

Choice Over Chance: A Systematic Review of Childfree Intention

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study synthesizes fragmented literature on voluntary childfree intention and examines how individual, relational, and structural factors shape the decision to remain childfree. The review maps publication trends, identifies dominant theories, contexts, and methodologies, and integrates existing findings through the Antecedents Decisions Outcomes (ADO) framework.

Design: A systematic literature review following PRISMA guidelines was conducted using the Scopus database. Peer-reviewed journal articles published between 1983 and 2025 were retrieved using childfree-related keywords. After screening 2,465 records and applying inclusion criteria, 66 studies were retained for analysis. Bibliometric trends were assessed, and the literature was synthesized using the ADO-TCM framework (Antecedents Decisions Outcomes; Theory Context Methodology).

Findings: Findings show that research on voluntary childfree intention has increased significantly since 2012, with most studies originating from developed Western economies. Qualitative approaches dominate the literature, particularly interview-based studies. Key antecedents influencing childfree intention include autonomy-oriented values, financial considerations, career priorities, sociocultural pressures, relational dynamics, psychological concerns, and identity factors. These antecedents shape reproductive decisions characterized by the deliberate rejection of parenthood norms and the construction of alternative identities. Outcomes are multidimensional: individuals report enhanced autonomy, well-being, and financial flexibility but also experience stigma, workplace inequality, and institutional disadvantages in pronatalist contexts.

Research Limitations/Implications: Future research should adopt cross-cultural, longitudinal, and large-scale quantitative designs to examine underrepresented contexts and clarify causal relationships.

Originality/Value: Through the ADO-TCM framework, this study positions voluntary childfree intention as a structurally embedded life-course position rather than a marginal lifestyle choice.

Keywords: Childfree Intention, Lifestyle, Financial Flexibility, Career Priorities

