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Childfree: Religious Perspective As Cultural Values In Indonesia

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Abstract

As a modern culture characterized by Western Culture, Childfree is a decision taken based on free agreement between husband and wife. However, there are still many who think that the Childfree decision is the result of problems experienced by the woman. This paper will discuss the phenomenon of childfree in Indonesia based on the views of Islam and Catholicism as the majority religions that influence the thoughts and perspectives of Indonesian society regarding childfree. This research method uses a literature study by using references from various open sources and scientific articles. Indonesia, which has an Eastern culture, generally rejects Childfree. A more collective Eastern view makes the relationship between husband, wife and child inseparable. Islam and Catholicism also reject Childfree. Islam, referring to the Qur'an, views that marriage is to continue good offspring so that one day they can become leaders of their group. Catholic Christianity based on the Holy Scriptures (Bible / Bible) states that the existence of children through intercourse is God's very good will as a form of love. In the official interpretation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the purpose of marriage is the welfare of husband and wife, the birth of children, and the education of children.

Keywords: Childfree; Indonesia, Religion, Islam, Catholic

Introduction

The term Childfree is familiar to the world community. Childfree is an English term that means not having children. It can be understood that a household between husband and wife who agree not to have children, and it is a choice not based on certain circumstances such as reproductive health. Many factors today make couples decide not to have children, such as economic conditions, mental conditions, concerns about the future of children, and modern lifestyles.

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Indonesian society is familiar with this term starting with the emergence of a statement from an influencer named Gita Savitri who decided to be Childfree in her youtube channel (@GitaSavitriDevi). There is a lot of debate in the community regarding the decision of this influencer who is often called Gitasav. Most Indonesians who are very thick with Eastern cultural customs argue that Childfree, is an unwise, selfish, and pessimistic decision. Meanwhile, Western culture sells the rhetoric of freedom and the realistic calculations of the modern world to support Childfree.

Eastern culture is a later term that emerged in opposition to Western culture. In the ancient Western worldview, the other world besides the Mediterranean Sea area was the East. The furthest the West traveled to the East was by Alexander the Great to India. The mysterious China was also in the East. Even more Western were the ferocious oceans that were said to be filled with sea monsters. This is how the division of West and East began.

Huntington & Samuel (1996) said that future conflicts after the cold war will always be wrapped in cultural conflicts, or the Clash of Civilizations. This is how Eastern and Western cultures are labeled. The Western world until recently was often labeled as Christian. This is true even though the influence of Christianity has greatly diminished since the West took the side of modernity. The West has become synonymous with liberalism, individualism, and secularism. Eastern culture is topped by major religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism. In addition, local cultures that are very diverse are still quite strongly rooted in customs that are tied to nature characterized by animism, dynamism, and totemism. In general, Eastern Culture can be understood as an opposition to Western Culture.

Due to its oppositional character, Eastern Culture has a tendency to reject the modern thinking of Renaissance and Aufklärung-style Western Culture that emphasizes liberalism, individualism, and secularism (Hobson, 2015). In this position, this paper develops to discuss some of the views of Eastern Culture in Indonesia. Islam is chosen as the majority culture of Indonesia. Meanwhile, Catholic Christianity is chosen as a comparison or accompaniment so that the perspective is more complex and multicultural.

Catholic Christianity, abbreviated as Catholicism, is often misinterpreted as a Western religion, especially a Western European religion. In fact, this religion that was born in the East was not an early part of the Renaissance and Aufklärung which marked the birth of Western Culture (Purwanta & Hieronymus, 2021; West & Mason, 2019). As a result, Catholicism in the

modern world is growing rapidly outside Europe, while it is static or declining in Europe. In this paper, Catholicism in Indonesia represents Eastern Culture, which also rejects Childfree.

As a modern culture characterized by Western Culture, Childfree is a decision taken based on free agreement between husband and wife. However, there are still many who think that the Childfree decision is the result of problems experienced by women. This is because there are still many assumptions that the mother's role in the household is more fundamental than the father's role, and the reproductive role of women who conceive, give birth and breastfeed is the basis for this assumption (Marfia, 2022).

According to Bimha and Chadwick in their research on women in Africa, there are three main factors for women choosing a childfree lifestyle, namely (1) Parenting experience; (2) Caring for and raising children is not easy; (3) Personal problems (Bimha & Chadwick, 2016).

Feminism as a social movement that supports gender equality between men and women has its own point of view in examining this Childfree problem. Women are often cornered and blamed for this decision even though not all Childfree phenomena are based on the choice of the wife alone. Feminism fights for women's freedom in terms of determining their lives, one of which is about the freedom to choose to have children or not without coercion. As an ideal that was originally formulated in Western culture, of course the characteristics of liberalism and individualism are present in feminism.

Indonesia, which adheres to Eastern culture, considers that children are a necessity in the household. Islamic and Catholic views reinforce this opinion. This assumption then places families without children as incomplete or incomplete, even violating God's commandments. Based on this, the choice not to have children has become controversial among Indonesians.

Western culture has an advantage in scientific rhetoric and also media mastery is able to make Western discourse more attractive, especially among the younger generation. Eastern culture also needs scientific rhetoric to respond to the Childfree phenomenon. Opinions that support Childfree also need to be commented on through an eastern perspective.

This paper will examine the phenomenon of childfree from the views of Islam and Catholicism in Indonesian culture. Islam and Catholicism are examined in this study as representations of recognized religions in Indonesia, as one of the characteristics of Eastern Culture.

Method

This research aims to find out the perspectives of Islam and Catholicism as well as Indonesian culture on household decisions that choose not to have children. This research is a literature study where the author uses written references from various sources in the form of books and scientific articles related to this research.

The approaches used in this research are religious and socio-cultural approaches. Through a religious approach, researchers will use the Al-Qur'an and Al-Kitab (Bible) sources in examining the issue of Childfree.

Findings

The term childfree began to emerge in the late 20th century in Western countries, which is believed to have been promoted by the feminism movement. Feminism is known as a movement that arises because of discrimination against women. Feminism arises not only from women but also all parties who uphold gender equality and human rights (Pertiwi et al., 2019). Feminism first emerged around 1550-1700 to confront the patriarchal system in England. Nowadays, feminism has developed and divided into several groups that have different directions, thoughts and goals. These groups include Radical Feminism, Liberal Feminism, Marxist Feminism, Socialist Feminism, Ecofeminism, Postmodern Feminism, Multicultural Feminism, Psychoanalytic Feminism, and Existentialist Feminism (Tong, 2006).

Understanding feminism in general requires first understanding gender. Gender is different from sex. If sex is very clear, it consists of men and women based on the ownership of reproductive organs. Unlike sex, gender is a social construction created by society. According to Amy Blackstone, gender is a construction of individual and structural interactions to create environmental restrictions and opportunities that are usually more favorable to men than women (Blackstone, 2003). Feminism exists to fight for gender equality between men and women, so that women have the same opportunities as men in the public sector.

Childfree is defined as a situation where a married couple's household decides not to have children by choice rather than by circumstance. It should be noted that childlessness can occur by choice or by circumstance. Circumstances here such as health factors, physical injuries, or reproductive problems from both the male and female parties. Not having children

due to circumstances is called Involuntary Childless, while not having children by choice is called Voluntary Childless or Childfree (Marfia, 2022)

There are various backgrounds for married couples or individuals choosing the Childfree lifestyle. Eva Fadhilah in her research journal mentions several factors that make Childfree a life choice for couples after marriage, including: (1) economic factors, namely couples who feel that their economic or financial life is not yet able to raise a child; (2) mental factors, couples who choose to childfree are motivated by past trauma when they were small and raised in a family environment that is not harmonious, toxic, domestic violence, and so on, giving rise to fears that the child will experience the same thing. In this case, the couple thinks that being a parent requires careful preparation, especially mentally; (3) personal factors, where the couple thinks that having children will hinder their life both in terms of career and harmony with their partner, and thinks having children will be troublesome because the couple does not like children; (4) cultural factors, the presence of children is an important thing in Indonesian society, so that not a few married couples will be asked “when to have children?” this question is a reason to choose Childfree so that it is no longer questioned; (5) overpopulation, someone who chooses not to have children because they think that humans in this world are already very numerous, and the presence of humans causes a lot of environmental damage, so they prefer to Childfree to overcome this (Fadhilah, 2022).

The view of Childfree has been studied from various perspectives, one of which is religion. Islam does not specifically prohibit, in the sense that it is not written in the Qur'an about the prohibition of not having children. However, there are several verses that suggest that one of the goals of marriage is to continue good offspring. This is stated in Surah An-Nisa verse 1 which means:

“O people! Fear your Lord who has created you from one self (Adam), and (Allah) created his spouse (Eve) from his (self); and from them both Allah multiplied men and women. Fear Allah, in whose name you ask one another, and maintain kinship. Verily, Allah is always watching over you.” (QS. Annisā 4:1).

The above verse can be understood that having offspring is one of the goals of marriage. By having offspring, the continuity of human life to create generation to generation can be maintained (Fadhilah, 2022). It is also stated in the Qur'an Surah An-Nahl verse 72 which means:

“Allah made for you wives of your own kind and made for you from your wives, children and grandchildren, and gave you sustenance from good things. So why do they believe in what is false and deny the favor of Allah?” (QS. An-Nahl 16: 72).

Children are the absolute will of Allah SWT in Islamic teachings through the process of creation. Parents are only an intermediary for the birth of children into the world, so it is often said that children are entrusted by God who must be guarded, educated, taught religion and norms so that later they can become human beings who are moral and useful for the surrounding environment (Fadhilah, 2022).

Surah Al-Furqon verse 74 also shows that humans marry for the purpose of having offspring. This verse contains a request to Allah to be blessed with a spouse and offspring as a comfort to the heart.

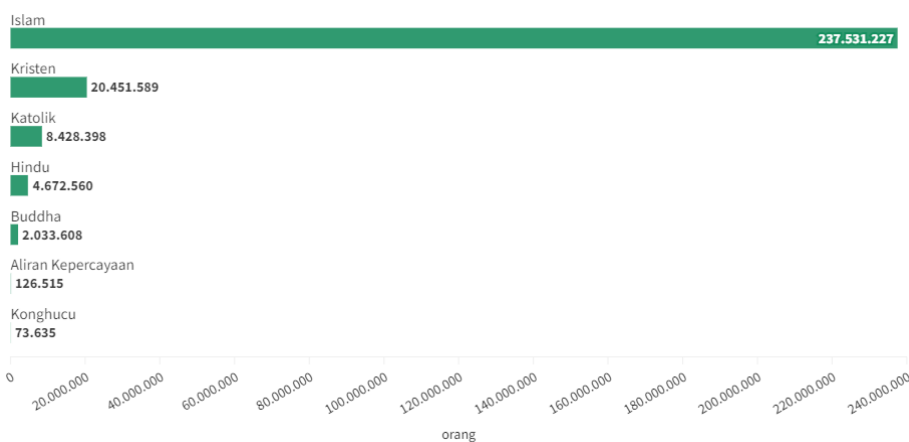
“O our Lord, grant us our spouses and our offspring to please us, and make us leaders of the pious” (QS. Furqon 25:74).

The meaning of the letter can also imply that the descendants will one day become leaders for the pious people around them. In addition to the Quranic verses that recommend having offspring, there are several hadiths that emphasize that the purpose of marriage is to have offspring.

From Ma'qil bin Yasar: “A man came to the Prophet and said, “I like a woman who is honorable and beautiful, but she is barren. Can I marry her?” The Prophet said, “No”. The man came to the Prophet Muhammad three times with the same question, but the Prophet was still forbidden, and he said “Marry a woman who is loving, fertile, and has many offspring, because I am proud of the number of my people on the Day of Resurrection (HR. Abu Daud) (Sunarto & Imamah, 2023).

The hadith tells that the Prophet SAW forbade someone to marry a woman who could not have offspring. This then became one of the guidelines in the life of the Muslim community as a follower of the Prophet Muhammad SAW to follow his advice. From Abu Hurairah, the Prophet said: “When a man dies, his deeds are cut off except for three things, namely jariyah charity, useful knowledge, and righteous children who pray for him” (HR Muslim number 1631). The existence of children in the hadith provides a guarantee that when we die, the prayers of righteous children can alleviate the punishment of parents in the grave.

Indonesia is a country where the majority of the population is Muslim. This is evidenced by data from the Ministry of Home Affairs, namely from 230 million Indonesians, almost 90% embrace Islam. In this regard, Indonesian customs and culture are oriented towards Eastern culture where Islamic teachings are very strong.



Picture 1. Data on Indonesia's population by religion in December 2021 (dataindonesia.id).

Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia is one of the strongest pillars in building Indonesian culture. Eastern customs and culture are inherent in Indonesian society. This is also what distinguishes the response of Indonesian society from the people of Western countries regarding social phenomena that occur, one of which is about Childfree. Apart from Islam, a religion that also has many people in Indonesia is Catholicism. There is no denying that the culture that exists in Indonesia today is inseparable from the influence of the beliefs and beliefs of these two major religions.

Catholicism is also one of the recognized religions in Indonesia. Although this religion is synonymous with European History as a representation of the Western world, the largest number is in the Americas at 48% (28% Latin America), while Europe is 20% (Eleazar, 2022). Catholicism grew the most in Africa at 2.1%, in Asia it increased by 1.8%, while in Europe it was only 0.3%. Since the Renaissance and Aufklarung Europe has chosen to be secular rather than religious.

As a religion that developed in Asia, also in Indonesia, Catholicism certainly influenced the culture of the people. The Catholic Religion's view on Childfree is based on the Holy Scriptures (Bible/Bible), namely the book of Genesis Chapter 1 verse 28

“God blessed them and said to them: Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth”. (Genesis 1:28)

The above verse can then be contextualized for clarity with the following verses:

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”. (Genesis 1:27)

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 John 4:8)

“We have known and believed God’s love for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” (1 John 4:16)

“Love is patient; love is kind; it is not jealous. It does not boast and is not arrogant. It does not do what is disrespectful and does not seek its own advantage. It is not angry and does not harbor faults in others. He does not rejoice in injustice, but in righteousness.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-6)

“And God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:31)

The above verses from the Christian Bible can be interpreted to mean that God created man in his image, which is love. Thus, humans must love one another. Love is generous, patient, and unselfish. In the Catholic tradition, the proverb *Bonum Divusivum Sui* is known, which means “Goodness (Love) Spreads”. This means that love can only happen by giving, so selfishness and arrogance keep away from love.

Intercourse, which is self-indulgence and denies the opportunity to have children, is not a form of love. Another form of love without children can be practiced by maintaining the purity of intercourse by becoming priests and monks/nuns who do not marry, obviously do not have intercourse, and avoid the fulfillment of personal pleasure. These priests and monks/nuns become parents and brothers/sisters to every human being, much broader than the nuclear family.

Finally, in Catholic teaching, God reemphasizes that all that He created was very good. In this case, the creation of humans with children is very good because it is a form of love itself. If anyone refuses to have children, then he rejects the love that is God.

As is well known, interpretations in Christianity can also be very diverse. In this research, we will choose the interpretation of the Catholic Church because its interpretation belongs to at least 10 million Indonesians unanimously, even 1.5 billion people in the world authoritatively. The interpretation of scripture in Catholicism is called the Catechism of the Catholic Church which is “a legitimate and authorized instrument in the service of the communion of the Church, henceforth as a definite norm for the doctrine of faith” (Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*).

Here is a teaching of the Catholic Church that can give insight into the social phenomenon of *Childfree*:

“The marriage covenant, by which man and woman form between themselves the union of the whole of life, is by its very nature directed to (1) the welfare of husband and wife (2) to the birth (3) and education of children...” (CCC 1601)

“Fertility is a gift, a goal of marriage, because conjugal love from its nature aims at fertility. The child is not added externally to this mutual conjugal love, it is born in the core of that mutual self-giving, it is the fruit and fulfillment of it. Therefore the Church, which “defends life”, teaches “that every sexual act must still be directed towards the birth of human life”. (CCC 2366)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church thus considers every act of intercourse to be an occasion for human birth. It is therefore clear in today’s society why the Catholic Church rejects contraception in any form, except natural contraception. The Catholic Church also defines the process of life as beginning when the sperm meets the egg at that very second, so abortion in any form and at any time is not permitted.

Birth control as a form of responsibility in accordance with the goal of Catholic marriage, namely the welfare of the family, must be done with natural contraception. By practicing natural contraception, the relationship between husband and wife is characterized by patient, unselfish, and fair love.

Based on the opinions of both religions sourced from the Qur’an and the Bible, which do not recommend or even prohibit not having children, because in fact every marriage aims to have offspring. This is evident from the views of Indonesian society regarding child ownership.

Indonesia is a pronatalist country with a birth rate percentage of 2.26 and people believe that the presence of children is important in a marriage. Children have an important role related to economic, social, psychological and religious values, so the presence of children is vital.

Changing times have changed the way marriages are viewed from institutional to individualized marriages. The focus of institutional marriages is to fulfill social expectations and norms, while individual marriages focus more on meeting the needs of themselves and their partners (Patnani et al., 2021). The presence of children is no longer a means to fulfill social expectations but rather to fulfill the emotional needs of the couple. Emotional needs include a sense of happiness, security and comfort.

Childfree has become a phenomenon among Indonesians and the world. Japan even implemented a special political policy strategy to increase the birth rate. This is due to Japan's productive culture that makes people in the country become individualistic, oriented towards economic progress, resulting in a drastic decrease in the birth rate. Japan's patriarchal culture places men in a higher status than women, assuming that only men can play a role in the public sector, while women's role is only in the domestic sector (Rudiono & Ageng Prakoso, 2022).

In contrast to Japan, Western countries are more tolerant of this Childfree phenomenon. The results of Childlessness research in the United States state that the decision to Childfree increased by 20% in the 2000s. The increase is based on family problems and consideration of future parenting. Economic difficulties and psychological pressure are the main reasons for this decision (Hanandita, 2022). In addition, the results of a survey conducted by the National Survey of Family Growth in America, around 15% of women and 24% of men decided not to have children. These results are also similar to a survey conducted in Canada by the General Social Survey (GSS) in 2001, where 7% of the population aged 20-34 years, representing 434,000 people, stated their intention not to have children. This decision was motivated by several factors, including medical conditions, not being able to raise children, career, and environment (Khasanah & Ridho, 2021).

Slightly different from the survey results above, research conducted by Tracy Morison analyzed Childfree based on several public comments on Facebook. The research supports the statement that Childfree is not a foreign thing in Western countries, but there are some

differences of opinion among the community, some support and some regret it. This is based on a netizen commenting that a friend of hers regretted having decided to go Childfree after her husband died. Morison stated that the Childfree option is like two sides of a coin. On the one hand they support Childfree, but on the other hand they think that having children will be fun and not having children will cause suffering because of loneliness (Morison, 2012). Based on this, Morison concluded that having children or not having children is a choice and freedom of everyone without any pressure from any party, be it family, environment, and community culture.

The results of the research from Patnani et al also state the same thing, namely that although there is a change in perspective on marriage, Childfree adherents also still consider the importance of the presence of children in a marriage. There are positive and negative impacts on couples who choose to be Childfree. From a positive perspective, couples who choose not to have children have financial freedom and satisfaction. Meanwhile, from a negative perspective, couples who decide to be Childfree get a lot of pressure from the community in the pro natal environment which causes various negative emotions to emerge (Patnani et al., 2021).

The Childfree phenomenon in Indonesia is still considered taboo. This is because Indonesia is a pro natalist country. In the early 20th century, it was still thick with the jargon “many children, many fortunes”. Although this jargon is no longer relevant today, and given the fact that Indonesia is the third most populous country. The large number of people in Indonesia, the government does not recommend childfree but has a program to reduce the number of births with the family plan program “two children are better”.

When looking at the findings above, the view in favor of Childfree puts forward arguments that are typical of the logic of Western Culture. Dictions such as freedom, financial problems, psychological pressure, social pressure, career development, and overpopulation are typical dictions of scientific positivism that depart from Western cultural modernity. Western modernity itself holds the pillars of liberalism and strict individualism. In looking at the differences in views related to Childfree between Western and Eastern cultures, it is necessary to briefly describe Western and Eastern culture first.

Western culture or modernity has not been synonymous with the Western world throughout thousands of years of history. Western modernity was born during the

Renaissance of the 15th-16th centuries and adolescence during the Aufklärung of the 18th century (Purwanta & Hieronymus, 2021; West & Mason, 2019). The most important characteristics of modernity are liberalism or freedom and individualism. At this point, modernity moved away from religion and tradition, which had been almost frozen in a static state throughout history. Modernity or Western culture chose a diction that they glorified, namely the objectivity of science (Betrand, 2004).

Eastern culture moves more quietly than Western culture. Historical differences are of course one reason. The Eastern world did not directly experience the Renaissance and Aufklärung, so the influences of *laissez faire*, individualism, and scientific objectivity were not received at the same time and to the same extent. In practice, Western culture had little effect on the daily life of the East. The intense competition in the West did not occur in the East (Chistyakova et al., 2020; Hobson, 2015). The objectivity of the West was defeated by the subjectivity of the East. This is where the idea of Childfree becomes controversial in Indonesia, which holds eastern values.

Financial hardship in raising children is the most common reason for supporting Childfree. This reason is typical of urban communities characterized by Western culture who are burdened with financial expenses for primary and secondary needs, social needs, lifestyle, and self-existence. The Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023) does state that the poor are mostly in villages at 12.36% compared to 7.53% in cities. However, this is due to the use of indicators that are not culturally empathetic as they measure rural poverty based on monetary income, education level, and occupation. Meanwhile, for Indonesians, especially in rural areas, financial difficulties are very rare due to subsistence needs. Subsistence needs themselves focus on fulfilling primary needs that are far from a consumptive lifestyle. Researchers found that villages in Kalimantan are actually quite prosperous, mainly because they are able to utilize the natural products around them.

Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia is one of the strongest pillars in building Indonesian culture. Eastern customs and culture are inherent in Indonesian society. This is also what distinguishes the response of Indonesian society from the people of Western countries regarding the Childfree phenomenon.

A few months ago, a twitter account with the name @WandaRoxanne was blasted by netizens for agreeing with Chef Juna's statement who was a guest star on one of Dedy

Corbuzier's podcast shows (Close The Door) which stated that he would leave the decision of having children or not to his wife, because he assumed that his wife would later be pregnant for nine months. If his wife does not want to have children, he will not force her. The blasphemy for agreeing to this indicates that the decision not to have children is still abnormal in Indonesia. The role of religion is still very strong in shaping cultural norms and values in Indonesia. Couples who decide to be childfree get a negative view from society because Islamic beliefs and teachings based on the Quran and hadith place the purpose of family is to have offspring. Indonesian society assumes that the perfect family is a family that has offspring.

Research from Wanda Roxanne and Saraswati Putri, which examined one of the Childfree couples in Indonesia, stated that they chose not to have children because they were not ready financially and mentally. Childhood trauma that is required to take care of his younger brother who is disabled while his older brother does not get the same responsibility. In addition, the couple is also worried about the life of their children in the future because there is a belief that in 2050 the earth will experience severe damage (Pricillia & Putri, 2023). This is in line with research from Eva Fadhila, regarding the factors couples decide to Childfree, among others: 1) economic factors, where the couple is not financially ready to have children; 2) mental factors, due to past trauma; 3) personal factors, several reasons experienced by the couple; 4) overpopulation, where the belief that humans on this earth are already very numerous, so that if having children will cause damage because there are too many people (Fadhilah, 2022).

The factors above can certainly be broken easily using the teachings of Islam which believes that every human being on this earth, their sustenance has been guaranteed by Allah SWT. This is stated in the Quran verse Surah An-Nur: 32 which means: "And marry those who are celibate among you, and also those who are worthy of marriage from your male and female servants. If they are poor, Allah will provide for them by His bounty. And Allah is All-Wise, All-Knowing." (Sunarto & Imamah, 2023). The verse shows that there is no need to worry about finances because Allah is the giver of gifts. And all worries related to worldly affairs should be left to Allah, the Almighty Creator. This is what is inherent in Indonesian society, which is predominantly Muslim, in addressing childfree. So these reasons are difficult to accept.

The encouragement to have offspring in Islam is accompanied by giving parents the obligation to strive for the best for their children. Providing moral, social and religious education is the responsibility of parents. In addition, parents are also obliged to provide welfare for their children. This is stated in the Quran letter An-Nisa: 9 which means "And let them fear (Allah) those who should leave weak descendants behind them whom they fear for their welfare. Therefore, let them fear Allah, and let them speak truthfully." (QS. *An-Nisa* 4:9) (Nuroh & Sulhan, 2022).

The Prophet's hadith that righteous children can pray for us after death is also a strong guideline for the view of child ownership in the family. The Prophet said: "When a man dies, his deeds are cut off except for three things, namely jariyah charity, useful knowledge, and righteous children who pray for him" (HR Muslim number 1631). In addition to this view, people are also worried that if they are old, there is no one to take care of them if they do not have children. This view is in line with Catholic teachings about offspring in the family.

Catholicism believes that the relationship between husband and wife and the inseparable presence of children will be blessed by God, "be fruitful and multiply ... have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1 verse 28). Catholicism believes in God's all-sufficient providence.

The highly consumptive modern life of Western culture is the cause of our financial problems. Fulfilling other needs that negate the potential for children is a sin in Catholic teaching. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2366), children are at the heart of a life of mutual love, mutual surrender. In fact, two of the three goals of Catholic marriage are related to children, namely the birth of children and the education of children, in addition to the welfare of husband and wife (CCC 1601).

This means that married life should strive for these three goals by limiting other desires that lead to sin according to Catholic teaching. The need for self-gratification must be controlled for the welfare of the family and the future of the children. Thus, having children is not the cause of financial problems, but rather a way for husband and wife to utilize their full potential for good.

Other factors that are often the reason for Childfree are children as career obstacles and children generate mental problems, such as bad neighborhoods, past memories, domestic violence, and dislike of small children. Of course, these opinions, which can be logical, get their proper context when linked to Western culture.

Individualism views each human being as distinct and independent (Betrand, 2004). Thus the existence of husband, wife, and child are three distinct existences. This is the main argument of individualism in favor of Childfree. Marriage according to them is an individualized marriage (Patnani et al., 2021). Children may be seen as career obstacles, potential mental problems, and bad environmental influences. This view is of course different in the Eastern world, especially Indonesia.

In Indonesian society, the role of the individual is always linked to the collective role in society. Children are not career inhibitors, rather children are sustenance that can ease the work of the family. Many children are many sustenance is a popular expression in Indonesia. Children and families are always bound until they die. It is not uncommon for three generations of grandparents, mothers, fathers and children to live in one house. The economy is supported jointly by these three generations or even burdens one generation. However, this is the norm in Indonesia. This view is very different from individualism.

Catholic teachings are compatible with the eastern view. The teaching of love in Catholic interpretation requires collectivity. Children are an integral part of the relationship between husband and wife (CCC 1601). Children are a form of love itself. It is written in the Bible that love is patient, generous, not jealous, not arrogant, sincere, and just (1 Corinthians chapter 13 verses 4-6). Children are the outpouring of this love that was originally done by parents. Husband and wife can act generously by raising children. The family can be patient, sincere, and just in daily life. A loving family can be a path for inner healing from mental wounds.

When Childfree advocates are concerned about past mental wounds such as domestic violence, the Catholic Church teaches that the relationship between husband, wife, and children can heal those wounds. Children through education can be a potential repair for a broken world.

The Catholic Church opposes childfree, and even goes so far as to oppose the use of non-natural contraception. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2366), the Catholic Church claims to be the defender of life so that every intercourse must aim at the birth of a child. Life in Catholic teaching begins at the moment the egg meets the sperm.

Over population is often also the reason for going childfree by using contraception. The Catholic Church remains opposed to contraception, arguing that non-natural contraceptives are not the recommended way to address the problem. Natural contraception taking into

account the fertility cycle is the recommended way because it involves the values of love which are illustrated in communication, patience, and responsibility. In contrast, the use of non-natural contraceptives and Childfree makes sexual intercourse an individual fulfillment, which in the view of the Catholic Church is selfish.

The Catholic Church does not ignore overpopulation. Pope Francis on January 19, 2015 said "Catholics should not feel they have to breed like rabbits because of the Church's ban on contraception" (Jemadu, 2015) He said this to argue against the case of a mother whose life was threatened by seven caesarean births. The Pope said that "it was irresponsible behavior."

Childfree is synonymous with the liberalist, individualist and secularist mindset of Western culture. Such a view considers the relationship between husband, wife and child to be highly individualistic. The husband's happiness can be separated from the wife's happiness, and the child's happiness is separated from the parents' happiness. Childfree feels justified in stating that they don't have children because they don't want them to suffer, or they don't have children to make themselves happier. Whereas in more eastern thinking, the relationship between husband, wife, and child is a collective relationship, even inseparable.

In Catholic teaching, the rejection of Childfree is not done openly. The rejection of Childfree is a rejection of selfishness, arrogance, and the temptations of the modern world. The motive of Childfree if it is done for personal satisfaction, then it is the main reason for the Catholic Church to reject it.

The arguments for and against the Childfree phenomenon must be viewed based on cultural differences in the world. Childfree supporters in Indonesia, the majority of whom are in big cities, are certainly more in touch with Western culture than Childfree opponents who still hold tight to Eastern culture. Islam and Catholicism are clearly against Childfree. Although there is no specific prohibition of Childfree in the Quran, there are many verses and hadith that indicate the purpose of a family is to build generations.

To be clear, Islam and Catholicism do not agree with the Childfree decision based on verses from the Quran and the Bible. However, both teachings are also strongly against child neglect, because Islam and Catholicism prioritize love for others. So that parents must try their best to provide welfare for their children. This can mean that parents are responsible for providing the needs of a child so that later they can live the life of the world and the hereafter well.

In the academic level, differences in culture-based perspectives are indeed very possible. In general, it is known as perspective or paradigm. The differences between Western and Eastern cultures were put forward in great detail by Samuel P Huntington in *Clash of Civilization* (Huntington & Samuel, 1996). He divides the world into cultural groups and predicts increased competition and conflict due to these cultural differences.

The Childfree phenomenon that raises pros and cons is also influenced by differences in cultural perspectives. This research has presented the views of Islam and Catholicism as Indonesian culture, representing Eastern culture. These two religions oppose Childfree because they prioritize a more collective perspective. In contrast to the individualist western perspective.

Conclusion

The controversy of childfree in Indonesia is caused by different perspectives. Childfree can be driven by Western thought, one of which is liberal feminism. Some reasons for childfree are economic factors such as financial difficulties, mental factors such as trauma and domestic violence, cultural factors such as liberalism and individualism, personal factors, and overpopulation factors. These factors are typical of Western culture.

Religion in Indonesia is the strongest pillar in the formation of community culture. This is because Indonesian people still hold strong religious values as guidelines in living life. Norms and values that exist in the community are built based on beliefs and beliefs in divinity. Although Western ideologies, ideas and flows cannot be stopped from entering Indonesia, it is still clear that eastern cultural customs, especially those arising from religious values, are still the main guidelines in responding to a phenomenon.

Eastern-cultured Indonesia generally rejects Childfree. The more collective view of the East makes the relationship between husband, wife and child inseparable. Islam and Catholicism also reject Childfree. Islam, by referring to the Qur'an, views that marriage is to pass on good offspring to become leaders of the group.

Islam, based on the Quran, has no verses that prohibit childfree. However, the verses of the Quran explain that the purpose of a marriage is to continue the generation which means giving birth to offspring. The community's response to the Childfree phenomenon, based on the values that exist in Islam which are believed by the majority of Indonesian people, forms

a mindset that also becomes values and norms and culture in society. The recommendation to have offspring in Islam is accompanied by an order or obligation to treat children well, be responsible for their welfare, and fulfill their physical and spiritual needs.

Catholic Christianity, which is based on the Bible, states that the existence of children through sexual intercourse is God's good will as a form of love. In the official interpretation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the purpose of marriage is the welfare of husband and wife, the birth of children, and the education of children. The relationship between husband and wife should be directed towards the birth of children, so the Catholic Church rejects contraception except natural contraception through the calculation of fertility dates. Not having children is a form of selfishness that must be avoided.

Different views on the Childfree phenomenon are caused by cultural differences. Western culture is more liberal, individualist, and secular. Meanwhile, Eastern culture is more collective and religious. Dialogues need to be held to discuss controversial issues such as Childfree. The idea of a single truth in science is very counter-productive. Supporters of Childfree and opponents of Childfree should be able to realize that each side has different reasons for their arguments. This research has presented the views of Islam and Catholicism as Indonesian culture towards Childfree.

Academic discussions need to take place. Childfree advocates in Indonesia must realize that history and geography have made Indonesia different from the Western world. The Western world's demands for liberalism, individualism and secularism are not necessarily the natural demands of the Eastern world. The problems of financial hardship are not necessarily experienced by some Indonesians in rural areas. The idea that the Western version of modernity is the best is not necessarily correct. Meanwhile, the characteristics of Western-style consumptive society have penetrated people's subconscious, so being critical in consuming free thinking is highly recommended.

Childfree rejectionists in Indonesia must realize that the Western-style modern world is indeed happening today. New problems such as over population and financial difficulties are indeed real problems that must be addressed. Meanwhile, a free lifestyle is indeed developing due to the encouragement of free media as well. Eastern values need to become more attractive and relevant to answer modern problems.

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