

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS *CHILDFREE* IN GEN Z STUDENTS

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Abstract

Keywords:

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Childfree is a phenomenon that has been increasingly discussed in recent years. This study aimed to examine the relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes toward childfree. The population of this study consisted of Generation Z university students. A quantitative approach was employed with 400 active university students aged 18–25 years who had never been married and were located across Indonesia. The sample was obtained using accidental sampling. Data were collected using psychological well-being and attitudes toward childfree scales, which had been tested for reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.770 and 0.893, respectively. Data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment correlation. The results showed a significant negative relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes toward childfree ($r = -0.161$; $p = 0.001$). The coefficient of determination of 2.6% indicates that psychological well-being explains only a small proportion of the variation in attitudes toward childfree, while 97.4% is influenced by other factors outside the study. Therefore, the research hypothesis was accepted.

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of *childfree* has become one of the social issues that has been increasingly talked about in recent years. *Childfree* is a term used to refer to individuals who decide not to have children (Dictionary, n.d.). This choice is increasingly receiving public attention, marked by the emergence of the Childfree Life Indonesia community and a number of *public figures* who openly stated that they choose to live a *childfree* life, such as Gita Savitri Devi, Rina Nose, and Cinta Laura. In Indonesia, having children is still seen as a social and religious obligation. However, increasing awareness of individual rights and life choices has caused *childfree* to begin to gain attention, especially among generation Z who are more open to alternative life choices (Aldito et al., 2025). On the



other hand, if this trend develops widely, *childfree* has the potential to affect the birth rate as it occurs in some developed countries (Mubarokah et al., 2025).

Data shows that the birth rate in Indonesia has continued to decline since 2020 (Lengkong et al., 2020). Based on the 2020 Population Census Long Form, Indonesia's *Total Fertility Rate* (TFR) was 2.18, then decreased to 2.13 based on SUPAS 2025. In addition, the results of SUSENAS show that 8.2% of women aged 15-49 years or around 71 thousand women choose to *be childfree*. The findings indicate a change in fertility patterns and a shift in perception of traditional family structures that also affect attitudes towards *childlessness*.

The *childfree* phenomenon has also given rise to various responses in society. Some individuals view *childfree* as an acceptable life choice, while others consider having children to be an important part of family life. These differences in views reflect a variety of attitudes towards *childfree*, ranging from positive to negative attitudes. One of the factors that is suspected to play a role in the formation of this attitude is the psychological aspect (Maier, 2009).

One of the relevant concepts to understand this phenomenon is psychological *well-being*. According to Ryff (1989), psychological well-being describes a condition when individuals are able to accept themselves, have a purpose in life, establish positive relationships with others, be independent, be able to manage the environment, and continue to develop personally. In addition, psychological well-being is also related to attitude formation, which is an individual's evaluation of an object that is reflected in positive and negative responses (Swarjana, 2022).

Previous research has shown mixed results. Audinovic and Nugroho (2023) found that Generation Z tends to have a more open view of *childfree* even though they do not always choose to implement it. On the other hand, Denson et al. (2025) show that *childfree* individuals still receive more negative social judgments than other groups. Meanwhile, Siswanto and Nurhasanah (2022) found that *childfree decisions* are influenced by personal, psychological, economic, philosophical, and life experience factors.

So far, research on *childfree* in Indonesia is still dominated by a qualitative approach that focuses on the subjective experience of individuals. This approach has not been able to provide an overview of the tendency of the Indonesian people's attitude towards *childfree*. Therefore, quantitative research is important to find out the tendency of people, especially generation Z students, towards *childfree* and test its relationship with psychological well-being.

This research aims to determine the relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childfree* in Gen Z students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Childfree

Childfree is an individual's choice not to have children (Dictionary, n.d.). The phenomenon of *childfree* is related to a change in views on life choices and family structure. In Indonesia, having children is still seen as a social and religious obligation, but increasing awareness of individual rights and life choices has made *childfree* increasingly garnered, especially among generation Z who are more open to alternative life choices (Aldito et al., 2025). The choice of *childfree* can also be influenced by various factors, such as personal, psychological, economic, philosophical, and life experience factors (Siswanto & Nurhasanah, 2022).

Attitudes towards *Childfree*

Attitudes towards *childfree* indicate that there are variations in individual views on the choice of not having children. Some individuals view *childfree* as an acceptable life choice, while others consider having children to be an important part of family life. Audinovic and Nugroho (2023) show that Generation Z tends to have a more open view of *childfree*, although they do not always choose to implement it. On the other hand, *childfree* individuals still receive more negative social judgments than other groups (Denson et al., 2025). These differences of views show that attitudes towards *childfree* can be in positive or negative tendencies.

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is a condition when individuals are able to accept themselves, have a purpose in life, establish positive relationships with others, be independent, be able to manage the environment, and continue to develop personally (Ryff, 1989). Psychological well-being is also related to attitude formation, which is an individual's evaluation of an object that is reflected in positive and negative responses (Swarjana, 2022). Thus, psychological well-being is one of the relevant psychological aspects to understand an individual's attitude towards *childfreedom*.

The Relationship of Psychological Well-Being with Attitudes to *Childfree*

Based on the description of *childfree*, attitudes towards *childfree*, and psychological well-being, psychological well-being is one of the relevant aspects in understanding individual attitudes towards the choice not to have children. Psychological well-being describes the ability of individuals to accept themselves, have life goals, establish positive relationships with others, be independent, manage the environment, and develop themselves (Ryff, 1989). Meanwhile, attitude is an individual's evaluation of an object that is reflected in positive and negative responses (Swarjana, 2022). Therefore, this study examines the relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childfreedom* in Gen Z students.

Hipotesis

Based on theoretical studies and previous research, the hypothesis in this study is that there is a relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childfreedom* in Gen Z students.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This type of research uses a quantitative approach. This study aims to find out the relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childfree* in Gen Z students.

Research Subjects and Samples

The subjects in this study are active students (S1), including Gen Z who are in the age range of 18–25 years and have never been married. Samples were obtained from 400 respondents using sampling techniques using *accidental sampling*. Data collection is disseminated online through social media such as Threads, WhatsApp, Instagram, X, and Telegram using Google Forms.

Research Instruments

The measuring tools in this study are *the short-scale version of Psychological Well-Being* (Humaidah & Mulyono, 2025) with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.770 and the attitude instrument towards *childfree* (Ellisa Fitriana, 2024) with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.893, so it has eligibility to be used in this study.

The scale used to measure psychological well-being variables in this study was adopted from the *short scale* version of the Psychological Well-Being scale which contains 11 items. This scale measures aspects of self-acceptance, positive relationships with other individuals, independence, mastery of the environment, life goals, and personal growth. Examples of statements on this scale are "in general, I feel I am responsible for the situation in which I live", "I am confident in my own opinion, even though my opinion differs from the opinion of most people", and "when looking back at my life story, I feel happy with what has happened so far". The answer moves from very appropriate, appropriate, inappropriate, and very inappropriate.

The scale used to measure the variables of attitudes towards *childlessness* in this study contained 20 items. This scale measures cognitive, affective, and conative aspects. Examples of statements on this scale are "I am researching information about *childfree* on my own initiative", "I feel that I can accept *the childfree* ideology well", and "I plan not to have children in the future". Answers move from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis used was *Pearson Product Moment* correlation using the help of JASP software version 0.95.4.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the analysis using Pearson Product Moment showed a significant relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childfree* ($r = -.16$; $p < .05$). The negative correlation value shows that the relationship between the two variables is opposite, meaning that the higher the psychological well-being, the lower the attitude towards *childfree*. However, because the correlation value was only .16, the relationship was so weak that the increase in psychological well-being had only a small effect on the decrease in the variable attitude towards *childfree*.

Normality Test

A normality test is carried out to find out whether the data to be analyzed is normal or not. In this study, normality testing was carried out to test the scale of psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childfree*. This study uses *Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical analysis* with the test criteria being that if the probability of value > 0.05 then the data is normally distributed and if the probability of value < 0.05 then the data is abnormally distributed.

Table 1. Normality Test

Fit Statistics

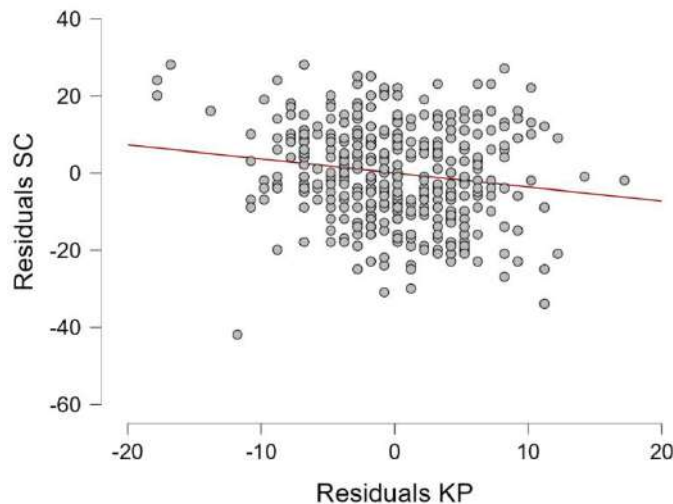
Test	Statistic	p
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.043	.446

Based on the table above, it was found that the data had a value of $p = 0.446$ ($p > 0.05$) so that it was declared to be normally distributed.

Linearity Test

A linearity test was carried out on the variables of psychological well-being and attitudes towards childfree to determine the relationship between the two. The results of the linearity test are as follows.

Figure 1. Linearity Test



Based on residual scatterplots, the data points are randomly spread around the regression line and do not form a specific curve pattern. Since no nonlinear pattern was found, the linearity assumption was stated to be fulfilled so that Pearson's correlation analysis could be used.

Uji Hypothesis

After conducting the normality test and the next linear test, the hypothesis test was carried out using the statistical analysis technique used in this study is *Pearson's Correlations*. Test this analysis using the help of JASP application version 0.95.4.0.

Table 2. Hypothesis Test

Pearson's Correlations

		n	Pearson's r	p
C	S	400	-0.161**	.001
D	C			

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Based on the results of the Pearson correlation test, it was found that there was a significant negative relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childfreedom*, which means that the hypothesis was accepted, ($r = -0.161$, (r^2) = 0.026 or 2.6%, or 97.4% was influenced by other factors other than the factors studied.

DISCUSSION

The results showed a significant negative relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childlessness* in Gen Z students ($r = -0.161$; $p = 0.001$). Thus, the research hypothesis is accepted. Negative relationships show that the higher the psychological well-being, the lower the attitude towards *childfreeness*. Conversely, the lower the psychological well-being, the higher the attitude towards *childfree*. However, a correlation value of 0.161 indicates that the relationship between the two variables is very weak. Thus, psychological well-being has little relationship with attitudes towards *childfreedom* in Gen Z students.

The negative relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childlessness* can be explained based on the theory of Ryff (1995). Individuals with low levels of psychological well-being tend to have difficulties in terms of self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, and mastery of the environment. These conditions can affect the way individuals deal with major responsibilities, including their role as parents. Thus, an individual's psychological condition can relate to how the individual views the choice of having or not having children.

The results of this study are strengthened by research by Eldi et al. (2023) which shows that individuals who decide to *be childfree* or have a positive attitude towards *childfree* can be influenced by psychological factors, such as traumatic experiences they have experienced. These findings are relevant to the results of this study which shows a negative relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childlessness*. In addition, Amalia (2023) shows that positive attitudes towards *childfree* can be influenced by trauma factors or psychological factors. The findings show that psychological aspects can be one of the considerations in understanding individual attitudes towards *childlessness*.

Based on the results of the analysis, the psychological well-being variable only explained 2.6% of the variation in attitudes towards *childfree*, while the other 97.4% were influenced by other factors outside the variables studied. The magnitude of the variation shows that the influence of psychological well-being is in the low category. Victoria M. Tunggono (2021) explained that there are other factors that also play a role, such as social factors, economics, cultural values, and changes in modern lifestyles. Therefore, attitudes towards *childlessness* need to be seen multifactorarily, not only from a psychological aspect, but also from a broader perspective. Thus, this study contributes to enriching empirical studies on the dynamics of psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childlessness*.

Apart from the results of the research obtained, this research has several limitations. First, data collection was carried out online so that the researcher could not fully control the condition of the respondents when filling out the questionnaire and could not ensure the seriousness of the respondents in providing answers. Second, *the accidental sampling technique* causes samples to be obtained by chance from respondents who are willing to fill out the questionnaire so that they do not fully represent all the characteristics of the sample. Although the study involved respondents from various regions in Indonesia, the number of respondents from the Eastern Indonesia region was still relatively small compared to the Western Indonesia region. This condition causes the representation of student characteristics from the Eastern Indonesia region to be not optimal so that the research results cannot be generalized to Gen Z students throughout Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that there is a significant negative relationship between psychological well-being and attitudes towards *childfree* Gen Z students ($r = -0.161$; $p = 0.001$). This shows that the higher the psychological well-being, the lower the attitude towards *childfree*, and vice versa. The relationship between the two variables was very weak, with a coefficient of determination of 2.6%, so psychological well-being explained only a small part of the variation in attitudes towards *childfree*, while the other 97.4% were influenced by factors outside the study. Thus, the research hypothesis is accepted. The level of psychological well-being is in the moderate category, while attitudes towards *childfree* is in the neutral category.

The next study is recommended to use *probability sampling* techniques and involve respondents more evenly from various regions in Indonesia so that the results of the study can be generalized more widely. Further research can also be conducted offline to minimize limitations in online data collection. In addition, qualitative research with female subjects can be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of attitudes towards *childlessness*.

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