ Elizabeth A. Hintz and Clinton L. Brown, "Childfree by Choice: Stigma in Medical Consultations for Voluntary Sterilization," *Women's Reproductive Health* 6, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 62–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23293691.2018.1556427>.

⁴ Fathul Mu'in et al., "Childfree in Modern Muslim Communities of Lampung and West Java Provinces: A Maqāsid Al-Sharī'ah Perspective," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 7, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 860, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v7i2.22400>.

⁵ Rebecca Harrington, "Childfree by Choice," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 22–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15240657.2019.1559515>.

⁶ Alexei Anisin, "Childfree Activism and Reproductive Norms in the 21st Century," *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, June 10, 2025, 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2025.2512855>.

⁷ Siti Nurjanah and Iffatin Nur, "Childfree: Between the Sacredness of Religion, Law and the Reality of Society," *Al-Adalah* 19, no. 1 (June 20, 2022): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v19i1.11962>.

⁸ Imam Syafi'i et al., "Childfree in Islamic Law Perspective of Nahdlatul Ulama," *Al-Ahkam* 33, no. 1 (April 30, 2023): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2023.33.1.14576>.

⁹ Yunuen Ysela Mandujano-Salazar, "Exploring the Construction of Adulthood and Gender Identity Among Single Childfree People in Mexico and Japan," *Sage Open* 9, no. 2 (April 10, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019855844>.

¹⁰ Diane W. Darling et al., "Blending and Spending: Financial Influences Impacting Childfree Stepmothers' Relationship Satisfaction," *Journal of Financial Therapy* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.4148/1944-9771.1402>.

¹¹ Merve Erkaya and Anil Ozge Ustunel, "A Qualitative Study on the Marital Experiences of Childfree Couples in Turkey," *International Journal of Systemic Therapy* 35, no. 1 (January 2, 2024): 80–107, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2692398X.2023.2240680>.

¹² Meera Suresh Babu, "Are You a Real Woman?: Stigma and the Childfree Indian Woman," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 31, no. 3 (October 31, 2024): 287–307, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09715215241262134>.

focus at the intersection of Islamic law,¹³ education,¹⁴ and millennial social behavior.¹⁵ This positioning allows for a deeper understanding of how religious norms function in practice, rather than merely at the level of doctrine.

The study seeks to address several central questions. How do millennial Muslims in Indonesia perceive the childfree lifestyle in relation to Islamic family law? To what extent does Islamic education influence their understanding of the role of children within marriage and family life? Additionally, how do modern social and cultural influences interact with religious teachings in shaping these perceptions? This study argues that Islamic education plays a significant role in shaping millennial attitudes toward the childfree lifestyle, but its effectiveness depends on the ability of educational approaches to be contextual, reflective, and responsive to contemporary challenges. The hypothesis underlying this research is that stronger internalization of Islamic family law values through education correlates with more critical attitudes toward the childfree lifestyle. By answering these questions, the study aims to contribute to both Islamic legal discourse and the development of educational models that remain relevant in addressing evolving family values among Muslim youth.

2. Method

This study employs a quantitative descriptive research design to examine Muslim millennials' perceptions of the childfree lifestyle and its relationship with Islamic family law principles. This design was selected to align with the research objective of mapping patterns of perception and normative evaluation among a specific legal subject group. The unit of analysis in this study is individual Muslim millennials, defined as married or unmarried Muslims aged 29–40 years, as this cohort is particularly exposed to contemporary social change and legal discourse on family institutions. The research population consists of Muslim millennials residing in Indonesia, while the sample was determined using purposive sampling. This technique was applied to ensure that respondents possessed basic exposure to Islamic teachings, either through formal Islamic education or informal religious learning in community settings. Respondents were recruited from several provinces to reduce regional bias and enhance representativeness. Although purposive sampling limits statistical generalization, it is methodologically justified in legal perception studies that emphasize normative understanding rather than population inference. This approach allows the research to focus on respondents who are legally and religiously relevant to the issue under examination.

Data were collected using an online questionnaire as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire consisted of 25 closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale and was structured around three dimensions: conceptual understanding of the childfree lifestyle, personal perceptions and attitudes toward childfree choices, and normative evaluation based on Islamic family law. Instrument validity was ensured through expert review involving scholars of Islamic law and family law studies, while reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha indicated satisfactory internal consistency across all dimensions. Data collection was conducted via Google Forms, and participation was entirely voluntary. Ethical considerations were addressed by providing informed consent at the beginning of the questionnaire, ensuring respondent anonymity, and excluding any personally identifiable information. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to generate frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. To enhance legal interpretation, empirical findings were integrated with normative analysis of Islamic legal sources, including maqasid sharia and hifz al-nasl, supported by contemporary fatwas and jurisprudential

¹³ Shelly Volsche, "A Comparison of Mothers and Childfree Women on the Common Characteristics of Romantic Love," *Sage Open* 7, no. 1 (January 30, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017701529>.

¹⁴ Catherine Verniers, "Behind the Maternal Wall: The Hidden Backlash Toward Childfree Working Women," *Journal of Theoretical Social Psychology* 4, no. 3 (July 8, 2020): 107–24, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts5.65>.

¹⁵ Nadya Anjani Rismarini and Nesya Adira, "Between Personal and Social Matters: Identifying Public Perceptions of Childfree Decisions in Indonesia," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 27, no. 6 (June 3, 2025): 719–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2024.2398619>.

commentary. This integration ensures methodological transparency and enables replication in future socio-legal research.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. The Childfree Lifestyle among Indonesian Muslim Families

The childfree lifestyle has become an increasingly visible social phenomenon within the context of modernization and shifting societal values. Among respondents, childfree is consistently understood as a conscious and voluntary decision by individuals or couples not to have children, clearly distinguished from childless, which refers to involuntary conditions caused by biological or medical factors. This distinction reflects a broader transformation in family orientation, where personal autonomy and individual life planning increasingly take precedence over traditional expectations related to marriage and reproduction. Reproductive decisions are no longer perceived as inherent consequences of marriage but as matters of individual choice and rational consideration. Such perspectives indicate a gradual weakening of traditional family norms that position procreation as a central purpose of marital life. Within this context, marriage is increasingly reinterpreted as a personal partnership rather than a social institution oriented toward lineage continuity.¹⁶ This shift has significant implications for the understanding of family within societies that are historically grounded in religious and communal values.

Childfree orientations among respondents are not homogeneous but exist along a continuum ranging from temporary postponement to permanent rejection of parenthood. Temporary childfree decisions are commonly associated with economic instability, career prioritization, and delayed family planning, while permanent childfree choices tend to be rooted in ideological beliefs, gender equality discourses, and environmental considerations.¹⁷ Many respondents perceive parenthood as an optional life stage rather than an essential objective of marriage.¹⁸ This tendency reflects a rationalization of family life in which emotional satisfaction and economic security are prioritized over reproductive responsibility. The increasing participation of women in higher education and professional sectors further reinforces this pattern, as marriage is often viewed as compatible with childfree arrangements. These dynamics illustrate how modern social conditions reshape marital expectations and redefine the meaning of family beyond procreation.

Despite its growing visibility, the childfree lifestyle continues to encounter strong resistance within communities that uphold religious and traditional family norms. Respondents reported experiencing moral judgment, familial pressure,¹⁹ and social stigma as a consequence of their reproductive choices. Individuals who choose to remain childfree are frequently labeled as selfish, irresponsible, or as deviating from religious and moral expectations attached to marriage. Such responses demonstrate that the childfree lifestyle remains a socially contested position rather than a fully accepted alternative. The persistence of stigma reflects the enduring strength of normative beliefs that associate marital legitimacy with the presence of children. Consequently, individuals adopting a childfree lifestyle often experience tension between personal autonomy and collective moral expectations, leading to social vulnerability within family and community environments.

¹⁶ Zakiya Darajat et al., "Exploring Childfree Choices in Society's Pressure to Have a Baby (2023): Contesting Societal Expectations of Womanhood and Motherhood," *Asian Women* 41, no. 2 (2025): 111, <https://doi.org/10.14431/aw.2025.6.41.2.111>.

¹⁷ Chandni Bhambhani and Anand Inbanathan, "Examining a Non-Conformist Choice: The Decision-Making Process Toward Being Childfree Couples," *International Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 5 (September 2, 2020): 339–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2020.1797265>.

¹⁸ Nida Denson, Diana Ferreira, and Thomas F. Denson, "Evidence of a Negative Bias Toward People Who Are Childfree by Choice," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, October 16, 2025, 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2025.2573719>.

¹⁹ Brittany Stahnke, Morgan E. Cooley, and Amy Blackstone, "'I've Lived My Life to the Fullest': Life Satisfaction among Childfree Older Women," *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 34, no. 3–4 (October 2, 2022): 296–312, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08952833.2022.2139078>.

From the perspective of Islamic family law, reproductive choices are closely connected to the objectives of marriage and the broader framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Marriage in Islam is not merely a contractual agreement between two individuals but a moral institution designed to preserve lineage, protect social order,²⁰ and ensure the continuity of the Muslim community. The principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* occupies a central position in this framework, emphasizing the importance of offspring as a trust (*amānah*) and a social responsibility.²¹ Decisions to remain childfree therefore raise normative questions regarding the alignment of individual autonomy with the objectives of Islamic law. Reproductive choice, within this perspective, cannot be separated from moral accountability and communal welfare.

The principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* extends beyond the prohibition of illicit sexual relations and encompasses the protection of children's rights, identity, and social status. Legitimate marriage serves as the foundation for safeguarding lineage and ensuring justice within the family structure. Respondents who demonstrated awareness of Islamic family law principles tended to frame reproduction as a moral obligation rather than merely a personal preference. In contrast, childfree choices often redefine marriage without reference to procreation, thereby challenging the normative structure of Islamic family law. This tension highlights the need to critically examine how contemporary lifestyle choices interact with the objectives of Islamic legal norms, particularly in societies undergoing rapid social transformation.

In the contemporary context of globalization and individualism, Islamic family law faces increasing challenges in responding to alternative lifestyle choices such as the childfree movement. While modern discourse emphasizes personal freedom and self-determination, Islamic legal principles continue to prioritize public welfare (*maslahah*) and the continuity of the ummah. The principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* provides a normative foundation for evaluating reproductive decisions by balancing individual autonomy with moral and social responsibility. Understanding childfree choices within this framework allows for a more nuanced legal analysis that does not merely reject modern realities but critically engages with them. Consequently, Islamic family law remains a vital reference point in addressing changing family norms while preserving its foundational objectives.

3.2. Religious Engagement in Shaping Childfree Perceptions among Muslim Millennials

This study involved 152 Muslim millennial respondents drawn from various regions of Indonesia. Respondents were selected through random sampling with consideration given to productive age representation, Islamic religious background, and levels of involvement in socio-religious activities. This sampling approach ensured that the dataset reflected demographic characteristics relevant to contemporary family and reproductive decision-making. The respondents represent a generation positioned at the intersection of religious tradition and social change. As Muslim millennials, participants are exposed to evolving lifestyle discourses while remaining embedded within Islamic normative frameworks. The sample captures individuals navigating career development, marital expectations, and reproductive planning. These characteristics make the respondent group particularly relevant for examining perceptions of the childfree lifestyle. The diversity of regional backgrounds further enhances the representativeness of the data. Collectively, the sample provides a robust empirical basis for analyzing how Islamic values intersect with modern reproductive choices.

²⁰ Erik Nakkerud, "Ideological Dilemmas Actualised by the Idea of Living Environmentally Childfree," *Human Arenas* 6, no. 4 (December 5, 2023): 886–910, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-021-00255-6>.

²¹ Melanie Brewster et al., "Intentionally Childfree: A Methodological Review and Content Analysis of Peer-Reviewed Scholarship," *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, December 15, 2025, 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08952833.2025.2604380>.

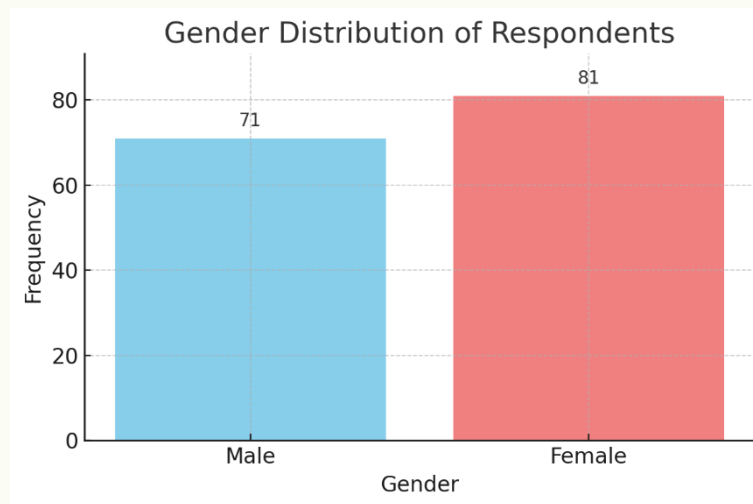


Figure 1. Gender Distribution

The respondents were categorized into two gender groups, consisting of 71 male respondents (46.7%) and 81 female respondents (53.3%). Female respondents slightly outnumbered male respondents, indicating a marginally higher level of participation among women in the study. This relatively balanced gender distribution ensures adequate representation of both male and female perspectives. The observed composition is analytically relevant, as gender is a key demographic variable in studies of family formation and reproductive decision-making. Differences in gender roles and social expectations may influence how individuals perceive lifestyle choices related to marriage and reproduction. Accordingly, this gender distribution provides an important basis for subsequent analyses examining variations in childfree perceptions across gender groups.

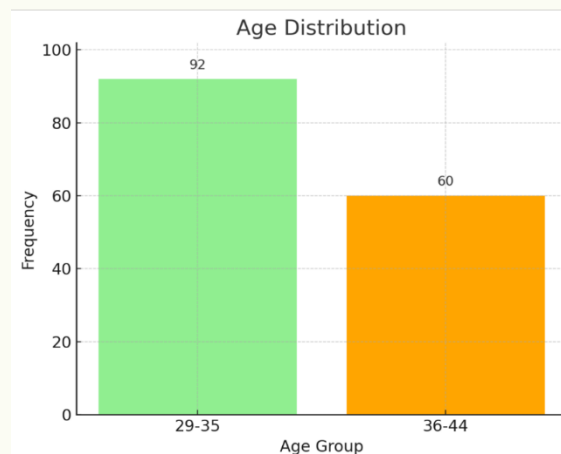


Figure 2. Age Group

The respondents were classified into two age groups: 92 individuals (60.5%) aged 29–35 years and 60 individuals (39.5%) aged 36–44 years. The majority of respondents were within the 29–35 age range, indicating that most participants were in the early productive stage of adulthood. This stage is commonly associated with key transitions related to employment, marital status, and reproductive planning. As a result, individuals in this age group represent a relevant demographic for examining attitudes toward family-related lifestyle choices. The inclusion of respondents aged 36–44 years allows for comparison with individuals at a later stage of adulthood. Overall, the age distribution provides a meaningful basis for analyzing millennial perceptions of the childfree lifestyle.

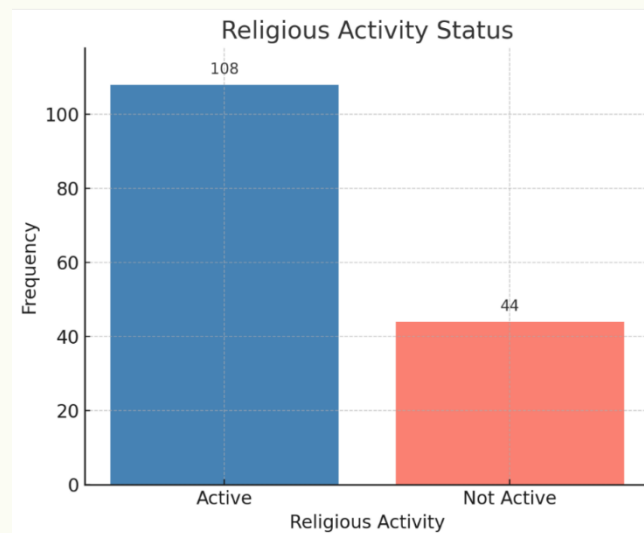


Figure 3. Religious Activity Level of Respondents

A total of 108 respondents (71.1%) reported active participation in religious activities, including pengajian (Islamic study groups), religious lectures, dakwah, and involvement in Islamic community organizations. In contrast, 44 respondents (28.9%) indicated that they were not actively engaged in such activities. This distribution demonstrates that the majority of respondents maintain a relatively high level of religious involvement. The prevalence of religiously active participants is analytically relevant, as religious engagement represents an important contextual variable in assessing attitudes toward marriage, reproduction, and family-related lifestyle choices. The variation in levels of religious activity among respondents provides a basis for further analysis of how religious engagement relates to perceptions of the childfree lifestyle.

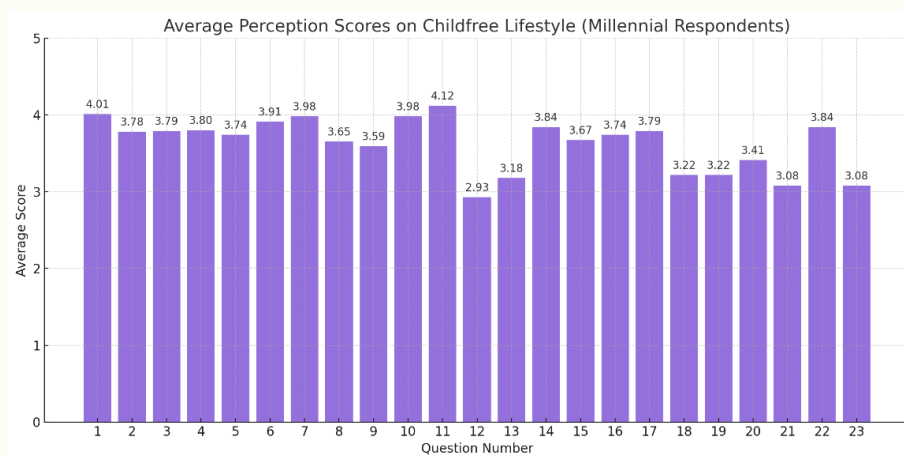


Figure 4. Recapitulation of Muslim Millennial Perceptions toward the Childfree Lifestyle

The distribution of mean scores for statements measuring Muslim millennial perceptions of the childfree lifestyle. Overall, respondents exhibit moderate to high levels of agreement, with average scores predominantly ranging from 3.5 to 4.1. Statements related to individual autonomy, financial stability, and changing social norms received relatively higher agreement. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement "Indonesian society has not fully accepted the concept of being childfree" ($M = 4.12$), indicating respondents' shared perception of persistent social resistance toward this lifestyle choice. In contrast, items associated with religious considerations, marital harmony, and the moral implications of not having children tended to yield mean scores closer to neutrality, generally ranging between 3.0 and 3.2. The lowest mean score was observed for the statement "Being childfree can strengthen a couple's

relationship" ($M = 2.93$), suggesting limited agreement regarding the relational benefits of childfree choices. These patterns indicate that while respondents show openness toward childfree living in terms of individual life management, greater ambivalence remains in areas closely linked to religious values and family-related norms.

Table 1. Gender and Childfree Perception

Gender	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	7	11	24	21	8	71
Female	5	15	17	35	9	81
Total	12	26	41	56	17	152

The analysis examined the statement "The decision not to have children does not contradict religious beliefs" across gender groups. The results indicate that a higher number of female respondents expressed agreement with the statement (35 respondents) compared to male respondents (21 respondents). Male respondents were more frequently represented in the neutral and disagree categories. This distribution demonstrates a gender-based variation in responses to religiously framed childfree perceptions. Overall, the findings indicate that female respondents report higher levels of acceptance of childfree choices within a religious context than male respondents.

Table 2. Religious Activity and Childfree Perceptions

Religious Activity	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Active	2	7	17	60	22	108
Not Active	2	5	11	22	4	44
Total	4	12	28	82	26	152

The results indicate that respondents who were actively engaged in religious activities showed higher levels of acceptance of the childfree lifestyle. A total of 82 religiously active respondents expressed agreement or strong agreement with the statement regarding the legitimacy of childfree living. Among respondents who were not actively involved in religious activities, 22 individuals also expressed agreement, although in a smaller proportion. This distribution demonstrates variation in childfree perceptions across different levels of religious engagement and indicates that acceptance of the childfree lifestyle is present across both groups, albeit to differing degrees.

Table 3. Independent Sample t-Test Difference Test

Group	N	Mean Childfree Score	SD	Sig.P
Male	71	3.45	0.60	0.038
Female	81	3.67	0.58	

The independent sample t-test was conducted to examine differences in average perceptions of the childfree lifestyle across respondent groups. The analysis compared perceptions based on gender and levels of religious activity, focusing on mean score differences between male and female respondents as well as between religiously active and non-active individuals. The results indicate a statistically significant difference in childfree perceptions between male and female respondents. The obtained p-value of 0.038 is below the conventional significance threshold of 0.05, confirming that gender is a significant factor influencing attitudes toward childfree living. Female respondents reported higher mean perception scores than male respondents, indicating greater acceptance of the childfree lifestyle. In contrast, male respondents exhibited comparatively lower mean scores, reflecting more cautious or reserved attitudes. These findings demonstrate that gender differences play a measurable role in shaping perceptions of reproductive lifestyle choices. The statistical results reinforce the descriptive patterns observed in earlier analyses. Overall, the t-test results confirm that perceptions of the childfree lifestyle vary significantly across gender groups within the sample.

3.3. Reinterpretation of Islamic Family Law in Muslim Millennials' Childfree Decisions

This study demonstrates that Muslim millennials largely recognize the childfree lifestyle as a legitimate personal choice, as reflected in the high level of conceptual understanding among respondents. However, this recognition does not translate into full normative acceptance when the issue is examined through Islamic teachings. The noticeable gap between respondents' understanding of childfree and their certainty regarding its compatibility with religious norms reveals an unresolved moral ambiguity. This tension illustrates the ongoing negotiation between individual autonomy and the normative structure of Islamic family law, where marriage and reproduction are embedded within broader ethical objectives. In Islamic jurisprudence, family formation is not merely a private arrangement but a moral institution connected to social order and continuity.²² Consequently, reproductive decisions become a site of ethical deliberation rather than a purely personal preference. The findings suggest that childfree choices among Muslim millennials reflect an evolving moral reasoning shaped by both religious consciousness and contemporary social realities.

Within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* occupies a central position in regulating family life and reproductive responsibility. Respondents generally acknowledge this principle, yet increasingly interpret it in ways that allow greater flexibility in practice. Rather than equating lineage preservation solely with biological reproduction, some respondents associate it with broader ethical responsibilities such as care, social contribution, and moral legacy. This interpretive shift indicates that Islamic legal values are not rejected, but rearticulated in response to changing socio-economic conditions.²³ The childfree lifestyle, therefore, is not automatically perceived as contradicting Islamic objectives, but as a choice that requires contextual moral evaluation. Such reasoning reflects a broader transformation in how Islamic family norms are understood by younger generations.²⁴ This transformation challenges rigid legal interpretations while maintaining engagement with normative Islamic principles.

The study further reveals that rational considerations play a dominant role in shaping childfree decisions among Muslim couples. Economic uncertainty, health concerns, career trajectories, and future planning emerge as primary factors influencing reproductive choices. These considerations suggest that childfree decisions are motivated less by ideological opposition to religious norms and more by pragmatic assessments of personal and social capacity. Interestingly, respondents who report active participation

²² Galina Boiarintseva, Souha R. Ezzedeen, and Christa Wilkin, "Definitions of Work-Life Balance in Childfree Dual-Career Couples: An Inductive Typology," *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 41, no. 4 (April 26, 2022): 525–48, <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-12-2020-0368>.

²³ Nicole Attridge and Elmien Lesch, "Inconceivable: South African Lesbians Talking about Being Voluntary Childfree," *Sex Roles* 83, no. 9–10 (November 29, 2020): 636–55, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01132-2>.

²⁴ Sathyaraj Venkatesan and Chinmay Murali, "Childless? Childfree? Neither, Just ME': Pronatalism and (m)Otherhood in Paula Knight's *The Facts of Life*," *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 12, no. 2 (March 4, 2021): 108–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21504857.2019.1617179>.

in religious activities still demonstrate relatively high acceptance of childfree as an individual right. This finding challenges the assumption that religiosity necessarily leads to pronatalist rigidity. Instead, it points to the coexistence of religious commitment and critical moral reflection. In this context, Islamic family law is not abandoned, but selectively interpreted to accommodate complex life circumstances. Such dynamics reflect the increasing pluralization of moral reasoning within contemporary Muslim societies.

Gender differences are particularly salient in shaping attitudes toward childfree choices. Women respondents exhibit greater openness to the childfree lifestyle, which may be linked to their direct experience of reproductive expectations and the unequal burdens associated with motherhood. Societal norms often position women as primary caregivers, intensifying moral scrutiny when they deviate from pronatalist expectations. This gendered dimension reinforces the perception that childfree decisions are more socially contested for women than for men. From the perspective of Islamic family law, this finding raises important questions regarding justice, responsibility, and gender equity within marital relationships. It suggests that reproductive norms are not only legal or theological constructs, but also socially enforced expectations.²⁵ The intersection of gender, autonomy, and religious norms thus becomes a critical factor in understanding contemporary family decision-making among Muslim millennials.

Despite growing acceptance at the individual level, the childfree lifestyle continues to encounter strong social resistance, particularly within communities that emphasize traditional family values. Respondents report experiencing stigma, moral judgment, and familial pressure, indicating that reproduction remains a core marker of social legitimacy.²⁶ This resistance reflects the enduring authority of pronatalist norms embedded within religious and cultural discourse. From an Islamic legal perspective, such resistance underscores the dominant interpretation of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* as a collective obligation rather than an individual ethical choice. However, the data suggest that this dominant interpretation is increasingly questioned by younger generations.²⁷ The resulting tension places childfree individuals in a position of moral vulnerability, navigating between personal convictions and communal expectations.²⁸ This finding highlights the social dimension of Islamic family law as a lived normative system rather than a purely textual framework.

While this study is limited by its urban sample and reliance on perception-based quantitative data, it offers important insights into the evolving relationship between Islamic family law and contemporary reproductive choices.²⁹ The findings demonstrate that attitudes toward childfree living among Muslim millennials are neither uniformly permissive nor strictly conservative. Instead, they reflect nuanced moral reasoning shaped by socio-economic conditions, gender dynamics, and engagement with Islamic normative values.³⁰ This complexity underscores the need for Islamic family law discourse to engage more deeply with lived experiences without abandoning its ethical foundations. In an era marked by shifting family norms, principles such as *ḥifẓ al-nasl* must be critically examined in light of changing social realities. Ultimately, this study contributes to a more contextual understanding of reproductive decision-making within Muslim societies, positioning childfree choices as a legitimate subject of legal and ethical deliberation rather than moral dismissal.

²⁵ Filipa Salgado and Sara Isabel Magalhães, "‘I Am My Own Future’: Representations and Experiences of Childfree Women," *Women's Studies International Forum* 102 (January 2024): 102849, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2023.102849>.

²⁶ Amara Miller et al., "In- Conceivable Futures : Climate Change and Reproductive Decision Making Among Childfree North Americans," *Social Currents* 12, no. 3 (June 26, 2025): 231–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23294965241300718>.

²⁷ Chao Lu, "In Pursuit of Childfree Lifestyle?," *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 35, no. 2 (October 31, 2025): 133–56, <https://doi.org/10.1075/japc.25024.cha>.

²⁸ Andi Darna, "Perkembangan Hukum Islam Di Indonesia: Konsep Fiqih Sosial Dan Implementasinya Dalam Hukum Keluarga," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 4, no. 1 (March 13, 2021): 90, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v4i1.8780>.

²⁹ Cassidy D. Ellis, "Electing to Survive," *Journal of Autoethnography* 4, no. 4 (October 1, 2023): 568–76, <https://doi.org/10.1525/joae.2023.4.4.568>.

³⁰ Paweł Ciesielski, "Construction and Validation of a Tool for Measuring Prejudice Toward Childfree People," *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, April 15, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759/a000822>.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Muslim millennials largely perceive the childfree lifestyle as an individual right, as evidenced by empirical findings showing that more than four-fifths of respondents associate childfree decisions with personal autonomy. However, this acceptance weakens significantly when examined through the framework of Islamic family law, particularly the principle of *hifz al-nasl* within *maqasid sharia*. The data indicate a persistent normative tension between rights-based reasoning and religious legal objectives, revealing that childfree practices are neither fully accepted nor entirely rejected in the legal consciousness of Muslim millennials. This ambivalence reflects broader socio-cultural transformations in contemporary Muslim societies, where modern individualism increasingly interacts with long-standing religious norms. The findings sharpen the understanding that childfree is not merely a lifestyle preference but a legally relevant issue that challenges the coherence of existing interpretations of Islamic family law. The study thus underscores the social relevance of *maqasid sharia* as a framework capable of engaging with evolving family norms while preserving the ethical foundations of Islamic law.

From a scholarly perspective, this research contributes to Islamic legal studies by empirically grounding *maqasid*-based analysis in contemporary social realities, thereby strengthening the normative-empirical approach in family law discourse. The study highlights important legal implications, particularly the need for contextual legal reasoning that balances individual autonomy with collective interests embedded in Islamic legal objectives. Nevertheless, this research is limited by its reliance on perception-based quantitative data, restricted regional representation, and the use of structured instruments that may not fully capture deeper legal reasoning processes. Future research is therefore recommended to employ qualitative, comparative, or cross-jurisdictional legal approaches to explore how childfree practices are interpreted within different Islamic legal traditions and cultural settings. Such research would enrich doctrinal development and policy formulation in Islamic family law. Ultimately, this study affirms that addressing contemporary family issues requires a principled yet adaptive legal framework, positioning *maqasid sharia* as a vital tool for sustaining the relevance and authority of Islamic family law in rapidly changing Muslim societies.

Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

Dinda Amanda Ainun Nuzul was responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, data curation, and drafting of the original manuscript. Satria Kharimul Qolbi contributed to validation, formal analysis, and critical review and editing. Muhammad Arif Nugraha carried out the investigation and provided resources. Ega Mawargi assisted with data analysis and manuscript revision. Umair Fahmiddin contributed to supervision and final manuscript refinement. All authors have read and approved the final version of this article.

Funding Statement

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. No publicly archived datasets were used or generated during this research.

Declaration of Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known financial or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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