Environmental Concerns and Parenthood: A Thematic Analysis of Young Adults' Perspectives in Bogor, Indonesia

Padel Muhamad Rallie Rivaldy, Dyah Kristyowati, Nurul Hanun Asyifa, Yuyus Rustandi
padelmrr@unpak.ac.id
Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universitas Pakuan

Abstract

Reproductive decision-making among young adults is increasingly shaped by socioeconomic uncertainty, environmental concerns, and changing expectations of responsible parenthood. This study examines how young adults in Bogor, Indonesia, understand and negotiate their willingness to have children amid these interconnected circumstances. Employing a qualitative approach, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with five participants and applies Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis to interpret their accounts. The findings are organised into four interconnected themes: economic security and responsible parenthood, psychological and relational readiness, environmental uncertainty and future family life, and the negotiation of reproductive responsibility. Participants associated parenthood with the ability to provide financial stability, emotional support, and adequate living conditions for future children. Environmental concerns, including unpredictable weather and changing urban conditions, contributed to these considerations but did not independently determine reproductive decisions. The findings suggest that reproductive aspirations may coexist with hesitation when the conditions necessary for responsible caregiving are perceived as inadequate. These findings illuminate conditional parenthood as an orientation in which the willingness to have children depends on material, psychological, relational, and environmental readiness.

Keywords: parenthood; reproductive responsibility; eco-anxiety; cultural studies

Introduction

Decisions about having children are shaped not only by personal aspirations but also by the social, economic, and cultural conditions in which parenthood is imagined and experienced. For young adults, the prospect of raising children involves considerations that extend beyond marriage and biological reproduction, including financial security, emotional preparedness, caregiving responsibilities, and the ability to provide a safe environment for future generations.

These considerations have become increasingly relevant amid economic uncertainty and growing public concern about environmental degradation. Although parenthood continues to be regarded as an important stage of adulthood in many societies, individuals may question whether the conditions necessary for raising children responsibly can be achieved. Consequently, reproductive decision-making cannot be adequately understood through a simple distinction between wanting and not wanting children. It also requires attention to how individuals interpret the responsibilities, expectations, and uncertainties associated with becoming parents.

In Indonesia, discussions about reproductive decisions have gained public attention through the growing visibility of *childfree* discourse, particularly on digital platforms. Traditionally, marriage and parenthood have been closely associated with family continuity, social responsibility, and culturally recognised expectations of adulthood. Choosing not to have children can therefore generate moral judgments, particularly when such decisions challenge established understandings of women's familial roles. Recent studies of Indonesian childfree discourse have demonstrated how voluntary non-parenthood is negotiated through social expectations, religious and familial values, and representations of gender (Purwaningtyas et al., 2024; Stephani, 2024; Widodo et al., 2024). However, the visibility of childfree narratives does not necessarily indicate that individuals who question parenthood have made a permanent decision against having children. Some may remain uncertain, while others may wish to have children but postpone parenthood until particular circumstances are considered adequate. Distinguishing these orientations is important because reproductive hesitation may reflect an evaluation of parental responsibility rather than a rejection of family life.

Research on voluntary childlessness has long challenged the assumption that parenthood represents an inevitable or universally desired life course. Blackstone and Stewart (2012) demonstrate that choosing to remain childfree can constitute a deliberate and meaningful decision rather than a failure to fulfil conventional adulthood expectations. Similarly, Park (2002) examines how voluntarily childless individuals negotiate social stigma and manage their identities in response to prevailing expectations of parenthood. Nevertheless, voluntary childfree identity differs from reproductive ambivalence and delayed parenthood, particularly when individuals express a continuing desire for children while questioning their preparedness to raise them. The distinction becomes more complicated when parenthood is understood as a responsibility extending across a child's lifetime. Financial provision, emotional stability, educational opportunities, and a supportive household may be regarded not merely as desirable circumstances but as necessary conditions for becoming a responsible parent. Reproductive decisions, in this sense, involve moral evaluations of the circumstances into which children would be born and the obligations that prospective parents anticipate undertaking.

Environmental concerns introduce further uncertainty into these considerations. Climate change, pollution, natural disasters, and declining environmental quality have increasingly become part of public discussions about whether bringing children into an uncertain future is ethically justifiable. Schneider-Mayerson and Leong (2020) identify two prominent dimensions of climate-related reproductive concern: the environmental consequences associated with having children and apprehension about the conditions future children may experience. Similarly,

Helm et al. (2021) examine environmental motivations among individuals considering or choosing voluntary non-parenthood. Nakkerud (2024) further demonstrates that environmentally motivated childfree decisions may be understood as forms of private environmental responsibility, public activism, or both. These studies illustrate that reproductive decisions can acquire environmental meanings beyond conventional considerations of family planning. Nevertheless, environmental concern does not necessarily produce a permanent intention to remain childfree.

Recent research has also raised questions about the relationship between environmental attitudes and actual reproductive behaviour. Drawing on Swedish survey data, Jylhä et al. (2025) found that environmental considerations were widely regarded as relevant to childbearing decisions, although their relationship with fertility outcomes remained limited. Similarly, Peters et al. (2025), using longitudinal data from Germany, found no general association between environmental concern and transitions to parenthood or completed fertility. These findings suggest that environmental concern should not automatically be interpreted as a direct explanation for declining fertility. Rather, it may influence how individuals evaluate the timing, feasibility, and ethical implications of having children. While these studies contribute important evidence concerning environmental attitudes and fertility, their primary emphasis on measurable associations and reproductive outcomes leaves further room to examine how individuals themselves construct and negotiate the meanings of environmental uncertainty in relation to parenthood.

Such concerns become particularly significant when environmental insecurity intersects with existing socioeconomic pressures. Employment instability, rising living costs, limited access to affordable housing, and uncertainty about future living conditions can shape how young adults imagine family formation. Environmental problems may intensify these pressures by introducing additional concerns about health, safety, mobility, and the wellbeing of future children. Pihkala (2020) argues that eco-anxiety should not automatically be regarded as a pathological condition, as distress about ecological change may constitute an understandable response to environmental threats. In reproductive contexts, environmental worry may similarly reflect concern for the conditions under which care can be sustained. The relationship between environmental uncertainty and reproductive decision-making therefore requires an understanding of how ecological concerns are experienced alongside everyday material and social insecurities, rather than treating them as separate or necessarily determining factors.

Reproductive responsibility is also shaped by gendered expectations surrounding family life and caregiving. In Indonesia, historical constructions of motherhood have positioned women as central to domestic welfare, child development, and national progress. Blackburn (2004) and Suryakusuma (2011) demonstrate how Indonesian state and social institutions have historically associated women's reproductive and caregiving responsibilities with broader developmental objectives. Although contemporary gender relations have changed, expectations concerning parental responsibility remain culturally significant. Prospective parenthood may involve concerns about pregnancy, employment, domestic labour, emotional support, and the distribution of childcare responsibilities. These considerations are relevant to understanding

reproductive decisions as socially situated evaluations of future care rather than exclusively individual preferences. They also invite examination of how women and men understand their anticipated responsibilities without assuming that their experiences or concerns are necessarily uniform.

The relationship between reproduction and national development adds another dimension to these negotiations. Indonesia's long-term development agenda, commonly articulated through the vision of *Indonesia Emas 2045*, places considerable emphasis on developing a healthy, educated, productive, and competitive population (Bappenas, 2023). Within this framework, population development is concerned not simply with the number of future citizens but also with their wellbeing and capacity to contribute to national progress. Such aspirations are accompanied by expectations concerning parental preparedness, children's health, education, and family welfare. However, the ability to fulfil these expectations depends partly on material and institutional conditions that are not equally available to all prospective parents. This creates a potential tension between the promotion of responsible parenthood and the difficulties individuals encounter when attempting to secure the resources necessary to practise it. The national development agenda therefore provides a relevant sociocultural context for examining how young adults interpret parenthood as a responsibility, although their personal decisions cannot be assumed to result directly from government policy.

Bogor provides a relevant setting for exploring these interconnected concerns. Located within the wider Jakarta metropolitan region, Bogor is shaped by urban development, educational opportunities, employment mobility, and environmental pressures. Young adults living, studying, or working in this setting may encounter the practical demands of metropolitan life alongside concerns about flooding, unpredictable weather, housing, and changing urban environments. These conditions offer a context in which reproductive aspirations can be examined in relation to both immediate circumstances and imagined futures. Rather than treating Bogor as representative of Indonesian youth more broadly, this study approaches the experiences of its participants as culturally and socially situated accounts through which broader questions about reproductive responsibility can be explored.

Despite growing scholarship on voluntary childlessness, environmental concern, and reproductive decision-making, a conceptual issue remains insufficiently explored: how do individuals who remain open to having children negotiate that desire when the circumstances required for responsible parenthood appear uncertain or unattainable? Existing studies have provided important insights into childfree identities, environmental motivations, and the relationship between ecological attitudes and fertility outcomes. However, these approaches do not fully explain how reproductive willingness may coexist with hesitation, postponement, and ethical concerns about future care. This distinction is especially relevant in cultural contexts where parenthood remains socially valued while expectations concerning the quality of childrearing continue to expand. Examining the meanings attached to reproductive readiness may therefore clarify how young adults negotiate personal aspirations in relation to economic insecurity, environmental uncertainty, and culturally established responsibilities.

Against this background, the present study examines how young adults in Bogor understand and negotiate parenthood amid environmental and socioeconomic uncertainty. Drawing on semi-structured interviews and a qualitative thematic approach, it investigates how participants construct the material, psychological, relational, and environmental conditions they consider relevant to becoming parents. The study addresses three questions: (1) How do young adults understand and negotiate their willingness to have children amid environmental and socioeconomic uncertainty? (2) How do expectations concerning financial security, emotional readiness, caregiving, and environmental conditions shape their understandings of responsible parenthood? and (3) How can these understandings be interpreted in relation to broader cultural expectations surrounding reproduction and population development in Indonesia? By focusing on participants' accounts rather than measuring reproductive intentions or predicting fertility outcomes, this study aims to contribute to cultural studies scholarship on reproductive responsibility, environmental uncertainty, and the negotiation of parenthood in contemporary Indonesia.

Methodology

The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to allow participants to express their experiences, perspectives, and considerations in their preferred language. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were anonymised and identified using interviewee codes. Relevant interview excerpts were subsequently translated into English by the researcher, with careful attention to preserving their original meanings and contextual nuances. The interview data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2022). This approach was selected for its flexibility in identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning across participants' accounts, particularly in understanding how young adults negotiate reproductive decisions amid environmental, economic, and social uncertainties. The analysis adopted an inductive–deductive orientation, allowing themes to be developed through engagement with the interview data while remaining informed by relevant concepts of reproductive responsibility, environmental concern, and gendered expectations. The analytical process followed six recursive phases: (1) familiarisation with the data through repeated reading of the interview transcripts; (2) generation of initial codes identifying meaningful expressions related to parenthood, financial stability, emotional readiness, and environmental conditions; (3) construction of candidate themes by examining patterns of shared meaning across the coded data; (4) reviewing and refining these themes in relation to individual extracts and the dataset as a whole; (5) defining and naming the themes according to their central organising concepts; and (6) developing an interpretive account that integrates participants' narratives with the broader sociocultural context of reproductive decision-making in Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis identified four interconnected patterns in young adults' understandings of parenthood: economic security as a condition of responsible parenting, psychological and relational preparedness, environmental uncertainty in imagining future family life, and the negotiation of reproductive aspirations (see Table 1 below). These patterns suggest

that decisions about having children are not necessarily organised around a fixed preference for parenthood or voluntary childlessness. Instead, participants' accounts reveal how the prospect of raising children is evaluated against the resources, responsibilities, and uncertainties associated with future family life. Economic circumstances, anticipated caregiving obligations, and environmental conditions were not understood as entirely separate concerns. Rather, they contributed to broader judgments about whether parenthood could be undertaken responsibly.

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Findings on Young Adults' Perspectives on Parenthood

Theme	Analytical Focus	Qualitative Interpretation
Economic Security	Employment, income, housing, and living costs	Economic stability is understood as an important condition for providing adequate care, making parenthood a long-term financial and moral responsibility.
Psychological Readiness	Emotional preparedness, mental stability, and supportive relationships	Parenthood requires sustained emotional and relational capacities beyond the desire to have children, reflecting concerns about future caregiving responsibilities.
Environmental Uncertainty	Unpredictable weather, urban development, environmental quality, and safety	Environmental concerns contribute to uncertainty about future living conditions, often reinforcing existing socioeconomic insecurities rather than independently determining reproductive decisions.
Negotiating Parenthood and Reproductive Responsibility	Reproductive aspirations, readiness, and postponement	Participants' accounts suggest that willingness to have children may coexist with hesitation, as parenthood is considered acceptable when material, psychological, and environmental conditions are perceived as adequate.

1. Economic Security

Economic security emerged as a prominent consideration in participants' discussions of future parenthood. Employment opportunities, income stability, living expenses, and housing were understood as circumstances that could influence not only the timing of having children but also the ability to provide adequate care. Across the interviews, economic considerations were associated with the expectation that parents should be capable of supporting children's needs beyond their immediate survival. Parenthood was consequently framed as a long-term responsibility requiring preparation and a degree of material security.

One participant explained how employment difficulties and increasing living costs shaped her expectations of becoming a parent:

> "If you ask me, finding a job is really tough right now. Housing prices keep climbing, and the cost of living is constantly going up. Environmental factors matter too, especially with how unpredictable the weather is getting. So I think the two are connected, but the economy definitely hits closer to home in everyday life. As for having kids, I think that's a personal choice. Personally, I'd still like to start a family eventually, but if I do have children one day, I want to make sure I'm completely prepared and ready first." (Interviewee 3, female)

The participant's statement reveals a distinction between the desire to have children and the perceived ability to become a parent. Her acknowledgement that she still wishes to have a family suggests that economic insecurity does not necessarily eliminate reproductive aspirations. Rather, it introduces conditions that must be considered before those aspirations can be realised. The emphasis on being "completely prepared and ready" positions parenthood as a responsibility that should be approached deliberately rather than as an inevitable consequence of adulthood or marriage. The participant also distinguishes between economic and environmental pressures. Although she recognises their interconnectedness, employment and living costs are described as having a more immediate impact on everyday life. This distinction is analytically important because it complicates explanations that position environmental anxiety as the primary motivation behind reproductive hesitation. Economic constraints appear to shape the participant's assessment of whether she could provide a stable environment for a future child, while environmental uncertainty contributes to her broader concerns about future living conditions.

The relationship between economic security and reproductive decision-making can be understood through the increasing expectations associated with responsible parenthood. In many contemporary settings, parents are expected to provide not only financial support but also educational opportunities, healthcare, emotional stability, and conditions favourable to children's development. These expectations may transform parenthood into a demanding long-term commitment, especially for young adults who have not yet established secure employment or housing.

Such considerations also complicate the distinction between reproductive choice and structural constraint. Although the participant describes having children as a personal choice, the circumstances influencing that choice extend beyond individual preference. Labour-market insecurity, housing affordability, and increasing living expenses establish conditions within which reproductive aspirations are evaluated. Parenthood therefore remains personally meaningful while being constrained by circumstances that individuals cannot necessarily resolve through personal effort alone. Rather than indicating a categorical rejection of children, these accounts point toward an understanding of reproductive responsibility in which willingness to become a parent depends partly on the perceived capacity to provide an adequate standard of care. Economic security consequently acquires an ethical dimension: the question is not simply whether having children is financially possible, but whether becoming a parent under uncertain

conditions would be consistent with the responsibilities participants associate with raising children.

2. Psychological Readiness

Alongside economic considerations, participants discussed psychological preparedness, emotional stability, and supportive relationships as relevant conditions for parenthood. These concerns suggest that readiness was not understood exclusively through material resources. Becoming a parent also involved anticipating the emotional and relational responsibilities associated with caring for another person over an extended period. The interviews included concerns about mental preparedness, the ability to sustain emotional support, and the importance of stable relationships. Such considerations extend the meaning of reproductive readiness beyond biological capability or the attainment of conventional adult milestones. Parenthood involves continuous caregiving, and participants' attention to psychological preparedness reflects an awareness that providing for a child requires more than economic resources. This understanding is particularly relevant to contemporary expectations surrounding parental responsibility. Caring for children involves emotional availability, patience, communication, and the ability to respond to changing developmental needs. These responsibilities are not confined to the moment of childbirth but continue throughout family life. Participants' concerns about readiness can therefore be interpreted as anticipatory evaluations of the work involved in becoming and remaining a parent.

The emphasis on psychological preparation also complicates the assumption that reproductive postponement necessarily reflects individualism or an unwillingness to accept familial obligations. Hesitation may instead be associated with recognising the seriousness of those obligations. Individuals who anticipate the emotional demands of childcare may wish to establish greater personal stability before undertaking them. However, psychological readiness should not be understood as an entirely individual quality. Emotional capacity is influenced by employment conditions, financial pressures, relationships, and access to support. A prospective parent's ability to sustain care may depend on whether caregiving responsibilities can be shared and whether the surrounding social environment provides sufficient stability.

These considerations are particularly significant when examined alongside the gendered organisation of care. Indonesian constructions of family responsibility have historically positioned women as central to child development and household welfare. Blackburn (2004) and Suryakusuma (2011) demonstrate how expectations concerning motherhood have been connected to wider social and national ideals. Although contemporary family arrangements are diverse, the historical association between femininity and responsibility for care provides an important context for interpreting how prospective parents may anticipate the demands of raising children. At the same time, the interviews do not establish that women and men systematically differed in their understandings of psychological readiness or caregiving. Gender is therefore relevant as a sociocultural framework. The central interpretive point concerns how prospective parenthood is understood as a sustained responsibility requiring emotional, relational, and material support.

Psychological preparedness thus forms part of a broader understanding of responsible parenting. Participants' concerns indicate that the decision to have children may depend on whether they believe they can maintain the quality of care they consider necessary. This reasoning places the anticipated wellbeing of children alongside personal reproductive aspirations and further complicates any straightforward classification of hesitation as unwillingness to become a parent.

3. Environmental Uncertainty

Environmental concerns formed another dimension of participants' reflections on future parenthood. The interviews included references to unpredictable weather, flooding, urban development, declining green space, and the management of public environments. These concerns were generally articulated through their implications for everyday safety, mobility, health, and the perceived quality of urban life. Environmental uncertainty therefore appeared alongside practical concerns about whether future families could live securely. Rather than approaching environmental degradation primarily as an abstract global problem, participants connected environmental conditions to the circumstances of everyday life. This orientation is especially relevant in Bogor, where urban development and environmental pressures form part of the broader context in which young adults imagine their futures.

Interviewee 3's account illustrates the relationship between these concerns. Her recognition that environmental and economic conditions are connected, alongside her stronger emphasis on immediate economic pressures, suggests that environmental uncertainty may intensify rather than replace existing insecurities. Unpredictable weather was relevant to her assessment of future circumstances, but it did not independently determine her willingness to have children. A different understanding of environmental quality appeared in another participant's description of changes in Bogor's urban environment:

> "The change is really drastic, isn't it? Environmentally speaking, and on a personal note, since I like observing the streets, there used to be so many street vendors taking up the sidewalks and roadsides, essentially occupying space meant for traffic. Thankfully, Bogor is clean now, so we can actually enjoy the city's atmosphere. It turns out the city is this beautiful without street vendors set up along the roads." (Interviewee 5, male)

This account associates environmental improvement with urban order, cleanliness, pedestrian accessibility, and the visual quality of public space. The participant evaluates the environment through conditions that make the city more comfortable and enjoyable for its residents. His description is therefore grounded in a human-centred understanding of urban liveability rather than an explicit concern for ecological preservation or the intrinsic value of non-human life. The statement also illustrates that participants may attach different meanings to environmental problems. Environmental concern cannot automatically be equated with climate activism, ecological consciousness, or opposition to reproduction. For some individuals, environmental quality may primarily concern access to safe, orderly, and functional urban spaces.

Importantly, Interviewee 5's statement does not directly connect these observations to his own reproductive decisions. Its analytical relevance lies in demonstrating how environmental conditions are perceived and evaluated, rather than proving that concerns about urban cleanliness influence the decision to have children. This distinction is necessary to avoid attributing reproductive motivations to environmental statements that do not explicitly express them.

Existing research has identified multiple ways in which environmental concerns may influence reproductive thinking. Schneider-Mayerson and Leong (2020) distinguish apprehension about the ecological implications of having children from concerns about the environmental conditions future children may inherit. Nakkerud (2024) similarly demonstrates that environmentally motivated non-parenthood may carry different personal and political meanings. However, the present findings suggest that environmental awareness does not necessarily translate into a stable childfree orientation or a clearly articulated form of environmental activism. This interpretation is consistent with Jylhä et al. (2025) and Peters et al. (2025), whose research cautions against assuming that environmental concerns directly determine reproductive outcomes. Although their studies examine different populations and employ different methodological approaches, they reinforce the importance of distinguishing environmental attitudes from actual decisions about becoming parents.

4. Between Reproductive Desire and Responsible Readiness

The relationship between reproductive aspirations and perceived readiness provides an important interpretive connection across the findings. Most participants did not express a categorical rejection of parenthood. Two explicitly indicated that they wanted children, while the remaining accounts described conditions that would need to be satisfied before having children could be considered acceptable. This distinction suggests that reproductive hesitation may coexist with continued interest in family formation. The findings therefore complicate the binary distinction between pronatalist expectations and voluntary childfree decisions. An individual may value parenthood without being willing to undertake it under current circumstances. Similarly, acknowledging environmental or economic reasons for avoiding childbirth does not necessarily indicate a permanent intention to remain without children. This distinction is consistent with scholarship that recognises voluntary childlessness as a meaningful reproductive orientation while distinguishing it from other forms of reproductive uncertainty (Blackstone & Stewart, 2012). However, the present findings draw attention to the moral reasoning involved when individuals remain open to having children but establish conditions under which doing so would be considered responsible.

Interviewee 3's continued desire for family formation is particularly instructive. Her statement does not position personal independence and parenthood as opposing values. Instead, it establishes preparation as a condition for realising a desired future. The possibility of having children remains open, but it is accompanied by expectations concerning employment, housing, financial stability, and personal readiness. This orientation can be understood through the concept of conditional parenthood, referring to a willingness to become a parent that

depends on the perceived adequacy of material, emotional, relational, and environmental circumstances. The concept does not imply that individuals have permanently rejected reproduction. Rather, it draws attention to how reproductive aspirations are evaluated against the anticipated requirements of responsible care.

Nevertheless, conditional parenthood should not be treated as entirely separate from conventional postponement. Economic and relational considerations have long influenced reproductive timing, and the available accounts do not establish that participants' circumstances represent a wholly new reproductive orientation. The potential analytical distinction lies in the extent to which readiness is constructed as an ethical obligation rather than simply a practical preference. In this interpretation, the question of having children becomes inseparable from the perceived responsibility to provide them with adequate living conditions. Reproductive hesitation may therefore reflect a tension between the desire for parenthood and uncertainty about fulfilling the obligations associated with it.

This tension also has implications for understanding reproductive responsibility within Indonesia's contemporary development context. The *Indonesia Emas 2045* agenda places emphasis on the development of healthy, educated, productive, and capable future generations (Bappenas, 2023). Such expectations reflect an understanding of population development in which the quality of future citizens is central to national progress. At the family level, however, providing the conditions associated with children's wellbeing requires access to employment, housing, healthcare, education, emotional support, and environmental security. The relationship between these expectations and participants' accounts reveals a possible paradox of responsible reproduction. The more extensive the perceived requirements of good parenting become, the more difficult it may be for young adults experiencing socioeconomic uncertainty to consider themselves adequately prepared for parenthood. Under such conditions, postponement may express commitment to responsible care rather than opposition to having children.

This interpretation does not establish that national development policies directly cause reproductive postponement, nor does it imply that participants consciously organise their decisions around *Indonesia Emas 2045*. Rather, it identifies a conceptual tension between culturally valued expectations of responsible parenthood and the material conditions within which those expectations must be fulfilled. From a cultural-studies perspective, this tension is important because reproductive decisions are not made independently of the meanings attached to adulthood, family responsibility, gender, and social achievement. The ability to become a responsible parent is shaped not only by individual willingness but also by culturally established expectations concerning what parents should provide and how children should be raised.

Taken together, the findings suggest that young adults' considerations of parenthood involve negotiations between personal desire and anticipated responsibility. Environmental uncertainty contributes to these negotiations, but its importance cannot be separated from economic insecurity, psychological preparedness, and the perceived capacity to sustain care. The concept of conditional parenthood offers one way of understanding this relationship without reducing reproductive hesitation to either permanent childfree identity or simple indecision. The broader

significance of this interpretation lies in recognising that the conditions under which individuals consider parenthood possible are themselves socially and culturally produced. Decisions about having children therefore provide insight not only into personal aspirations but also into the expectations and insecurities surrounding responsible family formation in contemporary Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study examined how young adults in Bogor understand and negotiate parenthood amid socioeconomic insecurity, environmental uncertainty, and expectations of responsible care. The findings suggest that reproductive decisions are not necessarily shaped by a straightforward preference for having children or remaining childfree. Instead, participants considered parenthood in relation to financial stability, psychological preparedness, supportive relationships, and the perceived quality of the environment in which future children would be raised. Although environmental concerns formed part of these considerations, they did not emerge as an independent or determining reason for rejecting parenthood. Rather, environmental uncertainty intersected with economic and social pressures, contributing to broader concerns about the feasibility of raising children responsibly. These findings support an interpretation of conditional parenthood, in which the desire to have children coexists with hesitation until certain conditions are considered adequate. From a cultural-studies perspective, this orientation highlights how reproductive aspirations are negotiated through socially constructed expectations of adulthood, family responsibility, and care. It also reveals a potential tension within Indonesia's quality-oriented population development agenda, as expectations of raising a well-supported future generation may become increasingly difficult to fulfil under conditions of material and environmental insecurity. Nevertheless, the study does not establish a direct relationship between national population policies and individual reproductive decisions. Given its small and context-specific qualitative sample, the findings should be understood as an interpretive contribution rather than a generalisation about Indonesian youth. Further research involving more diverse participants could examine how these understandings of responsible parenthood develop across different socioeconomic, gendered, and environmental contexts.

References

Bappenas. (2023). President Joko Widodo launches 2025–2045 RPJPN to emphasize 2045 Golden Indonesia vision. Ministry of National Development Planning. https://www.bappenas.go.id/index.php/en/berita/luncurkan-rancangan-akhir-rpjpn-2025-2045-presiden-paparkan-visi-indonesia-emas-2045-c29Ju

Blackburn, S. (2004). Women and the state in modern Indonesia. Cambridge University Press.

Blackstone, A., & Stewart, M. D. (2012). Choosing to be childfree: Research on the decision not to parent. Sociology Compass, 6(9), 718–727. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2012.00496.x

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. SAGE Publications.

Helm, S., Kemper, J. A., & White, S. K. (2021). No future, no kids–no kids, no future? An exploration of motivations to remain childfree in times of climate change. Population and Environment, 43(1), 108–129. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-021-00379-5

Jylhä, K. M., Kolk, M., & Fairbrother, M. (2025). Attitudes towards childbearing, population, and the environment: Prevalence, correlates, and connections with fertility outcomes in Sweden. Population and Environment, 47, Article 32. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-025-00503-9

Nakkerud, E. (2024). Choosing to live environmentally childfree: Private-sphere environmentalism, environmental activism, or both? Current Psychology, 43, 2887–2898. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04295-9

Park, K. (2002). Stigma management among the voluntarily childless. Sociological Perspectives, 45(1), 21–45. https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2002.45.1.21

Peters, S., Striessnig, E., Trimarchi, A., Testa, M. R., & Nitsche, N. (2025). Too worried about the environment to have children? Or more worried about the environment after having children? Population and Environment, 47, Article 3. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-025-00501-x

Pihkala, P. (2020). Anxiety and the ecological crisis: An analysis of eco-anxiety and climate anxiety. Sustainability, 12(19), Article 7836. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12197836

Purwaningtyas, M. P. F., Tarigan, A. A. B., & El Yasinta, J. R. (2025). Debating childfree: The contestation of "childfree" discourses in Instagram. Jurnal ASPIKOM, 9(1), 13–28. https://doi.org/10.24329/aspikom.v9i1.1439

Schneider-Mayerson, M., & Leong, K. L. (2020). Eco-reproductive concerns in the age of climate change. Climatic Change, 163(2), 1007–1023. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-020-02923-y

Stephani, N. (2025). You still want to have kids, right? Representation of childfree women in Indonesian leading online news outlets. Media Asia, 52(1), 102–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2024.2335013

Suryakusuma, J. I. (2011). Ibuisme negara: Konstruksi sosial keperempuanan Orde Baru. Komunitas Bambu.

Widodo, J. S., Muslim, M., Kristyowati, D., Amaliasari, D., & Rivaldy, P. M. R. (2024). Examining gender discourse and childfree movement in post-authoritarian era: A case study of @GITASAV on Instagram. International Journal of Sustainable Development & Future Society, 2(1), 8–14. https://doi.org/10.62157/ijsdfs.v2i1.66