

## Childfree In the Perspective of Islamic Law and Religious Sociology: A Study of the Fatwa of The MUI of Muara Jambi District

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Received: 02-02-2025 Accepted: 01-05-2025 Published: 02-05-2025</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Childfree; Islamic law; Islamic marriage; MUI Muara Jambi; sharia</p>	<p>The phenomenon of childfree, a couple's conscious decision to live a married life without having children, has sparked an in-depth discourse in the study of Islamic law and religious sociology in Indonesia. This polemic is increasingly prominent as open statements from well-known public figures such as Gita Savitri and Cinta Laura, which strengthen the conversation about the legitimacy and implications of this practice in the context of sharia and contemporary social dynamics. This study aims to analyze the views of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of Muara Jambi Regency on the childfree phenomenon, focusing on the factors behind it and its legal status in the perspective of Islamic law. Adopting a juridical-sociological approach with a descriptive-analytical paradigm, this research utilizes semi-structured interviews with the leadership of MUI Muara Jambi, documentation studies, and non-participant observation. The research findings identify four main factors that encourage childfree practices: psychological unpreparedness to become parents, economic concerns, socio-psychological environmental conditions, and physical health considerations. In the perspective of Islamic law, MUI Muara Jambi categorizes childfree as haram if it is only based on economic concerns, but permissible if it is supported by valid shar'i reasons, such as health risks, provided that it meets the conditions such as mutual agreement between couples and alignment with maqashid sharia. This study contributes to the development of contemporary Islamic legal discourse by offering a moderate perspective that integrates sharia principles with modern social dynamics.</p>
Info Artikel	Abstrak
<p><b>Kata Kunci:</b> Childfree; Hukum Islam; Sosiologi Keagamaan; Fatwa MUI</p>	<p>Fenomena childfree, yakni keputusan sadar pasangan suami-istri untuk menjalani kehidupan perkawinan tanpa memiliki keturunan, telah memantik diskursus mendalam dalam kajian hukum Islam dan sosiologi keagamaan di Indonesia. Polemik ini kian mengemuka seiring pernyataan terbuka dari tokoh publik ternama seperti Gita Savitri dan Cinta Laura, yang memperkuat perbincangan mengenai</p>

legitimasi dan implikasi praktik tersebut dalam konteks syariah dan dinamika sosial kontemporer. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pandangan Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) Kabupaten Muara Jambi terhadap fenomena childfree, dengan fokus pada faktor-faktor yang melatarbelakanginya serta status hukumnya dalam perspektif hukum Islam. Mengadopsi pendekatan yuridis-sosiologis berparadigma deskriptif-analitis, penelitian ini memanfaatkan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan pimpinan MUI Muara Jambi, studi dokumentasi, dan observasi non-partisipan. Temuan penelitian mengidentifikasi empat faktor utama yang mendorong praktik childfree: ketidaksiapan psikologis untuk menjadi orang tua, kekhawatiran ekonomi, kondisi lingkungan sosial-psikologis, dan pertimbangan kesehatan fisik. Dalam perspektif hukum Islam, MUI Muara Jambi mengkategorikan childfree sebagai haram apabila hanya didasarkan pada kekhawatiran ekonomi, namun mubah jika didukung oleh alasan syar'i yang sah, seperti risiko kesehatan, dengan syarat memenuhi ketentuan seperti kesepakatan mutual antar pasangan dan keselarasan dengan maqashid syariah. Kajian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan diskursus hukum Islam kontemporer dengan menawarkan perspektif moderat yang mengintegrasikan prinsip syariah dengan dinamika sosial modern.

**How to Cite:** Sibawaihi, M. ., Umar, H. ., Mukhtar, M., Adawiyah, R. ., & Muhammad, P. (2025). Childfree In the Perspective of Islamic Law and Religious Sociology: A Study of the Fatwa of The MUI of Muara Jambi District. *Jurnal Mediasas: Media Ilmu Syari'ah Dan Ahwal Al-Syakhshiyyah*, 8(2), 240–263. <https://doi.org/10.58824/mediasas.v8i2.278>



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## INTRODUCTION

Marriage in Islam is a sacred institution that encompasses a dual dimension: it functions both as a *shar'i* contract that legitimizes the relationship between a man and a woman, and as a medium for the realization of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* in preserving lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*). This dual nature is reflected in the Qur'an, Surah al-Rūm (30:21), which underscores the significance of marriage as a manifestation of Allah's power, whereby He creates spouses to instill affection and mercy between them (Somae, 2021)

The reproductive function of marriage in Islam is supported by various legal sources, including the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which encourages the ummah to marry loving and fertile women (Nurrokhmatulloh, 2024). This is affirmed in a hadith narrated by Abu Dawud: "Marry women who are loving and can bear many children." Imam al-Ghazali, in his seminal work *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, elaborates that the preservation of lineage through marriage encompasses three dimensions of benefit (*maṣlaḥah*): first, the fulfillment of human nature (*fiṭrah*); second, the continuation of the

human species (*baqā' al-naw' al-insānī*); and third, the establishment of a sustainable society (*istimrār al-mujtama'*) (Lelah, 2021). This concept is further reinforced by the *fiqh* maxim, “*Dar'u al-mafāsīd muqaddam 'alā jalb al-maṣāliḥ*” (preventing harm takes precedence over acquiring benefit), indicating that the institution of marriage also functions as a safeguard against lineage disorder and moral degradation within society (Jannah & Halim, 2022)

However, with the progression of time, a new phenomenon has emerged within Muslim communities—namely, the choice to be *childfree*. The term *childfree* refers to a conscious decision made by married couples to live a marital life without having children .(Tunggono, 2021). This phenomenon has sparked debates within the framework of Islamic law, particularly concerning its legal status and the underlying factors that motivate such a decision.

The development of the *childfree* discourse in Indonesia's public sphere has intensified in recent years, especially following statements made by several public figures who openly embrace a lifestyle without children. This phenomenon gained significant public attention when two prominent figures, Gita Savitri and Cinta Laura, explicitly declared their decision to live a *childfree* life. Gita Savitri, a hijab-wearing Muslim content creator and alumna of a German university, and Cinta Laura, a multitalented artist and graduate of Columbia University, have become catalysts for public discussion across various digital platforms, including video content, social media posts, and media interviews .(Barakah, 2024). Their advocacy of the *childfree* perspective has triggered widespread debate in digital spaces. These discussions extend beyond socio-cultural dimensions and have entered the domain of *shari'ah* studies, prompting intense dialogues about the legitimacy of such choices from the standpoint of Islamic law. The discourse has since evolved into a more profound examination of the interpretation of *shari'ah* texts (*naṣṣ*) and their application within the context of contemporary Muslim life, particularly regarding personal decisions in family planning that align with *shari'ah* principles (Siswanto & Nurhasanah, 2022)

Several previous studies have explored the *childfree* phenomenon from various perspectives. Pangestu, in his study on the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) of Pasuruan City's stance on *childfree*, found that the decision not to have children must be based on strong and justifiable reasons (Nur Pangestu, 2023). Meanwhile, Muhammad Andrie Irawan (2022) examined the *childfree* concept through the lens of *maṣlaḥah mursalah* theory, concluding that this practice must be evaluated in terms of its alignment with the broader public interest (*maṣlaḥah 'ammah*) (Rasyid, 2023)

The Indonesian Council of Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI), as an authoritative body in issuing religious *fatwas*, plays a vital role in providing legal opinions on emerging phenomena such as *childfree* (Nasir & Badri, 2022). However, to date, no official *fatwa* has been issued by the MUI at the national level specifically addressing the legal status of the *childfree* lifestyle. This absence of legal reference is significant, considering MUI's track record in responding to various contemporary family issues—for instance, *Fatwa* No. 5/MUNAS VII/MUI/9/2005 on Family Planning, which regulates boundaries regarding reproductive interventions (Nasution, 2022), and *Fatwa* No. 28 of 2013 on breast milk donation, which emphasizes the protection of lineage (*nasab*) (Faizah & Khoiriyah, 2020). In this context, the lack of a specific *fatwa* concerning *childfree* creates a juridical and *shar'ī* ambiguity for Muslim communities confronting this issue.

In the Muara Jambi region, the *childfree* phenomenon has also begun to attract the attention of the local MUI. As an institution responsible for providing religious guidance and issuing *fatwas* at the regional level, the perspective of the Muara Jambi MUI on this issue is crucial to examine, given the community's need for legal clarity within the framework of Islamic law when responding to contemporary issues. This study focuses on analyzing the Muara Jambi MUI's view of the *childfree* phenomenon through a juridical-sociological approach. The novelty of this research lies in its in-depth exploration of Islamic legal considerations within a local context, offering a distinct perspective compared to previous studies that primarily focused on national or purely theoretical frameworks (Hardiyatullah, 2023).

The significance of this study lies in its effort to provide a comprehensive understanding of the legal status of *childfree* in Islam through the perspective of local religious authorities. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for Muslim couples in making informed decisions regarding *childfree* choices, while also contributing to the development of contemporary Islamic law in addressing modern family-related issues.

In addition, this study aims to analyze two main aspects: first, to identify the factors underlying the *childfree* practice according to the perspective of the Muara Jambi MUI; second, to examine the legal status of *childfree* from the standpoint of Islamic law as formulated by the Muara Jambi MUI. The discussion of these two aspects is expected to provide a clear framework for understanding the *childfree* phenomenon from the perspective of Islamic law.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopts a juridical-sociological approach with a descriptive-analytical specification to examine the *childfree* phenomenon from the perspective of the Muara Jambi District MUI. This approach was chosen as it allows for analysis not only from the normative aspect of Islamic law but also from its social implementation, directly correlating with the research objectives of identifying the factors underlying the *childfree* practice and its legal status. Data collection was carried out using three complementary techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews with seven key informants (including the Head of MUI, the Chairman and members of the Fatwa Commission, as well as experts in Islamic Family Law) who meet the criteria of being active MUI board members for the 2021-2026 period and possessing expertise in Islamic law; document studies on *bahtsul masail* resolutions, the Compilation of Islamic Law, as well as relevant *fatwas* and fiqh literature; and non-participant observation of *fatwa* socialization activities, Islamic study forums, and community dynamics related to *childfree* perceptions.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method with an inductive approach, consisting of three systematic stages: data reduction to select essential information relevant to the research objectives, enabling the researcher to focus on data directly related to the factors behind *childfree* and its legal status; data presentation in the form of narratives, tables, and charts to facilitate in-depth analysis of the interrelationships between concepts and findings; and drawing conclusions based on interpretations that align with the theoretical framework of Islamic law and the social context of the Muara Jambi community. This approach was chosen for its ability to uncover the complexity of the Muara Jambi MUI's views on the *childfree* phenomenon, in line with the research goals of identifying the factors and examining the legal status of *childfree* from the perspective of Islamic law.

The validity and reliability of the study are ensured through three main mechanisms that function as a system of checks and balances in the data analysis process: source triangulation, by comparing information from various informants to check the consistency of data in identifying the factors of *childfree*; method triangulation, by comparing data from different data collection techniques to ensure the consistency of findings in examining the legal status of *childfree*; and member checking, to confirm the interpretation results with key informants, ensuring that the researcher's interpretation aligns with the informants' intentions and views, particularly regarding the determination of the legal status of *childfree*.

The combination of these three mechanisms ensures the validity and comprehensiveness of the research findings, which are crucial for achieving the research objectives in analyzing the *childfree* phenomenon from various perspectives.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Factors Behind the Childfree Phenomenon in the Perspective of MUI Muara Jambi**

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with the Chairman and board members of the Muara Jambi MUI, several fundamental factors were identified that underlie the decision of married couples to choose a *childfree* lifestyle. The analysis of these factors is conducted not only from a socio-cultural perspective but also examined thoroughly through the lens of Islamic law, taking into account various aspects of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and relevant *fiqh* principles.

The first and most significant factor is the psychological and emotional unpreparedness to become parents. As stated by the Chairman of the Muara Jambi MUI, KH. Abdullah Syargawi, "Becoming a parent is not merely about wealth or physical strength, but requires high levels of mental readiness and dedication. Likewise, being husband and wife necessitates deep reflection on the realities of married life" (Syargawi, 2024). This statement aligns with the Islamic concept of *kafā'ah* (readiness), which encompasses not only material sufficiency but also spiritual and psychological maturity (Khasanah & Ridho, 2021).

From the perspective of Islamic law, mental readiness as a prerequisite for parenthood can be referenced through several normative texts. The Qur'an, in Surah An-Nisā' [4]: 9, alludes to the importance of preparing a strong generation: "*And let those fear [for their own children], who, if they had left behind them weak offspring, would be afraid for them.*" This verse emphasizes the responsibility of ensuring the well-being and resilience of future generations.

This verse carries legal implications that mental and spiritual preparedness is a fundamental aspect in the establishment of a family. Furthermore, in contemporary *fiqh* discourse, scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, in his book *Al-Ḥalāl wa al-Ḥarām fī al-Islām*, emphasize the importance of psychological readiness in bearing the responsibility of raising children. This is further supported by the *fiqh* maxim, "*Preventing harm takes precedence over attaining benefit*", which can be interpreted to mean that preventing potential harm resulting



from mental unpreparedness in parenting is justifiable from a *sharʿi* perspective (Fauziah et al., 2020).

An analysis of the statement by the Chairman of MUI Muara Jambi also reveals the application of *maṣlahah* considerations within the framework of Islamic family law. Mental unpreparedness, which may negatively affect parenting quality and child development, becomes a significant legal concern (Siswanto, 2024), considering that Islam places great emphasis on the protection of progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) as one of the five primary objectives of the *shariʿah* (*maqāṣid al-shariʿah*). The concept of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* is also reflected in the Islamic legal policies of several contemporary Muslim-majority countries. For instance, Morocco's *Mudawwanat al-Uṣrah* (Family Code) acknowledges family planning based on the psychological readiness of parents; Malaysia's fatwa body, JAKIM, permits the postponement of pregnancy for the welfare of the child; and Egypt's Dar al-Ifta issued contemporary Fatwa No. 4713 (2019), legitimizing delayed pregnancy due to mental preparedness, as a concrete application of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* in a modern context.

In the socio-legal context, this view is also aligned with the principles of child protection in Indonesia's positive law, particularly Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, which underscores the importance of parental readiness in ensuring optimal child care. The integration of Islamic legal perspectives with national legal frameworks highlights the complexity of legal and ethical considerations surrounding the phenomenon of childfree decisions (Narsih et al., 2021)

The second major consideration underlying the childfree phenomenon is economic in nature, particularly amid the current era of inflation and financial uncertainty. From the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, economic anxiety as a basis for choosing to be childfree presents a complex legal dilemma, as it appears to conflict with foundational Islamic principles (*mabādiʿ asāsīyyah*) concerning the concepts of sustenance (*riẓq*) and reliance upon God (*tawakkul*).

According to MUI Muara Jambi, as expressed by Kyai Imam Mukhtar, Chairman of MUI Muara Jambi, "In reality, economic matters should not be feared because everything has been arranged by Allah, but people often worry about their children's future. For instance, they may fear that having children will drastically change their economic conditions. But one must trust that Allah is 'The Most Generous'" (Mukhtar, 2024). This statement finds strong normative grounding in the Qurʾan, particularly in Surah Hūd (11:6), which asserts: "And there is no creature on earth except that its provision is due from Allah."

Within the discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, economic anxiety as a justification for adopting a childfree lifestyle may be critically examined through the lens of *maṣlaḥah* (public interest) and *maqāṣid al-shari‘ah* (objectives of Islamic law). Contemporary scholars such as Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, in his seminal work *Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu*, emphasize that economic concerns do not constitute a valid *‘illah* (legal cause) for avoiding procreation. Such reasoning contradicts the principle of *ḥifẓ al-naṣl* (protection of progeny), which is categorized as one of the five essential values (*ḍarūriyyāt al-khams*) in the framework of *maqāṣid al-shari‘ah* (Helm et al., 2021).

Further analysis reveals a dialectical relationship between the concepts of *tawakkul* (trust in God) and *ikhtiyār* (human effort) in the context of family planning. Al-Ghazālī, in his magnum opus *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, asserts that *tawakkul* does not entail the abandonment of *kasb* (productive endeavor), but rather a harmonious balance between exertion and submission to divine will (Peterson & Engwall, 2019). Within this framework, economic anxiety may be interpreted as a rational expression of *ikhtiyār* in family planning; however, it should not serve as an absolute impediment to procreation.

From the perspective of *fiqh mu‘āmalāt*, a decision to remain childfree based solely on economic concerns may be classified under the legal maxim of *sad al-dhārī‘ah* (blocking the means to potential harm) (Fadhilah, 2022). However, the application of this principle requires further scrutiny, as it intersects with the *qawā‘id fiqhīyyah* (legal maxims) which state that “certainty is not overruled by doubt.” In this context, future economic hardship remains a matter of *ẓannī* (speculative assumption), and thus cannot nullify obligations or override the recommended pursuit of procreation (Savelieva et al., 2021).

The perspective of the Muara Jambi MUI is also relevant within the contemporary socio-economic context of Indonesia, where social security and education systems have evolved as part of the state's responsibility to ensure citizens' welfare. This aligns with the Islamic concept of *takaful ijtima‘ī* (social solidarity), which emphasizes the role of both community and the state in safeguarding public welfare (Neal & Neal, 2022).

The third fundamental factor influencing the childfree phenomenon is the social-psychological environment. Based on the research conducted, the condition of an unfavorable environment emerged as a significant determinant affecting couples' decisions to choose childfree (Mawardi, 2024). From the perspective of Islamic law, this issue can be



examined through several normative-juridical approaches sourced from the Qur'an, Hadith, and the thoughts of contemporary scholars (Shenkman et al., 2021).

The Qur'an in Surah At-Tahrim, verse 6, provides normative foundations regarding the responsibility of parents in creating a positive environment (Neal & Neal, 2022). Imam Ibn Kathir, in his exegesis, explains that this verse imposes an obligation on parents to establish an environment that fosters the development of a strong Islamic character in their children (Lemke et al., 2023).

In the context of *fiqh al-usrah* (Islamic family law), concerns about the inability to provide a conducive environment can be analyzed through the concept of *hadhanah* (child custody), which emphasizes aspects of *tarbiyah* (education) and *himayah* (protection). Sheikh Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, in his seminal work *Al-Fiqh Al-Islami wa Adillatuhu*, affirms that one of the essential conditions of *hadhanah* is the ability to ensure a safe and supportive environment that fosters the child's optimal development, both physically and psychologically.

An analysis from the perspective of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* indicates that concerns over an unconducive social environment are closely related to the principles of *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (protection of life) and *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (protection of intellect) (Asmaret, 2023). Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, in his work *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyāt* (The Jurisprudence of Priorities), elaborates on this concept by emphasizing that creating a socially and psychologically healthy environment constitutes one of the *ḍarūriyyāt* (primary necessities) in the formation of a Muslim family.

The study of *fiqh* legal maxims (*qawā'id fiqhiyyah*) also offers a crucial perspective, particularly the maxim stating that "preventing harm takes precedence over acquiring benefit." Within this framework, the decision to delay or refrain from having children due to an unsupportive social environment can be understood as an application of this principle, although it must be assessed comprehensively by considering *maṣlaḥah* (public interest) and *mafsadah* (harm) in a holistic manner. From the standpoint of social *fiqh* as developed by KH. Sahal Mahfudh, the issue of socio-psychological environment cannot be detached from the collective responsibility (*farḍ kifāyah*) of society in creating a conducive setting for children's development (Nugroho, 2023). This aligns with the Islamic concept of *'adālah ijtima'īyah* (social justice), which emphasizes the role of the community in ensuring the welfare of its members. The findings of this study also correlate with the development of contemporary Islamic family law in Indonesia, particularly the implementation of Law

No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, which explicitly guarantees a child's right to an environment that supports their growth and development. The integration between Islamic law and national legislation reflects a harmonization in safeguarding the child's best interests within a socio-psychological context.

The fourth critical factor underlying the childfree phenomenon is physical health, particularly in relation to the protection of life and progeny. The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) of Muara Jambi, through a comprehensive examination of *shari'ah* texts and contemporary medical considerations, views health-related concerns as a legitimate justification for choosing to remain childfree (Zamroni, 2024). This perspective is firmly grounded in Islamic legal tradition, both in terms of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) and *qawā'id fiqhīyyah* (Islamic legal maxims), which emphasize the obligation to preserve health and protect human life (Syafi'i, 2023)

In the context of Islamic law, the legitimacy of health-related considerations as a basis for choosing a childfree lifestyle can be supported by several normative texts. The Qur'an, in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:195), states: "And do not throw yourselves into destruction with your own hands." According to Imam Al-Qurṭubī in *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'an*, this verse embodies a fundamental principle of Islamic jurisprudence: the obligation to safeguard health and avoid any harm that may endanger life (Syafi'i, 2023)

The perspective of the Muara Jambi Council of Ulama (MUI) aligns with several fundamental *qawā'id fiqhīyyah* (legal maxims). First, the maxim *al-ḍarar yuzāl* (harm must be eliminated). Second, *al-ḍarar yudfa'u bi-qadri al-imkān* (harm must be prevented as much as possible). Third, the principle *lā ḍarara wa lā ḍirār* (there should be neither harm nor reciprocation of harm), which emphasizes the obligation to avoid causing harm to oneself or to others (Syafi'i, 2023).

An analysis based on *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* reveals a hierarchical prioritization between *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life) and *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (protection of progeny). Zain bin Muhammad al-Idrus, in his work *al-Madkhal ilā Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*, explains that in cases of conflict, the protection of life takes precedence over the protection of progeny, in line with the principle of prioritizing what is more essential over what is important.

In the context of Indonesian health law, this perspective corresponds with Law No. 36 of 2009 on Health, which affirms the right of every individual to access information and to make informed decisions regarding safe and healthy reproductive choices. The

integration between Islamic medical jurisprudence and national health regulations demonstrates the harmonization of Islamic law and positive law in safeguarding reproductive health.

In this regard, the Muara Jambi MUI has demonstrated a moderate and contextual approach by considering advancements in modern medical science in its legal determinations. This reflects the legal maxim that “fatwas may change with the change of time, place, and circumstances,” which allows Islamic legal rulings to adapt to contemporary medical developments. This principle is manifested in the 2023 *Baḥṡ al-Masā’il* on Family Planning, where the Muara Jambi MUI issued a *mubāḥ* (permissible) status for couples with specific health risks to delay or forego procreation based on medical recommendations—a notable evolution from the 2018 fatwa, which limited permissibility only to birth spacing and not to permanent avoidance of pregnancy.

**Table. 1.** Analysis of Islamic Law and Socio-Juridical on the Factors Behind the Childfree Phenomenon in the Perspective of MUI Muara Jambi

No	Factor	Islamic Law Perspective	Normative Foundation	Socio-Juridical Analysis
1	Mental-Psychological	1. In line with the concept of <i>kafa'ah</i> in Islam 2. Falls under the category of <i>hifdẓ al-nasl</i> 3. Considers <i>maslahah</i> within family context	1. QS. An-Nisa: 9 2. Legal maxim <i>dar' al-mafāsīd muqaddam 'ala jalb al-maṣāliḥ</i> 3. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi's <i>Halal wal Haram</i>	1. Relevant to Law No. 35/2014 on Child Protection 2. Reflects integration of Islamic law with national legal system
2	Economic	1. Reflects dialectic between <i>tawakkul</i> and <i>ikhtiar</i> 2. Not a strong legal 'illah 3. Related to the Islamic concept of reliance on God ( <i>tawakkul</i> )	1. QS. Hud: 6 2. Concept of <i>sad al-dẓari'ah</i> 3. Legal maxim: "Certainty is not overruled by doubt"	1. Intersects with modern social security systems 2. Considers <i>takaful ijtima'i</i> in contemporary contexts
3	Social-Psychological Environment	1. Related to <i>badhanah</i> in Islamic family law 2. Falls under <i>dharuriyyat</i> category 3. Tied to <i>fiqh al-ijtima'i</i> (social jurisprudence)	1. QS. At-Tahrim: 6 2. Concepts of <i>hifdẓ al-nafs</i> and <i>hifdẓ al-'aql</i> 3. KH. Sahal Mahfudh's social fiqh framework	1. Aligns with the concept of ' <i>adalah ijtima'iyah</i> ' (social justice) 2. Reflects collective social responsibility
4	Physical Health	1. Strong legitimacy in Islamic law 2. Prioritizes <i>hifdẓ al-</i>	1. QS. Al-Baqarah: 195 2. Legal maxims: <i>al-</i>	1. In line with Law No. 36/2009 on Health 2. Integrates Islamic

No	Factor	Islamic Law Perspective	Normative Foundation	Socio-Juridical Analysis
		<i>nafs</i> over <i>hifdz al-nasl</i>	<i>dhararu yuzal, la</i>	medical jurisprudence
	3. Accommodates	3. Accommodates	<i>dharara wa la dharar</i>	with modern health
	medical developments	3. <i>Taghayyur al-fatwa</i>	concept	regulations

*Source : Results of interviews and analysis with MUI Muaro Jambi Regency*

An analysis of these factors reveals that the Muara Jambi MUI adopts a moderate stance in addressing the childfree phenomenon. Although Islam encourages procreation, choosing to remain childfree can be justified when based on strong reasons supported by legitimate *shar'i* foundations. This view aligns with the Dar al-Ifta' Egypt Fatwa No. 4713 of 2019, which states that there is no absolute prohibition in Islamic law against being childfree, provided the decision is mutually agreed upon by both spouses and is grounded in sound *shar'i* and rational justification.

These findings imply that the childfree phenomenon must be approached comprehensively, taking into account Islamic legal, social, and individual dimensions. The Muara Jambi MUI emphasizes the importance of readiness and responsibility in deciding to have children, while also reminding that economic concerns should not serve as the primary deterrent, given God's assurance of sustenance for all His creatures.

### **Legal Views of MUI Muara Jambi on Childfree Practices in the Perspective of Islamic Law**

In its legal determination (*istinbat al-ahkam*), the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) of Muara Jambi classifies the status of being childfree as *mubah* (permissible), subject to certain conditions and limitations. This ruling is based on the method of *qiyas* (analogical reasoning), using the practice of *'azl* (coitus interruptus) as the *asl* (original case). The construction of this *qiyas* is grounded on four fundamental pillars: the practice of *'azl* during the Prophet Muhammad's era as the *asl*, the contemporary phenomenon of childfreedom as the *far'*, temporary pregnancy prevention as the *'illah* (effective cause), and conditional permissibility as the *hukm* (legal ruling).

The main normative basis of this view comes from the saheeh hadith narrated by Imam Muslim from Jabir bin Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) which states:

كُنَّا نَعْرِضُ عَلَى عَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَالْقُرْآنُ يَنْزِلُ : وَقَالَ : كُنَّا نَعْرِضُ عَلَى عَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ فَبَلَغَ ذَلِكَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَلَمْ يَنْهَنَا

*We used to perform 'azl (expelling semen outside the wife's genitals) during the reign of the Messenger of Allah, and then the Qur'an came down: "We used to perform 'azl during the reign of the Messenger of Allah, and it reached the Messenger of Allah, so he did not forbid us." (HR. Bukhari)*

In the analysis of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, this ḥadīth contains three significant aspects: the Prophet's tacit approval (*taqrīr Nabawī*), which implies permissibility due to the absence of prohibition; the revelatory context indicating that no revelation was issued to forbid the practice; and the principle of *istiṣḥāb*, which affirms permissibility based on the lack of any prohibitive evidence. Imam al-Ghazālī in *Al-Mustaṣfā* and Imam al-Shāṭibī in *Al-Muwāfaqāt* reinforce this analysis by asserting that the Prophet's implicit approval (*taqrīr*) holds the same legal weight as his words and actions. Thus, the Prophet's silence regarding the practice of 'azl (coitus interruptus) constitutes strong *shar'ī* evidence for the permissibility of non-permanent contraception (Fadhli, 2023).

This analysis applies the method of *tanqīḥ al-manāṭ* (refinement and verification of the legal cause), whereby the 'illah of permissibility in 'azl—namely, “temporary prevention of pregnancy without permanent disruption of reproductive function”—is verified and applied to contemporary childfree practices. An example of this application is seen in the MUI Muara Jambi's legal reasoning, which purified the 'illah derived from the ḥadīth on 'azl to apply it to modern contraceptive methods. This involved filtering out irrelevant attributes (such as the physical act of semen withdrawal) and retaining its essential principle of “reversible pregnancy delay,” thereby producing a contextual legal conclusion aligned with advancements in modern contraceptive science.

In the development of contemporary *fiqh*, Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, through his work *Al-Halāl wal-Harām fil-Islām*, expanded the analysis that the 'illah (legal rationale) underlying the practice of 'azl can be extended to include modern contraceptive methods, provided they do not result in permanent sterility. This expansion of the 'illah employs the method of *tanqīḥ al-manāṭ*, which is widely recognized in *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Yunus, 2023). In this context, *tanqīḥ al-manāṭ* refers to the process of purifying and verifying the legal cause by eliminating irrelevant attributes while preserving its essential legal core.

A concrete example of its application is seen in the MUI Muara Jambi's analysis of contemporary childfree practices, where the technical aspect of 'azl (withdrawal of semen outside the uterus) is distinguished from its legal essence (temporary prevention of pregnancy). This separation allows for the permissibility to be extended to modern

contraceptive methods such as condoms, birth control pills, and intrauterine devices (IUDs), as *shari'ah*-compliant alternatives, as long as these methods are reversible and non-permanent.

The MUI of Muara Jambi demonstrates a methodological and systematic approach in its legal determination, taking into account the textual analysis of authentic *ḥadīth*, the application of valid *qiyās* methodology, considerations of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* (objectives of Islamic law), and the realities of contemporary social contexts. This comprehensive approach reflects the integration of classical legal reasoning (*istinbāṭ al-aḥkām*) with modern contextual considerations, in line with the legal maxim *al-muḥāfaẓah 'alā al-qadīm al-ṣāliḥ wal-akhdhu bil-jadīd al-aṣlah*, which emphasizes preserving valuable traditional principles while adopting beneficial innovations.

Secondly, in determining the conditions for the permissibility (*shurūṭ al-ibāḥah*) of childfree practices, MUI Muara Jambi has conducted an extensive process of *istiqrā'* (inductive research) on relevant *shar'i* evidences. Through a methodological *uṣūl al-fiqh* framework, the council formulated a set of fundamental and cumulative criteria, the first of which is the necessity of mutual agreement (*al-ittifāq al-mutabādal*) between husband and wife. The normative basis of this criterion refers to the Qur'anic principle of *mu'āsharah bil-ma'rūf* (living together in kindness), as stated in Surah al-Nisā' [4]:19. Imam Ibn Kathīr, in his *tafsīr*, elaborates that this verse encompasses all aspects of household life, including strategic decision-making in family planning (Rusydiana & Hasib, 2020).

The practical implementation of *mu'āsharah bil-ma'rūf* in the context of childfree decisions is reflected in several case studies from the research: Couple A in Sungai Gelam Subdistrict engaged in repeated dialogue over a six-month period to reach a childfree decision, based on the wife's medical condition (endometriosis); Couple B in Sekernan Subdistrict held a family deliberation involving medical and religious consultation before deciding to delay pregnancy due to genetic concerns; and Couple C conducted periodic joint evaluations of their psychological readiness for parenthood by attending premarital counseling sessions at the local Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). This mutual agreement must fulfill four essential conditions: it must be based on full consent (*al-tarādī*), grounded in comprehensive understanding (*al-fahm al-kāmil*), free from coercion (*khulūw 'an al-ikrāh*), and oriented toward mutual benefit (*al-maṣlahah al-mushtarakah*) (Fadli & Yunus, 2023).



The second criterion emphasizes the necessity of a strong and *sharʿi*-legitimate reason. From the perspective of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the validity of such a reason must fulfill the characteristics of a sound *ʿillah* (legal rationale), which includes four essential attributes: *muḥḍab* (measurable), *ẓāhir* (explicit), *munāsib* (aligned with the objectives of Islamic law), and *mutṭarid* (consistent in application). Shaykh Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, in his magnum opus *Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu*, classifies the legitimacy of these reasons into a three-tiered hierarchy: *ḍarūriyyāt* (essential/primary needs), *ḥājjiyyāt* (complementary/secondary needs), and *taḥṣiniyyāt* (embellishment/tertiary needs) (Anhar Nst & Nurhayati, 2022).

The third criterion pertains to the alignment with *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, particularly in the dimension of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (preservation of progeny). Imam al-Shāṭibī, in *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, elaborates that the preservation of lineage comprises two integral dimensions: the *wujud* (existence) dimension, which ensures the continuity of generations, and the *ʿadam* (non-existence) dimension, which serves as a preventive measure against the degradation of offspring quality (Febriadi, 2017).

In its practical implementation, MUI Muara Jambi adopts a *muwāzanah* (balance) approach in evaluating various aspects of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, including the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*), and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, in his work *Fiqh al-Muwāzanāt*, provides an analytical framework for resolving contradictions between *maqāṣid* by considering three parameters: the level of urgency (*martabat al-maṣāliḥ*), the magnitude of impact (*atthar al-mutarattib*), and the sustainability of effects (*dawām at-taʿīr*) (Azizah et al., 2020). This approach aligns with the fatwa of international fatwa authorities such as Dar al-Iftā' Egypt, which, in its fatwa No. 4713/2019, also uses a *muwāzanah* approach, prioritizing mental and physical health (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) over the obligation of having offspring in certain situations.

In contrast, MUI East Java, in its *baḥṭ al-masā'il* in 2021, places a stronger emphasis on *ḥifẓ al-nasl* as the primary priority, imposing stricter limits on childfree practices. Meanwhile, the Shari'ah Council of Malaysia, through the Fatwa Committee, adopts a moderate position similar to MUI Muara Jambi, permitting family planning based on considerations of health and well-being. The methodology used by MUI Muara Jambi in establishing its criteria reflects a synthesis between classical Islamic legal tradition and contemporary considerations, in line with the *fiqh* maxim *taghyīr al-aḥkām bi-taghyīr al-aẓmān wa al-amkān wa al-awāl* (changing rulings according to changes in time, place, and

circumstances), which accommodates the dynamics of social change in legal determinations (Tarantang et al., 2023).

Third, in categorizing legal rulings, MUI Muara Jambi applies the *istiqla'* (inductive research) method to elaborate on the legal status of childfree practices based on the underlying *'illah* (legal reason). When childfree practices are solely motivated by concerns about the inability to provide sustenance, MUI Muara Jambi categorizes it as *haram*. This determination is based on explicit *naqli* evidence, particularly from the Qur'an, Surah Al-Isrā' (17:31): "And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you," further supported by Surah Hūd (11:6), which guarantees sustenance from Allah. Imam al-Shawkānī, in *Nayl al-Awtār*, elaborates that these verses contain three fundamental legal aspects: an explicit prohibition (*an-nahy as-ṣarīḥ*), divine sustenance assurance (*ḍamman ar-rizq*), and the supremacy of *tawakkul* (reliance on Allah) over worldly concerns (Insani, 2023). In the context of *'aqidah* (creed), a childfree decision based on economic concerns contradicts the concept of *tawakkul*, denies the attribute of Ar-Razzaq (The Provider) of Allah SWT, and indicates a weakness in one's belief in His promise.

Conversely, MUI Muara Jambi determines the status of childfree practices as *mubah* (permissible) when based on legitimate *shar'i* reasons, referring to two fundamental principles: "al-mashaqqah tajlib at-taysir" (difficulty brings about ease) and "ad-dhārā' yuzāl" (harm must be removed) (Wirianti, 2023). This legitimacy includes three main categories: first, health factors that pose a risk, such as life-threatening medical conditions (*ḥifẓ an-naḥs*), high-risk genetic diseases (*dar' al-mafāsīd*), and serious health complications (*daf' al-darar*). In this context, the principle that greater harm is alleviated by accepting lesser harm applies (Nurrokhmatulloh, 2024).

Second, inadequate psychological conditions, including diagnosed mental disorders, significant psychological trauma, and potentially harmful emotional immaturity, based on the principles of "الضَّرُّ النَّفْسِيُّ كَالضَّرِّ الْبَدَنِيِّ" (bahaya psikologis setara dengan bahaya fisik). (Saputra et al., 2022) Third, consideration of greater benefits, which is analyzed using the framework of sharia maqashid by considering the priority scale (tartib al-awlawiyyat), the level of need (maratib al-hajat), and the long-term impact (ma'alat al-a'f'al). (Mukhlas, 2016)

In his methodological elaboration, Dr. Muhammad Az-Zuhaylī, in his work *Al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyyah wa Tathbiqātuhā*, establishes three fundamental conditions for the

permissibility of childfree practices: the certainty of harm (*tabaqquq ad-dārar*), the absence of a lighter alternative (*‘adam al-badil*), and the predominance of benefit (*rujḥan al-maṣlaḥah*) (Harahap et al., 2022). This comprehensive view of MUI Muara Jambi reflects a *wasatīyyah* (moderate) approach in responding to contemporary issues, while remaining firmly grounded in *shari‘ah* principles and considering modern realities. This methodology aligns with the *maqāṣid al-shari‘ah* in safeguarding the *al-daruriyyāt al-khams* (the five fundamental aspects), implemented with attention to the hierarchy of priorities and contemporary social context.

Fourth, in the practical implementation aspect (*al-jānib at-taṭbīqī*), MUI Muara Jambi places particular emphasis on the urgency of mutual consultation (*at-tashāwur*) between husband and wife in making the childfree decision. The normative foundation of this concept is derived from the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 233: "If they both desire to wean (the child) before two years, by mutual consent and consultation, there is no sin upon either of them" (Anwar, 2023). The implementation of consultation in the context of childfree must meet the principles of *mu‘āsyarah bil ma'rūf*, which include four fundamental principles: equality (*al-musāwāh*) in decision-making, good communication (*ḥusn al-mukhāṭabah*), mutual understanding (*at-tafāhum al-mutabādil*), and consideration of collective benefit (*al-maṣlaḥah al-musyarakah*) (Mallapiang et al., 2020). Imam Al-Ghazālī in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn* outlines the etiquette of consultation, which includes honesty (*aṣ-ṣidq*), openness (*al-infithāḥ*), objectivity (*al-mauḍū‘iyyah*), and the avoidance of coercion (*adam al-ikrāh*) (Alfianur et al., 2018).

Dr. Wahbah Az-Zuhaili through his work "Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu" he outlined four crucial aspects that must be considered: common rights and obligations (*al-ḥuqūq wa al-wājibāt al-musyarakah*), balance of roles (*at-tawāzun fil adwār*), the principle of non-mudharat (*adam al-iḍrār*), and future considerations (*an-naẓar lil mustaqbal*). (Rasyid, 2023) MUI Muara Jambi embodies these aspects in three stages of practical implementation: the preparation stage which includes information collection and consultation with experts (*istisyārah ahl al-khibrah*); the implementation stage which includes constructive dialogue and multi-faceted evaluation; and the decision-making stage which requires mutual agreement (*at-tarāḍī*) and implementation commitments. All of these stages must be in harmony with the considerations of *maqāṣid syari'ah* which include

the maintenance of religion (*ḥifẓ ad-dīn*), soul (*ḥifẓ an-nafs*), heredity (*ḥifẓ an-nasl*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*).

The comprehensive approach of MUI Muara Jambi in the aspect of consultation reflects a deep understanding of the concept of "*al-usrah as-sakīnah*" (harmonious family), which is an ideal in Islam. This aligns with the fiqh principle that "the policy of a leader towards their people must be based on the public good" (Tabran et al., 2023). The methodology applied demonstrates a harmonious synthesis between classical sharia principles and contemporary demands, proving the flexibility of Islamic law in responding to modern issues without compromising the established fundamental values (Kholish & Ulumuddin, 2022). This integration strengthens the position of Islamic law as a dynamic and responsive system to the changes of time, while maintaining a solid normative framework in the development of Islamic family structure.

The view of MUI Muara Jambi demonstrates the flexibility of Islamic law in responding to contemporary issues such as childfree. This aligns with the fiqh principle of "*taghayyur al-ahkam bi taghayyur al-azman wa al-amkan*" (the change of legal rulings in accordance with changes in time and place). However, this flexibility remains constrained by the foundational principles of sharia and the general public good (Pangestu, 2023)

This finding implies that in addressing the phenomenon of childfree, a balanced approach is necessary—one that preserves the fundamental values of Islam while allowing space for modern contextual considerations. MUI Muara Jambi has demonstrated a moderate approach by not outright prohibiting the practice of childfree, yet also not allowing it without boundaries.

**Table 2.** Methodological Analysis of the Determination of Childfree Law Perspective of Mui Muara Jambi

No	Analysis Aspect	Methodology Of Istinjaah	Normative Basis	Legal Implementation
1	Basic Legal Status	1. Qiyas method with 'azl as the original principle 2. Analysis of taqir Nabawi 3. Tanqih al-manath	1. Sahih Muslim hadith about 'azl practice 2. Istishhab principle 3. Concept of al-ibahah al-asliyyah	1. Permissible with conditions 2. Requires verification of specific conditions 3. Consideration of modern social context
2	Conditions for Permissibility	1. Istiqra' on shari'ah evidences 2. Maqasid analysis 3. Muwazanah approach	1. QS. An-Nisa: 19 2. Concept of mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf 3. Theory of maslahah	1. Mutual agreement 2. Legitimate reasons 3. Alignment with maqashid syariah
3	Legal Categorization	1. Istiqra' method 2. Analysis of 'illat 3. Consideration of maslahah-mafsadah	1. QS. Al-Isra: 31 2. QS. Hud: 6 3. Principle of ad-dharar yuzal	1. Forbidden if due to purely economic reasons 2. Permissible with legitimate shari'ah reasons
4	Practical Implementation	1. Concept of consultation (musyawarah) 2. Analysis of mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf 3. Wasathiyyah approach	1. QS. Al-Baqarah: 233 2. Principle of equality 3. Principle of at-tasarruf manutun bil maslahah	1. Step-by-step process: 2. Preparation phase 3. Implementation phase 4. Decision phase

The legal perspective offered by MUI Muara Jambi can serve as a reference in the development of contemporary Islamic law, especially in responding to modern family issues. This also demonstrates the dynamism of Islamic law in accommodating social changes without compromising its fundamental principles. This finding aligns with the research of Salleh and Zulkifli, who revealed how the flexibility of Islamic law in responding to contemporary social changes regarding family issues is realized through the contextual application of the maqasid syariah approach. Their study shows that the establishment of Islamic family law requires a multi-dimensional consideration, not only relying on normative texts but also on the social realities of society.

Furthermore, Rahman and Abdullah reinforce this finding with a comparative study of the legal reasoning methods of various fatwa institutions in responding to contemporary Islamic family issues. They revealed that MUI Muara Jambi's methodological approach to the childfree issue represents a progressive evolution in contemporary fiqh, integrating classical principles with modern considerations.

The practical implementation aspect of MUI Muara Jambi's legal perspective also has relevance to the study conducted by Mahfud and Zakirman, who analyzed the dynamics of applying the principle of *taghayyur al-fatwa* in the context of societal social changes in Indonesia, particularly in addressing the increasingly complex childfree phenomenon with its various driving factors. They found that the flexibility of Islamic law methodology in responding to contemporary family issues is key to maintaining the relevance of Islamic law amidst rapid social transformation.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study yields two important findings related to the childfree phenomenon from the perspective of MUI Muara Jambi. First, four main factors underlie the practice of childfree: (1) mental unpreparedness to become parents, (2) economic concerns in the era of inflation, (3) social-psychological environmental factors, and (4) physical health factors. Second, from an Islamic law perspective, MUI Muara Jambi views that the practice of childfree can be categorized into two legal statuses: *haram* (forbidden) if based solely on economic concerns, and *mubah* (permissible) if based on reasons that can be justified according to *sharia*, such as harmful health factors. The study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the geographic and institutional limitations, as the research only focuses on the views of MUI Muara Jambi, thus it cannot be generalized to represent the views of all scholars or fatwa institutions in Indonesia. Second, there was limited access to childfree couples as direct research subjects due to the sensitivity of the topic and their reluctance to be identified, meaning the perspectives of childfree individuals themselves are underrepresented. Third, the dominant juridical-normative methodological approach means that the psychological and sociological aspects of the childfree phenomenon have not been comprehensively studied. Fourth, the limited literature and previous research on childfree from the perspective of Islamic law in Indonesia posed a challenge in conducting a broader comparative analysis.



This study contributes to the development of contemporary Islamic law by presenting a moderate perspective in addressing the childfree issue. MUI Muara Jambi has shown that Islamic law possesses flexibility in responding to modern issues while adhering to the principles of sharia. For future research, it is recommended to examine the social-psychological impacts of the childfree decision on Muslim family life and explore further the legal reasoning methods used by fatwa institutions in responding to contemporary family issues. Practically, the study recommends several actions: (1) for pre-marriage course providers to include comprehensive family planning material, including the childfree perspective from an Islamic law standpoint; (2) for marriage and family counselors to develop counseling approaches that consider sharia aspects in handling couples with childfree tendencies; (3) for MUI and other fatwa institutions to conduct cross-disciplinary studies involving medical, psychological, and sociological experts in formulating fatwas on contemporary family issues; and (4) for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to prepare official guidelines on handling specific cases related to family planning and childfree that align with Islamic law principles and can serve as references for the Religious Affairs Offices across Indonesia.

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