

**Childfree Is Not A Disgrace For Women:**

**Harmonizing the Stoicism-Mubadalah Paradigm in Fighting Stigma and Gender Discrimination**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Women's decision not to have children (childfree) is always labeled as an act that violates social norms. This is further exacerbated by patriarchal religious interpretations that limit women's roles to the domestic sphere. This social construct often leads to discrimination against childfree women and ignores their right to determine their own happiness in life. This article analyzes the childfree choice as a manifestation of women's pursuit of happiness and autonomy through the lens of Stoic philosophy and the Mubadalah paradigm of reciprocity. This descriptive qualitative study uses literature review with primary data from the book “Qira'ah Mubadalah” by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir and “Filosofi Teras” by Henri Manampiring, as well as secondary data from various relevant literature. Data was collected through documentation techniques and analyzed using content analysis. The results of the study show that Stoicism and Mubadalah create a strong paradigm to counter stigma and gender discrimination against childfree women. Despite originating from different traditions, both offer significant support for childfree women. Stoicism empowers individuals to find happiness from within, through control over thoughts and internal responses to external pressures, including social stigma. On the other hand, Mubadalah provides a strong theological foundation for deconstructing patriarchal narratives in religious interpretations that limit women's roles to reproductive functions. Both approaches emphasize individual freedom in determining one's life path, focusing on internal quality of life, and recognizing happiness as a dynamic process. Ultimately, this study affirms that discrimination against childfree women is an act that is inconsistent with human values and inclusive religious teachings, and therefore needs to be addressed with a more just and equitable understanding*

**Keywords :** Gender Discrimination; Mubadalah; Childfree Women; Social Stigma; Stoicism.

**A. INTRODUCTION**

The decision not to have children, or what is known as childfree, is increasingly becoming a relevant and complex phenomenon in contemporary social discourse. In various parts of the world, including Indonesia, women who choose this path often face significant negative stigma and social pressure.<sup>1</sup> Society tends to internalize the view that

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<sup>1</sup> Nicky Stephani, “You Still Want to Have Kids, Right? Representation of Childfree Women in

a woman's primary role is as a mother, a natural role that has been passed down through generations and reinforced by cultural narratives and certain religious interpretations.<sup>2</sup> This social construct places women in the domestic sphere, limiting their responsibilities to household chores and procreation, so that the childfree choice is often seen as violating existing norms and values.<sup>3</sup>

Stigma against childfree women manifests in various forms, ranging from subtle prejudice to overt discrimination. They are often labeled as selfish, incomplete, uncaring, or even unfeminine for allegedly rejecting one of the primary purposes of a woman's existence.<sup>4</sup> Invasive questions about their reproductive choices are commonplace in social interactions, as if this personal decision is a matter of public concern that is fair game for comment and judgment.<sup>5</sup> This pressure is exacerbated by the notion that women have a “biological clock” that is constantly ticking, so that delaying or rejecting pregnancy is seen as a failure to meet social and biological expectations.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, this stigma is reinforced by religious interpretations that tend to be patriarchal, which reinforce women's roles in biological and reproductive functions alone, disregarding their individual potential and autonomy.<sup>7</sup> In some interpretations, giving birth is considered a religious duty or divine obligation, so the choice to be childfree can be interpreted as defiance of religious commands.<sup>8</sup> As a result, women who choose to be

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Indonesian Leading Online News Outlets,” *Media Asia* 52, no. 1 (2024): 125, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2024.2335013>.

<sup>2</sup> Nadya Anjani Rismarini and Nesya Adira, “Between Personal and Social Matters: Identifying Public Perceptions of Childfree Decisions in Indonesia,” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 27, no. 6 (2024): 719, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2024.2398619>.

<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Harrington, “Childfree by Choice,” *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (2019): 22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15240657.2019.1559515>.

<sup>4</sup> Wanda Roxanne Ratu Pricillia and LG. Saraswati Putri, “Perempuan Voluntary Childfree: Melawan Stigma Dan Menyoal Femininitas Dalam Masyarakat Pronatalis,” *Dharmasmrti: Jurnal Ilmu Agama Dan Kebudayaan* 23, no. 1 (2023): 89, <http://dx.doi.org/10.32795/ds.v23i1.4080>.

<sup>5</sup> Tsalits Syafa’atun Nashiroh and Aprillia Firmonasari, “Stigmatization of Childfree Individual in Youtube Comments: A Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Diglosia: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya* 7, no. 2 (2024): 237, <https://doi.org/10.30872/diglosia.v7i2.950>.

<sup>6</sup> Suhariyati et al., “Stigmatization, Life Satisfaction, and Its Associated Factors of Childfree Women: A Scoping Review,” *Pedimaternat Nursing Journal* 11, no. 1 (2025): 56, <http://dx.doi.org/10.20473/pmnj.v11i1.51819>.

<sup>7</sup> Siti Nurjanah and Iffatin Nur, “Childfree: Between the Sacredness of Religion, Law and the Reality of Society,” *Al-’Adalah* 19, no. 1 (2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v19i1.11962>.

<sup>8</sup> Alyssa N. Hook, “Perceptions of the Voluntarily Childless: The Negative Stigma of an Unconventional Ideal” (Undergraduate Research Commons, California Polytechnic State University, 2012), 2, <https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/psycdsp/36/>.

childfree often experience psychological and social burdens due to negative judgments, even from their closest circles such as family and relatives. They may face social isolation, demeaning comments, or even pressure to change their minds, which significantly disrupts their happiness and mental well-being.<sup>9</sup> However, behind this dominant narrative, the childfree choice can also be understood as an effort to seek happiness and self-autonomy,<sup>10</sup> which aligns with philosophical principles emphasizing internal control and acceptance of things beyond one's control.<sup>11</sup>

The childfree phenomenon, when examined more closely, reflects the tension between normative social expectations and the individual's right to determine their own path in life. In this context, Stoicism offers a relevant perspective. Stoicism emphasizes the importance of focusing on things that can be controlled, such as thoughts and actions, and accepting things that cannot be controlled, such as others' opinions or judgments.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the childfree decision can be seen as a manifestation of intrinsic happiness that does not depend on external validation or social expectations, but rather stems from a conscious choice aligned with personal values.

In addition, the urgency to review the childfree phenomenon is also closely related to issues of gender equality and reproductive rights. Within the framework of human rights, every individual, regardless of gender, has the right to determine their reproductive future, including the right to have children or not. Unfortunately, this right is often misunderstood or even ignored when it comes to women.<sup>13</sup> This is where the theory of Mubadalah becomes crucial. Mubadalah, or the principle of reciprocity in Islam, emphasizes that rights and obligations in relationships, including in the household and reproductive sphere, apply

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<sup>9</sup> Katie Reining, “Voluntary Childlessness: Stigma and Societal Pressures on Men and Women,” *Scholars: Journal of Undergraduate Research* 29 (2017): 2, <https://www.mckendree.edu/academics/scholars/issue-29.php>.

<sup>10</sup> Kimberly Martinez Phillips, “Autonomous Women: An Examination of the Lives and Experiences of Childfree, Never-Married Single Women of Color from a Decolonial Feminist Perspective” (Doctoral Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2025), 188, <https://research.library.mun.ca/17012/>.

<sup>11</sup> Victoria M. Tunggono, *Childfree & Happy: Keputusan Sadar Untuk Hidup Bebas-Anak* (Buku Mojo Group, 2021), 12.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Asmis and Julie K. Ward, “The Stoics on Women,” in *Feminism and Ancient Philosophy* (Routledge, 1997), i, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315865782>.

<sup>13</sup> Sukron Ma'mun et al., “Childfree Phenomenon Among Urban Muslims: A Multidisciplinary Examination of Science and Morality,” *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 28, no. 1 (2023): 112, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v28i1.6773>.

reciprocally between men and women.<sup>14</sup> This principle challenges patriarchal interpretations that place the burden of reproductive responsibility solely on women, thereby opening up space for the recognition of women's right to choose to be childfree without being considered unnatural.

Nevertheless, studies on childfree in Indonesia are still dominated by a normative approach, with little emphasis on women's rights, autonomy, and pursuit of happiness. This normative research was conducted by Pangestu<sup>15</sup>, Zakiyah<sup>16</sup>, and Salahuddin.<sup>17</sup> A literature review also shows that most studies focus on demographic or sociological factors that influence the choice to be childfree, as done by Siswanto<sup>18</sup>, Nurmayani<sup>19</sup>, and Audinovic.<sup>20</sup> Basically, research on the perspectives of mubadalah and stoicism has been conducted by previous researchers, but this has been done partially or separately, namely by Cahyono<sup>21</sup> and Rohmah.<sup>22</sup> However, there has been no comprehensive research that integrates philosophical dimensions such as Stoicism or gender justice perspectives such as Mubadalah in understanding this phenomenon as an expression of happiness and human rights. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by offering a more holistic analytical framework.

In line with these issues, the objectives of this study are: To objectively analyze the

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<sup>14</sup> Nurul Kartika Laili et al., “The Trend of Choosing Not to Have Children (Childfree) Perspective of the Concept of Interplay (Mubadalah),” *Jurnal Syntax Admiration* 4, no. 9 (2023): 894, <https://doi.org/10.46799/jsa.v4i9.716>.

<sup>15</sup> Fadlan Nugraha Nur Pangestu and Jenuri, “Fenomena Childfree Pada Keluarga Milenial Salam Pandangan Islam: Kontroversi Atau Solusi?,” *Tahdzib Al-Akhlaq: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.34005/tahdzib.v6i2.3412>.

<sup>16</sup> Euis Zakiyyah and Hisan Mursalin, “Fenomena Childfree Dalam Perspektif Islam,” *Mauriduna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.37274/mauriduna.v4i2.921>.

<sup>17</sup> Citra Widyasari Salahuddin and Taufiq Hidayat, “Tinjauan Masalah Mursalah Terhadap Fenomena Childfree,” *Diktum: Jurnal Syariah Dan Hukum* 20, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.35905/diktum.v20i2.2924>.

<sup>18</sup> Ajeng Wijayanti Siswanto and Neneng Nurhasanah, “Analisis Fenomena Childfree Di Indonesia,” *Bandung Conference Series: Islamic Family Law* 2, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.29313/bcsifl.v2i2.2684>.

<sup>19</sup> Nurmayani and Anggun Maharani, “Analisis Presepsi Mahasiswa Terhadap Childfree Berdasarkan Prinsip-Prinsip Islam,” *Jurnal Intelek Dan Cendekiawan Nusantara*, n.d.

<sup>20</sup> Vizcardine Audinovic and Rio Satria Nugroho, “Persepsi Childfree Di Kalangan Generasi Zilenial Jawa Timur,” *Jurnal Keluarga Berencana* 8, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>21</sup> Laili et al., “The Trend of Choosing Not to Have Children (Childfree) Perspective of the Concept of Interplay (Mubadalah).”

<sup>22</sup> Ria Marzuqotur Rohmah et al., “Konsep Bahagia Menurut Filsafat Stoikisme Terhadap Fenomena Childfree,” *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 4, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v4i2.10073>.

childfree choice as part of women's right to achieve happiness in life, through the lens of Stoicism philosophy and the mubadalah reciprocity paradigm. In addition, this article also harmonizes the concepts of Stoicism and mubadalah to reconstruct individual and public paradigms to be more humanistic in viewing the childfree phenomenon. This research also assumes that the decision to be childfree as a choice for happiness is flexible and temporary. This means that when women no longer feel happy in a childfree situation, they have the full right to decide to have children in the future. This perspective emphasizes that happiness is a dynamic process, and women's rights to determine their life choices, including those related to reproduction, must always be respected at every stage of their lives

## **B. METHOD**

This research is a descriptive qualitative literature study. The approach used is a combination of gender and philosophical approaches to analyze the stigma and discrimination faced by women who choose not to have children (childfree). This study seeks to describe, interpret, and analyze this phenomenon in depth through the theoretical frameworks of Stoicism and Mubadalah. Thus, the study not only explains the phenomenon but also examines the philosophical and religious foundations that can be used to respond to it.

The data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from two main books: “*Qira'ah Mubadalah*” by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir and “*Filosofi Teras: Filsafat Yunani-Romawi Kuno untuk Mental Tangguh Masa Kini*” by Henri Manampiring. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected from various other literature, such as journal articles, books, proceedings, theses, dissertations, and other relevant materials related to the topics of childfree, gender stigma, and discrimination. Data collection was conducted using the documentation technique, which involves gathering and recording information from various written sources. All collected data were then analyzed using content analysis to identify, categorize, and interpret the meanings and patterns contained in the texts. This analysis aimed to construct a coherent and argumentative narrative, integrating the two theories used to frame the main argument of this article.

### **C. ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION**

#### **Childfree as a Happy Choice: The Stoic Perspective**

The meaning of freedom and happiness in Stoicism has a unique interpretation, differing from the popular view that often associates the two with the fulfillment of external desires. According to Stoicism, freedom (*apatheia* or *ataraxia*) does not lie in the ability to do whatever one desires without restriction, but rather in freedom from the domination of negative emotions and uncontrolled desires. This means achieving a state of inner calm that is unaffected by external events beyond our control.<sup>23</sup> As explained by Reale (2002) in “*A History of Ancient Philosophy*” for the Stoics, the only thing fully within human control is one's internal judgments, decisions, and actions. Therefore, true freedom is the ability to manage internal responses to external events, not to control the events themselves.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Stoicism offers a vision of happiness centered on character development, mental resilience, and a deep understanding of the limits of human control.

Childfree is one phenomenon that can be analyzed through the lens of Stoic philosophy, particularly in relation to freedom and happiness. In Stoicism, freedom (*apatheia* or *ataraxia*) is not the freedom to act as one pleases, but rather freedom from the domination of negative emotions and uncontrolled desires. This means achieving inner peace that is unaffected by external events beyond our control. Reale (2002) explains that Stoicism emphasizes that the only things fully within human control are one's judgments, decisions, and internal actions. Childfree individuals who choose their path based on rational considerations and accept what cannot be changed essentially achieve a form of Stoic freedom. They free themselves from passions or emotions that may drive decisions inconsistent with sound judgment, such as fear of missing out or the desire to please others.

Happiness (*eudaimonia*) in Stoicism differs from the common understanding. It is not measured by the accumulation of pleasures but by living in harmony with nature and rationality, or virtue (*arete*). Virtue is the only true good; other things—such as wealth,

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<sup>23</sup> Satinder Dhiman, “More than Happiness: A Stoic Guide to Human Flourishing,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Well-Being* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 2, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02470-3\\_51-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02470-3_51-1).

<sup>24</sup> Giovanni Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy* (State University of New York Press, 1985), 230.



health, or offspring—are considered “preferences” without intrinsic moral value.<sup>25</sup> Long emphasizes that happiness is the natural consequence of living virtuously, where individuals accept what cannot be changed and act ethically.<sup>26</sup> For childfree individuals, their happiness does not depend on the experience of being a parent. Instead, happiness stems from living in accordance with internal values, such as independence, self-development, or social contribution. They find eudaimonia in the rational acceptance of their decisions and the development of personal virtue, not in fulfilling reproductive role expectations.

Stoicism can also interpret childfree as an absolute right of women, especially in relation to reproductive rights, through an emphasis on individual autonomy and rationality. Although Stoicism does not explicitly address modern reproductive rights, its principles support the idea that every individual, including women, has full control over their mind and body within limits that are in harmony with nature. Reproductive rights are a concrete manifestation of this autonomy. Brennan states that Stoicism encourages individuals to act based on rational judgment and not to succumb to external pressures that are not in harmony with virtue.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the childfree decision can be seen as an embodiment of women's sovereignty over their bodies and lives, a choice based on rational considerations of personal eudaimonia, rather than following social norms that may not align with their internal goodness. This is an exercise of freedom to reject “preferences” if they conflict with rationality and inner peace.

As free individuals, women's decisions to remain childfree fundamentally reflect a search for meaning in life that is in line with their personal desires, where external views have little influence. For the Stoics, a meaningful life is one that aligns with rationality and internal virtue, not based on validation or expectations from others.<sup>28</sup> As emphasized by Epictetus, we cannot control others' opinions, only our response to them.<sup>29</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>25</sup> Monika Zeba, “Stoicism Emotions and Good Life” (Bachelor Thesis, University of Rijeka, 2021), 3, <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:186:579232>.

<sup>26</sup> Epictetus, *How To Be Free*, trans. A. A. Long (Princeton University Press, 2018), xvi.

<sup>27</sup> Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate* (Clarendon Press, 2005), 27.

<sup>28</sup> Donald Robertson, *Stoicism and the Art of Happiness: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Life: Embrace Perseverance, Strength and Happiness with Stoic Philosophy* (Hachette UK, 2018), 47.

<sup>29</sup> Avais Aziz, “The Application of Stoic Philosophy to Modern Emotional Regulation,” *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology* 10, no. 4 (2025): 4265, <https://eprint.innovativepublication.org/id/eprint/83/>.

childfree individuals who choose this path, despite facing social norms or pressures, are practicing Stoic autonomy. They prioritize internal control over life choices over concerns about external judgment, affirming that true happiness does not stem from fulfilling others' expectations but from consistency with personal rational values.

Continuing the discussion on happiness in marriage, according to Stoicism, this is not solely determined by the presence of offspring. The Stoic concept of happiness (eudaimonia) is rooted in virtue (arete) and living in harmony with nature, not in indifferents like children.<sup>30</sup> Epictetus, as interpreted by Long, emphasizes that happiness is the consequence of character development and control over what is within our control.<sup>31</sup> In the context of a childfree marriage, couples can focus on mutual self-development, supporting each other in the pursuit of wisdom, resilience, and moral goodness. Their relationship can serve as a vessel for intellectual and ethical growth, pursuing goals higher than mere biological or social fulfillment. Happiness in such a bond is found in rational harmony and shared purpose that transcends material possession or status.

Furthermore, Stoicism's view of self-control in childfree decisions contrasts with Epicureanism, even though both are Hellenistic schools of thought. Stoicism emphasizes complete control over internal responses to external events and considers happiness to be the result of virtue and rational acceptance of fate.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, Epicureanism seeks happiness (ataraxia) through the avoidance of suffering and the attainment of static pleasure—pleasure derived from the absence of pain and anxiety, often involving the fulfillment of basic desires.<sup>33</sup> For an Epicurean, the childfree decision may be based on a calculation to avoid the potential misery or discomfort that may arise from raising children, and to maximize personal pleasure. However, for a Stoic, this decision stems from rational autonomy and harmony with logos, not from a calculation of pleasure or avoidance of pain.

This fundamental difference lies at the foundation of the ethics of the two philosophies. Stoicism views true happiness as virtue itself, and that the primary value lies

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<sup>30</sup> Christopher Gill, *Learning to Live Naturally: Stoic Ethics and Its Modern Significance* (Oxford University Press, 2022), 26.

<sup>31</sup> Epictetus, *How To Be Free*, xvii.

<sup>32</sup> Tim O'keefe, "The Stoics on Fate and Freedom," in *The Routledge Companion to Free Will* (Routledge, 2016), 40.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Carlos Kodoati, "Epikureanisme Dan Stoikisme: Etika Helenistik Untuk Seni Hidup Modern," *Media: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi* 4, no. 1 (2023): 91, <https://doi.org/10.53396/media.v4i1.140>.



in prohairesis—our rational choices—rather than in external outcomes. One can be happy in adversity if one responds to it with virtue.<sup>34</sup> As Sedley (2005) explains in “*The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*” the moral value of an action is intrinsic to its intention.<sup>35</sup> In the childfree decision, a Stoic not only avoids potential problems but actively chooses the path they believe is most consistent with their rationality and personal integrity, regardless of whether it brings immediate pleasure or not. The primary goal is a life in harmony with nature and reason, which may include disregarding the pressure to reproduce for the sake of a higher good.

In contrast, Epicureanism tends to evaluate choices based on their impact on pleasure and the absence of pain. Although Epicurus advocated moderation and friendship, his primary focus remained on hedone (pleasure) as the goal of life.<sup>36</sup> The childfree decision from an Epicurean perspective may be based on practical considerations about how not having children can minimize financial stress, allow for more free time, or reduce worry. This distinction is crucial: Stoicism views childfree as an embodiment of internal freedom and virtue, a rational choice in harmony with nature and unaffected by passion. Epicureanism may view it as a pragmatic strategy to achieve maximum pleasure and avoid pain, a calculation centered on one's affective state

### **Childfree in the Construction of Gender Equality: The Mubadalah Perspective**

Qiraah Mubadalah is a concept introduced by Kiai Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir as a response to concerns about gender inequality. This concept emphasizes the principle of gender equality through the idea of mubadalah, which means reciprocity or mutuality between men and women.<sup>37</sup> According to him, gender equality is the main foundation for building fair and equal relationships between men and women. Qiraah Mubadalah is a contribution of thought that is not only academic but also practical, so that it can be applied

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<sup>34</sup> Jens Johansson, “Two Arguments for Epicureanism,” in *Exploring the Philosophy of Death and Dying* (Routledge, 2020), 123.

<sup>35</sup> David Sedley, “The School, from Zeno to Arius Didymus,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>36</sup> Ad Bergsma et al., “Happiness in the Garden of Epicurus,” *Journal of Happiness Studies* 9 (2008): 397, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-006-9036-z>.

<sup>37</sup> Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh* (IRCiSoD, 2019), 104.

in everyday life, both within the family and in society at large.<sup>38</sup>

Islam is a religion that is present for both men and women, and not just one of them. This is the core vision and orientation of the writing of Qira'ah Mubadalah. The presence of Islam for men and women further necessitates that all wisdom and laws must be felt by both.<sup>39</sup> Referring to the epistemology of monotheism, belief in Allah the One and Only certainly necessitates that no one other than Allah should require one group to be subordinate to another. Additionally, recognizing Prophet Muhammad as the messenger tasked with spreading *akhlakul karimah* (noble character) as a foundational concept that must be upheld equally by both men and women.<sup>40</sup>

The principle of mubadalah fundamentally reinterprets verses of the Qur'an that are often misunderstood as limiting women's roles to the domestic and reproductive spheres.<sup>41</sup> In the context of reproduction, there are several verses of the Qur'an that are often misinterpreted and interpreted as evidence prohibiting the decision to remain childfree. One of them is Surah An-Nisa verse 1, which reads as follows

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً  
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

Meaning: “O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul and created its mate from it; and from the two of them He spread many men and women”.

Traditionally, Surat An-Nisa' verse 1 has often been rigidly interpreted as a theological foundation for the absolute obligation of women to reproduce and give birth for the survival of humanity. The emphasis on the phrase “to produce many men and women” is often understood as an explicit divine command for every woman to procreate. In conservative interpretations, this then implies restrictions on women's reproductive autonomy, where women's roles and identities are predominantly reduced to their

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<sup>38</sup> Hotimah Novitasari, “Islam Dan Kesetaraan Gender: Perspektif Qira'ah Mubadalah,” in *Antologi Kritik Ideologi Islam: Kumpulan Kritik Ideologi Mahasiswa Pascasarjana, Dirosah Islamiyah, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya 2021* (Inoffast Publishing, 2021), 60.

<sup>39</sup> Septi Gumindari and Ilman Nafi'a, “Mubadalah as an Islamic Moderating Perspective between Gender and Patriarchal Regimes in Building Family Resilience,” *Jurnal Penelitian* 17 (2020): 107, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v17i2.2970>.

<sup>40</sup> Isyaaq Maulidan and Mukhtar Adinugroho, “The Relationship of Husband and Wife in The Perspective of Mubadalah: Is A Study of The Concept of Rights and Obligations According To KH. Hasyim Asy'ari,” *Journal of Islamic Civilization* 5, no. 2 (2023): 192, <https://doi.org/10.33086/jic.v5i2.5081>.

<sup>41</sup> Ahmad Saerozi et al., “Implementation of Qira'ah Mubadalah on Verses and Hadiths on Family Issues and Its Contribution in Determining Public Policy,” *Jurnal SMART: Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi* 11, no. 1 (2025): 138, <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v11i1.2918>.

biological capacity as ‘producers’ of offspring.<sup>42</sup> This perspective creates a narrative where the choice not to have children, or being childfree, is seen as contrary to the nature of womanhood and even religious commands, thereby closing the space for women to determine their own reproductive choices. As a result, women often face social and religious pressure to fulfill these reproductive expectations, which in turn can disregard their individual rights and holistic well-being.<sup>43</sup>

The mubadalah reinterpretation of Surat An-Nisa’ verse 1 offers a far more comprehensive and inclusive understanding, transcending the reduction of meaning to reproductive obligations alone. Mubadalah emphasizes that this verse, rather than being a mandatory command for every individual to reproduce, is more accurately understood as an affirmation of the origin of humanity from a single soul and the importance of maintaining kinship ties (silaturrahim) and piety toward Allah. The phrase “to multiply men and women in large numbers” in the context of mubadalah is not interpreted as a personal obligation for every woman to give birth, but rather as a description of the historical and sociological facts of how humanity reproduces collectively.<sup>44</sup> Thus, mubadalah provides greater space for women's reproductive autonomy, acknowledging that the decision to have children or not is part of human rights based on rational considerations, personal circumstances, and mutual agreement between husband and wife, without disregarding religious values.<sup>45</sup>

Not only verses from the Qur'an, but also several hadiths are used to prohibit and consider childfree as un-Islamic. The following is the text of the hadith

—حَدَّثَنَا حُسَيْنٌ، وَعَقَّانُ، قَالَا: حَدَّثَنَا خَلْفُ بْنُ خَلِيفَةَ، حَدَّثَنِي حَفْصُ بْنُ عُمَرَ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْبَاءَةِ، وَيَنْهَى عَنِ التَّبْتُلِ نَهْيًا شَدِيدًا، وَيَقُولُ: «تَرَوْجُوا الْوُدُودَ الْوُلُودَ، إِنِّي مُكَاتِرٌ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.»

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<sup>42</sup> Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (University of Texas Press, 2019), 33, 10.7560/315910.

<sup>43</sup> R. Tanzil Fawaiq Sayyaf et al., “Criticizing Childfree in the View of Radical Libertarian and Cultural Feminism: Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah Perspective,” *Muwazah: Jurnal Kajian Gender* 16, no. 2 (2024): 219, <https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v16i2.8777>.

<sup>44</sup> Yulistya Rifana et al., “Childfree As A Women’s Right To Freedom In An Islamic Perspective,” *At-Tuhfah : Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 13, no. 2 (2024): 9, <https://doi.org/10.32665/attuhfah.v13i2.1612>.

<sup>45</sup> Marhamah Al-Eser et al., “The Position of Husband and Wife in the Indonesian Marriage Law: A Mubadalah Perspective,” *Journal of Islamic Mubadalah* 1, no. 1 (2024): 14, <https://doi.org/10.70992/ab305a97>.

Meaning: *Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said: The Prophet, peace be upon him, commanded us to marry and strongly forbade us from remaining unmarried. He said: “Marry women who are fertile and kind-hearted, for with your large numbers I will take pride before the Prophets on the Day of Resurrection.” (Reported by Ahmad, No. 12613).*

In the traditional view, this hadith is often interpreted as an absolute and obligatory command for every Muslim to procreate as much as possible. This perspective tends to prioritize reproductive capacity as the primary criterion in choosing a partner, implying that having many children is the primary purpose of marriage.<sup>46</sup> As a result, women who choose to remain childfree or have reproductive limitations often face social and religious stigmatization, as they are perceived as failing to meet the expectations of this hadith.

However, the mubadalah perspective offers a more contextual and holistic reinterpretation. Mubadalah views this hadith as a conditional recommendation (mandub) that is not binding, especially in a modern context. Its purpose was to strengthen the Muslim community during the early spread of Islam, where the quantity of believers was an important factor in building community strength.<sup>47</sup> In the contemporary era, mubadalah argues that quality of life, well-being, and resource sustainability are equally important considerations. Therefore, this hadith is understood as a general encouragement for the continuity of the community, which can be achieved not only through the quantity of children but also through education, self-development, and quality social contributions. Thus, the choice to remain childfree, based on rational considerations and the greater good, both for the individual and society, remains relevant and justified within the framework of mubadalah, which prioritizes mutuality, justice, and comprehensive well-being.<sup>48</sup>

The argument regarding the permissibility of remaining childfree is further strengthened by the legal status of marriage in Islam, which is sunnah (recommended) rather than obligatory. Most scholars agree that marriage is a strongly recommended

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<sup>46</sup> Tika Nadila and Angraini Ramli, “Childfree on Hadith Perspective,” *Al-Bukhari: Jurnal Ilmu Hadis* 5, no. 2 (2022): 258, <https://doi.org/10.32505/al-bukhari.v5i2.4754>.

<sup>47</sup> Nikmatullah, “Male Ulama Reinterpretation of the Gender Hadith in Indonesian Socio Cultural Contexts,” *Pharos Journal of Theology* 105, no. 2 (2024): 1, <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.105.213>.

<sup>48</sup> Ma'mun et al., “Childfree Phenomenon Among Urban Muslims: A Multidisciplinary Examination of Science and Morality,” 112.

practice, but not an absolute obligation. Individuals who choose not to marry for legitimate personal reasons, provided such choices are not based on hatred or rejection of the institution of marriage itself, cannot be considered to be violating Islamic law.<sup>49</sup> The phenomenon of scholars or religious figures who choose not to marry and continue to live a full spiritual and intellectual life serves as historical and practical evidence that the choice to remain single is valid in Islam.<sup>50</sup> This reaffirms the principle that individual freedom in determining one's life path, including matters of marriage, is respected within the bounds of sharia.

From the legal premise that marriage itself is sunnah and not obligatory, mubadalah then draws the logical conclusion that having children, as a consequence or purpose of marriage, also cannot be categorized as an absolute obligation. If the primary foundation for procreation—marriage—is not obligatory for every individual, then inherently, the outcome of marriage—having children—cannot be imposed as an obligation.<sup>51</sup> Thus, married couples who consciously choose not to have children, based on mature and mutually agreed-upon considerations, may do so without violating Islamic law. This perspective provides theological and legal justification for the childfree choice, affirming that reproduction is merely one of many purposes of marriage, not the sole purpose and certainly not the most obligatory one.

From the perspective of mubadalah, the childfree choice is permissible based on several rational and ethical reasons that align with the principles of Islamic law, which prioritize the welfare and well-being of individuals and families. First, health considerations are a significant reason; if having children could endanger the physical or mental health of the wife, or pose a high risk of producing offspring with serious health conditions, then choosing to remain childfree is a wise decision in line with the principle of hifzh al-nafs (protection of life).<sup>52</sup> Second, economic limitations and parenting capacity

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<sup>49</sup> Nurul Kartika Lalili, “Memilih Tidak Memiliki Anak (Childfree) Perspektif Konsep Kesalingan (Mubadalah)” (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq, 2025), 76, <https://digilib.uinkhas.ac.id/30115/>.

<sup>50</sup> Husein Muhammad, *Para Ulama Dan Intelektual Yang Memilih Menjomblo* (IRCiSoD, 2020), 10.

<sup>51</sup> Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, “Childfree: Hukum, Dalil, Dan Penjelasannya Dalam Perspektif Mubadalah,” *Mubadalah.Id*, 2022, <https://mubadalah.id/childfree-hukum-dalil-dan-penjelasannya-dalam-perspektif-mubadalah/>.

<sup>52</sup> Ahmad Maulidizen et al., “The Concept of Child-Free Lifestyle in the Context of Maqasid Shariah: Ethical Considerations and Social Implications,” *Journal of Islamic Law and Legal Studies* 1, no. 2 (2024):

also serve as strong justifications. Islam emphasizes the responsibility of parents to provide for their children's needs, education, and a suitable environment. If a couple feels unable to meet these demands optimally, choosing to remain childfree can prevent potential harm to the child and family in the future.<sup>53</sup>

Third, prioritizing self-development and social contribution is an aspect emphasized by mubadalah. In addition to the natural inclination to reproduce, humans also have a natural inclination to develop their potential, pursue careers, and contribute to society. If a couple believes that choosing to remain childfree will allow them to focus more on personal development, professional achievements, or broader social service, then this choice is recognized as a legitimate manifestation of self-actualization in Islam.<sup>54</sup>

Although mubadalah allows for the option of childfree, there are ethical and legal limitations that married couples must consider. First and foremost, the decision to be childfree must be the result of consultation and unanimous agreement between husband and wife. The principle of syura (consultation) in marriage is fundamental; there should be no coercion or domination from either party, as this is a decision that significantly impacts their shared life.<sup>55</sup> Second, the choice to remain childfree should not be based on hatred or rejection of the essential values of family and lineage in Islam. This means that the reasons behind this choice must be rational and ethical, not because of a desire to avoid responsibility or a nihilistic understanding of life.<sup>56</sup> Third, this decision must be made with full awareness of its future consequences, both for the couple and their social environment, and must not conflict with broader maqasid syariah (objectives of sharia) such as maintaining honor or the common good.<sup>57</sup> Mubadalah emphasizes that individual freedom of choice is not unlimited; it must remain within the corridor of moral and social

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92, <https://www.mabadiiqtishada.org/index.php/ShariaLex/article/view/51>.

<sup>53</sup> Khozinatul Asrori, “Choosing Not to Have Children in the Perspective of Hadits and Maslahah,” *Law and Justice* 8, no. 1 (2023): 81, <https://doi.org/10.23917/laj.v8i1.2070>.

<sup>54</sup> Abdul Rahman Ramadhan, “Reproductive Rights and Childfree in Islamic Law: A Juridical and Social Analysis,” *Proceeding International Conference on Religion, Science and Education* (Yogyakarta) 4 (2025): 975, <https://sunankalijaga.org/prosiding/index.php/icrse/article/view/1531>.

<sup>55</sup> Mahmudin Bunyamin et al., “Mubadalah in Fulfilling the Rights and Obligations of Contemporary Husbands and Wives,” *Jurnal Mahkamah: Kajian Ilmu Hukum Dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 1 (2024): 19, <https://doi.org/10.25217/jm.v9i1.4623>.

<sup>56</sup> Imam Syafi’i et al., “Childfree in Islamic Law Perspective of Nahdlatul Ulama,” *Al-Ahkam* 33, no. 1 (2023): 1, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2023.33.1.14576>.

<sup>57</sup> Syafi’i et al., “Childfree in Islamic Law Perspective of Nahdlatul Ulama,” 219.



responsibility taught by Islam.

### **Viewing Childfree Through the Lens of Religion and Philosophy: The Meeting Point of Mubadalah and Stoicism**

Stoicism and Mubadalah have unique visions and demonstrate a meeting point as a perspective in viewing the childfree phenomenon. One such point is the struggle against societal stigma through an approach centered on internality and relational ethics. Stoicism, with its emphasis on the dichotomy of control and virtue (arete), encourages individuals to focus on what is within their control—their thoughts, judgments, and actions—rather than on external societal opinions or expectations.<sup>58</sup> From a Stoic perspective, the stigma surrounding the childfree choice is something beyond an individual’s control. Therefore, the struggle against this stigma does not lie in directly changing external perceptions, but rather in cultivating inner calm (apatheia) and rational acceptance of the reality that others’ views cannot be controlled. Childfree individuals who apply Stoic principles will focus on self-integrity and living in accordance with reason, regardless of social pressure to have children, as discussed in studies on the application of Stoicism in modern life.

Meanwhile, Mubadalah, as an Islamic paradigm emphasizing reciprocity and equality, offers a vision for combating childfree stigma through a more inclusive reinterpretation of religious texts and values.<sup>59</sup> The Mubadalah approach does not explicitly address childfree, but the principles of gender justice and respect for individual autonomy in Islam can be expanded to accommodate this lifestyle choice.<sup>60</sup> Stigma toward childfree individuals often stems from patriarchal social constructions and religious interpretations that place reproductive roles at the core of women's identities. Mubadalah challenges this view by emphasizing that an individual's value is not determined by marital status or the presence of children, but rather by their piety and contributions to society. Thus, the struggle against the stigma of childfree through the lens of Mubadalah centers

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<sup>58</sup> Henri Manampiring, *Filosofi Teras: Filsafat Yunani-Romawi Kuno Untuk Mental Tangguh Masa Kini* (Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2019), 72.

<sup>59</sup> Kodir, *Qirā’ah Mubādalāh*, 292.

<sup>60</sup> M. Bintang Fadhlurrahman et al., “Kajian Kesalingan: Emansipasi Laki-Laki Dan Perempuan Di Ranah Publik Pada Era Kontemporer Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur’an,” *Jurnal Riset Agama* 2, no. 1 (2022): 133, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jra.v2i1.16007>.

on deconstructing dominant narratives that marginalize non-traditional choices, promoting a more comprehensive and egalitarian understanding of religion.

On another note, Mubadalah and Stoicism both emphasize the principle of freedom in childfree choices. However, they have different approaches and boundaries. Stoicism, as a Hellenistic philosophy, emphasizes the rational autonomy of individuals in making life choices. This freedom is based on virtue (*aretē*) and living in harmony with nature (*logos*), which means following reason and not being influenced by emotions or external opinions. From a Stoic perspective, the decision to be childfree is the result of rational consideration that leads to *eudaimonia* (true happiness) and self-fulfillment, not merely the fulfillment of momentary desires.<sup>61</sup> The limits of Stoic freedom lie in the universal moral obligation to contribute to the common good and avoid actions that harm reason or society, as outlined in many Stoic texts.

Meanwhile, Mubadalah, as an Islamic framework of thought, also values individual freedom in the childfree decision, but this freedom is limited by Islamic principles rooted in *Maqashid Syariah* (the objectives of Islamic law). In the context of childfree, the freedom to choose not to have children needs to be examined to see whether it conflicts with the preservation of offspring (*hifdz al-nasl*) as one of the objectives of Sharia, even though this can be interpreted broadly.<sup>62</sup> Mubadalah seeks to find a balance between individual freedom and collective values, for example, by ensuring that the childfree choice does not harm society or the collective future of the community, and that its motivation is based on the principles of justice and *maslahat* (the common good).

Freedom from the responsibility of child-rearing for childfree couples implies a shift in focus toward self-development and improving the quality of life. This is also at the core of the Stoic and mubadalah paradigms. Stoicism emphasizes the development of quality of life through virtue ethics, where happiness (*eudaimonia*) is achieved not through external possessions but through the internalization of virtues such as wisdom, courage,

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<sup>61</sup> Roberto Radice, “Philo and Stoic Ethics. Reflections on the Idea of Freedom,” in *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy* (Brill, 2008), 141, <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004167483.I-296.28>.

<sup>62</sup> Safdhinar M. An Noor et al., “Rethinking Mu’āsyarah Bil Ma’ruf: A Maqāshid Syari’ah Cum-Mubādalāh Approach,” *At-Turās: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2024): 12, <https://doi.org/10.33650/at-turas.v11i1.7281>.

justice, and moderation.<sup>63</sup> Stoic individuals are encouraged to continuously hone their intellect and act according to reason, which inherently improves their quality of life without relying on external variables such as having children. Focusing on things that can be controlled, such as one's own thoughts and actions, is the key to sustainable improvement in quality of life.

Mubadalah also emphasizes improving quality of life, but from the perspective of mutuality and *maslahah* (the common good). The principle of Mubadalah encourages each individual to reach their full potential and contribute positively to society, regardless of gender roles or reproductive status. Improving quality of life in Mubadalah is not only about individual well-being, but also about creating a more just and equitable society.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the shift in focus toward self-development and social contribution by childfree couples can be seen as an embodiment of Mubadalah values, where quality of life is measured by one's capacity to bring benefit and achieve social justice.

The common ground between Stoicism and Mubadalah in understanding dynamic happiness in childfree decisions lies in the emphasis on internality and adaptability. Stoicism views happiness (*eudaimonia*) as a stable inner condition achieved through virtue and living in harmony with reason, not from external circumstances such as having children. If the childfree decision contributes to inner peace and moral integrity, it is a valid choice. However, Stoic happiness is also dynamic in the sense of the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. If the childfree choice later causes suffering that cannot be controlled by reason, Stoicism would encourage the individual to reconsider that decision in order to achieve optimal inner well-being.

Mubadalah, through the lens of mutuality and benefit, also recognizes happiness as a dynamic process, especially in the context of the childfree decision. If this choice brings well-being and justice to women and their partners, and does not conflict with broader Sharia principles (e.g., the right to offspring if there is a change of heart), then it is perfectly acceptable. However, the relevance of Mubadalah lies in the flexibility of interpretation

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<sup>63</sup> Yelliza MA Gusti, “Teras Philosophy: The Concept of Stoicism in Guiding Modern Life and Islamic Education,” *Al-Mudarris: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 1 (2025): 175, <https://doi.org/10.23971/jwm97x20>.

<sup>64</sup> Kodir, *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*, 510.

and its emphasis on the individual's right to change and adapt. If internal factors or changes in life circumstances cause the childfree decision to no longer bring happiness or benefit, Mubadalah will support women's right to reconsider that choice, reflecting an inclusive and adaptive understanding of human experience.

### **Stoicism-Mubadalah as an Individual and Public Paradigm in the Fight Against Stigma and Gender Discrimination**

As a response to the stigma faced by childfree women, the concept of the trichotomy of control in Stoicism offers a robust framework. This trichotomy distinguishes between things that are entirely within our control (e.g., judgments, opinions, actions), things that are completely beyond our control (e.g., reputation, the actions of others), and things that are partially within our control (e.g., health, wealth, which are influenced by our efforts but also by external factors).<sup>65</sup> Childfree women need to understand that their internal reactions and interpretations of stigma are the only aspects fully within their control. The focus should be on developing virtues such as wisdom, courage, justice, and moderation, rather than trying to change the views of every individual in society.

It is important for childfree women to internalize that other people's opinions and actions regarding their life choices are completely beyond their control. The stigma imposed by society, the labels given to them, or even social pressure to have children, cannot be directly controlled by them. Attempting to change every negative view will be a source of endless frustration and contrary to Stoic principles.<sup>66</sup> Instead, what they can control is their internal response to such stigma: how they choose to interpret criticism, whether they allow it to affect their self-worth, and how they respond rationally and calmly. This aligns with Epictetus' view that what disturbs humans is not the event itself, but their judgment of the event.

As for the things that childfree women can partially control in this context, these include how they present themselves in public and their efforts to educate those around them about the childfree choice. Although they cannot guarantee that everyone will

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<sup>65</sup> Manampiring, *Filosofi Teras: Filsafat Yunani-Romawi Kuno Untuk Mental Tangguh Masa Kini*, 63.

<sup>66</sup> Aditi Mukesh, “Stoicism as a Model of Psychotherapy,” City University of Seattle, 2020, 2, <https://repository.nusystem.org/bitstreams/84823a29-067e-45d8-9af0-ab15f296d53d/download>.

understand or accept it, they can invest in clear communication, demonstrate maturity and happiness in their choice, and engage in constructive dialogue to counter misconceptions. This requires wisdom to know when to speak up and when to remain silent, as well as the courage to stay true to their principles. These efforts, though they do not guarantee universal acceptance, can significantly shape perceptions within their immediate surroundings.

By applying this trichotomy of control, childfree women can effectively reduce the negative impact of societal stigma. Focusing on what is within their control—their thoughts, attitudes, and ethical responses—allows them to maintain inner peace and happiness, regardless of external pressure. They can practice *amor fati*, accepting their fate and loving their life choices, without seeking validation from others.<sup>67</sup> This Stoic approach empowers childfree women to live according to their own values, refusing to be defined by narrow societal expectations, and ultimately achieving *eudaimonia* or a flourishing and meaningful life.

Complementing these reconstruction efforts, *mubadalah* also offers a paradigm of reciprocity that can serve as a public benchmark for evaluating childfree women. The principle of reciprocity (*mubadalah*) in Islam offers a transformative public paradigm. This concept, rooted in the idea of fundamental equality between men and women before God, emphasizes that an individual's value is not determined by reproductive roles or marital status, but by the quality of their faith and worship.<sup>68</sup> This inherently rejects justifications for discrimination against childfree women, as their life choices do not diminish their spiritual essence or dignity as servants of God. Therefore, *mubadalah* demands that society view childfree women as equal subjects, not objects defined by their biological capacity.

The principle of reciprocity inherently challenges social narratives that often link femininity with motherhood. Within the framework of *mubadalah*, the quality of a person's faith, whether male or female, is measured by their piety and dedication to God, not by

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<sup>67</sup> Sabindra Raj Bhandari, “*Amor Fati and Memento Mori in Marcus Aurelius’ Meditations: The Synthesis of Stoicism*,” *Journal of NELTA Gandaki* 5, no. 1 (2022): 17, <https://doi.org/10.3126/jong.v5i1-2.49277>.

<sup>68</sup> Siti Rohmah et al., “Critical Discourse Analysis of Dakwah Media Texts on *Mubadalah.Id*,” *AIP Conference Proceeding* (Jember), AIP Publishing, 2023, 15, <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0242248>.

their marital status or the presence of children.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, measuring a woman's worth based on her ability to have children is an irrelevant and un-Islamic justification according to the principle of tawhid. This paradigm encourages the public to free themselves from narrow views that confine women to domestic and reproductive roles alone, opening up space for appreciation of diverse life choices that remain in line with values of faith.

Furthermore, the principle of partnership in mubadalah requires fellow Muslims to collectively build good quality of life and worship. In the context of childfree women, the public has a moral obligation to support and respect their decisions as a fundamental right.<sup>70</sup> Discrimination, whether in the form of social pressure, judgment, or exclusion against childfree women, constitutes a violation of the principle of partnership. Given that Islam upholds justice and equality, discriminatory actions reflect a narrow understanding of religion and are contrary to the spirit of inclusivity taught in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Therefore, the mubadalah proposal requires the public to re-examine social norms that discriminate against childfree women. Providing moral support to them is not merely an act of sympathy, but an ethical and theological obligation. Recognizing and respecting the childfree decision as a legitimate individual right is a manifestation of a deeper understanding of gender justice in Islam. This underscores that an individual's reproductive choices are a private matter that should not be interfered with by public judgment or pressure that lacks a valid religious basis.

Thus, discrimination against childfree women can be seen as an act that is highly un-Islamic, even surpassing the “childfree act” itself, which is essentially a lifestyle choice. While the childfree choice falls within the realm of individual permission and rights, discrimination is a form of oppression and a violation of rights that is explicitly prohibited in Islam. The Mubadalah paradigm offers a strong theological foundation for dismantling this stigma and discrimination, guiding society toward a more just and equitable understanding of women's roles in Islam—one that transcends biological expectations and focuses on divine and human values.

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<sup>69</sup> Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, “Mafhum Mubadalah: Ikhtiar Memahami Qur'an Dan Hadits Untuk Meneguhkan Keadilan Resiprokal Islam Dalam Isu-Isu Gender,” *Jurnal Islam Indonesia* 6, no. 2 (2017): 1.

<sup>70</sup> Dini Amalia, “Empowering Equality: Mubadalah as a Catalyst for Peace, Justice, and Harmony Among Humanity,” *Equality Journal of Gender Child and Humanity* 2, no. 1 (2024): 10, <https://doi.org/10.58518/equality.v2i1.3304>.



#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study has analyzed the childfree choice as an expression of women's happiness and autonomy through the lens of Stoic philosophy and the Mubadalah paradigm of mutuality. It is evident that both frameworks, despite originating from different traditions, offer significant support for women who choose to be childfree. Stoicism empowers individuals to find happiness from within, through control over thoughts and internal responses to external pressures, including social stigma related to childfree. On the other hand, Mubadalah provides a strong theological foundation for deconstructing patriarchal narratives in religious interpretations that limit women's roles to reproductive functions. The harmonization of Stoicism and Mubadalah creates a powerful paradigm for combating stigma and gender discrimination against childfree women. Both approaches emphasize individual freedom in determining one's life path, focusing on internal quality of life, and recognizing happiness as a dynamic process that allows flexibility in life choices, including the decision to have children in the future if circumstances change. Ultimately, this research affirms that discrimination against childfree women is inconsistent with humanistic values and inclusive religious teachings, and therefore must be addressed with a more fair and equitable understanding.

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