

The Phenomenon of Childfree in Marriage From the Perspective of Deontological Ethics

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is an agreement between a man and a woman to form the smallest institutional unit called a family. Economic reasons, physical beauty, sociology and the environment triggered the childfree phenomenon which was quite viral lately in Indonesia as a country full of eastern values, causing debate. Childfree is a term used for couples who do not want to have children or offspring after marriage. It is believed that for some couples having children or getting offspring is a big responsibility as a consequence. Childfree in the view of Deontological Ethics is an option to be studied in this study using a qualitative approach method. Data obtained from primary and secondary sources are processed and analyzed to draw qualitative descriptive conclusions. This theory prioritizes rules/traditions/customs in distinguishing good or bad actions. This study found that the decision not to have children is contrary to universal moral law.

Keywords: *Childfree, marriage, ethical deontology.*

ABSTRAK

Perkawinan merupakan suatu kesepakatan antara laki-laki dengan Perempuan untuk membentuk satu unit Lembaga terkecil yang disebut dengan keluarga. Alasan ekonomi, keindahan fisik, sosiologi maupun lingkungan memicu fenomena childfree yang cukup viral belakangan di Indonesia sebagai negara yang sarat dengan nilai ketimuran, sehingga menimbulkan perdebatan. *Childfree* merupakan istilah yang digunakan untuk pasangan yang tidak ingin mempunyai anak ataupun keturunan setelah menikah. Diyakini bagi sebagian pasangan memiliki anak atau mendapatkan keturunan merupakan tanggung jawab besar sebagai konsekwensinya. *Childfree* dalam pandangan Etika Deontologi menjadi pilihan untuk dikaji dalam penelitian ini dengan menggunakan metode pendekatan kualitatif. Data diperoleh dari sumber primer dan sekunder yang diolah dan dianalisis untuk menarik kesimpulan deskriptif kualitatif. Teori ini lebih mengutamakan aturan/tradisi/adat dalam membedakan perbuatan yang baik atau buruk Studi ini menemukan bahwa keputusan untuk tidak memiliki anak berlawanan dengan hukum moral universal

Kata Kunci : Kata kunci: Childfree, perkawinan, etika deon

A. BACKGROUND

Marriage is an agreement between a man and a woman to form a unit of the smallest institution called a family. Marriage is one of the human needs, not only physical needs, but also psychological needs.¹

Marriage is a physical and mental bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a happy and eternal family (household) based on the Almighty God.² One of the purposes of marriage is to have offspring. Even in certain beliefs, it is emphasised to choose a woman who is likened to fertile land.³ However, the current phenomenon is different, the paradigm of deliberately choosing not to have children (giving birth to children) has become the lifestyle of contemporary couples.

The decision not to have children is one of the most remarkable changes in modern families over the past few decades, the number of couples who voluntarily do not wish to become parents (commonly referred to as 'childless')⁴ has increased dramatically around the world, and this is an important issue for cultural geography.

Some societal mindsets that divide gender roles based on sex have expectations or demands about what women and men should do and have in marital life. This division of roles attaches women to feminine tasks and characteristics (childbirth and motherhood) and attaches men to masculine tasks and characteristics (socio-economic centres) as the support of the household.

One of the roles attached to women with feminine characteristics is to be a mother who gives birth and cares for children.

The mindset, pattern of Indonesian family life is built continuously, becomes a doctrine, and is socialised from an early age, even the division of gender based on sex begins from infancy. This is done so that women and men will one day be ready to perform roles based on their gender.

¹ Henry Frédéric Arnold Völlmar, Frédéric Arnold Völlmar, Chidir Ali, *Hukum Keluarga*, Get Press Indonesia, Padang, 2023, hlm.194

² Undang-Undang Nomor 16 tahun 2019 tentang Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 1 tahun 1974

³ Yusuf Abdullah Daghaq, *Wanita bersiaplah ke rumah tangga*, Gema Insani, Jakarta, 1999, hlm.114.

⁴ Shelly Volsche, 2019, *Voluntarily Childfree Identity and Kinship in the United States*, 2019, Lexington Books, US. 128. Helene A. Cummins, Julie Anne Rodgers Judith Dunkelberger Wouk, 2021, *The Truth About M(O)therhood: Choosing to be Childfree*, : Demeter Press,

According to Oakley⁵, sex is a word to denote the biological differences between men and women male and female based on visible genital organs related to the function of procreation. Whereas gender is a social classification that divides masculine and feminine based on culture. Departing from the differences in the form of women and men with their distinctive characteristics in a complex manner with all the functions of each other complementing each other.

This paper presents a Deontological Ethics review of childless choices to return to the literature that once existed and or forgotten with the presence of a paradigm of thinking that seems modern.

The focal point of special attention on the motivation underlying the decision, compliance, sociological aspects, traditional stereotypes usually associated with people who do not have children, and ethical aspects as a questioning of the reasons underlying the decision not to have children.

The formulation of the problem in this study is how childfree in marriage from the point of view of deontological ethics and how marriage leads humans to the realisation of the purpose of their creation as perfect human beings.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research method uses a qualitative method, this research is library research where researchers examine sources through journals and books that have a relationship with the title being studied. The approach that the author uses in this research is a normative philosophical and sociological approach. The philosophical normative aspect is studied through values, norms that live in society.

While the sociological aspect is studied to find out the reality of the views of groups of couples who make childfree as their best choice as thesa, and the view of Ethical Deontology as anti thesanya. The data analysis technique in this research is descriptive qualitative where the researcher conducts a comprehensive reading of existing reading sources, then collects them and compiles them into an understandable research.

⁵ *The Social Context of Health*, Open University Press, csc-indonesia.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/ebooksclub.org__The_Sociology_of_Health_Promotion__Critical_Analyses_of_Consumption__Lifestyle_and_Risk.pdf1998, hlm.121. diakses 7 September 2023.

C. FINDING & DISCUSSION

1. Childfree marriage from the perspective of deontological ethics

1.1. Childfree in marriage

In the Oxford Dictionary, Childfree is a condition in which a married couple does not have children.⁶

Childfree is defined in the literature as the decision, desire and plan not to have children.⁷

It is the decision, choice, or principle of each individual or couple not to have children after marriage. Couples who decide to go Childfree do not attempt to conceive naturally or plan to adopt a child. The reasons for choosing not to have children are complex and responses to childless women are most likely influenced by gender role expectations, excessive fears that a woman's physique will not be as beautiful or attractive as before childbearing, fears that her partner will turn to another woman, fears of postpartum anxieties, fears of not being able to educate, fears of the economic burden of raising her, and other anxieties that constitute a lack of literacy about the philosophy of the child as the successor to the human species.

How we view childless women is most likely juxtaposed with how we understand what a woman is and moreover, what a woman should be. Negative images of childless women, as the standard for healthy adult female development has been equated with motherhood.

The decision to have or raise children, as well as the perceptions of people who choose not to parent, is linked to a range of social and identity processes. A review of the multidisciplinary literature focuses on adults who do not wish to have children by giving birth to them. Early research in this area, which emerged in the 1970s, focussed almost exclusively on heterosexual women and utilised childless, childfree, and nonchildfree frameworks.

Later work saw a shift to "childless by choice" or "child-free" frameworks that emphasised that for some, not becoming a parent was an active choice and not a misfortune.

There are advantages and disadvantages to being childfree. Advantages that seem to favour

⁶ Kembang Wangsit Ramadhani, Devina Tsabitah, Fenomena Childfree dan prinsip idealisme Keluarga Indonesia dalam Perspektif Mahasiswa, Vol.11, No 1, Juni 2022, E-ISSN: 2684-8171, P-ISSN: 1829-9245, *LoroNG: Media Pengkajian Sosial Budaya*, Stuart Basten, 2009, Voluntary Childlessness and Being Childfree, Oxford: University of Oxford, hlm. 23.

the couple. But if you remember the existence of time, the metamorphosis of humans from young, aging, then things that are considered profitable need to be studied more deeply. While indeed the lives of couples in the working era are so volatile, the presence of children will disrupt the movement of parents. This is especially true for those who have no family to leave their children with. Even if they have other families, it will cause new polemics.

The childfree view is different when it comes to human rights.⁸ The currently popular childfree trend states that the decision not to have children is a woman's human right, because she as the owner of the womb must decide what is best for her. We are entering the 21st century where women are given the power to make decisions about their lives.

Women are given the right to continue their studies, the freedom to pursue a career or be a stay-at-home mum, to be elected to parliament and so on. Even when they are given freedom, they are still associated with negative stigmas. For example, women who choose careers outside the home are seen as not loving and caring for their families, and women who pursue higher education are simply looked down upon. It becomes selfish even when women choose to be single and don't want to get married quickly because that would be a problem.

Childfree is an option for couples who do not want children, whether biological, adopted or stepchildren. Childfree is made up of two words, child which means child and free which means free. Somewhat different⁹ from Victoria, Dykstra and Hagestad define "childfree" as those who do not have biological children, meaning those who have no living biological or adopted children.

1.2. Ethical Deontology

Deontology is a branch of ethics. Deontology, according to the Dictionary of Philosophy, is ethics based on the concept of obligation, as opposed to ethical systems based on the basic idea of achieving a number of good relationship conditions or character qualities needed for a good

⁸ Rhona K. M. Smith, 2015, *Hukum Hak Asasi Manusia*, Bantul: PUSHAM UII, hlm. 252

⁹ Victoria M. Tunggono, 2021, *Childfree & happy keputusan sadar untuk hidup bebas-anak*, EA Books, HLM.148. Bahwa menurut Victoria Tunggono dalam bukunya *Childfree and Happy*, childfree adalah sebagai sikap pilihan hidup yang dilakukan secara sadar oleh seseorang untuk menjalani hidup tanpa kelahiran atau anak. Tanpa keberadaannya. Singkatnya, "bebas anak" berarti tidak menginginkan anak, tidak ingin memikul beban mengasuh anak, yang berarti tidak memiliki anak dan tidak mau memikul beban mengasuh anak.

life.¹⁰ Deontology discusses obligation, the guidance of moral injunctions, and the idea of obligation in general as a social imperative specific to ethics.¹¹

K.Bertens, 2013 page 198, says that deontological ethics emphasises the importance of motivation and good will from and by the perpetrator. That the form of good will itself is when someone is willing to carry out obligations, not to run away from the act is not a matter of question, because basically there is an urge in human conscience. This means that when a person fulfils an obligation as a moral law on the impulse of his heart, then the action has reached morality.¹²

Immanuel Kant was the main proponent of the Deontology school. According to Kant, the content of ethical words, rules, and actions does not depend on their consequences.¹³ An action should be performed not because of cause and effect or judgement on the outcome, but because it has certain inherent qualities. The underlying question is not "what do I get", but what should I do". James Rachels states that according to Kant an action can be said to be morally good if it is carried out in accordance with the categorical imperative,¹⁴ which is a categorical moral demand, in which a person is obliged to do something independent of special desires.

Graham, summarised morally good actions and morally intentional actions as actions based on duty.¹⁵

Back to Kant, Kant thus argues that obligation is a necessity of respectful action towards the law, it does not matter whether the action makes the doer comfortable or not, like it or not, suitable or not, all of which remain a person's obligation in doing his actions, in short, unconditional action. For example, a college student sped his motorbike to get to his campus, when he drove his vehicle, the traffic light he passed was red indicating that all vehicles must stop. The rider stops because of the obligation of the good will of his conscience even though the situation requires him to arrive at his destination immediately. That is what Immanuel Kant called morality.

¹⁰ Simon Blackburn, 2013, *Kamus Filsafat*, terj. Yudi Santoso, Pustaka Pelajar, Yogyakarta hlm. 436.

¹¹ Lorenz Bagus, 2005, *Kamus Filsafat*, PT Gramedia Utama, Jakarta, 2005, hlm. 158.

¹² Johannis Putratama Kamuri, *Otonomi Dan historitas Agen moral immanuel Kant Dan Alas dai Omacintyre Melalui Perspektif Hermeneutika Hans Georgs Gadamer*, <https://lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=20456100&lokasi=lokal>, Universitas Indonesia Library, Diakses 6 September 2023.

¹³ Wardani, 2003, *Epistemologi Kalam Abad Pertengahan*, LkiS, hlm.158

¹⁴ Simon Petrus L. 2004, Tjahjadi, *Petualangan Intelektual; Konfrontasi dengan Para Filsuf dari Zaman Yunani Hingga Zaman Modern*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, hlm.286-287.

¹⁵ Graham, Gordon. 2015, *Teori-Teori Etika*. Diterjemahkan oleh Irfan M. Zakkie. Bandung: Penerbit Nusa Media, hlm.148.

Such actions are called good not because they produce good and beneficial results, but because they are done in obedience to the dictates of conscience and the prevailing moral law.¹⁶ The action simply arises without the motivation of producing something bad as a result of improper contingencies that are beyond the actor's will.

To know that an action comes from good will is through a transcendental dialectic that must be truly a priori, the origin of the process of obtaining certain knowledge drawn from the contents of conscience and the origin of certain conceptions that can be concluded.¹⁷

Kant's deontology provides the belief that moral value is always based on what is in the act itself, not something that is outside.¹⁸

Based on the discussion above, that women marry, then and or based on the rules, norms, pakem both hereditary, and based on research, are used as a reference for a known marriage life, among the purposes of marriage is to continue the human species, meaning that human birth and growth, then continue the generation and multiply offspring, through the institution of marriage, married wives / women are subject to moral obligations. Against it is the opposite of good. Here what is meant is that conceiving, giving birth or adopting children is the best choice. To negate it is the opposite.

2. Marriage Leads Man to the Realisation of the Purpose of His Creation as a Perfect Man His creation as a perfect human being.

Philosophers categorise "maleness" as a human differentia, while gender (maleness and femaleness) is merely a description attached to humans or a complement.¹⁹ When sebastansi becomes perfect, meaning that humanity has reached the level of perfection, then the issue of gender can be discussed, because to identify something substantially and incidentally, can only be done at that stage.

Gender has no effect on human actualisation. Gender comes from matter, not from form, because the form of things is what forms the essence of things, so gender is not part of the actuality

¹⁶ Gordom Graham, 2014, Teori-Teori Etika, Bandung: Nusa Media, hlm.21.

¹⁷ K. Bertens, 1993, Etika K. Bertens, Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta, hlm. 254.

¹⁸ Idzam Fautanu, 2012. Filsafat Ilmu Teori dan Aplikasi, Referensi, Jakarta, hlm 207

¹⁹ Usep Mohamad Ishaq, 2020, Filsafat Sains: Menurut Ibn al-Haytham, Prenada Media, Jakarta, hlm.99

of things. It can be said that if we want to know the actual form of something then its form reveals its actuality and essence. But since matter is diverse and has the possibility to become actual in other forms, it is not a sign of its essence.²⁰

Theosophists say that gender is material, not formal. This means that it has no role in form and actuality.²¹ When they mention the difference between genus and matter, they say that matter has several parts, some of which include male and female. Gender goes back to matter not to form. Therefore, the two genres are not only specific to humans, but are also found in animals and plants.

The argument of reason states that if there is a difference between two opposites, it must be seen whether the difference is caused by external or internal factors. If no substantial difference is found, then they are of the same type or they are two persons of the same kind.

In terms of obligations and prohibitions, men for example and women receive the same stipulations. Men and women are not differentiated in terms of their status as God's creation/God's creatures who must fulfil God's commands and avoid His prohibitions. The same applies to the purpose of their creation and life in this world, as well as the rewards for their deeds.²²

As for the internal side of human beings, there may be slight differences between the organ structures of men and women, but in the end, these differences disappear. If there is a difference in the means of thinking (the brain), then that difference is not proof that they differ in the virtues they can potentially attain. In order to attain perfection, there is a medium that the brain needs for men, just as there is a medium for women to attain their virtues.

Based on the theory of Plato or Aristotle or the theory of transcendental philosophy, the spirits of men and women are not different. In social life, it cannot be said that women cannot have a position that can be achieved by men.²³

The two basic things in human beings, namely knowledge (theoretical reason) and the manifestation of knowledge in the form of actual activities (practical reason), determination belief, imaginary conjecture and other similar things are branches of theoretical reason. As for intention,

²⁰ Jawadi Amuli, 2011, Keindahan dan Keagungan Perempuan, Perspektif Studi Perempuan Dalam Kajian AL Qur'an, Filsafat dan Irfani. Lentera, Jakarta, hlm.73

²¹ Wening Udasmoro, Widya Nayati, 2023, Interseksi Gender, Perspektif Multidimensional Terhadap Diri, Tubuh, dan Seksualitas Dalam Kajian Sastra, Gajah Mada Press, Jogja, hlm.74

²² Op.Cit

²³ Abdul Hadi, 2021, Dimensi Esensi Manusia, Guepedia, Jakarta, hlm.27.

determination, sincerity, will, love, justice and other things, they are the measure of honour.

The world of creation is permanent and perfect despite its diversity. This complexity has a single origin and telos of purpose, all in permanent and harmonious movement from beginning to end, complementing each other in the process.²⁴ Everything in this world has two aspects attached to it, presence and lack. Everything in the world has two inherent aspects, presence and deficiency. Everything in the world has a specific perfection while on the other hand, it is steeped in imperfection in the context of another perfection, which can be found in something else. Everything in the world supports each other's needs and each entity complements the deficiencies of the other entities, helping it towards the greatest goal of the phenomenal world. In this way this complex world becomes something unique and a whole.

This dynamic and harmony is obtained through the implementation of God's law. Common sense accepts this law, of course, and it can be achieved by humans obeying God's rules and complementing the shortcomings of other creations in their movement towards perfection.²⁵ This is the responsibility placed on human beings.

In the human world, diversity and complexity also prevail. Men and women each have perfection. Each has certain perfections, which are unique to each gender. Thus, based on the goals of perfection, harmony, and continuity (continuity, multiplication of human offspring), both must create a harmonious society. The relationship between men and women is defined and moulded on this principle.²⁶

Women have special abilities and perfections. Of course one cannot think that because they are both human beings, there should be no difference between them. The fact is that men and women are different, but externally, if they are identical they will not be able to complement each other and family life will be meaningless in terms of the telos of the existential world.²⁷

A harmonious and interrelated unit called a family cannot exist in a societal context. If it is to be unified and interconnected, the organisation of society must have a unity, which is based on affection, mutual love, cooperation, and sacrifice. A society will function well if the relations

²⁴ Ali Husein al Hakim, 2005, *Membela Perempuan, Menakar Feminisme Dengan Nalar Agama*, Al Huda, Jakarta, hlm.45.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

between its members represent unity, complementarity, and interconnectedness. The happiness and potentiality of any society depends on its interconnectedness, equality, and alliance.²⁸

It is important to say that if each part of society helps to complement the other and in so doing demonstrates competence and capability, then all parts of society will come together to create a complete, happy, and rational society. A positive society in terms of deviation but diverse and cohesive. To realise it requires the cooperation of its many parts in order to properly fulfil its internal needs and obligations.

The family is the basic foundation of society, given that society is a collection of families that form the core (society), which is interconnected and continuous, the uniqueness and continuity (of a society) depends on the continuity and interconnectedness of its core. The internal association and harmony of the members of society is a condition for the formation of family institutions, which are active units in society. A family becomes harmonious, unified and interconnected when its members complement each other under wise management and leadership

²⁸ Ibid.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above, we can conclude that there is nothing that prohibits the freedom of choice to bear children, or not to bear them. Having offspring is recommended and not obligatory. Choosing not to have children, at first glance, does not harm women personally, for those who deliberately make it their way of life. However, if this becomes the indoctrinated lifestyle of humanity, it will result in the destruction of the human species. Childfree is contradictory from the ethical point of view of deontology, where humans cannot go against nature, the submission of their conscience to the rules, the literacy that is maintained.

It is important to note that children are seen, who are the fusion of the father and mother with the compatibility of the compound as a gift that must be thanked, because they are good from God. The presence of children as one of the goals of marriage is a manifestation of God's love for mankind. Because the presence of children in marriage can contribute to family harmony if parents are physically and mentally prepared. When a legally married couple has children, it forms a family unit of continuity and connectedness, realising human beings in accordance with the purpose of their creation, perfecting them as human beings.

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