

## Framing Childfree as a Choice: A Case Study of *Magdalene.co*

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### Abstract

The discourse of childfree has received significant attention in Indonesia since 2021, especially after public figures voiced their decisions to live childfree. This study examines the framing of the issue of child-free in *Magdalene.co*, a progressive online media, using Media Framing Analysis (MFA) by Shaw & Giles (2009). This study explores how *Magdalene.co* frames the narrative around the discourse of childlessness. At the macro level, *Magdalene.co* frames the issue of childlessness as a human rights discussion centered on privacy, personal autonomy, and resistance to social pressure. At the micro level, the analysis reveals narratives that emphasize the psychological and social aspects of the decision to live child-free, but it notes the lack of empirical data to support these arguments. The findings suggest that *Magdalene.co* supports a neoliberal feminist perspective, which advocates for individual freedom, psychological well-being, and respect for privacy. However, this study also identifies a degree of homogeneity in the narrative and highlights the need for broader empirical studies to deepen the discussion on the social and economic impacts of the decision to be child-free.

**Keywords:** child-free; framing; *Magdalene.co*; media representation; women

### Abstrak

Wacana tentang childfree telah mendapat perhatian yang signifikan di Indonesia sejak tahun 2021, terutama setelah figur publik menyuarakan keputusan mereka untuk hidup childfree. Studi ini meneliti pembingkai isu childfree di *Magdalene.co*, sebuah media daring progresif, menggunakan analisis bingkai media (MFA) oleh Shaw & Giles (2009). Studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana *Magdalene.co* membingkai narasi seputar wacana childfree. Pada tingkat makro, *Magdalene.co* membingkai isu ketidaksuburan sebagai diskusi hak asasi manusia yang berpusat pada privasi, otonomi pribadi, dan perlawanan terhadap tekanan masyarakat. Pada tingkat mikro, analisis tersebut mengungkap narasi yang menekankan aspek psikologis dan sosial dari pilihan untuk hidup tanpa anak, tetapi mencatat kurangnya data empiris untuk mendukung argumen ini. Temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa *Magdalene.co* mendukung perspektif feminis neoliberal, yang menganjurkan kebebasan individu, kesejahteraan psikologis, dan penghormatan terhadap privasi. Namun, studi ini juga mengidentifikasi tingkat homogenitas dalam narasi dan menyoroti perlunya studi empiris yang lebih luas untuk memperdalam diskusi tentang dampak sosial dan ekonomi dari keputusan untuk tidak memiliki anak.

**Kata kunci:** childfree; framing; *Magdalene.co*; perempuan; representasi media

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## INTRODUCTION

Child-free discourse increased in Indonesian media in 2021, especially since an influencer declared herself to be child-free. Although it was not the first time the topic emerged, this event was enough to make the term child-free increasingly known among Indonesian society. The discourse of child-free became widely discussed and debated across mass media, from social media, online news portals, to television. Information search of child-free increases on Google Trend Indonesia. Child-free keyword searches increased in August 2021 by 35% from previous years which were no more than 1%. This trend then jumped to a full percentage in February 2023. In the same year, child-free became a trending topic on a number of social media platforms, such as Twitter (now X).

Initially, this became a debate among netizens on a number of social media, such as Twitter and Instagram. However, this issue became more widespread and controversial when Gita Savitri mentioned her decision not to have children in the comment column on her social media in February 2023 (Figure 1). The emergence of the term child-free as a life choice has caused sentiment in the public sphere. A number of social media users and news texts have emerged with pros and cons and neutral attitudes. In the Google search, until this study was conducted, the word “childfree” resulted around 2.250 news articles in the Indonesian news column. Various news media such as *BBC Indonesia*, *Detik*, *CNN Indonesia*, *CNBC Indonesia*, and other media have begun to raise the issue of child-free, from the introduction of the term, the causes and effects of making child-free decisions, various points of view on child-free, to the problems associated with it. Child-free then became an option by a number of Indonesian people, especially after several public figures also voiced their decisions to be child-free, such as Cinta Laura and Chef Juna who revealed it in 2021, and Rina Nose in 2022.

The child-free phenomenon has been widely discussed by people in several countries since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has attracted media attention in the United States (US) for the past 30 years (Hintz & Haywood, 2021; Šumskaitė & Rapolienė, 2019, p. 137). Until now, the child-free trend is still a lifestyle of many people. Census data in the UK (2021) shows that in 2020, 18% of women aged 45 years did not have children and 17% had an only child. This figure



**Figure 1.** Screenshot of Gita Savitri’s viral comment about her decision to be child-free

Source: orbitindonesia.com

decreased by 13% compared to the generation above them (their mothers). Other data from Italy and Spain show that these countries experienced a significant decline in birth rates from 1.44% and 1.34% in 2011 to 1.25% and 1.19% in 2021 (Fleck, 2023). In the United States, the National Center for Health Statistics wrote the birth rate decreased significantly from 2017 to 2022 by 9.4%. The results of a 2021 Pew Research Center survey showed that 44% of non-parents in the 18-49 age range in America said they were not interested in having children (Brown, 2021). This number has increased from 37% in 2018. As many as 43% of them had clear reasons for their decision, while the other 56% decided simply because they did not want to have children. These data indicate that many people are far below the replacement level of fertility, which in 'developed' countries is estimated to be only 2.1%.

Despite being an increasing trend, the child-free phenomenon in Western society is not free from negative stereotypes and stigmas. As found in the mass media, child-free in Lithuania tends to be tolerated on the grounds of circumstances, not as a choice (Šumskaitė & Rapolienė, 2019, pp. 136–137). In the UK, child-free couples are perceived to have psychological problems, even though morally, those who choose child-free are evaluated positively, while parents tend to view child-free as inferior and dislike it less (Ekelund & Ask, 2021, p. 22). Sweden framed child-free news in three frames: a family without burden for child-free couples, a problematic life for child-free women, and unaffected for child-free men (Peterson, 2014, pp. 6–10). In China, child-free women are represented as selfish women who suffer and prioritize work too much (Lu et al., 2023, pp. 6–11).

The condition of being childless can also arise due to forced circumstances, usually referring to health problems, even though they want children and have tried. While those who deliberately decide not to become parents are called child-free (Blackstone, 2014). Those who call the term childless are called involuntary childlessness, while child-free is called voluntary childlessness (VC). Both factors have their own specific factors, such as health, finances, priorities, or other reasons.

People's decision to live child-free is explained in liberal feminist theory which raises issues related to freedom, in this case, contextualized with the freedom to have children. Aspects of life fought for in this stream of feminism include sexual, intimate, and reproductive aspects. The role of women should not be marginalized only as a means of male entertainment, and a complement in the family and society (Tong, 2018). Whereas the gender construction instilled in Indonesia is problematic in viewing this phenomenon. The standards instilled in women and married couples, such as the nature of women to be mothers, the demands for women to give birth because they were created to have a uterus, and the goal of a "normal" married couple is to have children, are in stark contrast to the concept of child-free.

The role of women in Indonesia is often associated with reproductive functions and is presented with euphemisms. The representation of women in Indonesia is raised by feminist movements that have a patriarchal view (Santoso, 2022). In the civilization and development of the Indonesian state, women's empowerment is considered to have a very significant role in giving birth, caring for, and raising the next generations of the nation, or in other words, giving birth to children and becoming mothers (Jakimow, 2018; Zahrok & Suarmini, 2018). The understanding that women should carry out the role of a housewife is the fruit of the patriarchal culture inherent in society (Rawat, 2014, p. 14). *Ibuisme Negara* becomes a term that reflects the practice of domesticating women since the New Order.

The association between media and child-free is complex and even more complicated due to the lack of media insight into the concept of child-free as a life choice. This is what causes the image and reality of an event, one of which is child-free, to tend to be biased towards

pronatalist groups. The dominance of pronatalist ideology in society means that child-free representation in the media tends to be peppered with conflict and opposition.

The problem of child-free, which is rooted in the inequality of gender roles in Indonesia, then attracted the attention of one of the gender-based alternative media to raise the discourse of defending child-free. Since 2021, *Magdalene.co* has released around 20 texts related to child-free and women's freedom not to have children during January 2021-September 2023. Although it is not only *Magdalene.co* that actively raises the issue of child-free, many news media portals in Indonesia also publish texts discussing the discourse of child-free from various perspectives. In contrast, *Magdalene.co* stands out by presenting child-free information from the perspective of feminism, gender, and religion which has a different tone from other media (Maryani & Adiprasetyo, 2017).

The media has the power to shape public understanding of an event or phenomenon (Oliver et al., 2020, p. 183). The development of public space is also closely related to the growth of public literacy and journalism production activities (Supriadi, 2017). More broadly, digital platforms and social networks have also become important elements for public spaces along with digitalization (Eren et al., 2024).

Several international and national studies have been conducted on the issue of child-free. However, most of the existing studies only discuss negative discourses on the child-free trend such as stigmatization, the good and bad sides of the child-free trend, the debate on child-free as a choice, infertility issues & sex education. Meanwhile, studies discussing positive discourses on the child-free issue remain few in number. With that, this study fills the gap in media studies in discussing positive discourses on child-free in Indonesia.

This study examines the framing patterns in texts containing child-free discourse in alternative media with a feminist perspective in Indonesia, *Magdalene.co*, by identifying stories, characters, readers, narratives, language categories, and generalization points. With a critical approach, the study results explain the extent to which the feminist media perspective understands the reality of child-free. This understanding is important to review because it influences social norms and state policies/systems that regulate the role of women in Indonesia.

To explore the child-free text in *Magdalene.co*, we use the framing analysis model of Shaw and Giles (2009). Adjusting to the type of text on *Magdalene.co*, this framing analysis model is considered appropriate for identifying framing patterns in news texts and opinion articles. This study assumes that the opinion articles selected to be published by *Magdalene.co* have a fairly large role in assessing *Magdalene.co*'s understanding of the reality of child-free in Indonesia from a feminist perspective. As an alternative media, research on *Magdalene.co* media also focuses on the conflicts between the values adopted by the wider community and child-free values.

Framing analysis and feminist theory are associated with each other in analyzing how mass media works in representing women. This analysis then identifies gender stereotypes, hierarchical structures, and inequalities in women's roles in society.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study used the MFA (Media Framing Analysis) research methodology developed by Shaw and Giles (2009). This framing analysis method was designed with an interesting concept from a number of existing framing models such as Entman (1991, 1993), Gamson & Modigliani (1989), Scheufele (1999), Pan & Kosicki (1993), and Van Gorp (2007). The MFA framework was used to examine dominant frame patterns in a text through six stages of analysis, story identification, character identification, reader identification, narrative analysis, language

category analysis, and identification of generalization points. MFA analysis was then applied to two categories, macro and micro frames. The macro stage aimed to identify consistent framing patterns in the media (Shaw & Giles, 2009, p. 1220). In the context of *Magdalene.co*, which has a consistent view on various issues from a gender perspective, this model is considered the most appropriate to use. The micro stages in this analysis model are also considered the most appropriate to analyze the types of texts on *Magdalene.co* which involve a lot of opinion articles. With this research model, researchers can also find out the parasocial relationship that makes readers interested in studying the writing in the text (Shaw & Giles, 2009).

To find out how the media understands the child-free issue and to what extent the feminist perspective is involved in the discussion of this issue, we use a critical paradigm. Using feminist theory, a critical approach is used in this study to explain how gender identity, the power that regulates it, women's aspirations, and resistance to patriarchal values are displayed in a narrative. At the same time, how language and symbols are used to break down sexist norms.

The research sample was obtained by typing the keywords "*childfree*"; "*without children*"; "*don't have children*"; and "*don't want children*" in the *Magdalene.co* search column. The *Magdalene.co* page produced initial results of around 1,707 texts from various columns such as lifestyle, issues, society to politics. The earliest text was published in 2014. However, the texts taken as samples must have been published in 2021, when the child-free discourse began to rise in the Indonesian digital realm, until 2023, when this discourse reached its peak of excitement being discussed by Indonesian internet users. Therefore, around 82 texts were obtained in the period 2021 to 2023. We then conducted a cursory check on each text obtained to eliminate texts irrelevant to the child-free discourse or only mentioning the elements of child-free and children by chance and in passing in their discussions. These texts usually discuss parenting, child marriage, marriage, sexual violence against children, sex recession, the impact of the pandemic, LGBT-Q, and politics. We also ensured that there were no duplicate texts because they entered several keywords in the search column. The results of the text sample were eight news texts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted by analyzing sample texts (N=8) using the MFA technique. With six flexible stages, each text is described in relation to the identification story, characters, language categories, narrative, reader, and generalization. Furthermore, this study involves an in-depth analysis of a selection of child-free texts, based on the research objective to identify child-free texts available on *Magdalene.co*. The texts selected for micro-analysis were texts written in the first person, where the authors clearly state support for child-free (Giles et al., 2009, p. 12).

### Macro Frame

*Identifying Story* Framing analysis emphasizes the importance of researcher selectivity and impartiality by focusing on identifying "news peg," which are specific events or incidents that trigger conflict, often sourced from previous media reports. A total of six texts contained conflict in the intensity between the child-free values carried by child-free public figures and the pronatalist values adopted by society. Two texts contained the development of awareness of the patriarchal construction of women's roles in society and the seizure of women's body power in the family environment. We identified the background of the child-free text story on *Magdalene.co* by grouping the news peg in each text, so that five news pegs were obtained, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** News Peg

No	News Peg
1	Rina Nose stated that child-free is opposed by most of society
2	Gita Savitri & Paul Partohap stated that child-free is opposed by society
3	Gita Savitri's comments on 'staying young because of Child-free' on social media
4	Discussion on 'Child-free in an Islamic Perspective' by Lingkar Ngaji KGI
5	'Muslim Women's Bodies' Discussion by Magdalene.co

Source: processed from *Magdalene.co* (2021-2023), by Nabilla Lynne (2024)

*Identifying characters & readers* Media is social because it introduces various real or fictional characters who form parasocial relationships with readers. Meanwhile, MFA analysis aims to examine these characters and how readers are invited to identify with them. In this stage, most of the texts (N=5) in *Magdalene.co* contain the figures Gita Savitri and Rina Nose as the key backgrounds for the emergence of child-free discourse in Indonesia. The presence of the two figures is presented descriptively, through indirect, and direct quotes. Other figures are also presented as the involvement of public figures in raising the child-free discourse, including Cinta Laura, Chelsea Handler, Ashley Judd, Jennifer Aniston, and Madonna. These public figures are also told as evidence of intimidation and stigmatization of a child-free society. Half of the texts, which are news texts, contain expert responses from an Islamic perspective. The presence of these experts raises a positive view of child-free from an Islamic perspective that is rarely found in other media. The responses are presented with direct and indirect quotes. While one other text contains expert responses that contribute to providing a positive view of child-free from a mental health perspective.

*Analyzing narrative & language categorization* This analytical tool utilizes qualitative methods such as narrative and discourse analysis, focusing on the storytelling conventions used by editors and writers, as well as on the choice of linguistic categories such as verbs, nouns, figures of speech, and slogans. Broadly speaking, all existing texts contain similar narrative structures, as presented in Table 2.

More than half of the texts studied consist of long-format texts reaching 900-1,500 words. These texts are often found using metaphors and slogans to describe the perspective of society in viewing the role of women, the decisions of child-free women, and the presence of children. A number of slogans were also found in several texts that emphasized the struggle for women's rights and roles.

The texts on *Magdalene.co* use metaphorical language styles and slogans to show the struggle for women and depict the negative stigma that society places on child-free women. *Magdalene.co* describes the perspective of society in viewing the role of women with metaphors: *child factory*, *sexual object*, *reproductive tool*, *sexual gratification tool*, *production machine*, and *economic burden*. To counter these perspectives, the authors of the texts present metaphors, including *non-physical subjects*, *own grip*, *not owing a story*, and *choosing/choice*.

**Table 2.** Narrative Structure

No	Structure	Essence
1	Orientation	The emergence of the background of the events that are happening
2	Conflict	Brainstorming pronatalist ideologies that conflict with child-free values
3	Resolution	Elaboration of the child-free concept that is debated in the conflict section
4	Closing	Persuasion of readers to change their mindset and actions

Source: processed from *Magdalene.co* (2021-2023), by Nabilla Lynne (2024)

**Table 3.** Macro Frame

No	Macro Frame
1	Child-free as A Form of Awareness of Women's Rights and Roles
2	Child-free as A Choice
3	Child-free Public Figures and Privacy Boundaries

Source: processed from: *Magdalene.co* (2021-2023), by Lynne (2024)

The perspective of society in viewing the presence of children is shown by the use of the word's *investment*, *encouragement*, and *life complement*.

From the perspective of society, child-free texts on *Magdalene.co* tend to fight against stigma and stereotypes with the use of metaphors and slogans. *Magdalene.co* texts show the struggle for women's rights and roles in society with the use of metaphors: *non-physical subjects*, *own grip*, *not owing stories*, and *choosing/choices*. These tendencies are also present in the form of slogans: *women are not sexual objects*, *women's body authority*, *women's bodies belong to themselves*, *women have the right to choose*, *normalize childfree*, and *stop policing women*.

*Point generalizing* This stage is taken Based on Entman's (1991) framing criteria and Kitzinger's (2000) concept of 'media templates'. This analysis highlights how news generalizes events as part of a larger phenomenon through intertextual references. We drew points from each text into several broad categories that best represent each text. From this stage, we found three frames that best represent each child-free text published on *Magdalene.co* as listed in Table 3.

### **Child-free as A Form of Awareness of Women's Rights and Roles**

The texts in this frame focus on women's struggles against the negative stigma that nails the unwritten rules over their body power, especially concerning family and husband-wife relationships. Writings categorized as forms of women's awareness are texts that raise issues such as women's rights to determine life choices, including the decision to be child-free, while also opposing the view that women are merely sexual objects. Texts with this tone of struggle are included in all child-free texts published by *Magdalene.co*.

*Magdalene.co* emphasizes that women have rights over their bodies, including the decision not to have children. This choice is not a reflection of egoism or lack of affection but is a form of awareness of individual happiness. This frame contained in one of the texts titled *Bukan Punya Ayah atau Suami, Tubuh Muslimah Miliknya Sendiri* (Not Father's nor Husband's Own, a Muslim Woman's Body is Her Own) by Tabayyun Pasinringi which emphasizes that ownership of a woman's body authority is in her own hands. In this text, we provide context from a cultural and religious perspective where Indonesian society usually claims ownership of a woman's body in the hands of her father and husband, not herself.

The behavior of a society that often judges women without children, whether they are child-free or childless, is the main point in the discussion of child-free on *Magdalene.co*. *Magdalene.co* defends that child-free women still contribute to society and have the right to be happy without having to meet rigid social standards. This frame contained in one of the texts titled *Tips Anti Aging Gitasav, Kemarahan Para Ibu, dan Isu Nyata yang Selalu Terabaikan* (Gitasav's Anti-Aging Tips, Mothers' Anger, and Real Issues That Always Ignored) by Ruby Astari which dissects some of social expectations of society towards women. This text summarizes how women have dual roles in society without adequate protection and rights.

## Child-free as A Choice

The child-free as a choice frame is presented in six texts. The main discussion of the texts in this category includes the normalization of the child-free lifestyle choice, respecting the reasons behind the decision, and considering the pros and cons of having and not having children. *Magdalene.co* persuades readers to normalize the child-free lifestyle, viewing it as a legitimate choice in the context of family and religion. This frame is contained in one of the texts titled *Miliki Anak atau Tidak, Islam Anjurkan Pilihan yang Mashlahat* (Have Children or Not, Islam Advises Choices that Benefit) by Tabayyun Pasinringi which provides the story of two sources, a mother and a child-free woman regarding the reasons why they both decided to have and not have children.

The texts included in the frame as a choice category emphasize the importance of understanding the reasons behind the child-free decision, starting from considerations of personal life, economy, and health, to moral responsibility for the future of children. *Magdalene.co* discusses the consequences of both choices—having children or not—with a comprehensive perspective, covering personal and social aspects and expert responses from the fields of religion and psychology. Four news texts contain responses from experts from the fields of Islam and psychology who provide positive responses to the child-free decision. For example, a text titled *Bagaimana Islam Menilai 'Childfree'? Sebuah Penjelasan Lengkap* (How Does Islam Assess 'Child-free'?) A Complete Explanation containing an explanation from an academic in the field of interpretation and a text titled *4 Alasan Kita Perlu Mendengarkan Keputusan Seleb yang 'Childfree'* (4 Reasons We Need to Listen to Celebrity Decisions Who Are 'Child-free') which quotes the response of a mental health counselor.

## Public Figures's Child-free Decision and Privacy Boundaries

The main discussion in this frame concerns the issue of public figures' privacy, especially women, in facing stigma and societal pressure related to their life choices, such as the decision to be child-free. Female public figures who are child-free are often the target of stigma and social pressure by journalists to become public consumption. From four texts consisting of three opinions and one news text, *Magdalene.co* highlights the importance of respecting privacy boundaries, not only for public figures but also for all individuals.

The topic of child-free is often in the public spotlight, especially when public figures state this choice openly. Societies with pronatalist values tend to pressure them with questions and judgments about marriage, household, and children as if they were obliged to explain. As happened to several public figures portrayed in the text *4 Alasan Kita Perlu Mendengarkan Keputusan Seleb yang 'Childfree'* (4 Reasons We Need to Listen to the Decisions of Celebrities Who Are 'Child-free') by Aurelia Gracia. This text is one of the texts on *Magdalene.co* that frames the difficulties of child-free public figures' lives in protecting the privacy of their life choices.

The texts categorized in the frame of public figures and privacy emphasize that not many people understand the boundaries of privacy, especially when it concerns the personal lives of public figures. As if the privacy of public figures is not only theirs but also everyone's right. The decision not to have children is something that no one should have to explain or question. *Magdalene.co* calls for respect for each individual's boundaries and rejects pressure or invasive questions about their life decisions.

## Micro Frame

Micro analysis at this stage is very relevant to the research objective to identify scripts

**Table 4.** List of Micro Analysis Articles

No	Title	Author
1	<i>Tips Anti Aging Gitasav, Kemarahan Para Ibu, dan Isu Nyata yang Selalu Terabaikan</i> (Gitasav's Anti-Aging Tips, Mothers' Anger, and Real Issues That Are Always Ignored)	Ruby Astari
2	Not all 8-hour Sleep and Botox: Being Childfree in Indonesia	Devi Asmarani*
3	<i>Hormati Gita Savitri, Perempuan Memang Bebas Pilih Punya Anak atau Tidak</i> (Respect Gita Savitri, Women Are Free to Choose Whether or Not to Have Children)**	Putri Amalia NA
4	<i>Yang Lebih Penting dari 'Childfree': Hargai Pilihan Masing-Masing</i> (More Important Than Being 'Child-free': Respect Each Other's Choice)**	Mansurni Abadi

\* owner of Magdalene.co  
\*\* text with footnotes  
this list is for reference in the explanation below

Source: *Magdalene.co* (2021-2023)

that discuss child-free discourse because it involves an in-depth analysis of some of the selected articles about child-free. In this study, the selected scripts are articles written in the first-person singular point of view, in which the authors subjectively show a defense of child-free although not all of them clearly state that they are child-free or childless.

We drew four texts in Table 4 that fit the characteristics above. Two texts were long feature texts, one of which was written directly by a child-free woman known as the owner of the *Magdalene.co*. While the other two texts were opinion articles that contained a footnote that the text did not fully represent *Magdalene.co*. Even so, we still assumed that by including the two writings in the collection of *Magdalene.co* written content, the text contains a meaning regarding *Magdalene.co*'s perspective in viewing the child-free issue. The point is that the selected articles consistently contain the opinions of authors successfully selected by *Magdalene.co* as one of the written products on its platform.

### Unreasonable Social Demands on Women

All four texts highlight the same key theme, the obsessive social demands on women. Women's lives are often under unreasonable social pressure, where the decision to have children or not is always the target of criticism: '*Must have children, must be a mother*' (1).; '*At this age, people presume that you have children — unless you don't, in which case you're sad or just strange*' (2). The selected texts reveal the injustices that women often experience due to social expectations. Women are expected to live independent lives and still be responsible for domestic matters such as caring for children and taking care of themselves (1). This burden, which is often considered normal, is unhealthy, especially since women often receive injustice from childhood through parenting patterns that ignore the traumatic impact on their future life choices, as reflected in one of the authors' stories about a female friend who was treated unfairly by her parents compared to her brother (1) which likely influenced her choice to be child-free.

Most people tend to generalize, without considering the background or capacity of the individual. Women are often forced to have children without considering their mental, physical, or economic readiness (3). According to the authors, having children is a big decision that requires careful consideration, including mental, physical, and economic stability. Unfortunately, society often does not ask about a person's intentions or readiness, but immediately imposes

the expectation that every woman wants and is ready to have children: *'No one ever really asks women: "Do you want to have children or not?", "How many children do you want to have?", "Are you ready not to have children?"'* (3). One author emphasizes the importance of open and respectful discussions between couples before marriage to create harmony in the family: *'Because of this, I suggest that couples discuss this matter before deciding to get married'* (3).

### Normalizing Child-free as A Choice

The authors also call for the normalization of child-free choices as part of human rights. Every individual has the right to their own body, and there is no obligation to explain the reasons behind their decisions to anyone: *'So try as much as possible to respect other people's choices and not invalidate their choices'* (4). By respecting the privacy and choices of others, social conflicts due to unreasonable pressure and expectations can be minimized (4). The four authors invite society to focus on more important issues and stop controlling other people's lives: *'That we need to stop policing women's bodies, and respect their choice to have or not have a child'* (2). With the keyword *'wake up call'* (1;2), the authors hope to create space for women to live happier and free from detrimental social pressures.

### Public Attention to the Controversy

The wrong focus of society is also highlighted. Instead of discussing fundamental things, such as the burden of child-free women, intimidation of women without children, or injustice in parenting patterns, society is more obsessed with superficial things such as anti-aging or physical appearance:

*'Yes, it's not all Botox and eight-hour, disruption-free sleep in this childfree universe. In many Indonesian traditional cultures, a woman without a child is valued less than one who has (and even more respect given to those with grandchildren)'* (2)

Even when women succeed in meeting social demands, ridicule still arises, often from other women who project their unhappiness due to unreasonable social pressures: *'Bullying of Single Women and Women Without Children is Still Considered Normal'* (1); *'What surprises me most about this latest furor is how it provoked women...'* (2). This phenomenon shows that many parties fail to understand the essence of freedom of choice, including reproductive freedom.

The authors agree to appreciate Gita Savitri's courage in raising the issue of child-free in Indonesia, which is still dominated by rigid pronatalist views: *'But she is brave to put herself out there to be the face of a life choice that is still considered "unnatural" in most societies'* (2). The presence of this discourse provides hope that the public mindset can begin to change: *'I am sure that when public figures declare their choice to be childfree, there is hope that the +62 public will be a little educated'* (4). However, the authors are worried that this issue will only be a temporary trend, sinking again when public attention shifts to other issues, as happened before.

The script about child-free on *Magdalene.co* is overall quite in-depth in discussing this issue from various perspectives, such as feminism, religion, and psychology, while still highlighting relevant social aspects. If the findings of Giles et al. (2009) found a negative frame from the news about childfree which was interpreted positively as a human rights issue, *Magdalene.co* builds a frame that is "negatively positive" - raising the perspective of supporting child-free with resistance to the patriarchal system and pronatalist culture that are considered rigid. This finding contrasts with that of Giles et al. (2009) who interpreted childfree as resistance. While *Magdalene.co* shows a frame that supports childfree as a form of women's awareness.

The feminist perspective emphasizes awareness of the importance of women's rights in choosing not to have children to pursue a career, self-development, and exploration of their lives without being bound by conventional norms of motherhood (Nabila et al., 2024). Concerning the construction of women's roles in society, women's main role is emphasized in the role of caregiving, so that their identity as women is 'incomplete' and 'deviant' before they are married and have children (Bhambhani & Inbanathan, 2018). Childfree women construct narratives about their positive identities and negotiate their social positions to protect themselves from pronatalist contexts (Buitrón, 2023).

The persuasion by *Magdalene.co* shows that *Magdalene.co* adheres to neoliberal feminism. Neoliberal feminism fights for a balance between traditional values about differences in gender roles while maintaining the progress of women's transformation approaching logical limits as human beings (Rottenberg, 2019, p. 4). The decision to become childfree, which is increasingly popular with society, is proof of women's transformation breaking through traditional boundaries to fight for their right to determine their own lives. This can be seen from how *Magdalene.co* creates space for writers to call for a change in people's mindsets to normalize child-free decisions in Indonesia. This can also be seen from the growth of rhetoric about support for those who choose not to have children in online community media (Hintz & Brown, 2020; Morison et al., 2016). Women who decide child-free are often considered to be against family values or lacking in affection (Hintz & Haywood, 2021; Lu et al., 2023; Peterson, 2014; Šumskaitė & Rapolienė, 2019). To combat the stigma that is not much different from that thrown by Indonesian society, *Magdalene.co* presents the humanist side of this decision, linking it to personal reasons, consequences, and its psychological and social impacts. The emphasis on respecting the right to privacy is one of the highlighted core narratives.

One of *Magdalene.co*'s unique features is the positive religious perspective. *Magdalene.co* offers a different perspective, especially by linking the issue of child-free with religious teachings and gender equality. It links Islam with the teachings of gender equality. This approach shows how religion can support women's rights to determine their life choices, including the decision to be child-free. This is different from another study that has found that the media often uses tradition and religion as a basis for criticizing women's lifestyles (Lu et al., 2023). In Indonesia, child-free has received a lot of resistance from a religious background. As found by a study from the *Institut Pembina Rohani Islam Jakarta*, having children brings many spiritual benefits, so the decision not to have children based on non-spiritual reasons such as career and economy is considered invalid (Hadi et al., 2022). By highlighting religious and psychological perspectives, *Magdalene.co* provides a new color in the discussion of the child-free issue although it needs further strengthening through empirical data and broader impact analysis.

Through the child-free narrative, *Magdalene.co* supports women's struggle to break the negative stigma that regulates their power over their bodies. *Magdalene.co* emphasizes that women have the right to choose, be happy, and continue to contribute without having to submit to rigid social rules. This principle is in line with the theory of neoliberal feminism which interprets the role of motherhood professionally as closely associated with managerial abilities (Rottenberg, 2019), which *Magdalene.co* believes that not all women have these abilities. Having children or becoming a mother should be emphasized as a role based on a sense of joy and enthusiasm. The choice to have children is grounded in the claim that not everyone is suited for the role of being a mother (Giles et al., 2009, pp. 12–15). There is a hidden tension between social responsibility and personal freedom, sometimes associated with feminism (Giles et al., 2009, p. 17). Neoliberal feminism raises the balance between motherhood and work-family roles to align women's traditional roles amidst the values of modern capitalism.

The domestication of women's roles under capitalist values has been going on since the *Orde Baru* era. The term *Ibuism* as a gender ideology forms strict restrictions and rigid stereotypes that aim to control women's roles with a hierarchical order (Suryakusuma, 2011). However, the dominant ideology in society makes the role of mothers look natural and noble in the context of pronatalist culture (Pricillia & Putri, 2023, p. 91).

## CONCLUSION

On a macro level, *Magdalene.co* discusses the issue of childfree from various aspects, thus creating a more inclusive narrative. However, the texts presented appear homogeneous, with topics that are often repeated. *Magdalene.co* presents a positive framing of the struggle for women's rights presented negatively as resistance to traditional values. Meanwhile, on a micro level, *Magdalene.co* portrays a narrative rich in opinion but requires more empirical references to support arguments, such as academic studies, statistics, or interviews with related public figures. It focuses on psychological aspects and mindsets but does not explore the impact of child-free decisions on social contexts, such as changes in family dynamics or economic contributions.

The emphasis on respecting privacy and psychological understanding makes the news articles relevant to many readers. *Magdalene.co* adopts a psychological approach in the form of character emergence and inner conflict and the use of metaphors. However, this study does not deeply discuss the literary style of *Magdalene.co* in writing its journalistic products. The findings of this article noted that *Magdalene.co* reflects the perspective of Indonesian society on the childfree issue and the role of women as part of complex reciprocity between pronatalist understanding, religious systems, and patriarchal culture, while a logical approach is less reflected. With the discussion that cannot yet represent the whole child-free discourse frame in Indonesian, further research is required to explain how mainstream media in Indonesia frames the childfree issue to find the representation of Indonesian media in presenting news about childfree.

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