

The Childfree Phenomenon: An Examination of the Interplay Between Traditional and Religious Values in the Malay Community of Jambi

Yuliatin*, Ardian Kurniawan, M. Kamal Fathoni

Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin, Jambi, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: yuliatin@uinjambi.ac.id

Abstract

Problem statement: This study examines the responses of the Melayu Jambi community to the concept of being childfree, which refers to the intentional decision not to have children. This phenomenon prompts significant reflection on cultural norms, Islamic beliefs, and familial regulations. **Objective:** The research aims to understand how the rejection of the childfree concept influences the community's perspectives on tradition and religion. **Methods:** Employing a qualitative approach, the study utilises in-depth interviews and content analysis involving participants from the Melayu Jambi society, including religious and traditional leaders. **Results:** The findings highlight a pronounced rejection of the childfree perspective, with certain respondents emphasising the significance of familial values, lineage, and the responsibilities of parenthood as outlined by Islam, which form the foundation of Melayu Jambi's heritage. In terms of the interpretation of Islamic family law, this rejection arises from the belief that parenthood constitutes an essential aspect of a Muslim's responsibilities and obligations. Furthermore, this opposition reflects concerns regarding the long-term implications of the childfree ideology on families and communities. **Conclusion:** The study provides insights into the complexities of a society that dismisses the childfree concept as an effort to uphold enduring traditional and religious principles. It serves as a reflection of values that illustrate how this opposition signifies the community's aspiration to maintain steadfast views on family and parental roles in the face of evolving cultural and societal changes.

Keywords: Childfree, Cultural Values, Islamic Family Law, Melayu Jambi.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana masyarakat Melayu Jambi menanggapi dan menolak konsep childfree, yang merujuk pada pilihan sadar untuk tidak memiliki anak. Fenomena ini memicu refleksi mendalam terhadap nilai-nilai adat, hukum Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana penolakan terhadap konsep childfree mempengaruhi pandangan masyarakat terhadap tradisi dan agama. Metode penelitian ini melibatkan pendekatan kualitatif dengan wawancara mendalam dan analisis konten terhadap partisipan dari kalangan masyarakat maupun tokoh agama dan tokoh adat Melayu Jambi. Hasil penelitian mengindikasikan adanya penolakan terhadap pandangan childfree, dengan beberapa responden menekankan pentingnya nilai-nilai keluarga, keturunan, dan tanggung jawab sebagai orang tua dalam Islam yang menjadi landasan adat Melayu Jambi. Dalam interpretasi hukum keluarga Islam, penolakan ini mengacu pada keyakinan bahwa memiliki anak adalah bagian integral dari peran dan tugas seorang muslim. Penolakan ini juga mencerminkan kekhawatiran terhadap dampak jangka panjang dari paham childfree terhadap keluarga dan komunitas. Penelitian ini memberikan pandangan dalam dinamika masyarakat yang menolak konsep childfree dalam rangka menjaga nilai-nilai tradisional dan agama yang telah lama dipegang. Sebuah refleksi nilai yang menggambarkan bagaimana penolakan tersebut mencerminkan upaya masyarakat dalam melestarikan pandangan yang kokoh terhadap keluarga dan peran orang tua dalam menghadapi perubahan budaya dan sosial.

Kata Kunci: Childfree, Hukum Keluarga Islam, Melayu Jambi, Nilai Adat.

Introduction

The 'childfree' phenomenon refers to the deliberate choice made by individuals or couples to refrain from having children, despite possessing the physical and economic capacity to do so. This decision is influenced by a myriad of personal, social, economic, and environmental factors. It encompasses the decision not to have biological offspring, extending beyond considerations of fertility issues or medical conditions. The childfree choice has predominantly emerged among modern individuals in industrialised nations (Doyle et al., 2013), often linked to feminist movements advocating for increased reproductive autonomy and female participation in the workforce (Blackstone & Stewart, 2012). Historically, the establishment of childfree support groups can be traced back to Shirley Radl and Ellen Peck, who founded the National Alliance of Optional Parenthood in Palo Alto, California, in 1972. This organisation subsequently championed the concept of resistance to pronatalism through its advocacy network, which later gained traction globally (Agrillo & Nelini, 2008).

The factors influencing the decision to remain childfree can be diverse. For instance, individuals or couples may find greater happiness in the absence of the responsibilities associated with raising children, allowing them to concentrate on personal pursuits (Al Uslam, et.al, n.d.). Additionally, perceptions shaped by economic and employment considerations reflect contemporary concerns regarding the balance between work and family life (Koropeckyj-Cox & Al, 2007). Environmental factors also play a significant role, as the rapidly growing human population contributes to environmental issues such as climate change and resource depletion (Helm et al., 2021). Consequently, some individuals choose not to contribute to population growth. Furthermore, mental health considerations and societal pressures to procreate, often disregarding societal expectations, also inform this decision.

In Indonesia, certain groups express opposition to the existence of childfree adherents. This ideology is perceived not only as contrary to religious beliefs and Eastern cultural values but also as detrimental to the nation, as it is believed to contribute to a future decline in the number of individuals of productive age (Rizka & et al., 2021). The presence of childfree adherents has even provoked resistance among communities known for their religious convictions and adherence to tradition. Several Islamic organisations, including Hidayatullah, the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Institute (LDII), Muhammadiyah, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), classify the childfree ideology as a form of radical feminism, arguing that it deviates from the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, undermines the purpose of marriage, and contradicts human nature (Meidina & Puspita, 2023). Consequently, various accusations and negative stigmas have emerged against individuals who embrace the childfree movement. Notwithstanding religious teachings and social norms in Indonesia, the implications of globalisation are increasingly permeating the social fabric of society.

Cultural and religious sensitivities, along with respect for prevailing societal values, are characteristic features of Indonesia that sharply contrast with the notion of being childfree. The stereotype associated with being childfree differs significantly from that of couples who are unable to conceive. The former is often less accepted within societal constructs than the latter. Eastern cultural norms,

social environments, and the negative stigma (Goffman, 1963) associated with this choice contribute to its perception. In relation to life values, social norms, and regulations, proponents of the childfree lifestyle are frequently regarded as selfish and hedonistic, perceived as lacking in responsibility, and viewed as ill-equipped to adapt to the social environment (Jenuri et. al, 2022).

This philosophical conflict is also encountered by the indigenous Malay community in Jambi. The strong attachment to traditional values and the internalisation of Islamic teachings among the Malay tribe is evident in the traditional saying that is firmly upheld: *adat bersendi syara', syara' bersendi kitabullah* (custom is based on Sharia, Sharia is based on the Book of Allah). The explicit representation of Islamic teachings that oppose the childfree concept aligns with the principles of Jambi Malay customs. The community's profound reliance on and belief in traditional institutions has created a distinct segment within the sociological fabric of the community, particularly concerning the childfree phenomenon. To counteract the influences of globalisation, which are often at odds with Eastern traditions and culture, traditional values tend to assume a more dominant role as a form of protection (Qurbani & Hakim, 2022).

The Malay community in Jambi, predominantly Muslim, undoubtedly integrates the values and norms of Islam into their daily lives. Within the Islamic framework, children and families are pivotal in shaping the social structure and life of the community. The significance of perpetuating lineage, as articulated within Islamic family law, is interpreted as an aspect of *maqashid al-shariah*, which aims to preserve the continuity of lineage (Indah & Zuhdi, 2022). Children serve as successors of religious teachings and custodians of family identity.

Furthermore, Islamic legal principles underscore the necessity of providing quality education and care for children. In the context of a 'childfree' lifestyle, the moral obligation associated with the education and upbringing of future generations is fundamentally absent. Consequently, the familial role in societal development may fail to function effectively. The presence of children as successors constitutes a critical element in fostering social interactions that are significantly linked to the cultivation of moral values within society; however, this aspect remains overlooked (Wulandari, 2019).

The interpretation and application of Islamic family law can vary significantly across different communities and individuals (Musthafa, 2016). This variation is to be expected, given the complex interplay of culture, religion, and values that shape individual perceptions. Furthermore, the influence of globalisation, exemplified by concepts such as the 'childfree' movement, introduces new perspectives on life and family structures. Individuals influenced by this concept may interpret religious values and teachings within a broader context.

Globalisation facilitates the exchange of culture, ideas, technology, and values among diverse communities, thereby enabling easier access to information, perspectives, and lifestyles from various parts of the world. Consequently, ideas that were once confined to local environments can now be disseminated globally through social media, the internet, and intercultural interactions. In this context, the 'childfree' concept has created a wider platform for promoting the choice of a childless life, thereby introducing various perspectives on existence that were

previously underexplored within the cultural framework of the indigenous Malay community of Jambi.

Individuals influenced by the 'childfree' ideology and residing in affluent environments may experience internal conflicts between their personal beliefs and religious values. This phenomenon can be seen as a logical consequence of the disparities that can emerge between cultural and religious values in an increasingly globalised world (Hudiyana & Takwin, 2020). Malay customs are characterised by strong family values and are firmly rooted in Islamic law, which regards marriage and procreation as integral components of community life. Such a framework can undoubtedly create the potential for social conflict when confronted with differing perceptions.

In these circumstances, certain Jambi Malay communities may perceive the 'childfree' choice as a personal decision warranting respect, whereas others may prioritise the importance of lineage continuation. The varied perspectives on the 'childfree' phenomenon within the Malay community in Jambi may stem from an acceptance of personal choice and a more inclusive interpretation of the 'childfree' decision. This group may assert that every individual or couple possesses the right to choose a lifestyle that aligns with their aspirations, including the decision to remain childless. Such a choice can be regarded as an expression of individual human rights.

Within every community, there exist variations in individual perspectives regarding the phenomenon of 'childfree' as a choice that warrants unconditional respect, while others may espouse more conservative viewpoints. These differences in opinion represent a manifestation of the evolution of social and cultural values that typically occur over time (Hariansah, 2022). Younger generations may adopt a more progressive stance on the 'childfree' choice compared to their older counterparts, influenced by global cultural shifts and a heightened emphasis on individual autonomy.

However, in certain Jambi Malay communities, traditional values that underscore the significance of family and descendants, alongside the influence of Islam, play a pivotal role in shaping the lives of the Jambi Malay people. Nonetheless, interpretations of these values can vary, thereby creating opportunities for more inclusive perspectives on the 'childfree' concept. It is essential to acknowledge that the heterogeneity and dynamics of society will inevitably give rise to a diverse array of views on the 'childfree' concept.

The 'childfree' phenomenon signifies a shift in values that does not always align with the local traditions of the indigenous Malay community in Jambi. This presents a challenge to the integration of globalisation with local customs. In regions such as indigenous communities that continue to uphold their traditions, where customs and cultural values hold profound historical significance, the assimilation of modern perspectives, such as the 'childfree' ideology, can be problematic. Family values, social obligations, and cultural norms are often difficult to reconcile with the more independent and individualistic outlook on life that has emerged in the wake of globalisation.

Conversely, amid social and cultural transformations, an intergenerational dilemma arises, reflecting divergent viewpoints on the 'childfree' concept. The older generation tends to uphold traditional values that emphasise marriage,

reproduction, and family, which are consistent with Islamic teachings. In contrast, the younger generation may be more influenced by globalisation and individualistic perspectives.

This conflict of views engenders complex dynamics within social life, particularly in the indigenous Malay community of Jambi. The older generation may express concern over the erosion of religious and traditional values, while the younger generation feels compelled to assert their identities in accordance with evolving modern principles. Consequently, intergenerational value conflicts may arise, potentially impacting societal harmony.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, comprising two principal stages: in-depth interviews and content analysis. This methodology was selected due to the study's primary objective of elucidating the views and perceptions of the Malay community in Jambi regarding the concept of being childfree, as well as examining how these views intersect with traditional and religious values.

In-depth interviews were conducted with a diverse range of participants, including religious and traditional leaders. These interviews utilised a structured set of questions aimed at exploring their perspectives on the concept of being childfree, as well as the extent to which these perspectives are shaped by the principles and beliefs intrinsic to their traditional and religious practices.

Following the collection of data, it was systematically analysed to discern key themes and patterns of opinion that emerged from the participants. The content analysis of the interviews sought to comprehend how respondents perceived the concept of being childfree within the context of Jambi Malay traditional and religious values. The findings from this analysis contributed to a nuanced understanding of the concept of being childfree from both traditional and religious viewpoints.

Perceptions of the Childfree Concept within the Indigenous Malay Community of Jambi

In the indigenous Malay community of Jambi, traditional cultural values and Islamic teachings significantly influence the identity and moral framework of the community. This influence is encapsulated in the saying: *adat bersendi syara', syara' bersendi Kitabullah* (customs based on Islamic teachings rooted in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith) (Jambi, 2001). The choice to remain 'childfree', which contradicts established religious and traditional perspectives, undoubtedly fosters diverse perceptions within society. The role of religion as a moral compass and life guideline contributes to a more intricate dynamic in the interpretation and implementation of these values within the societal fabric.

According to Islamic teachings, the concept of being childfree contravenes the fundamental purpose of marriage. The absence of explicit prohibitions against this choice in the Qur'an and Hadith does not constitute a robust argument in its favour. This matter falls within the domain of *fiqh*, which necessitates *istinbath*. These two primary sources of Islamic law serve as essential tools for the *istinbath* methodology. As-Sayyid Muhammad bin Alwi al-Maliki asserts that the *qath'i* arguments of the Qur'an and Hadith, even when not explicitly stated, do not preclude the existence of regulations governing such matters (Muhammad, 2013).

Furthermore, procreation and the nurturing of offspring are among the objectives of Sharia (Al-Syathiby, 2006) particularly concerning good preservation of lineage (*hifdz an nasb*), which aims to preserve the values of Islam as a religion that embodies *rahmatan lil alamin*.

The universality of Islam, which positions it as a teaching that is suitable for all times and places (*sholih li kulli al zaman wa al makan*), presents religious values within a dynamic society, in contrast to the contemporary trend of childfree living. These fundamental Islamic values also engage in a dialectical relationship with local customs as expressions of wisdom within the Malay community of Jambi. The Muslim majority in this community has historically upheld Islamic law as the governing framework of the state or sultanate of Jambi, as evidenced by the *seloko*, which stipulates that *adat* must be grounded in Islamic teachings. The content of the *seloko adat* serves as a guiding principle for life, fostering harmony between the values of Islamic teachings and the legal, cultural, and indigenous practices of the Malay community in Jambi.

The adage of *adat nan sebenar adat* within the Malay community of Jambi articulates Islamic teachings as the culmination of doctrines that have existed in Jambi since the *Jumhor* and Hindu-Buddhist periods. The deputy chairman of the Malay Customary Institution (LAM) of Jambi, Muchtar Agus Cholif, recounts that,

“Since the era of the old Malay or *Jumhor*, the customary law of Malay Jambi has been in existence. The precise origins of this legal tradition remain uncertain, leading to its description in custom as being “born on a path in the middle of the jungle.” During the reign of Rajo Datuk Paduko Berhalo, Islam experienced significant growth in the Land of Jambi, necessitating that all customary practices be aligned with Islamic law. Any practices that were at odds with Islamic law were required to be abolished. It was during this period that customary law was harmonised with Islamic law, a phase referred to in customary law as the *Jumhor* period” (Cholif, 2022).

In relation to the contemporary childfree phenomenon, the norms surrounding children and Islamic family law within Jambi *adat* can be elucidated by examining the cultural context of the community. The indigenous Malay community of Jambi is characterised by a prominent kinship system¹, wherein the position of children as descendants holds significant importance. Children are not merely seen as the successors of their parents; they also represent the continuity of their extended family and the broader indigenous community. The presence of children is consistently celebrated through traditional rituals and religious events. Ethnic identity within the kinship structure of the traditional community is transmitted through the child.

The childfree phenomenon is met with strong opposition from traditional leaders. For instance, in Tabir Subdistrict, Merangin Regency, there exists a

¹ In the province of Jambi, a pluralism of kinship systems is evident, specifically encompassing matrilineal, patrilineal, and bilateral (or parental) structures. The matrilineal kinship system, which traces descent through the maternal or female line, is prevalent among the Malay communities of Jambi, particularly in the districts of Merangin and Kerinci. In contrast, patrilineal kinship, characterised by male lineage, is observed in Batanghari Regency and certain areas of Muaro Jambi Regency. Bilateral or parental kinship is typically found in various regions of Muaro Jambi Regency and Jambi City.

community of Umah Tuo² people who continue to uphold their traditional values. In an interview with Datuk Iskandar, a member of the traditional community's *tuo tengganai*, he stated,

“Children hold significant importance within the familial structure, and procreation is often regarded as a priority, as they represent the successors and heirs of the family lineage. Furthermore, children will play a crucial role in the continuation of the *ninek mamak* and *tengganai* customs within this village. The absence of children can be perceived as a source of shame for the family, particularly if it is a deliberate choice, which is likely to be met with opposition” (Iskandar, 2022).

The indigenous Malay community of Jambi, located in the Umah Tuo village, adheres to a matrilineal kinship system. In this traditional framework, the status of children is prioritised according to the maternal line (female). Notably, the eldest daughter holds a prominent position within the extended family, with her role significantly influencing decisions regarding the management of traditional heirlooms (Iskandar, 2022). Consequently, couples who have been married for an extended period without having children often face negative stigma. Such circumstances are frequently perceived as a form of punishment or a curse, attributed to the perceived transgressions of their parents or ancestors.

The concept of being childfree, which prioritises personal interests, provokes counter-perceptions among traditional Malay leaders in Jambi. Nevertheless, its implications for the life choices of future generations may emerge as societal norms evolve. This generates tension between personal perspectives shaped by globalisation and those rooted in religious and traditional beliefs. On one hand, there is the influence of modern values; on the other, there exists a sense of obligation to uphold cultural and religious responsibilities. Thus, the childfree concept is likely to foster polemics and social challenges within the traditional Malay community in Jambi. Muchtar Agus Cholif asserts that the role of tradition as a guiding principle must be maintained,

“The passage of time is inescapable; however, customs that withstand the erosive effects of rain and the fading influence of heat must be preserved and upheld as guiding principles to prevent missteps. The customs of the Malay people of Jambi are instrumental in fostering societal harmony within the contexts of religion and tradition. The traditional values ingrained in the community should function as essential guidelines” (Cholif, 2022).

In the indigenous Malay community of Jambi, several customary texts form the foundation of its social structure. One of the most significant texts underpinning the customary laws of the Malay community in Jambi is the *Pucuk Induk Undang Nan Limo*, which has served as the framework for customary law since 1502 AD. This text is grounded in Islamic principles, constituting the basis of Malay customs in

² “*Umah tuo*” in Indonesian translates to “old house.” The term “*umah tuo*” is employed to describe the long houses that accommodate more than 20 families. In contemporary contexts, *umah tuo* is recognised as a village that continues to uphold traditional values and is characterised by numerous well-maintained houses featuring distinctive attributes. Interviews conducted with local traditional leaders reveal that this village has existed for approximately 300 years within the Malay territory.

Jambi, and comprises five fundamental principles, namely: 1) *Titian Tereh Batanggo Batu*, 2) *Cermin Nan Idak Kabur*, 3) *Lantak Nan Idak Goyah*, 4) *Nan Idak Lapuk Keno Ujan*, *Idak Lekang Keno Panas*, 5) *Kato Seiyo*. Kelima dasar ini saling berkaitan sebagai satu kesatuan *Pucuk Induk Undang Nan Limo* (Jambi, 2001: 12).

Malay customary law in Jambi comprises several levels of legal hierarchy. At the apex is *Pucuk Undang Nan Limo*, also known as *Pucuk Undang Tambang Taliti*, which serves as the highest source of law. Beneath this are additional sources of law, namely *Adat Nan Empat* and *Hukum Adat Sembilan Pucuk*, which function as implementing regulations for *Pucuk Undang Tambang Taliti*. Within *Adat Nan Empat*, there exists a fundamental principle known as *Adat yang Sebenar Adat*, which serves as a guideline for the implementation of customs (Cholif, 2022). This principle signifies that the customary laws of the Malay people of Jambi are internalised from Islamic values. The law of Allah SWT, referred to as *Adat Nan Sebenar Adat*, is regarded as absolute and unalterable.

The foundational tenet of *Pucuk Undang Nan Limo* is *Tititan Tereh Batanggo Batu*, which is grounded in Islamic teachings. Jambi Malay customs assert that the verses of Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through divine revelation must not be transgressed. Failure to adhere to the commands of Allah SWT incurs consequences in the form of disasters and the wrath of nature, as articulated in Surah al-Isra' verse 58, which states that should a nation's inhabitants engage in disobedience, severe punishment will ensue, leading to their destruction before the Day of Judgement.

As a custom rooted in Islamic values, the perception of custom rejecting the concept of childfree is certainly consistent with the principles outlined in Sharia law (*seloko adat bersendi syara'*). Similarly, the presence of children and the continuation of descendants within Islamic family law carries profound and multifaceted significance. It encompasses not only the physical continuation of generations but also moral, spiritual, and social dimensions aimed at fostering a robust and dignified society in accordance with Islamic teachings. Moreover, the existence of children must be safeguarded in its entirety, particularly in predominantly Muslim societies (Nasution & Nasution, 2021).

The abandonment of human nature inherent in the concept of childfree is regarded as a sin that contravenes the Sharia law of Allah SWT. In the community of Sepucuk Jambi Sembilan Lurah, it is enshrined in the customary law of Sembilan Pucuk³ that all behaviours within the community must align with the intrinsic nature of humanity as creations of Allah SWT. Muhammad Yusuf, a religious leader in the city of Jambi, stated,

"Arang safat debunya rintik, cempedak dapat di padang pisang. Orang beradat lakunya baik, idak beradat sopannyo ilang." (This indicates that traditional teachings encourage individuals to act in accordance with ethical and moral values. The traditional proverbs of Jambi function as messages and guidance, advising individuals to adhere to their

³ The Nine Peaks Customary Law encompasses a comprehensive framework of nine distinct legal provisions, specifically: 1) Law on Persons and Families; 2) Law on Contracts; 3) Law on Marriage; 4) Law on Inheritance; 5) Law on Forest Land; 6) Undang Rajo (pertaining to Governance); 7) Village and Hamlet Law (concerning Territorial Matters); 8) Larik Jajou Law (regarding Population Issues); and 9) Duo Pulu Law (addressing Criminal Offences). In Hasan Djafar, *Prasasti Masa Kerajaan Melayu Kuno dan Beberapa Permasalahannya*, Jambi: Kerjasama Pemda Tingkat 1 Provinsi Jambi dengan Depdikbud Provinsi Jambi, 1992.

inherent nature and instincts as human beings, which includes the expectation of procreation within the confines of marriage) (Yusuf, 2022).

From a robust sociocultural perspective within the Malay region of Jambi, the tension between the 'childfree' ideology and prevailing customs and religious beliefs can significantly influence community cohesion. Communities that steadfastly uphold traditional values may perceive the shifts instigated by globalisation as a threat. Consequently, progressive individual perspectives that diverge from established traditional and religious norms are often met with resistance and may be categorised as contentious by the surrounding populace.

Reflections on Traditional and Religious Values Concerning the Concept of Childlessness in Jambi Malay Society

In the indigenous Malay community of Jambi, the perception of children encompasses a broader dimension than merely their role as physical descendants or successors to the family lineage. Children are regarded as bearing a significant responsibility to uphold and transmit the cultural values, norms, and traditions inherent within their community. As articulated by the *tuo tengganai* of the indigenous *umah tuo* community,

"Anak merupakan penerus yang memikul tanggung jawab adat tradisi kami. Our current customs and culture must be passed on to our children and grandchildren. Because no matter what, the old will die, and the young must grow up to take their place (*nan tuo bilo nak gugur, tune harus batumbuh*)(Iskandar, 2022).

He added:

"The continuation of the lineage, particularly through female offspring, is of paramount importance within the traditional Malay community in this *umah tuo* village. There exist traditional heirlooms that are designated for inheritance solely by female children, including land, rice fields, and houses. These heirlooms are not bequeathed to male descendants, as tradition dictates that women and their progeny hold a significant role in this regard." (Iskandar, 2022).

The philosophical significance embedded in these customary norms also reflects pronounced gender values. In certain indigenous Malay communities in Jambi, women often occupy the role of primary breadwinners for the family, while also bearing the responsibilities of reproduction and childcare. This perspective stands in stark contrast to the notion of being childfree.

The central tenet of these custom serves as a guideline for life. In a different context, it is intertwined with the religiosity of indigenous peoples. Customary laws (*adat seloko*), informed by Islamic teachings, interpret the concept of being childfree as a transgression against human nature, which further implies a breach of Sharia law. Such actions could invoke the displeasure of Allah SWT and the onset of calamity or misfortune. Consequently, the Malay community in Jambi unequivocally opposes ideas that are at odds with Islamic values. As Muchtar Agus Cholif stated (Cholif, 2022),

"Samo-samo bacarak tuntung keris, samo diminum air keris pusako, pitis sekipeng dipatigo, sekipeng dibawa ke bukit nan mamuncak luhak

bapangulu Pagaruyung alam Minangkabau, sekipeng dibawa ke ombak nan bedebur angin nan bapuhun alam nan barajo tanah pilih Jambi, sekipeng tinggal di bukit Siguntang Tuo. Sumai ditanam sebagai saksi, bersama rambut yang dipertuan berdarah putih dan rambut pemangku adat, disatukan dengan pitis sekipeng tando dipadu adat dan syara', hidup dikandung adat, mati dikandung agama." This *seloko* signifies that the inhabitants of a region are bound by an obligation to adhere to customs rooted in Islamic teachings. Should any individual contravene these customary and religious regulations, they will face punishment commensurate with their offence."⁴

Overall, the values inherent in Islamic family law significantly influence perceptions of family and descendants within the traditional Malay community of Jambi. These values promote positive transformations that adapt to contemporary societal changes while preserving robust cultural and religious foundations. (Syawqi, 2022).

Confronting contemporary challenges such as the issue of childfree, the principles of Islamic family law offer a flexible framework for addressing evolving perceptions of the family. This foundation aids the Malay community in Jambi in navigating the dilemmas and conflicts that emerge from social change. Several arguments can be presented, namely:

1. Islamic values within the family underscore the principle of flexibility (*istihlak*) (Fatarib, 2014). In this context, it facilitates adaptation in response to unforeseen circumstances, such as the childfree choice, which may lack a direct counterpart in the era of the Prophet. This principle of flexibility is inherently present in the Malay community of Jambi, the majority of whom identify as Muslim.
2. The consideration of the objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-Shariah) allows for the interpretation of Islamic family law to serve broader purposes, including social and family values. In the context of the childfree choice, the Malay community in Jambi can base their decisions on the overarching goal of family harmony, while also accounting for the potential negative consequences associated with such a choice.

Guided by religious and customary norms, the integrated values of Islamic family law furnish the Malay community in Jambi with a flexible framework for adapting to social changes, including the phenomenon of childfreedom. These norms facilitate the maintenance of harmony between traditional values and contemporary demands, thereby assisting the community in resolving value conflicts and making considered decisions.

Reflecting on the rejection of the childfree concept within the traditional Malay community of Jambi, various factors are intricately linked to cultural values, generational continuity, social norms, and religious perspectives. The complexity of the Jambi Malay custom's rejection embodies a robust traditional viewpoint. It is crucial to recognise that this perspective stems not solely from cultural and religious

⁴ This *seloko* is also interpreted as an indication of the unification of the customs and laws of the three regions. The accord between the leaders of these regions and the traditional authorities is symbolised by the intertwining of strands of hair and the placement of coins from each region into a container. This act signifies that life is governed by customary law, while death is interred according to religious law.

convictions, but also from the imperative to preserve the identity and continuity of the community.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this study indicate that traditional and religious values play a significant role in shaping the views and decisions of the community regarding the childfree phenomenon among the Malay community in Jambi. Traditional and religious norms exert a central influence on the perceptions of the Malay community in Jambi regarding the childfree phenomenon. These two factors serve as the foundation for shaping the direction and outlook on life concerning family, generational continuity, responsibility, and relationships among family members within the traditional community. The inclination of the traditional Malay community in Jambi is to consider how these traditional and religious values can be interpreted and applied in a challenging modern context. Adapting these values in the face of the childfree phenomenon involves finding a balance between tradition and the diversity of human life choices in an ever-changing environment.

Reflection on values in the context of the family reveals a shift in perceptions of family responsibilities, roles, and goals. There are observable efforts by the Malay community in Jambi to adapt traditional values to modern challenges. This reflects the complexity of the relationship between traditional values, religion, and the evolution of views on family in confronting the childfree phenomenon within the Malay community of Jambi. Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of flexibility, adaptation, and profound understanding in addressing ongoing social change without the necessity of abandoning traditional values and Islamic teachings.

References

- Agrillo, C., & Nelini, C. (2008). Childfree by Choice: A Review. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 25(3).
- Al-Syathiby, A. I. (2006). Al-Muwafaqat fi Ushul Al-Syari'ah. In *Juz I, Cairo-Egypt: al-Hayah al-Mishriyah al-Ammah li al-Kitab* (p. 19).
- Al Uslam, S., & Et.al. (n.d.). Childfree and The Position of Children From An Islamic Perspective in Indonesia. *Hukum Islam*, 23(1).
- Blackstone, A., & Stewart, M. D. (2012). Choosing to be Childfree: Research on the Decision not to Parent. *Sociology Compass*, 6(9).
- Doyle, J., Pooley, J. A., & Breen, L. J. (2013). A Phenomenological Exploration of the Childfree Choice in a Sample of Australian Women. *Journal Of Health Psychology*, 18(3).
- Fatarib, H. (2014). Prinsip Dasar Hukum Islam (Studi Terhadap Fleksibilitas dan Adaptabilitas Hukum Islam). *Nizham: Jurnal Studi Kelslaman*, 3(1), 63–77.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes On The Management Of Spoiled Identity*.
- Hariansah, S. (2022). Analisis Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Budaya Hukum dalam Kehidupan Berbangsa dan Bernegara: studi Kritis Pendekatan Masyarakat, Budaya, dan Hukum. *Krtha Bhayangkara*, 16(1), 121–130.
- Helm, S., Kemper, J., & White, S. (2021). No Future, No Kids-No Kids, No Future? *Popul Environ*, 43.
- Hudiyana, J., & Takwin, B. A. (2020). Catatan Editor: Langkah JPS Dalam Situasi

- Pandemi dan Pengantar tentang Budaya, Identitas, dan Relasi Antar Kelompok. *Jurnal Psikologi Sosial*, 18(3), 196–198.
- Indah, D. N., & Zuhdi, S. (2022). The Childfree Phenomenon in the Perspective of Human Rights and Maqashid Al-Shari'ah. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Community Empowerment and Engagement (ICCEE 2021)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220501.025>
- Jambi, L. A. P. (2001). *Pokok-Pokok Adat Pucuk Jambi Sembilan Lurah: Sejarah Adat Jambi*. Jambi: Lazuardi Indah.
- Jenuri, & Al, E. (2022). Fenomena Childfree Di Era Modern: Studi Fenomenologis Generasi Gen Z Serta Pandangan Islam Terhadap Childfree Di Indonesia. *Sosial Budaya*, 19(2).
- Koropecjy-Cox, T., & Al, E. (2007). Through the Lenses of Gender, Race, and Class: Students' Perceptions of Childless/Childfree Individuals and Couples. *Sex Roles*, 56.
- Meidina, A., & Puspita, M. (2023). Childfree Practices in Indonesia (Study on the Response of Islamic Community Organizations in Kebumen District). *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies*, 7(1).
- Muhammad, A.-S. bin A. A.-M. (2013). *Manhajussalaf fi Fahmin an-Nushus*, Beirut: Darul Kutub Ilmiyah.
- Musthafa, A. H. (2016). Hukum Keluarga Produk Negara Perspektif Ushul Fiqih: Kajian Hukum Islam Normatif, Historis, dan Sosiologis. *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman*, 25(1), 84–102.
- Nasution, K., & Nasution, S. (2021). Implementation of Indonesian Islamic Family Law to Guarantee Children's Right. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 59(2), 347–374.
- Qurbani, I. D., & Hakim, M. L. (2022). Analisis Normatif Pengaturan Pembentukan Desa Adat. *Grondwet*, 1(2).
- Rizka, S. M., & Et.al. (2021). Childfree Phenomenon in Indonesia. *Proceedings of the 11th Annual International Conference (AIC) on Social Sciences*, Universitas Syiah Kuala, 29-30 September 2021, Banda Aceh, Indonesia.
- Syawqi, A. H. (2022). Multiparadigma Sosiologi Hukum Keluarga Islam. ,” *Al-Manhaj: Journal of Indonesian Islamic Family Law*, 4(1), 66–89.
- Wulandari, N. W. (2019). Interaksi Sosial dan Kecerdasan Moral Pada Remaja. *Wacana*, 11(2), 185–195.

Interview:

- Cholif, M. A. (2022). *Interview with Deputy Chairman of the Jambi Malay Customary Institution*.
- Iskandar, D. (2022). *Interview with Leader of the Traditional Village of Umah Tuo*.
- Yusuf, M. (2022). *Interview with Religious Figure in the City of Jambi*.