

## Child Freedom as Ecofeminist Praxis: Navigating Gender, Reproductive Choice, and Climate Action

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### ABSTRACT

This research explores the decision to have child freedom, namely the choice not to have children, as a form of ecofeminist praxis in supporting climate change action. By integrating ecofeminist theory, this study aims to analyze the individual impact of child freedom decisions on climate change and explore the gender dimensions that may be involved. Adopting a literature study approach, this research details how these decisions can be understood through an ecofeminist lens, linking issues of gender and reproductive choices to the ecological responsibility of individuals. Through an in-depth literature analysis, this research strengthens the argument that child freedom can be articulated as a positive action in reducing an individual's ecological footprint and considering the social impact of gender in the context of climate change. This discussion highlights ecofeminist perspectives in the context of child freedom and explores how policy and society can support this choice as a concrete contribution to environmental sustainability. It is hoped that the results of this research can deepen our understanding of the relationship between gender issues, family decisions, and climate change action. The implications of these findings can provide a basis for the development of more inclusive policies and support concrete steps in overcoming the challenges of climate change.

**Keywords:** Child Freedom; Gender; Ecofeminism; Climate Change Action.

### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi keputusan child freedom, yaitu pilihan untuk tidak memiliki anak, sebagai bentuk praxis ekofeminis dalam konteks mendukung aksi perubahan iklim. Dengan mengintegrasikan teori ekofeminisme, penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dampak individual keputusan child freedom terhadap perubahan iklim dan menjelajahi dimensi gender yang mungkin terlibat. Melalui pendekatan studi literatur, penelitian ini merinci bagaimana keputusan ini dapat dipahami melalui lensa ekofeminisme, mengaitkan isu-isu gender dan pilihan reproduksi dengan tanggung jawab ekologis individu. Melalui analisis literatur yang mendalam, penelitian ini memperkuat argumen bahwa child freedom dapat diartikulasikan sebagai tindakan positif dalam mengurangi jejak ekologis individu dan mempertimbangkan dampak sosial gender dalam konteks perubahan iklim. Diskusi ini tidak hanya menyoroti perspektif ekofeminis dalam konteks child freedom tetapi juga mengeksplorasi bagaimana kebijakan dan masyarakat dapat mendukung pilihan ini sebagai kontribusi konkrit terhadap keberlanjutan lingkungan. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memperdalam pemahaman kita tentang keterkaitan antara isu-isu gender, keputusan berkeluarga, dan aksi perubahan iklim. Implikasi temuan ini dapat memberikan landasan bagi pengembangan kebijakan yang lebih inklusif dan mendukung langkah-langkah nyata dalam mengatasi tantangan perubahan iklim.*

**Kata Kunci:** Child Freedom; Gender; Ekofeminisme; Aksi Perubahan Iklim..

## Introduction

Climate change is already an urgent global issue and requires a deep understanding of the various contributing factors. In this context, attention to the impact of human populations on climate change becomes particularly relevant. One aspect that is increasingly attracting attention is the decision of individuals not to have children, known as the phenomenon of child freedom. Some countries such as Japan, Europe, and America face this phenomenon, they indirectly experience a population decline crisis caused by the decision of their people not to reproduce and have children. According to research related to the population census in America, the increase in the number of women who chose not to have children by 26.2% increased in early 2006 and rose to 30.6% in 2016. This is because many married couples feel pressured by increasingly high lifestyles and economic competition.<sup>1</sup>

Child Freedom, as a reproductive choice not to have children, has emerged as an important topic of discussion, emphasizing the views of a person or couple who do not want to have children. The term childfree originated in English at the end of the 20th century. St. Augustine was a Manichaeism who believed that having a child was immoral. Therefore, according to the belief system, it is like trapping the soul in an impermanent body. With such efforts, the calendar contraceptive system began to be put into practice.<sup>2</sup>

This decision wasn't solely driven by personal desires but also backed by numerous surveys in specific nations. It was implemented not just to fulfill individual preferences but also as a strategic step toward preserving the planet and alleviating economic competition. Although often a personal decision, Child Freedom is thought to be highly correlated significantly to a person's level of consumption and, implicitly, to that individual's ecological footprint. Previous studies have identified that child freedom can be considered a positive step towards reducing population pressure on natural resources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, as interest in child freedom in the context of climate change increases, there needs to be a neutral and objective approach to detail the implications. Especially if most people choose this step, it will also indirectly affect the generation gap where the number of productive-age humans will be less than unproductive humans, and this will also affect economic growth. The use of ecofeminism theory in evaluating these decisions provides an additional dimension, bringing gender perspectives and human relations with the environment into the debate. Through this approach, we can see Child freedom as an individual action that not only affects environmental sustainability but is also closely related to gender dynamics. Therefore, this study not only involves practical aspects of child freedom decisions on the impacts of climate change but also understands its complexity from a social and gender point of view. By exploring the phenomenon of Child freedom neutrally and deepening our understanding of its effects, this research is expected to provide an objective foundation of knowledge, open space for wider discussion, and provide a basis for informed scientific debate.

## Literature Review

In the explanation of Ecofeminist theory, women are said to be very close to the environment. Where the environmental crisis that occurs is assumed to be the result of patriarchal culture. Nature and the environment are indeed created as a source of support for human life, but sometimes humans use it in an anthropocentric way or egoism.

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<sup>1</sup> Journal: V & Audinovic e R S Nugroho. Childfree Perceptions among The Zilenial Generation of East Jawa. Journal of Family Planning, vol. 8, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Journal: Dias Safitri et al. Fenomena Childfree di Era Gen-Z Menurut Pandangan Agama. Jurnal Kajian Islam Kontemporer. 1-1,1—25. 2023. Doi: 10.11111/nusantara.xxxxxxx.

Just like women in patriarchal cultures always experience a form of discrimination due to the dominance of masculinity or in its terms "House Wifization". Women have always been marginalized, they have always been a supporting factor in matters of masculinity although it is undeniable that women are internal control for their families. Nature also experiences this, where the form of exploitation of nature has the same meaning to women under a patriarchal culture. Nature is used as a giant machine to fulfill the source of human life, but they sometimes forget that they need to instill empathy and provide reciprocal value for the environment for the survival of future generations. Because the value of closeness in ecofeminist theory makes it easy for women to empathize with environmental damage that occurs. They realize that the problem of subordination, exploitation, and oppression of nature is the same as their position marginalized by the domination of the power of masculinity. For this reason, women have a strong gender sensitivity, where they feel and emphasize the responsibility to protect and care for the environment and empathize with the surrounding nature for more harmonious sustainability.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

Child Freedom or the decision not to have children is a form of women's empathy for nature and the environment. Population accumulation further narrows human opportunities to meet the increasing standard of living and competitiveness. For this reason, certain researchers and communities began to explore a lot that there is a link between environmental damage and rapid human growth. Child Freedom is considered as one of the solutions that can reduce population size and overcome the problem of overpopulation. Based on research by Dias Safitri 2021, it was found that around 5% of women made the decision not to have children due to climate change factors. Environmental issues are highly correlated with aspects of human physical and non-physical resilience.<sup>6</sup> Every human being who has a family always tries to meet the needs of clothing, food, shelter, in the family and health. Difficulties in meeting these aspects of physical and non-physical endurance are mandatory considerations in the decision-making process. For this reason, the choice of reducing the population with Child freedom can be an alternative personal choice in overcoming the problem of failure to fulfill these aspects of resilience.<sup>7,8</sup> Child Freedom's decisions correlated to environmental action were also influenced by prosocial psychological theory. Every human being in addition to having selfish values is also balanced with social altruistic values.

Social altruistic values are formed due to the influence of social conformity, where a person understands the importance of an environment inseparable from their background and they experience social processes and accept various actions and consequences.<sup>9</sup> These values ultimately lead to concern for environmental issues when one judges environmental issues based on harm or benefit to others, be it individuals, the surrounding environment, social networks, countries, or all of humanity.

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<sup>3</sup> Journal: Fryna Angelica Andris, Maria & Edwin Martua Build Tambunan. The Role of Women in the Peacebuilding Process: A Case Study of Women Activists in South Sudan (2005-2018). *Scientific Journal of International Relations*. 19:124, no 1. 19 June 2023. <https://doi.org/10.26593/jihi.v19i1.6220.1-24>.

<sup>4</sup> Journal: Sarwono, Billy K. Interpreting Global Warming and Environmental Issues in the Media by Urban Women. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*. 2, 178-190.2010.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Journal: Dias Safitri et al., Fenomena Childfree di Era Gen-Z Menurut Pandangan Agama. *Jurnal Kajian Islam Kontemporer*. 1-1,1—25. 2023. Doi: 10.11111/nusantara.xxxxxxx.

<sup>7</sup> Journal: Dewa, Ayu Putu Eva Wishanti, Joko Purnomo, et Wishnu Mahendra Wiswayana. Mapping Climate-related Disaster Preparedness in Decentralized Ternate as Global Climate Change Adaptation. *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional* 17, no 2. 9 November 2021: 18699. <https://doi.org/10.26593/jihi.v17i2.4368.186-199>.

<sup>8</sup> Journal: Desi Asmaret. The Impact of Child Free on Family Resilience In Indonesia. *Adhki: Journal Of Islamic Family Law* 5, no 1: 7389. (24 July 2023). <https://doi.org/10.37876/adhki.v5i1.108>.

<sup>9</sup> Journal: Schultz. Empathizing with Nature: The Effects of Perspective Talking on Concern for Environmental Issues. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 56, No. 3, pp. 391–406. 2000. Doi: 10.1111/0022-4537.00174

According to him, the choice is quite rational because environmental behavior is always motivated by perceived behavioral consequences related to various actions. Such as the influence of education that has been owned since childhood so that it forms cultural adaptation and becomes a norm or belief for them. The influence of the external environment is also very influential for the development of their altruistic values personally, as well as natural disasters that harm them individually and widely so that they become more empathetic and motivated to maintain the sustainability of the environmental ecosystem they live in. As a result, women who have become accustomed to strictly adhering to moral values rarely have the intention to break free from the moral bonds that limit them. Therefore, for women in the context of patriarchal culture, protecting nature and the environment is often seen as an obligation. They understand that caring for the environment is their responsibility, and instinctively they feel that as mothers, they are responsible for educating their children about environmentally friendly behavior. In other words, the view given by patriarchal norms to women's domestic roles has a significant impact on the way they understand the environment and their decision to choose Childfree.<sup>1011</sup>

In the next study that discusses the perception of Childfree among the Zillennial generation, it was also revealed that the phenomenon of childfree is also widely encountered among Generation Z. This generation inherits the tradition of the millennial generation who first introduced the phenomenon of Childfreedom. They share a similar view, where the decision not to have children is seen as a personal choice that is not worthy of condemnation.<sup>12</sup> No criminal or administrative penalties were imposed, and they also considered the disproportionate demographic contribution of overpopulation to such decision-making. However, they are also aware of the negative impact if many residents choose Childfree, namely a decrease in the birth rate. This condition, if it lasts for a long time, can cause a population imbalance with the dominance of old age and the lack of successor generations, which has the potential to disrupt the level of productivity and economic stability of a country.<sup>13</sup>

The next article further explores the relationship between climate change issues and Childfreedom's decisions. In the article, the interviews were conducted directly within relevant academic forums, particularly within the BirthStrike community. The interviewees were members of the BirthStrike Community, aged between 25 and 40 years, consisting of both employed and unemployed women. The focus of the interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of their motivations for choosing not to have children. Although the details of the interview method were not elaborated on extensively in the methodology section, this approach allowed researchers to gather relevant and meaningful data from the appropriate group within the study's context. These interviews were a part of the subsequent article, which further explores the relationship between climate change issues and Childfreedom's decisions. It conducts live interviews with 7 members of the BirthStrike community, an environmentally-focused group.

These interviews revealed their views on the two main factors influencing their consideration of whether or not to have children in the context of climate change. They discussed the impact that children would have on the environment, such as carbon emissions and the use of natural resources, as well as concerns about the world future generations will inherit due to climate change.

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<sup>10</sup>Journal: Schultz. Empathizing with Nature: The Effects of Perspective Talking on Concern for Environmental Issues. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 56, No. 3, pp. 391–406. 2000. Doi: 10.1111/0022-4537.00174.

<sup>11</sup>Journal: Nyoman and Asmarani. Ekofeminisme Dalam Antroposen: Relevankah? Kritik Terhadap Gagasan Ekofeminisme. *Balaiirung: Jurnal Multidisipliner Mahasiswa Indonesia*. 1,128-142.2018. doi: <https://doi.org/10.22146/balairung.v1i1>.

<sup>12</sup>Journal: Audinovic et Nugroho. Childfree Perception Among East Java Zilennial Generation. *Jurnal Keluarga Berencana*. 8,1-11, 2023. Doi: 10.37306/kkb.v8i1.

<sup>13</sup>Journal: Dwi, Hardani Oktawirawan & Ananta Yudianto. Analysis of the Social, Cultural, and Psychological Impact of Single in Indonesia. *Pamator Journal* 13, no 2: 21317. 2 October 2020. doi: <https://doi.org/10.21107/pamator.v13i2.7872>.

The decision to live without children is seen as a choice that can positively contribute to or, at least, not exacerbate climate change, influenced by perceived climate change anxiety and the desire to avoid contributing to environmental degradation.<sup>1415</sup>

From these various literary sources, We have gained a foundation that allows us to begin to understand the relationship between Child Freedom decisions, especially in the context of their relation to environmental issues. Demographic balance becomes especially important when countries face the risk of overpopulation potentially leading to overexploitation of resources. From the perspective of gender theory and ecofeminism, Child Freedom's decision can be interpreted as a sensible action, where each woman interprets her environment and decides how they can contribute directly to environmental restoration efforts. However, other aspects of gender, especially those concerning women's reproductive health, have not been fully explored. The impact of Child Freedom's decisions on women's psychological and emotional dimensions in the context of responses to climate change has not been widely studied. Questions about the psychological changes that women who choose Childfreedom as climate action may experience, and how they can be understood through the point of view of ecofeminism, are still areas of research that need to be deepened.

## Methodology

This research will employ literature studies and synthesis analysis to explore the relationship between child freedom, the decision not to have children, and climate change action. In this context, the study will investigate the individual impact of these decisions, particularly in reducing population pressures on natural resources. This approach will be integrated with ecofeminism theory to analyze the interrelationship between child freedom, gender perspectives, and social responses to climate change.

Additionally, this research aims to assist the general public in understanding the linkage between environmental mitigation efforts associated with population reduction and assisting in the creation of sustainable economic growth policies in the future. Data analysis will encompass synthesizing findings from selected literature, considering global perspectives, ecofeminist aspects, and the impact of child freedom on climate change. The use of literature from reliable sources and ethical research considerations will be the primary focus to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis.

Methodological limitations and implications of the findings will be observed. The research is delimited by a period starting from the era of COVID-19 until the increasing trend of reports on married couples deciding not to have children. Necessary resources, including access to databases and related literature, will be listed. The research schedule will guide the steps of literature analysis, expected to contribute to an understanding of the role of child freedom in supporting sustainability, particularly in the context of climate change and ecofeminism theory. Furthermore, an in-depth exploration of the psychological and emotional dimensions of women who choose child freedom in response to climate change will also be conducted to provide a broader perspective on issues of reproductive health and women's welfare. This research also aims to enrich ecofeminism theory by exploring a deeper relationship between child freedom decisions and ecofeminist perspectives. Policy and practice implications, recommendations for mitigating environmental impacts, and contributions to social issues such as gender and environmental sustainability are key focuses in efforts to translate research findings into positive and useful outcomes for global and local communities.

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<sup>14</sup> Mo, Silje. Childfreedom as Climate Action Experiences of Pronatalist Pressures and Gendered Expectations Among Members of the BirthStrike Movement. Thesis Publication: Faculty of Psychology Department of Health Promotion and Development University of Bergen. Norway: 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Journal: Nakkerud, Erik. Ideological Dilemmas Actualised by the Idea of Living Environmentally Childfree Human Arenas. *Journal Current Psychology*. Vol 6, no 4 (1 December 2023) : 886910. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-021-00255-6>.

## Analysis

### a. Childfreedom's Decision as Climate Action: Implications of Ecofeminism

Child-free or Child Freedom is a concept where a person who does not want and plans not to have children is caused by various factors such as structural, economic, and ideological changes and other factors. This term appeared in 1972 issued by the National Organization for Non-Parents was started in Palo Alto California, at which time the desire of women in the Western European region appeared. About 15-20% of women, especially those in urban areas, like Jerman and Belgia decide not to have children for the rest of their lives. This happened because in that year many women married at a young age around the age of 20 and were not ready to become mothers, and many abandoned their children. For this reason, the problem triggers women in the European region to do infertility until they assess themselves ready to become a mother.<sup>1617</sup>

In the United Kingdom infertility at the time was up to 3.3% in young couples, and about 25% for women in the 30-34% age range.<sup>18</sup> Then several other countries in the European region such as Denmark, Switzerland, Northern France, and the Netherlands also supported the Childfree trend with the widespread use of contraceptives, the second-wave feminist movement, and the level of educational opportunities and career encouragement for women who were getting higher. Childfree was considered a rational choice until the 20th century and resulted in lower rates of unmarried in both men and women. However, the Childfree trend in the 21st century began to be debated with various research reports from the fields of psychological and biological sociology. Childfree is not only framed as a form of psychological deviation, but the results of research studies on Childfree usher in a new paradigm that in addition to affecting economic and demographic vulnerabilities, Childfree also affects women's mental and reproductive health. Women who have experienced pregnancy and breastfeeding are known to have a lower risk of breast, endometrial, and ovarian cancer than women who have never been pregnant.<sup>1920</sup>

The process of pregnancy and breastfeeding alters the ovulation cycle, leading to changes in estrogen and progesterone hormones. These hormonal shifts during pregnancy and lactation may serve to decrease the likelihood of cancer in women. Moreover, prolonged use of contraceptive pills or other forms of birth control methods can have lasting effects on female reproductive organs, potentially influencing various health aspects, including bile disorders, tumors, and disorders of the uterus and reproductive system. Further details are outlined below: <sup>21</sup>

- Cardiovascular impact: The use of birth control pills can increase the risk of developing venous thromboembolic disease, stroke, and heart attack. This risk is higher in smokers due to the influence of manipulation of the hormones estrogen and progesterone in the body.
- Metabolic effects: The progestin component in birth control pills has the potential to reduce good cholesterol levels, while the estrogen component can increase bad cholesterol levels, both of which affect the body's metabolic system.

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<sup>16</sup> Journal: Ramdani, Rizky et al. Fenomena Childfree di Tengah Masyarakat. *Journal Ulumul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*. Volume x, Nomor x, Mei 2023. Diakses dari <https://bajangjournal.com/index.php/JOEL/article/view/1225>.

<sup>17</sup> Journal: Hikbal Pane, Safri & Abdurahman Adisaputera. Individual Freedom In The Context of Childfree: A Study of Jean-Paul Sartre's Existentialism In Adrindia Ryandisza's Novel Ours. *Journal of Social Education and Humanities*, vol. 2, 2023. Diakses dari <https://publisherqu.com/index.php/pediaqu>.

<sup>18</sup> Journal: Ramdani, Rizky et al. Fenomena Childfree di Tengah Masyarakat. *Journal Ulumul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*. Volume x, Nomor x, Mei 2023. Diakses dari <https://bajangjournal.com/index.php/JOEL/article/view/1225>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, hal 12.

<sup>20</sup> Journal : Matthew Schneider-Mayerson. The environmental politics of reproductive choices in the age of climate change. *Journal Environmental Politics* 31, no 1 2022 : 15272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2021.1902700>.

<sup>21</sup> Report PLOS: L, Brown and Flores. Climate Change, Concern, and Children: A Systematic Review Exploring Decision-Making. *Hope Dillarstone*. London: Guilford, Press. 2021.

- Bile disorders: Long-term use of birth control pills can increase the risk of bile disorders in women.
- Tumors: Oral contraceptives can increase the risk of developing benign tumors, such as neoplasms that can cause gastric bleeding.
- Problems with the uterus and reproductive organs: Long-term use of IUD contraceptives can increase the risk of pelvic inflammation, uterine perforation, or problems with the fallopian tubes.

The framing of the study caused the Childfree Trend to decline, as the concept was debated by scientists and researchers. However, in 2020, the Childfree trend resurfaced in society, especially after the emergence of COVID-19 in 2019. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic increased the confidence of Childfree activists to choose that path as a wise decision for them. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact, both on human and environmental crises. This long-running pandemic has caused global chaos and increased human competition in search of economic resources. What's more, its relationship with the issue of climate change worries many people. The rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus around the world and its deep psychological impact have created trauma for many. Fear of a repeat of similar phenomena in the future leads them to believe that their world is not safe. This prompted them to choose Childfreedom as a wise decision, to protect future generations from destruction and reduce negative impacts on the environment.<sup>22</sup>

From the results of Silje Mari Mo's research entitled Childfreedom as a Climate Action, she managed to conduct interviews with 7 members of the BirthStrike community. BirthStrike is an environmentally-focused group that brings child freedom as a viable individual response to the climate emergency. The interviews produced views on some of the things that influence their thinking about having children or not in the context of climate change. First, they considered the impact that children would have on the environment, such as emissions and resource use. Second, they think about what world their children will inherit, especially as climate change affects the future. Some worry about the additional resources and emissions generated by a growing population, while others think about the state of the planet that might affect children's well-being later in life. The impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather, rising sea levels, shortages of natural resources, and natural disasters, can all affect children's daily lives in the future. Living without children is considered a choice that can make a positive contribution or at least not hurt climate change. These decisions are also influenced by perceived climate anxiety, with some people experiencing negative feelings such as frustration, hopelessness, guilt, sadness, and stress. For them, childless living becomes a way to ease negative feelings and avoid contributing to worse climate change.<sup>23</sup>

This consideration that prioritizes ecological aspects is an implication of the concept of ecofeminism, which emphasizes the specific relationship between women and nature. Nature is the focus of feminist issues, because environmental damage affects women in particular, along with children, as the most affected group. Therefore, women tend to be more empathetic to nature and pay more attention to the principles of sustainability. Environmental damage also indirectly impacts the health of women and children, as described in the research of Anders Wijkman and Lloyd Timberlake.

For example, in some rural areas, water scarcity makes it difficult for women to access clean water and maintain food security to meet their daily needs.

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<sup>22</sup> Journal: Nakkerud Erik. Ideological Dilemmas Actualised by the Idea of Living Environmentally Childfree. *Journal Human Arenas*, p. 887-903. December 1, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-021-00255-6>.

<sup>23</sup> Mo, Silje. Childfreedom as Climate Action Experiences of Pronatalist Pressures and Gendered Expectations Among Members of the BirthStrike Movement. Thesis Publication: Faculty of Psychology Department of Health Promotion and Development University of Bergen. Norway: 2021.

Not only in developing countries but also in developed countries such as the United States and Canada, the literature on chemical sensitivity shows that women are more susceptible to formaldehyde and other chemicals, with a higher number of cases than men, especially in older children and women. In the Great Lakes Basin, United States, various chemicals such as pesticides, heavy metals, PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), and dioxins not only interfere with animal reproduction, but also cause various health problems in humans, including low infant weight, decreased sperm count in males, and an increased risk of cancer and other diseases. Therefore, women feel a strong connection with nature and feel responsible for the well-being of future generations.<sup>2425</sup>

One aspect of the concept of ecofeminism that also influences women's decision to choose Child Freedom is the experience of subordination that is often experienced by women, both in the social and ecological spheres. Women are often placed in a position similar to nature, perceived as objects rather than subjects. They realize that environmental degradation is a form of human subordination, similar to the experience of subordination they may experience from masculine parties. For example, when corporations overexploit nature, it is considered a form of repression similar to the patriarchal repression women experience. They see how patriarchal norms and capitalism can cause gender inequality for them, as well as corporate actions that damage the environment through overexploitation. Related to the Childfree decision, women see it as a way to free themselves from the patriarchal system, allowing them to choose freely whether they want to be mothers or not, without feeling attached to the traditional reproductive responsibilities that society believes in. Therefore, ecofeminists are increasingly convinced that the relationship between women and nature is very close, and the decision to choose Childfree is a sensible choice.<sup>2627</sup>

In the context of gender and feminism, Childfreedom reflects complex dynamics between gender roles, human interaction with the environment, and feminine values along its journey. Women often feel marginalized and have limited space for activities, particularly in environmental mitigation efforts. They are frequently perceived merely as supporters of the development process and have restricted access to resources, such as forest lands. Women are also underrepresented in public decision-making and rarely hold leadership positions in governmental agencies related to the environment. They are often excluded from forest-related economic activities and shoulder household responsibilities. Women experience inequality in access to resources and economic opportunities, including land or forest ownership, access to credit or business capital, and opportunities to participate in sustainable economic activities in the forestry sector.

This inequality can be attributed to cultural, legal, and social factors that limit women's roles in economic activities. Women in the forestry sector often receive lower wages than their male counterparts for similar or equivalent work. They are also less likely to hold leadership or decision-making positions in the industry. Consequently, they receive less attention and opportunities in environmental mitigation programs.

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<sup>24</sup> Journal: N, Nyoman & Asmarani. Ecofeminism in the Anthropocene: Is It Relevant? Critique of the Idea of Ecofeminism. *BALAIRUNG: Jurnal Multidisipliner Mahasiswa Indonesia*, 128-140. Vol. 1 No. 1 Tahun 2018. Doi:<https://doi.org/10.22146/balairung.v1i1>

<sup>25</sup> Journal: Nakkerud, Erik. Choosing to Live Environmentally Childfree: Private-Sphere Environmentalism, Environmental Activism, or Both?. *Journal Current Psychology*. Pp.120-127. 2023. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04295-9>.

<sup>26</sup> Journal: Adi Nugroho, Dimas et al. Childfree and Unmarried Trends among Japanese People *COMSERVA Indonesian Journal of Community Services and Development* 1, no 11. 24 April 2022 : 102330. <https://doi.org/10.36418/comserva.v1i11.153>; Sarwono. Interpreting Global Warming and Environmental Issues in the Media by Urban Women. 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Journal: Abdullah, Suparman. Pembangunan Gender dan Benturan Tradisi. *Journal Socius*. Pp 22-38. 2013.



Therefore, for them, Childfreedom is considered an environmental mitigation measure that demonstrates women's direct contribution to preserving nature and the environment, as well as an effort to address gender disparities in various fields, with support from feminist movements that help reduce environmental impacts.<sup>28</sup>

From the perspective of ecofeminism theory, women's decision to choose Child Freedom is not only based on personal values as has often been the case in the past. Rather, this decision is more of a response to current environmental conditions and how they can play a role in preserving nature and maintaining ecological balance as part of their social and gender responsibilities. Some of those who choose Child Freedom believe that the human population on this planet has reached an excessive point and its impact has damaged the earth's environment. Therefore, they contribute to the maintenance and balance of nature by not bearing children. They feel a moral responsibility not to worsen environmental conditions by increasing the human population without ensuring that the earth has good conditions for survival.

#### **b. Psychological and Emotional Dimensions of Women in Childfreedom Decisions: Ecofeminist Perspectives**

The Ecofeminist perspective ushers in a positive understanding of the global community about women adherents of Child Freedom. But on the other hand, there are negative things that also need to be considered as a result of the desire not to have children. The negative side of Child Freedom is not only seen from the demographic element where the number of productive humans will be less in the future than humans in the non-productive age range. A small number of productive age population in the future will have an impact on employment problems and other social problems. For example, in China, the difference in the ratio of productive and non-productive age people is very high, so inevitably many parents whose lives depend on the state because there are no children or families to take care of. Therefore, the burden on the state will be greater to finance the elderly population because the productive age population is less than the unproductive and will indirectly affect the economic growth of the population. But it also has psychological and emotional implications that women who choose Childfree may experience in response to climate change.<sup>29</sup>

Psychological childfree may increase endorphin hormones where for some people, this decision provides a sense of satisfaction because they feel they have more time, energy, and resources to focus on careers, relationships, or other personal interests or fulfill emotions in psychological terms. However, on the other hand, individuals who choose Childfree may also feel a sense of isolation or rejection. Although more and more people are choosing not to have children, society still often places pressure or expectations on individuals to have children. This can leave individuals feeling isolated or rejected by a society that considers their decisions unconventional. Although it depends on their cultural factors, background, and life experience. Indeed the spouse or woman comes from family pressure that is thick with patriarchal systems, or ideological views that assume that women must indeed reproduce.<sup>3031</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Journal : Akbar, Hikmatul Et al. Empowering Women in Social Forestry: Indonesia's Contribution to the Climate Accords. ICARSE. ASSEHR 748, pp. 409–419. 2023. Doi: [10.2991/978-2-38476-048-0\\_44](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-048-0_44)

<sup>29</sup> Journal: Richie, Christina. Green Reproduction, Resource Conservation, and Ecological Responsibility . *Journal Worldview*. vol. 18. Pp 144-172. 2014. DOI: [10.1163/15685357-01802003](https://doi.org/10.1163/15685357-01802003)

<sup>30</sup>Mo, Silje. Childfreedom as Climate Action Experiences of Pronatalist Pressures and Gendered Expectations Among Members of the BirthStrike Movement. Thesis Publication: Faculty of Psychology Department of Health Promotion and Development University of Bergen. Norway: 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Journal: Nugroho, Dhimas Adi, Fitri Alfarisy, Afizal Nuradhim Kurniawan, and Elin Rahma Sarita. 'Tren Childfree Dan Unmarried Di Kalangan Masyarakat Jepang'. *COMSERVA Indonesian Journal of Community Services and Development* 1, no. 11.24 April 2022. 1023–30. <https://doi.org/10.36418/comserva.v1i11.153>.

Stigma and criticism can also be a psychological result of Childfree choices. Some individuals may experience judgment or criticism from family, friends, or society who do not understand or approve of their choices. This situation can cause stress or discomfort in interacting with others. In addition, the decision not to have children can also raise deep questions about personal identity, especially in the context of relationships and parenthood. Usually, the role of a mother who has children is considered more positive than that of women who have not had children, and whose emotions may be unstable. Individuals may reflect on the meaning and purpose of their lives, as well as how they want to contribute to the world around them. There are also concerns about loneliness in old age that Childfree individuals may feel. Some individuals may worry about a lack of social support in old age due to not having children who can care for them. This can lead to anxiety or worry about the future. From a psychological point of view, Childfree decisions can also cause problems in marriage. Future loneliness can lead to ongoing conflict with your partner, and if not handled properly, can lead to divorce due to a lack of child-related considerations. Childfree marriages can also have health impacts, with childfree women likely to have worse health risks in the future. However, for some, the decision to become child-free can also bring deep feelings of self-acceptance and happiness. They may feel free to live life as they see fit without pressure to meet social expectations. The psychological impact of these childfree decisions can vary depending on various factors such as the individual's culture, background, and life experiences.<sup>32,33,34</sup>

When viewed from the perspective of ecofeminism, the decision to become Childfree can lead to a debate about new perspectives. Although Childfree is considered a rational choice within the framework of ecofeminism, there are criticisms worth noting. In the ecofeminist view, the decision not to have children could be considered a sensible step. This is because by reducing the number of human populations, pressure on the environment and natural resources can be reduced. By having fewer children, individuals can reduce their carbon footprint and reduce consumption's impact on the environment. In addition, in the context of patriarchy that still prevails, women are often trapped in the role of mothers and housekeepers, which can limit their freedom to pursue careers or personal interests.<sup>35</sup>

However, this view does not fully reflect complex realities. Although childlike decisions can positively contribute to the environment, this does not mean that parenthood automatically harms the environment. On the contrary, there are many ways in which parents can raise their children with high environmental awareness, teaching the values of sustainability and social responsibility to future generations. In addition, ecofeminist views that portray women as protectors of nature or "mother earth" can ignore the diversity of women's experiences and identities. Not all women feel connected to nature or desire to be mothers, and putting pressure on women to take on such roles can limit their life choices and reduce the complexity of their individuality.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Journal: N, Nyoman & Asmarani. Ecofeminism in the Anthropocene: Is It Relevant? Critique of the Idea of Ecofeminism. *BALAIRUNG: Jurnal Multidisipliner Mahasiswa Indonesia*, 128-140. Vol. 1 No. 1 Tahun 2018. Doi:<https://doi.org/10.22146/balairung.v1i1>.

<sup>33</sup> Journal: Nakkerud Erik. Ideological Dilemmas Actualised by the Idea of Living Environmentally Childfree. *Journal Human Arenas*, p. 887-903. December 1, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-021-00255-6>.

<sup>34</sup> Mo, Silje. Childfreedom as Climate Action Experiences of Pronatalist Pressures and Gendered Expectations Among Members of the BirthStrike Movement. Thesis Publication: Faculty of Psychology Department of Health Promotion and Development University of Bergen. Norway: 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Journal: Kharisma, Bella & Princess, Azmi Fitriisia. Childfree dalam Prespektif Filsafat Eksistensialisme. *INNOVATIVE: Journal Of Social Science Research* Volume 3 Nomor 6 Tahun 2023 Page 8390-8396. 2023. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v3i6>

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, hal.129.

Furthermore, this approach can also pose problems in maintaining gender balance. Stating that being childfree is the only way to respond to the environmental crisis could imply that primary responsibility for addressing environmental problems falls on individuals and not on broader systems, including economic and political structures that support overconsumption and exploitation of natural resources. So, while childfree decisions can be driven by valid environmental considerations, it is important to pay attention to the diversity of individual experiences, as well as to recognize that solutions to environmental problems must include broader systemic change. Understanding this complexity can help us avoid falling into stereotypes and find a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to the problems faced by our planet Earth.<sup>37</sup>

The best solution in addressing environmental challenges by considering the concept of childfree must be based on a holistic and holistic approach. Although reducing reproduction rates can reduce pressure on natural resources and help control population growth, these solutions should also be considered carefully. For example, studies have shown that reductions in reproductive rates are directly related to improved women's well-being, including better access to education, economic opportunities, and reproductive health. By increasing this access, women have more control over their reproductive decisions, thus allowing them to make better choices for themselves and the environment. In addition, this approach can also help reduce pressure on natural resources by reducing the number of individuals who need those resources. However, it is important to remember that these solutions must be implemented ethically and respect human rights, including the right of every individual to make decisions about their own life. Thus, a comprehensive and inclusive approach that pays attention to women's welfare, human rights, and environmental sustainability is the best solution in addressing environmental challenges by considering the concept of childfree.

## Conclusion

The decision to pursue the concept of childfree has very complex implications, especially when viewed from the point of view of ecofeminism. Although often seen as a rational action to reduce pressure on the environment, this decision also involves deeper considerations, including psychological, emotional, and social aspects. From one side, choosing child-free can be considered as a response to increasingly urgent climate change and as a form of environmental awareness. By reducing the number of human populations, the hope is to reduce the carbon footprint and ensure the sustainability of our planet for future generations. This thinking is in line with the principles of ecofeminism which highlight the special relationship between women and nature, where women are often the group most affected by environmental damage.

However, the view should also be broadened to take into account the diversity of individual experiences as well as consider the larger role of the broader systemic in addressing environmental problems. Putting pressure solely on individuals to take environmental measures such as childfree can overlook the importance of larger systemic change, including economic and political structures that support overconsumption and exploitation of natural resources. From a psychological point of view, child-free decisions can bring feelings of satisfaction and self-acceptance to some individuals. However, on the other hand, such individuals can also experience stigma, criticism, and anxiety regarding their future. Gender roles and stereotypes can also play an important role in experiencing the psychological impact of these decisions, with many women feeling trapped in social expectations about motherhood.

The best solution in addressing environmental challenges by considering the concept of childfree is a holistic and inclusive approach.

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<sup>37</sup> Journal: Abdullah, Suparman. Pembangunan Gender dan Benturan Tradisi. *Journal Socius*. Pp 22-38. 2013.

This involves giving women greater control and access to education, economic opportunities, and reproductive health. By increasing this access, women can make better choices for themselves and the environment, while reducing pressure on natural resources. In the context of ecofeminism, these solutions also include acknowledging the diversity of women's experiences and understanding that not all women feel connected to nature or have a desire to be mothers. Understanding this complexity will help us avoid stereotypes and find more inclusive and comprehensive approaches to addressing the environmental challenges we face.

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