

The Impact of Childfree on Health and Economic

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ABSTRACT: People in various countries have started to do childfree, including Indonesia. Childfree (voluntary childless) is the decision of a married couple not to have children during the couple's marriage, this is different from the term involuntary childless, where this term is a term for couples who for some reason do not get children from the marriage. The impact of childfree on health if in order to prevent pregnancy using hormonal contraceptives, cancer of the reproductive organs will arise or thromboembolic which is at risk of stroke. Another impact is the existence of a demographic imbalance where the elderly population is very dominant and the toddler population is very lacking so that the number of productive age is decrease and this will lead to a decrease in the resilience of a country. Efforts that have been made by the state in preventing childfree are by providing large incentives to the productive age population so that it is expected not to hesitate to have children as the next generation.

KEYWORDS: childfree; health impact; demographic impact

INTRODUCTION

In the news media, several public figures in Indonesia decided to get married but did not expect children(childfree) for various reasons. The decision to be childfree is considered unnatural, out of line with society's values, selfishness and individualistic. However, this growing trend in Indonesia since 2020 has opened people's eyes that some people have taken this decision as their life choice (Sandra Milenia, 2022). Meanwhile, in Japan, the population has embraced childfree from about 20 years ago.

The decision to go childfree can be considered a response to difficult economic conditions, such as high living costs, strong work pressure or economic uncertainty. This can be reflected in childfree trends among certain groups, such as millennials or urbanists living in a more competitive and expensive environment. The decisions can affect a country's population structure, resulting in economic and social consequences, including a decline in the labor force and an increased burden on the older generation.

In Indonesia itself, the population growth rate has started to decline, in 2021 it was 1.22%, in 2022 it was 1.17% and in 2023 it was 1.13% (BPS.go.id, 2020). Meanwhile in Japan, in the last 10 years, the population has decreased by 2.3%.

The decision to carry out childfree are not violate human rights or violate any religion, in Islam it is not prohibited to carry out childfree but there is a suggestion (not an obligation) to multiply offspring.

Indonesia has no concept in preventing this childfree decision, while in Japan, childfree prevention is carried out by providing incentives or large salaries for young employees and encouraging them to get married and have children.

METHODOLOGY

This research will conduct a literature study and then create a simple questionnaire with respondents being couples who have been married for less than 1 year and brides-to-be. The research location and target were Indonesians. All respondents (100%) are disagreed with the childfree decision. Then research is carried out related to the health impact of using unsafe contraceptives and the demographic impact that can be felt by countries whose population decides to childfree.

DISCUSSION:

Definition of Childfree and Involuntary Childless

The vocabulary childfree first appeared in the Merriam-Webster English dictionary before 1901. The phenomenon of childfree itself has actually existed since the 1500s in several countries such as France, England, and the Netherlands. Not everyone who does not have children is called childfree. The word childfree or voluntary childlessness refers to the state of someone who does not have children based on choices they make voluntarily, not due to health problems such as fertility problems or other conditions. In Eastern culture, which is also shared by most Indonesians, a child is considered to be the complement or completion of a marriage. The ideal family is described as consisting of a nuclear family, namely, father, mother, and child with strong social, emotional, and inner

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relationships in an intimate family based on marital ties, where parents have a role to supervise and motivate children in developing social responsibility in the family environment and society (Sandra Milenia, 2022).

Every married couple partly aims to have biological children in their marriage, especially for couples who live in a pro natalist environment, which is an environment that supports childbirth (Gold, 2012; Hidayati & Faiq, 2015; Tanaka & Johnson; 2016). The presence of biological children is considered to provide social and economic benefits (Nauck, 2014), provide a sense of security when parents are elderly (Park & Cho, 2011) and provide psychological, cultural and religious benefits (Fahmi & Pinem, 2018). Children are expected to provide these benefits, so the pronatalist environment places demands on every married couple to have children, even a year after marriage couples are usually expected to enter the stage of becoming parents of their biological children (Jan, 2010). However, there are certain conditions that cause married couples not to have children even though they are not in a condition to delay or prevent pregnancy, known as involuntary childless. Involuntary childless is different from voluntary childless, which is consciously and intentionally not wanting to have children. Involuntary childless conditions are mostly caused by medical factors, either due to infertility of the wife, husband or a combination of both, and only about 18% have no known cause (Bell, 2013). The inability to meet the demands of having children causes involuntary childless to experience various negative impacts both individually, couples and the marriage itself. The negative impacts experienced by involuntary childless include feelings of emptiness, fatigue and frustration (Nahar & Richters, 2011), feelings of loss and depression (Hadley & Hanley, 2011), feelings of anger and loss of social status (Pujari & Unisa, 2014), blaming oneself and others and having no hope (Ferland & Caron, 2013) and decreased levels of well-being (Huijts, Kraaykamp & Subramanian, 2013). In addition to the individual impact, the absence of children in the marriage also negatively affects the marriage, with relationships becoming strained and there is a tendency to blame each other, which in turn has an impact on the marriage, namely the emergence of guilt and considering the possibility of divorce (Onat & Beji, 2012). Although it has a negative impact, a number of studies also show different results because the absence of children actually brings benefits or advantages to involuntary childless such as financial satisfaction, pleasure, and closer relationships with spouses, family and friends (Peters, Jackson and Rudge, 2011; Hansen, 2012), satisfied and happy with their lives (Vikstorm et al., 2011) (Patnani et al., 2021).

The definition of marriage in Article 1 of Law No.1 of 1974 is a physical and mental bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a happy family based on the guidance of the Almighty God. Meanwhile, marriage in the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) is defined as a very strong contract or mitsaqan ghalidzan to obey and carry out the commands of Allah (Muksalmina 2020). The concept of marriage in the Qur'an comes from two key words, namely zawwaja and nakaha which are interpreted as the bond (aqad) of marriage. The rules of marriage (munahakat) are regulated in the surah QS. An-Nur: 32 and QS. Al-Rum: 21.

In the Qur'an Surah Ali Imran verse 14, Allah SWT likens the birth of a child in a marriage bond as an adornment for a family. In addition, the presence of a child as a marriage enhancer and is often used as an indicator of perfection and happiness for every couple (Lestari and Suprapti 2018). In addition, in QS. Al-Kahf verse 46, Allah SWT says that offspring play an important role for parents because they can be used as a place of affection and later become the hope of parents to always pray for them. For some couples having children or getting offspring is a big responsibility that will be held accountable in the hereafter so that some couples decide not to have children(childfree) on the grounds of unpreparedness to become parents, economic factors, environmental factors and physical factors. Therefore, currently the decision of each couple regarding childfree often raises pros and cons so that it raises the question of childfree if it is associated with Islamic laws (Muhamad Andrie Irawan, 2022).

The Reasons for Childfree

The reasons why married couples decide to be childfree are:

1. Not ready to have children quickly;
2. Having trauma in the past, so they don't want their children to feel the same way;
3. Not yet financially well-off. Because, by having children, the needs of life in the household increase;
4. Want to focus on their career, and want to make themselves happy;
5. Not yet able to control emotions. So, afraid if the child is lacking in affection and parents are responsible;
6. Have strong hobbies, so they don't think about having children.

The decision of a couple who chooses childfree is not a selfish decision. However, someone who has decided it must have thought beforehand together with a partner. A couple also decides this for the good of the child. And do not want to put pressure on the child himself (Gita, 2021 in Channel Analisa, 2021). The presence of children in the household does bring happiness. However, the presence of happiness is not only with children. Rather, with us gathering with family, doing hobbies or hobbies of married couples. Then happiness will exist (Iyenk, 2021 in Tirtoid, 2021). Childfree is not an easy thing, because there must be those who disagree in the family. Childfree also requires our mental and psychological readiness. If someone is not ready and decides to do it (Febri et al., n.d.)

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In the research *Childlessness in the United States* (Frejka 2017) provides a statement that the decision not to have children increased by 20% in the 2000s. The increase in percentage is based on historical reasons for family problems and considerations related to future childcare. The increase is supported by the fact that the decision was initially based on economic hardship and psychological stress that affected family life. Psychologists and doctors in America explain that the reasons why married couples do not have children are their own subjective reasons. There are several motivational sentences held by childless couples, namely:

1. I love our life, our relationship as it is and having children will not affect it;
2. I value freedom and independence; 3. I want to focus my life on my own interests, needs and goals (Hanandita, 2022).

Meanwhile, the reasons for childfree that the author observed on social media, among others:

1. Economic reasons;
2. Disproving the myths in society: "many children many fortunes";
3. Preventing overpopulation;
4. If the couple separates, there are no children as victims;
5. Denying that children are a long-term investment (future);
6. When there are many children, economic hardship occurs, thus increasing the occurrence of a criminal offense;
7. The number of cases of pregnancy outside of marriage;
8. The existence of teacher harassment to students (children);
9. Increasingly expensive education costs and rising prices of basic necessities.

Contraceptive Methods and Their Impact

Couples who decide to go childfree naturally need a method to prevent pregnancy by using contraception. Contraceptives available worldwide are hormonal contraceptives (pills, injections and implants) and non-hormonal (other than pills, injections and implants). The next contraceptive methods are long-term methods, namely Intra Uterine Device (IUD), implants and Male Operative Method (MOP) and Female Operative Method (MOW) and short-term contraceptive methods, namely pills, injections, condoms.

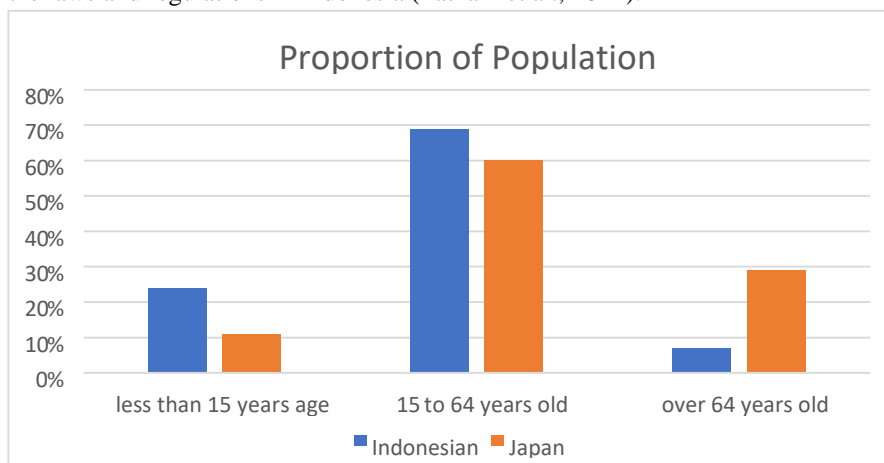
The use of contraceptives using hormones will cause many side effects, including exposure to cancer in the reproductive organs, symptoms of thromboembolic which is one of the risks of stroke (cerebral hemorrhage).

In a preliminary study conducted by the author on 10 respondents, namely single (not married, age is enough to get married) and newly married couples <1 year. All of them answered that they did not want a childfree program, they already knew what childfree was and already knew the public figures who decided to be childfree and the reasons.

Impact of Childfree on Demographics

In addition to affecting health conditions, the decision to go childfree will affect the population pyramid, where the population pyramid is like a bottle neck because the number of children is very small and the population is dominated by the elderly. Of course, this threatens the productivity of the country's population if many people decide to go childfree.

The childfree principle is actually a choice that is not wrong, because adhering to this principle, Indonesia can gradually reduce its population so that one day Indonesia can become a developed country that has a small population like in America, Italy, Sweden, South Korea and Japan. In contrast to the results of research that conclude that the absence of a child provides involuntary childless benefits, such as satisfaction in financial aspects, pleasure, closer relationships with spouses, friends and family (Peters, Jackson, and Rudge, 2011; Hansen, 2012). However, it all goes back to the principles of each person or the principles of each family in determining the number of children, the sex of the child, whether or not to have children and so on, all of which are individual rights and are not regulated in the laws and regulations in Indonesia (Patnani et al., 2021).



Graph 1 Proportion of Population

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The graph illustrates the proportion of the population of Indonesia, which has only known Childfree for 3 years, compared to Japan, which has implemented childfree for more than 20 years.

The demographic impact is clearly visible in the proportion of the population aged less than 15 years, compared to Indonesia, less than half, while the number of people aged more than 64 years, Japan is 4 x greater than Indonesia.

Childfree According to Islamic Perspective

Based on the opinion of Imam Ghazali, childlessness caused by biological factors or with the intention of delaying having children is allowed in Islam by using traditional contraception ('azl, calendar, basal body temperature, cervical mucus examination, symothermal) and modern contraception (hormonal contraception, injections, contraception under the skin, intrauterine contraception, birth control pills) (Mustofa et al. 2020). In contrast to childfree, couples who choose to do childfree are not allowed if it is not based on health-related reasons. Childfree is prohibited if it is a matter of worldly affairs (career and work), economics, or fear of not maximizing child support. Every couple is not allowed to do childfree because, Rasulullah SAW ordered to marry a loving woman and give birth to many children so that later Rasulullah SAW was proud to have many people (Muhamad Andrie Irawan, 2022).

According to Husein Muhammad, reproductive rights are divided into four, namely the right to enjoy sexual relations, the right to refuse sexual relations, the right to refuse pregnancy, and the right to terminate the pregnancy (abortion). In addition to these four reproductive rights, there are other opinions that add to these reproductive rights. According to Masdar F. Mas'udi, part of reproductive rights are the right to choose a partner, the right to care for children, the right to reproductive leave, and the right to divorce a partner (Khasanah, 2021).

There are several things that are conveyed as recommendations in order to prevent demographic imbalances due to childfree are as follows:

1. Family program: by providing subsidies to residents who want to have children, starting from childbirth costs; medical expenses; housing costs and education costs. If possible (adjusted to the financial condition of the country) the subsidy is given 100%;
2. Providing substantial family incentives for government and private employees, if the family does not have children, the incentive will automatically be reduced considerably;
3. A substantial tax deduction for families with children;
4. Providing the right to maternity leave for 6 full months in accordance with the recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding;
5. Every office or company must provide adequate childcare so that parents can work with peace of mind.

CONCLUSIONS

The decision to go childfree for married couples is not a violation of human rights but it is feared that more couples will decide to go childfree so that the composition of a country's population becomes unbalanced, as a result the number of productive age population is decreasing and the country's resilience is threatened. There needs to be regulation in a country, in order to prevent the population from carrying out childfree, besides that sufficient incentives are needed for families who decide to have children.

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