

Childfree and Its Prolonged Pro-Choice Indications

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Abstract

This article amplifies the option to be childfree in the frame of pro-choice action. Being childfree is popular yet crucial recently since it includes both personal choice and resistance against cultural tradition of having children. In further understanding, childfree tends to follow argumentations of pro-choice than pro-life as it emphasizes more on personal experience rather than common cultural standards. Through qualitative method, this article answers the question of ‘how may childfree be emphasized on its matter of pro-choice option?’. In analysis, pro-choice brings background that taste and experience remain important thing today. People are urged to think by themselves out of any obstacle from traditional standards. In conclusion, childfree indeed challenges old values by proposing self-indications rather than giving out to children. It does not mean that children are not important, but the pro-choice itself accentuates more to personal understandings as resistance to any traditional standard.

Keywords Childfree, Pro-Choice, Resistance, Traditional Values

A. Introduction

Home life is closely related to commitment within it. It is not just about a couple of people who love each other and are bound by a sacred promise, but also about the vision and mission that they created and agreed upon. A couple's commitment or vision and mission includes family priorities, financial plans, plans for

future goals, and plans for raising children (Alcalde, 2022; Hintz & Tucker, 2023). However, there is a term of childless in which it opposes those traditional values. Childfree is a term used for married couples who choose not to have or raise children. Literally, the meaning of childfree is a condition when a person or couple decides not to have children (França,

2022; Neal & Neal, 2021). Those who choose to be childfree are prepared if they will not have children. Even when they are old, no one will continue their lineage as that is their own true choice.

Married couples in Indonesia are generally bound by traditional values in marriage, one of which is to have children and continue the family tree (Alcalde, 2022; Hintz & Tucker, 2023). Indonesia itself is a pro-natalist country so most of its population hopes to have children. In this case, they are called pro-lifers as their intentions are usually to have children to prolong others' lives. However, some couples actually choose to be free from the obligation to raise children, or are called as childfree themselves, and they are called as pro-choice (Ekelund & Ask, 2021; Neal & Neal, 2021). Indeed, the choice underlines idea that the couple, especially the mother, is having full authority to bear or not to bear any child.

Recently, childfree has been widely discussed by the public because of its pros and cons. The decision to choose childfree is not a

mistake. In fact, this debate is quite normal as a discourse in society (Bayer, 2019; Dvorak, 2018). It is due further dialogues in which the pros and the contras opposing, debating, and denying each other. On a hand, any human being is destined to live with life of other human being. On the other hand, it is quite usual too to be essentially childfree since it is the right of every couple to choose what is best for them (Husada, 2023; Morison, et al., 2016).

B. Research Method

By using a qualitative method, data regarding Childfree and Its Prolonged Pro-Choice Indications taken from various sources, such as journals, websites articles, and social media. Data analysis was carried out by reading referral journals and websites, look for data about childfree and community opinions on social media, understand childfree meaning and pro choice concepts, composing journal frames, and presenting journals by outlining the frame of analysis that has been made.

C. Results and discussions

Childfree and Its Continuance

Nowadays, the term of childfree is more widely known. Childfree can be interpreted as a couple who does not want to have children in their life (Ekelund & Ask, 2021; Hintz & Tucker, 2023). Of course, this is very contrary to the mindset of Indonesian people who still think that many children will bring a lot of good fortune or perhaps it is the nature of a woman that "should" have children to continue her life. Most of the opposing arguments of childfree come from traditional values of stable identities including familial culture, identity background, religious understandings, and even biological perceptions of women (Bayer, 2019; Dvorak, 2018).

The decision not to have children is one of the rarest changes in a modern family. In recent decades, this has been proven by the large number of couples who are willing to refuse to become parents, which is usually called Childfree. The term Childfree has increased drastically throughout the world, this has become

an important issue that is also discussed in cultural geography (Agrillo & Nelini, 2008; França, 2022). The childfree movement is a growing social phenomenon that has gained momentum in recent years. It is an intentional choice made by individuals who do not want to have children, and it is often connected with a longing for personal freedom, autonomy, a focus on career and personal growth (Bayer, 2019; Dvorak, 2018).

Childfree and Childless are having almost the same meaning according to the views of people who barely or even do not really know about this term. Childfree is defined as consciously not wanting to have children, while childless is a couple who do not have children because there is something preventing them, such as illness, infertility or other physical and psychological things (França, 2022; Hintz & Tucker, 2023). Indeed, childless is out of their own option. The couple wants to have children but they could not. Childfree is totally different since it is really the choice of the couple for not having children at all (Stahnke, et al., 2020;

Husada, 2023). They do not want to and will not adopt a child in any case at all.

The childfree movement has been met with resistance from traditional cultures, which often place a high value on family and childbearing. It is often to see through many societies, having children is spotted as a social obligation, and those who choose not to have children are used to be stigmatized (Blackstone, 2013; Harrington, 2019). For instance, seeing through the inside of a social context, it has been declared that to have children becomes one of the most consequential decisions for couple to decide. This thing is kind of heavily tilted in a pro-natalism way (França, 2022; Shpancer, 2019).

Moreover, it is quite persistent that those couples who choose to be childfree always pay attention to their own reasons in doing so (Stahnke, et al., 2020; Husada, 2023). As previously discussed, childfree is a personal decision in which the decision can certainly be justified. Rather than following traditions, the couples choose to follow their own

main rationalities (França, 2022; Shpancer, 2019). There are several common reasons why a couple chooses to be childfree.

The first one is that having children will always deal with big responsibility and commitment (Harrington, 2019; Rahadi, 2023). Those couples who choose to be childfree refuse to have that commitment because they want to reach another dream in the future. They have another focus to do and they believe that it could also bring such happiness to them. Besides, matter of parenting somehow is always traditioned and passed down from generation to generation. The ones who choose to be childfree would like to totally oppose those old values by emphasizing more on rational doings (Harrington, 2019; Rahadi, 2023). Moreover, becoming a mother is a difficult choice and has great responsibilities, which according to childfree couples is impossible, complicated, and even difficult to do.

Having children will also not in their long-term plans. Raising children is a lifelong responsibility

and they refuse to spend more costs, time, and even energy for a child. The couples who choose to be childfree are also thinking that parenting is never that easy (Harrington, 2019; Rahadi, 2023). It is not they are afraid to be parents, but they understand that parenting is more complex than ever. To raise children with love needs physical and psychological growth. It needs further careful parenting including stable, undisruptive, and just emotions as those will always reflect such big responsibilities for parents.

In matter of future cost, education is also no less important in terms of costs. For kindergarten alone, currently the registration fee is very expensive. It is certain that it will cost millions if a child wants to go to a school with the best quality (França, 2022; Neal & Neal, 2021). This does not include monthly fees, recreation fees, building fees, pocket money, school supplies, etc. Not to mention school necessities such as books, stationery, bags and shoes, they often want to follow the trends of their friends, which may not be cheap.

Through the above senses, it could be understood that the choice for being childfree is quite rational since any expense spent should be considered through financial capabilities when deciding to have children (França, 2022; Neal & Neal, 2021). When a couple has decided to be childfree, it is likely that they have taken into account their financial capabilities or even the possibility of financing the child's growth and development. If in this calculation, financial stability could be a priori or even a posteriori of such reasons from the couple who choose to be childfree.

The second reason is more private than the former. In this aspect, the couples have no interest in having children because they think they do not deserve them (Rahadi, 2023; Ruegamer & Dziengel, 2022). The lifelong responsibility is not for them and of course the childfree couple rejects that as their main choice. It could also be caused by several traumas in the past that they could not amend with. Any physical sacrifice for those couples should be done for other matters besides for children.

Insecurities about physical condition could also be the reason behind a woman who refuses to bear a child.

The third reason is wider and more global since childfree couple think that this world is too evil for children. Violence, bullying, harassment, and murder are everywhere. They do not want children to be victims of those unruly behaviors. They do not want to prolong trauma of this world to the future children (Ekelund & Ask, 2021; Ruegamer & Dziengel, 2022). Indeed, those childfree couples refuse to pass more insecurity to the next generations.

From three reasons above, the impacts of childfree are more complex than being said. Various possibilities of both being in positive and negative impacts may intertwine each other. Childfree has several positive impacts, such as each couple not having to worry about financial matters (Ekelund & Ask, 2021; Ruegamer & Dziengel, 2022). Working couples can also focus more on their respective careers without thinking about children who could distract them. They could have more

me-time to explore their potentialities. However, the professional points may also reflect that childfree couples are quite selfish and materialistic (Ekelund & Ask, 2021; Ruegamer & Dziengel, 2022). Indeed, economic independence could be reached but future understandings of the world are avoided by the childfree couples. They may have a pile of money, but to spend it further will not bring happiness compared to those who have children.

Another negative side of being childfree is that those couples refuse to bear any motherhood and fatherhood situation. In that case, they refuse the nature of a woman to be a mother and a man to be a father. They also reject the idea of involved parenting in which it could cultivate more psychological knowledge, personal maturity, and well-being. For today's generation, being a mother and father are not the ultimate achievements. They think that it is always better to stay out from any idealized thoughts and speak more to realities being currently faced.

Furthermore, current generation thinks that mental health needs to be focused than physical health. Having a child is considered to gain more mental burden than personal happiness. Being childfree will deliver them from any bad attitude that will follow. Another cause is that current generation thinks that they need to follow the trends from their role models. Indonesian artists like Cinta Laura, Gita Savitri, Rina Nose, Chef Juna, and Leony Vitria have the same opinion that they agree and happy to decide to be childfree. Indeed, the reasons are because their existences should be in career. Having a child will only waste time, money, and energy. Those who are inspired by these artists then follow their rational traits to be childfree.

The Postures of Pro-Choice in Matter of Being Childfree

The matter of emphasizing choice in logical understanding is named as pro-choice. In this aspect, the logics are much used to defend the right to do abortion. The idea could also be used to support the situation of

childfree. Abortion and childfree are two different things, but the idea of pro-choice is ontologically quite similar. The crucial difference between them is the existence of the fetus (França, 2022; Neal & Neal, 2021). Abortion is more complicated due to the fetus' existence. It is aborted but it will kill the small child inside. Childfree is not about fetus since it is non-existent at all. The childfree couples reject a child so that the fetus is not there yet at all. Therefore, childfree is more simple since it does not pay attention to the idea of a child at all (Stahnke, et al., 2020; Husada, 2023). It merely focuses on the ideas of the couples.

Matter of pro-choice is actually relies on the idea of basic human right to choose. By depending on that matter, planning could be attained and further rationality could be embraced. In matter of childfree, pro-choice is against the idea of pro-natalism in which it encourages societal perceptions that value reproduction while discriminating against those who do not have children (Harrington, 2019; Park, 2002). For couples who choose

childfree, it will be harder on the woman. This is related to the public stigma of pro-natalism itself as an ideology that considers women's destiny and ultimate fulfillment to be related to giving birth to children and becoming mothers (França, 2022; Neal & Neal, 2021).

Pro-natalism contains a number of key speculations, as the first, having children is seen as something normal and basically pointed in human instincts and biology (Harrington, 2019; Park, 2002). Second, childbearing is examined as an important developmental milestone in normal development through heterosexual adulthood and as an important marker of normal gender development. Finally, childbearing is seen as personally satisfying, and essential to a happy and meaningful life. That is why, at the end, much of parenting culture has shown that the part of parenting becomes the most necessary thing of achieving the fulfillment, happiness, meaning in life, and as an indicator of successful adulthood (França, 2022; Shpancer, 2019).

Matter of motherhood is also opposed as it also says no to maternal mandate. People who lean towards the pro-natalism ideology are pro-life in terms of childfree. It does not mean that those who support childfree totally deny any woman to be a mother (França, 2022; Shpancer, 2019). They presume that a woman must think rationally to have children rather than merely following traditional norms. If a husband and wife have chosen to be childfree with all the consequences, it means that they prefer to take this risk in order to feel freedom from the responsibilities of being parents (França, 2022; Shpancer, 2019). The arguments are indeed applied in reverse.

The main idea of pro-choice is to always consider any aspect before deciding to have a child. If someone could not bear to have a child, she must not force herself to do so. The couples must think a lot about the child's future. If they could not afford it, childfree could be a way to say no to have a child. By doing so, people who are Pro-Choice towards childfree also understand that true married life is about uniting two people who have

the same goal and work together to achieve it (França, 2022; Shpancer, 2019). It means that the decision must be done on the behalf of both husband and wife. Indeed, a baby is borne by the wife, but the husband must also work hard to fulfill the child's needs in the future.

Prolonged Womanness in Childfree Condition

Representatives of communities implementing childfree are mostly young, highly educated, professionally successful, less susceptible to religion and tradition, financially stable, and aware of the threats and dangers of modern society (Harrington, 2019; Park, 2002). Remarkably, in contrast of the communities where they have low education, low socio-economic status, or insecure employment statues were often established to be negatively associated with childbearing intentions, yet their role is not clear in proneness to childlessness. This has to assist as a confirmation for viewing childbearing as a symbol or form of empowerment and gaining nobility in

androcentric and ethnocentric cultures which is not necessary in a society that is more tolerant of diversity (Harrington, 2019; Conference, 2019). There are some stereotypes prospects from people who decide not to have children is connected to certain psychological trauma in the past or selfishness that is shown on that people who has decided their decision for not having children, they decide it in a full matter of being conscious.

Women who are voluntarily childfree are viewed more warmly than women who are not. Intentional being childfree could be mentioned as a form of deviance, but it could also indicate marital satisfaction in childfree couples, infrequent to experience the depression and commonly face the higher rates of happiness (Harrington, 2019; Conference, 2019). Those who prefer to be childfree basically show themselves to focus more of their time and energy on investing in their relationship with their partner. Exceedingly, in 2016, according to "World Happiness Report" manifested the negative relationship

between parenthood and life satisfaction throughout the world (Harrington, 2019; Park, 2002).

Pro-choice also refers to the right of individuals to choose whether or not to have children. It is a movement that advocates for the freedom of individuals to make their own decisions regarding their reproductive health and family planning (Hintz & Brown, 2020; Park, 2002). People who decide themselves by not wanting to have children, identify themselves as pro-choice, where they assume that everyone has the basic human right to determine when and whether to have children. Not only that, the pro-choice is also understood as the ability to people to choose the abortion as an alternative for an unplanned pregnancy, even if they would not choose the abortion for themselves (Hintz & Brown, 2020; Ruegamer & Dziengel, 2022). Then, people who oppose of abortion used to call themselves pro-life. However, those people are only concerned with is the life of the fertilized egg, embryo, or fetus. They are much less concerned about the life of women who have

unwilling pregnancies or the welfare of children after they are born. Due to the fact that many people who call themselves as pro-life are being reinforced to the capital punishment or the death penalty and oppose child welfare legislation (Ekelund & Ask, 2021; Miriam, 2019).

Matters of pro-life and pro-choice totally accentuate the importance of womanness in being childfree. It is always regarding the role that has the womb to carry and bring a child to this world. Indeed, the woman must be the main emphasis of all choices (Harrington, 2019; Ruegamer & Dziengel, 2022). It is actually her that should speak for herself. She should always write her own texts. If she chooses to have a child, she will write happiness of being a mother. If she chooses to be childfree, career will be her happiness furthermore.

The understanding of a woman is indeed in crucial standpoint today. In many societies, marriage undermines women. Even in pregnancies, the one who must pay the fee is the man, while actually it is the woman who is in pain (Ekelund &

Ask, 2021; Ruegemer & Dziengel, 2022). The society should more focus on the main actress here that is the woman. If she believes she could transform into a mother, let her be. If she remains a woman, let her choice be the one she holds well enough. She must be the one who takes decision and that is the main point of being a pro-choice in this sense (Husada, 2023; Morison, et al., 2016).

Moreover, being childfree is popular yet crucial recently since it includes both personal choice and resistance against cultural tradition of having children. In further understanding, childfree tends to follow argumentations of pro-choice than pro-life as it emphasizes more on personal experience rather than common cultural standards (Harrington, 2019; Ruegemer & Dziengel, 2022). The situation is clear that being childfree is always against the traditional norms of familial relations. It will automatically degenerate those who do not follow such standards. In this sense, being childfree will be alienated by the society with communitarian values.

This is to underline that womanness in matter of pro-choice of being childfree is matter of such resistance. It resists the hegemony of patriarchal and familial systems (Ekelund & Ask, 2021; Ruegemer & Dziengel, 2022). Opposing patriarchal system means that men must stay behind in choosing being childfree. Fatherhood is another matter that will come after motherhood. So, motherhood must be decided first. It resists familial system either since it opposes ideas of big families. For childfree couples, small family is sufficient even without a child. It must be appreciated whatsoever.

D. Conclusion

The decision to be childfree becomes each person's life choice after marriage. Various reasons trigger couples to choose to live without children after marriage, ranging from finances, not being ready to take on big responsibilities, to wanting to spend their lives focusing on their careers. Despite the pros and cons of childfree, it is always better to realize that today's young

people actually have more choices. They have to think about how to proceed and evaluate what is best for them. Any judgment should be rational since every human has their rights and obligation in this life. Those who choose childfree should also be appreciated as they believe that life with her/his couple is more than enough, can be focused with career, and they are happy with the choice taken. Childfree indeed challenges old values by proposing self-indications rather than giving out to children. It does not mean that children are not important, but the pro-choice itself accentuates more to personal understandings as resistance to any traditional standard.

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