

The Dialectics of Childfree: Integrating Islamic Law, Individual Rights, and Social Transformation in the Modern Era

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A B S T R A C T

The growing prominence of the childfree phenomenon in contemporary society has generated significant debate between individual reproductive autonomy and religious-cultural norms that emphasize procreation as a core purpose of marriage. This article examines childfree through an integrative framework combining Islamic law, human rights, and socio-legal analysis. Employing a qualitative library-based methodology, the study analyzes classical and contemporary Islamic jurisprudence, international human rights instruments, and sociological literature on family transformation. The findings demonstrate that Islamic law differentiates between temporary and permanent childfree practices: temporary childfree arrangements may be permissible based on considerations of public interest (*maṣlaḥah*), whereas permanent childfree choices are generally inconsistent with the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), except in cases of compelling medical necessity. From a human rights perspective, childfree is situated within the sphere of bodily autonomy and reproductive rights, warranting protection from coercion and discrimination, though not as an absolute entitlement detached from social responsibility. The article proposes a model of "responsible freedom" that reconciles individual rights with ethical and social considerations, emphasizing dialogue between Islamic norms, human rights principles, and lived social realities. By offering a contextual and integrative approach, this study contributes to contemporary debates on family law, reproductive ethics, and the governance of plural normative systems in modern societies.

1. Introduction

The childfree phenomenon, defined as an individual or a couple's deliberate decision not to have children, has become increasingly prominent in the modern era. Advances in technology, expanded access to information, heightened awareness of mental health, and changing lifestyle patterns have contributed to the growing acceptance of this discourse among younger generations. Social media has further amplified discussions on the meaning of family, the purpose of marriage, and the freedom to make life choices, signaling a shift in perspectives toward family concepts that were previously regarded as fixed (Jasmin & Syahrul, 2025).

However, the childfree phenomenon has generated sharp controversy. On one hand, it is viewed as an expression of individual rights, particularly reproductive rights and the freedom to determine one's life path. Proponents emphasize reproductive autonomy and individual freedom in shaping the future and defining family forms based on personal choice, citing economic, health, psychological, and quality-of-life considerations (Pertiwi et al., 2023). On the other hand, criticism emerges from religious and cultural perspectives. In Islam, procreation is regarded as a primary objective of marriage and an integral component of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, while cultural norms position children as the bearers of tradition and symbols of familial completeness. This tension illustrates a fundamental clash between individual rights and religious as well as social norms.

Previous studies have examined the childfree phenomenon from sociological, psychological, and modern family studies perspectives (Blackstone, 2019), explored perceptions among younger generations (Audinovic & Nugroho, 2023), and analyzed it within the framework of Islamic family jurisprudence (*fiqh al-usrah*) (Musyafa'ah, 2012). Research by Sagita and Santoso (2024) highlights a *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and utilitarian analysis of childfree practices among celebrities. Nevertheless, comparative studies that examine childfree through the lenses of Islamic law, human rights, and contemporary social contexts remain limited.

Accordingly, this study addresses the question of how the childfree phenomenon is understood within the perspectives of Islamic law and individual rights, and how these perspectives interact within contemporary social contexts. The objective of this research is to analyze the legitimacy of childfree from normative Islamic, human rights, and socio-social perspectives. The scholarly contribution of this study lies in fostering dialogue between Islamic norms and principles of individual rights, while offering a proportional and contextual approach to understanding childfree as part of the dynamics of modern family life.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research. The focus of the analysis is the childfree phenomenon as examined through relevant literature, including classical and contemporary *fiqh* texts, fatwas, academic journals, scholarly books, human rights (HR) documents, and family-related regulations. Sources were selected selectively based on specific criteria. Classical and contemporary *fiqh* works were chosen according to their relevance to marriage, procreation, and the *maqāṣid al-nikāḥ*. Fatwas and formal regulations were drawn from authoritative institutions such as the Indonesian Council of Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI), as well as international human rights documents.

Academic journals and books were selected based on peer-reviewed quality, publication within the last ten years, and a focus on family issues, reproductive rights, or Islamic law. Human rights documents include international instruments such as the ICCPR and CEDAW, along with national regulations related to family and reproductive rights.

The units of analysis consist of texts and documents addressing Islamic scholarly and fiqh perspectives on procreation, marriage, and sterilization; human rights principles concerning reproductive rights, privacy, and bodily autonomy; and sociological discourses on changing family values and younger generations' perceptions of childfree. Data collection was conducted through documentation and literature review, drawing on primary sources such as fiqh texts, fatwas, and human rights documents, as well as secondary sources including academic journals, books, and scholarly articles. The collected data were analyzed in two main stages. First, content analysis was used to identify key themes in the literature, such as *maqāṣid al-nikāḥ*, reproductive rights, and shifts in family values. Second, comparative analysis was employed to examine differences and intersections between Islamic legal perspectives, human rights principles, and contemporary social realities. The findings were then synthesized to integrate *sharī'ah* norms, individual rights, and social dynamics, resulting in a proportional conclusion regarding the childfree phenomenon. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation by comparing fiqh texts, human rights documents, and sociological literature, as well as through peer debriefing with relevant academic sources.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Concept of Childfree in the Modern Era

The term childfree refers to the conscious choice of individuals or couples not to have children. This choice differs from childless, which results from infertility or biological factors. In contemporary social literature, childfree emphasizes intention and rational deliberation as part of a deliberate life decision. The concept is often associated with reproductive autonomy, personal freedom, and resistance to pronatalism—namely, social pressures that position having children as the sole normative life path (Mantaru et al., 2023).

Clarifying the definition of childfree is important because it helps distinguish between social norms, personal decisions, and legal-religious consequences. By making these distinctions, the analysis moves beyond mere description and opens space to assess how individual life choices interact with prevailing societal norms. This is particularly relevant in the context of Islamic legal studies, which place procreation as one of the objectives of marriage.

In academic research, the definition of childfree is further enriched by psychosocial and normative dimensions. Beyond being understood as a lifestyle choice, childfree is also analyzed as a social identity shaped by media narratives, feminist discourse, and changes in urban family structures. This identity demonstrates that childfree is not merely an individual decision, but part of a broader social construction developing within modern societies.

As a concept, childfree requires sensitivity to the motives underlying the decision. These motives may include quality-of-life preferences, career orientation, mental health considerations, and environmental concerns. Therefore, childfree cannot be simplistically equated with egoism or aversion to family life. Conceptual analysis allows a framework that

separates empirical evidence—such as motivations and practices—from normative claims that often appear in the form of moral or religious judgments (Lynne et al., 2025).

Accordingly, discussions of childfree are not only relevant to the sociology of the family, but also closely connected to studies of Islamic law and human rights. From the perspective of Islamic law, this phenomenon challenges shari‘ah norms that emphasize procreation as part of the *maqāṣid al-shari‘ah*. Meanwhile, within the human rights framework, childfree is viewed as part of reproductive rights and bodily autonomy that must be respected. This relationship underscores the need to situate analyses of childfree within a dialogical framework between religious norms and individual rights in order to arrive at a more proportional understanding of its position in the modern era.

3.1.1. The Childfree Phenomenon in the Modern Era

The childfree phenomenon—defined as the conscious choice not to have children—has become increasingly prominent in modern society. This decision is not confined to developed countries experiencing economic pressures and heightened individualism, but is also emerging among urban populations in developing countries, including Indonesia. Nevertheless, it continues to face strong social pressure from traditional and religious norms that emphasize family continuity and procreation. Shifts in modern values, globalization, and contemporary lifestyle demands provide individuals with greater space to reconsider the meaning of family and the role of reproduction in their lives.

Within the context of Islamic studies and Muslim societies, childfree represents a complex phenomenon that cannot be understood solely as a personal choice, but must also be examined through moral, cultural, and religious dimensions. Research by Ma‘mun et al. (2023) indicates that a multidisciplinary approach combining scientific perspectives and moral considerations can offer deeper insight into childfree among urban Muslims. Such decisions are influenced not only by biological instincts (*fitrah*), but also by interconnected psychological and moral factors, including considerations of *tawḥīd* values and the structure of marriage in Islam. This perspective reframes childfree from a purely personal decision into a dialogue between scientific reasoning and religious moral values.

Furthermore, discourse surrounding childfree has generated varied social and cultural responses in modern society. On the one hand, it is perceived as an expression of individual freedom to determine one’s life course; on the other, the decision not to have children may challenge traditional values and social structures that have long positioned families with children as the basic unit of society. This phenomenon triggers debates involving individual rights, generational continuity, and social responsibility, thereby necessitating interdisciplinary dialogue and sensitivity to local cultural and religious contexts.

3.1.2. Factors Contributing to Childfree

The childfree phenomenon in the modern era is influenced by a range of structural, psychological, cultural, and global factors. The decision not to have children is not solely rooted in personal preference, but is also closely linked to normative legitimacy, which generates debate, particularly from the perspectives of Islamic law and human rights. Consequently, childfree must be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon embedded within broader social and ideological contexts.

3.1.2.1. Economic Factors

Economic considerations are among the primary determinants influencing childfree decisions. Rising living costs, education expenses, and healthcare needs lead some couples to conclude that having children requires financial stability that is difficult to attain under modern economic conditions. From the perspective of Islamic law, economic reasons cannot justify a permanent rejection of procreation, as this contradicts the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, particularly the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (the preservation of lineage) (Dita et al., 2024). In contrast, the human rights perspective views such decisions as part of reproductive rights and individual freedom to determine family life in accordance with personal capacity and circumstances (Ramadhan, 2024).

3.1.2.2. Psychological and Mental Health Factors

Psychological factors—such as childhood trauma, anxiety regarding parenting quality, and preferences for personal freedom—also encourage individuals to choose a childfree life. In Islamic thought, childrearing is regarded as a moral and religious trust (*amānah*) that must be fulfilled responsibly. Therefore, psychological reasons are generally considered acceptable only when they involve verified medical conditions or serious mental health disorders. Conversely, human rights principles emphasize the protection of mental health as an integral component of fundamental human rights, thereby legitimizing childfree decisions as efforts to safeguard personal well-being and prevent potential psychological harm to both parents and children (Ma'mun et al., 2023).

3.1.2.3. Shifts in Modern Family Values

Transformations in modern family values have also influenced perspectives on reproduction. Marriage is no longer understood solely as a means of producing offspring, but also as a space for cultivating relational quality, emotional fulfillment, and psychological stability between partners. Within Islamic law, this shift poses challenges to traditional family concepts that emphasize generational continuity (Nasution, 2026). However, from a human rights perspective, such transformations are viewed as legitimate reorientations of personal freedom and individual rights to define family models aligned with personal values and life goals.

3.1.2.4. The Influence of Social Media and Globalization

Social media and globalization further normalize childfree lifestyles through the dissemination of alternative narratives about family and childless living. Online communities and global cultural representations increase the visibility, acceptance, and social legitimacy of childfree choices. From an Islamic perspective, such external influences must be critically filtered to ensure they do not undermine *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* within the institution of the family (Lynne et al., 2025). In contrast, human rights discourse emphasizes that access to global information forms part of freedom of expression and the right to information, thereby expanding individual autonomy in shaping life choices.

Collectively, these factors demonstrate that childfree decisions cannot be understood merely as individual choices, but rather as outcomes of complex interactions among social structures, economic conditions, cultural norms, and global discourses. From the perspective of Islamic law, permanent childfree practices generally conflict with the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, except when justified by strong and accountable medical reasons. Meanwhile, human rights frameworks affirm that childfree constitutes part of reproductive rights and bodily autonomy

that must be respected, provided it does not infringe upon the rights of others. Accordingly, this phenomenon calls for a proportional and dialogical approach capable of bridging religious norms and individual rights to produce a more comprehensive, contextual, and just understanding.

3.2. Childfree from the Perspective of Islamic Law

The phenomenon of childfree refers to the decision of individuals or couples not to have children, either permanently or temporarily. From the perspective of Islamic law, this decision cannot be viewed uniformly, as differences in motivation, objectives, and methods of avoiding pregnancy entail distinct legal consequences. Islam distinguishes between temporary birth prevention (*tanzīm al-nasl*) and permanent abandonment of procreation (*tarq al-nasl*), while also considering whether such decisions are driven by medical, psychological, economic, or ideological reasons (Umar, 2021).

Permanent childfree practices – such as sterilization or a lifelong moral commitment to reject offspring – are considered problematic because they potentially conflict with the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, particularly the protection of lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*). Consequently, the majority of scholars regard their legal status as approaching reprehensibility (*makrūh shadīd*) or even prohibition (*ḥarām*), unless justified by life-threatening medical conditions (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2012). Conversely, temporary childfree arrangements are more flexible, as they may be understood as part of *tanzīm al-nasl*, namely the postponement or regulation of pregnancy for the sake of family welfare. This position is supported by Imam al-Ghazālī (2011), who permitted birth regulation to avoid excessive hardship, and by al-Qaraḍāwī (2000), who argued that family planning may even become obligatory when there is a serious risk of harm.

The factors motivating the childfree decision also play a decisive role in determining its legal status. Clear medical and psychological reasons may justify even permanent measures, whereas economic considerations and mental readiness more commonly serve as grounds for permissibility in temporary cases (Farisi et al., 2021). Accordingly, childfree should not be uniformly categorized as blameworthy; rather, it must be assessed based on intention, method of prevention, and the balance of benefit (*maṣlaḥah*) and harm (*mafsadah*) involved.

In the context of modern society, permanent childfree practices without valid *sharʿī* justification are more appropriately classified as prohibited, as they entail the absolute negation of progeny and contradict the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*. In contrast, temporary childfree practices may be accepted as a legitimate form of family management, provided they are grounded in the principle of *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār* (no harm and no reciprocating harm) and maintain a balance between the objectives of marriage and family welfare. This position affirms that Islam does not obligate every married couple to have children; rather, progeny constitutes one of the objectives of marriage that must be considered alongside relational quality and family well-being. Consequently, the legal evaluation of childfree must be contextual and oriented toward the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*.

Thus, within the modern social context, the contemporary scholarly view that permits temporary childfree practices as part of *tanzīm al-nasl* for clear welfare-based reasons represents the most relevant and judicious position to adopt. Current societal realities – such

as economic pressure, high living costs, and increasingly complex demands related to children's education and healthcare—render the postponement of pregnancy or limitation of family size a rational strategy for maintaining family stability. Moreover, growing awareness of mental and physical health issues necessitates legal flexibility, as trauma, anxiety, or psychological instability may constitute strong grounds for delaying pregnancy. The principle of *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār* supports this permissibility, as Islam does not intend harm to spouses or families.

Meanwhile, permanent childfree practices without urgent *sharʿī* justification—such as serious medical threats—are more appropriately categorized as prohibited, since they negate progeny absolutely and contradict the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, particularly the protection of lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*). From the author's perspective, temporary childfree may be deemed *mubāḥ* when grounded in tangible welfare considerations, whereas permanent childfree can only be justified under conditions of medical necessity. This approach not only preserves consistency with the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* but also responds to modern social challenges by recognizing family well-being, relational quality, and emotional health as integral components of the objectives of marriage in Islam.

3.3. A Human Rights Perspective on the Childfree Phenomenon

The childfree phenomenon is frequently interpreted within the framework of human rights as a legitimate expression of individual freedom and reproductive autonomy. In modern human rights discourse, the decision not to have children is positioned as part of the right to privacy, moral freedom, and bodily autonomy. This approach is grounded in the liberal assumption that individuals are autonomous subjects entitled to determine their life trajectories without illegitimate external interference (Blackstone & Stewart, 2012). However, this perspective also carries a problematic affirmative tendency, as it often obscures the social, cultural, and moral complexities surrounding reproductive practices, particularly in societies where collective and religious values remain strong.

Normatively, international human rights instruments do provide a robust foundation for recognizing reproductive rights, including the right not to have children. Negative reproductive rights—that is, the freedom to refuse pregnancy or progeny—are regarded as equivalent to the right to have children. Nevertheless, this conceptualization is not immune to criticism. Human rights discourse frequently operates within a universalist paradigm that assumes individual freedom can be applied uniformly across cultures. In non-Western or religious societies, reproduction is often understood not merely as a personal choice but as part of social responsibility, communal continuity, and moral trust. At this juncture, an epistemic tension emerges between universal human rights claims and local value systems that situate reproduction within a framework of collective ethics.

This tension becomes even more apparent when childfree is framed as an expression of the right to mental health and well-being. From a human rights perspective, the decision not to have children for psychological reasons—such as trauma, anxiety, or emotional limitations—may be justified as an effort to protect personal dignity and integrity (Geneva: WHO, 2020). However, this approach also risks reducing structural issues to mere individual preferences. Factors such as economic pressure, gender inequality, inadequate state support for childcare, and exploitative work cultures often constitute the hidden backdrop of childfree

decisions (Nuryantiningih, 2017). Consequently, an overly individualistic human rights reading risks normalizing state and systemic failures to create family-friendly conditions.

In addressing discrimination against childfree individuals or couples, human rights frameworks offer strong normative tools through the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Social stigma, cultural pressure, and moral judgment clearly contradict the spirit of protecting human dignity. Yet, an internal critique of human rights discourse is necessary: does every form of social evaluation automatically constitute discrimination that violates human rights? In certain societies, social norms surrounding family and progeny function as mechanisms of social cohesion rather than mere instruments of oppression. Therefore, the challenge lies not only in eliminating stigma but also in carefully distinguishing between the protection of individual rights and the total delegitimization of meaningful social norms within a community.

The childfree issue is also frequently associated with gender equality agendas, particularly critiques of patriarchal structures that disproportionately burden women with reproductive roles. From a feminist human rights perspective, the childfree choice may be interpreted as a political act aimed at reclaiming bodily autonomy and life control (Gillespie, 2023). Nevertheless, not all childfree decisions are emancipatory. In some cases, they arise precisely from unresolved structural pressures—such as women’s double burden, unequal domestic labor, or economic insecurity. Thus, uncritical glorification of childfree as a symbol of liberation risks obscuring deeper roots of gender injustice.

Furthermore, human rights discourse itself acknowledges that individual freedoms are not absolute. Limitations on rights may be justified insofar as they meet the principles of legality, proportionality, and legitimate public purpose (Geneva: WHO, 2020). In the context of childfree, such limitations are rarely discussed seriously, as human rights narratives tend to resist moral state intervention in reproductive matters. Yet, within public ethics discourse, the state holds legitimate interests in demographic sustainability, intergenerational solidarity, and social welfare structures. The challenge is not to impose an obligation to have children, but to formulate policies that balance individual freedom with collective interests without descending into moral authoritarianism.

Accordingly, the childfree phenomenon from a human rights perspective cannot be understood in a binary manner as merely an individual right that must be accepted without reservation. While human rights frameworks provide essential normative foundations for protecting freedom and human dignity, they must be interpreted critically and contextually. A dialectical dialogue among human rights, religious values, social norms, and public interests is necessary to avoid asymmetrical power relations (Neal & Neal, 2024). Within this framework, childfree should be understood neither as a deviation to be condemned nor as a choice immune from critique. Rather, it is a complex social phenomenon that demands reflective, cross-value engagement and openness to sustained ethical debate.

3.4. Integrating Islam and Human Rights in the Study of Childfree

The integration of Islam and Human Rights (HR) in the study of childfree requires not only normative coherence but also operational validation within legal practice and public policy. Without concrete applicative illustrations, such integration risks remaining an abstract ethical discourse that is difficult to implement. Accordingly, the principle of “responsible

freedom” must be translated into tangible mechanisms operating within family law systems and state governance—particularly in religiously grounded societies—as emphasized by recent studies highlighting the need for empirical evidence and policy responses sensitive to local contexts (Ramadhan, A. R., 2025).

Within the domain of Islamic family law, a critical point of implementation emerges when legal authorities and religious counselors assess couples’ reproductive decisions not through a priori categorization, but through an evaluation of actual *maṣlaḥah*. The *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* approach enables religious court judges, marriage registrars, and family counselors to weigh health safety, psychological stability, and household welfare before issuing normative judgments—a procedure increasingly proposed in contemporary Islamic legal literature as a normative–operational middle path. Such practices bridge the protective imperatives of human rights—preventing coercion and discrimination—with the ethical authority of religion to consider familial and collective welfare.

Comparable implications arise in reproductive health policy. Non-discriminatory access to contraception, counseling, and medical services that respect informed consent and confidentiality constitutes a core human rights obligation. However, effectiveness is enhanced when these services are designed to be religiously sensitive—for example, by involving religious leaders in the formulation of ethical service guidelines to foster social legitimacy. Empirical qualitative studies in religious and rural communities demonstrate that religious norms, local communal structures, and limited service access often constrain reproductive autonomy. Consequently, collaboration between healthcare providers and faith leaders can expand access and reduce stigma that impedes service utilization (Rachel L. Wright et al., 2024).

In the spheres of labor and population policy, an integrative approach urges the state to advance two objectives simultaneously: (a) legal mechanisms prohibiting discrimination based on reproductive status in recruitment and promotion; and (b) public ethical dialogue that frames social responsibility and generational sustainability as collective concerns rather than instruments of moral judgment against individuals. Research on younger generations indicates that economic hardship, trauma, and psychological unpreparedness are strong motivators behind childfree choices. Therefore, public policies relying solely on demographic narratives without addressing structural conditions—such as social security, caregiving incentives, and service accessibility—are unlikely to respond adequately to the realities shaping reproductive decisions (Innocentia A. Lastika et al., 2024).

At the socio-educational level, effective operationalization of integration is achieved through family literacy programs and premarital counseling that combine human rights perspectives (autonomy and non-discrimination) with *maqāṣid*-based explanations emphasizing *maṣlaḥah*. Dialogical, non-judgmental educational interventions have proven more effective in reducing stigma and enhancing public understanding, as evidenced by field studies examining public perceptions of childfree in cities characterized by strong normative pressures.

Finally, from the standpoint of research and advocacy, Islam–HR integration must be pursued through interdisciplinary and contextual approaches. Local empirical research, engagement with progressive religious scholars, and collaboration among policymakers,

healthcare providers, and human rights organizations are essential to ensuring that integration is not merely symbolic. Deliberative practices—such as policy dialogue forums, joint ethical service guidelines informed by *maqāṣid*, and pilot programs for confession-sensitive services—can be tested and evaluated, transforming integration into a sustainable, measurable, and evidence-responsive institutional process (Putri et al., 2025).

Accordingly, the integration of Islam and Human Rights in the study of childfree becomes tangible when normative principles are translated into *maqāṣid*-oriented judicial procedures, rights-based and confession-sensitive health policies, anti-discriminatory labor regulations, and dialogical public education programs. This applicative approach affirms that reproductive choices can be governed in a fair, contextual, and ethical manner—without neglecting moral responsibility or the protection of individual human rights.

3.5. Analytical Synthesis (Integration of Islamic Law – Human Rights – Social Dimensions)

The synthesis of Islamic law, Human Rights (HR), and social dimensions begins with the recognition that all three constitute normative orders operating within the same social space and mutually influencing one another. Islamic law provides an ethical framework through the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, oriented toward the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property, while human rights offer universal standards for safeguarding human dignity and fundamental freedoms. This synthesis does not position *maqāṣid* as a substitute for human rights, but rather as an interpretive framework that enables harmonization when tensions arise between individual freedom and social interests (Paʿqih, 2025).

Within this framework, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* functions as the primary integrative instrument due to its focus on the objectives of law rather than textual literalism alone. The *maqāṣid* approach allows for proportional assessment between individual rights—such as reproductive rights—and public welfare, including family and community resilience. Contemporary *fiqh* literature demonstrates that *maqāṣid*-oriented reasoning opens space for contextual *ijtihād* responsive to social and technological change, thereby enabling integration between Islamic law and human rights that is dynamic and operational rather than rigid or defensive (Wigati et al., 2022).

From a human rights perspective, principles such as freedom of religion, the right to privacy, and reproductive health rights constitute foundational elements of non-discriminatory legal protection. At the same time, human rights frameworks acknowledge legitimate limitations based on law, public interest, and the rights of others. This structural convergence indicates that neither Islamic law nor human rights regard freedom as absolute. Consequently, this analytical synthesis proposes a model of responsible freedom, whereby respect for individual rights is exercised within the bounds of public welfare—a model particularly relevant to sensitive issues such as family policy, gender, and health (Neal & Neal, 2024).

The success of this normative integration is critically shaped by social dimensions as the arena of implementation. Legal norms do not operate in a vacuum; they interact with customs, local religious practices, patriarchal structures, and economic conditions that influence access to rights. Therefore, a socio-legal approach—combining normative analysis with empirical research—is a prerequisite for ensuring that Islam-HR integration gains social

legitimacy and does not remain confined to abstract normative discourse (Firman Asrafi & Wulandari, 2025).

Policy implications of this synthesis require concrete and participatory institutional mechanisms, such as dialogue forums involving religious authorities, human rights institutions, and policymakers; the formulation of fatwa guidelines that incorporate maqāṣid considerations and human rights standards; and the regulation of essential services to guarantee non-discrimination. Legal policy studies indicate that evidence-based and inclusive governance is more effective in reducing normative conflict and enhancing compliance and social acceptance (Wigati et al., 2022).

In summary, the principal findings of the integration of Islamic law–human rights–social dimensions in this study can be outlined as follows: (1) Islamic law and human rights relate to one another in a complementary manner within a shared social space, rather than in mutually negating opposition; (2) maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah functions as an integrative framework balancing individual freedom and public welfare; (3) the model of responsible freedom represents a normative convergence that is operationally viable for both traditions; (4) social dimensions are a key determinant of successful implementation; and (5) integration necessitates dialogical, non-discriminatory, and empirically grounded public policies. Within this framework, normative differences are not erased but constructively managed, enabling the concurrent realization of human rights protection and religious values in legal practice and public policy.

4. Conclusion

As a concluding reflection on the dynamics of the childfree choice from the perspectives of Islamic law, Human Rights (HR), and the social context, it can be affirmed that the childfree phenomenon – when examined through the lenses of Islamic legal reasoning and individual rights – cannot be simplistically understood either as a moral deviation or as an absolute entitlement. Within Islamic law, childfree is assessed contextually through the framework of maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah, taking into account intention, method, and impact on family welfare, as well as the protection of life, intellect, and lineage. Meanwhile, from an individual rights perspective, childfree constitutes part of reproductive freedom and the right to privacy, both of which must be safeguarded from coercion and discrimination.

The interaction between these two frameworks is dialogical and complementary, and may be articulated through the model of responsible freedom: individual autonomy is acknowledged, yet exercised within the boundaries of public welfare and social interest. The novelty of this study lies in its formulation of an integrative synthesis between Islamic law, human rights, and social dimensions that transcends the dichotomy of ḥalāl–ḥarām versus absolute rights, offering instead a contextual and operational analytical framework.

Academically, this study affirms the continued relevance of the maqāṣid-oriented approach in addressing contemporary family issues and enriches human rights discourse through a socio-legal reading that is sensitive to local values. Practically, it recommends the development of non-discriminatory and evidence-based family and reproductive health policies, the strengthening of maqāṣid-based ijtihād among Islamic scholars, and further empirical research to examine the real-world implementation of this integrative synthesis.

Through such an approach, childfree can be understood in a manner that is fair, contextual, and ethically grounded within modern society.

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