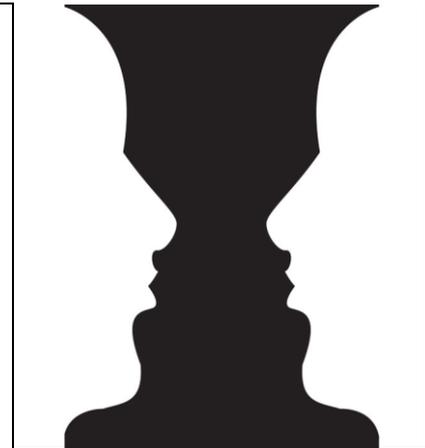

JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE RESEARCH IN
ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

Copyright © The Author, 2022
Volume 13, Number 2, Winter 2022
ISSN 2068 – 0317
<http://compaso.eu>



Vocabularies of motive by which women justify their decisions to not have children

Bianca-Andreea Costache¹

Abstract

This paper discusses six vocabularies of motive through which women justify their decision to not have children, by using a case study of comments posted on YouTube. In the sociological sense proposed by Mills (1940), a satisfying or adequate reason is one that satisfies those who ask the question. As a formulation, a reason tends to be an acceptable response to questions about social and linguistic behavior. The research method employed is qualitative content analysis and the analysis consists of 85 comments posted on YouTube in response to three videos from different content creators. In conclusion, two of the vocabularies of motive focused on providing a decent life for the child, three vocabularies of motive prioritized the happiness and well-being of the women involved until the moment of deciding to become a mother, and the last vocabularies focus on the society's reaction.

Keywords

Vocabularies of motive; Comments; Birth; Children; Childfree; Women;

¹ Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest, Romania, bianca.costache@s.unibuc.ro, byandra24@gmail.com.

Introduction

The topic of birth rates is one that I frequently come across lately, whether it's within my family, conversations with friends, or on television. Society often puts considerable pressure on couples who do not yet have children, as well as on single women. I have personally experienced this pressure, with society urging them to get married and become mothers, justifying this pressure by claiming it is the normal and natural order of things. However, those who share this view often overlook or choose to ignore the fact that some individuals are not yet ready for this step, do not want children in the near or distant future, or may have fertility issues. Therefore, this subject becomes implicitly sensitive and emotionally impactful.

Raising a child requires a significant effort from both partners, as a child needs affection and unconditional love, followed by moral support and harmonious development within a family that protects them and is there for them every step of the way. Education does not solely occur within an educational institution but is also learned at home during the first seven years of life.

The subject addressed in my research is based on the concept introduced by Charles Wright Mills (1940) called vocabularies of motive. Motives are professed or attributed statements in response to questions. They are linguistic formulations rather than hidden states in people's minds. According to Mills, individuals learn, through socialization, to justify their actions to others and to themselves by appealing to these so-called vocabularies of motive. I aim to discover and understand the motives expressed and learned through socialization that have led to this decision and what pretexts exist for these women not to envision themselves giving birth to a child and assuming the responsibility of raising them.

The decision of women to not become mothers is highly controversial and widely debated within families, on social media, in the press, and in the news. The topic of children is frequently addressed and arouses curiosity, with an expectation of a positive response. If the response is negative, people implicitly condemn what they hear and find it difficult to accept. A response referring to a medical issue might be more readily accepted by other interlocutors, but a response without such arguments lacks justification in their eyes. In the widely accepted vocabularies of motive in present-day Romania, the feeling of being a mother cannot be compared to anything else in the world. It is the deepest and surpasses everything else.

The research question I propose is: *What are the vocabularies of motive through which women explain and legitimize their intention not to have children?*

Therefore, the research problem consists of identifying the elements invoked by women in support of their decision not to become mothers in the near future. The research objectives are to discover the motives why women are not yet ready to dedicate their time to children, as well as to examine how society responds to their decision and whether it makes them feel constrained.

Theories and studies on the decision to remain childfree

Definition of vocabularies of motive

In the sociological understanding of Mills (1940), a satisfactory or adequate reason is one that satisfies those who have asked. As a formulation, a reason tends to be an acceptable response to questions regarding social and linguistic behavior. When a subject formulates a motive, they are not trying to describe their social action with experience. They do not even state disinterested motives but influence others, as well as themselves, to accept the legitimacy of a desire or action. They usually find new motive that become justifications for their actions. Vocabularies of motive in different situations stabilize and guide behavior, as well as expectations regarding others' reactions.

Motives are often attributed by others before being stated by the person in question. The mother controls her child, saying, "Don't do this, don't be greedy." The child learns what they are allowed or not allowed to do and receives a standard motive that promote the mother's imposed actions and discourage unwanted ones. Alongside a set of rules and norms for actions in different situations, we also learn the appropriate vocabularies of motive for them. These are the motives we are supposed to use because they are part of our language and behavior.

The emergence of the "childfree" movement

The term "childfree" first appeared before 1901, according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, and was initially used in 1972 by the National Organization for Non-Parents. Childfree denotes a person who does not desire and does not plan to have children (Agrillo, Nelini, 2008). The prefix "free" was specifically chosen to emphasize the sense of freedom and lack of perceived obligations among all women who voluntarily decided not to give birth to children. In 1972, childfree activists Ellen Peck and Shirley Radl founded the National Organization for Non-Parents (NON), the first organization dedicated to advocating for the rights of "childfree by choice" individuals. Bridging the gap between identity politics and environmental activism, NON promoted a childfree life as a socially respectable and politically responsible reproductive choice. NON provided a sophisticated critique of the marginalization of childfree individuals in a pro-natalist society. Childfree activists faced fierce opposition from those who believed reproduction and parenting were defining features of the American family. Embracing the language of reproductive choice, NON succeeded in alleviating some of the controversies surrounding its childfree crusade and brought voluntary childlessness into the mainstream of American thinking (Healey, 2016).

While feminism fights against gender inequality and promotes women's empowerment in society by expanding their roles and rights, women are still seen, in many areas of contemporary societies, including present-day Romania, as beings who must procreate and bear children for their families. Otherwise, they are seen as "barren" and useless, and consequently, their rights as women are diminished:

"In the light of pronatalist ideologies, the words woman and mother are often presented as synonymous in terms of identities and experiences. The notion of motherhood is often associated with femininity, as well as the bodily changes that occur with age, as well as the moment of giving birth and pregnancy. Being a mother thus becomes a natural and normal state, while the absence of children in a woman's life is seen as a failure and an abnormal state." (Rich, Taket, Graham, Shelley, 2011, p. 228)

Thus, the childfree movement emerged to unite women who do not desire children against all the accusations leveled against them and to demonstrate that they can excel through their own strengths and abilities, not just by giving birth to and caring for a child while the husband works and provides for the family.

The impact of everyday life on Generation Z

In today's world, the childfree phenomenon has gained momentum among individuals belonging to Generation Y (known as Millennials) and Generation Z. Generation Y represents individuals born between 1980 and 1994, while Generation Z encompasses those born from 1995 to 2010. These generations emerged and flourished with the advent of the internet, with the latter being referred to as "digital natives." Young people have different priorities compared to their parents, who considered it essential to start a family, build a house, and focus on family well-being. Nowadays, young individuals need to prioritize their mental well-being and avoid suffering from nervous system disorders such as anxiety, bipolar disorder, and depression. They strive to achieve stability in their financial lives, ensuring a decent living through employment that offers prospects for the future. Sociologist Ana Bulai observes in the online publication *Ziarul Financiar* that

"Career, well-being, and leisure time now define success for this generation, and children and family have no place among these elements. Fulfilling an individual goal is no longer associated with the family. I believe that at this rate, Romania's chances of disappearing as a nation in the next century are increasing." (Bulai, 2022)

In a study on the fertility vignette of the family, Sorana Mocanu remarks that:

"In the context of life and societal evolution, fertility has been influenced by multiple biological, psychological, and social aspects, transforming amidst changes in societies and their expansions due to economic growth and emerging technologies. These changes in family dynamics have led to an increase in the age of first marriage, a postponement of the decision to have children, a rise in divorce rates, and a shift in relationship dynamics within families. This transformation of fertility patterns is described as one of the largest changes in social behavior in the 20th century. It is also important to mention that an increasing number of women are active in the labor market, affecting areas such as fertility, relationship formation, and the desire to engage in marriage. The results of these trends include declining fertility rates below population replacement levels, especially in Europe and Asia." (Mocanu, 2022, p. 122-123)

From this, we can deduce and understand that family roles, as well as the role of women, acquire new meanings, and the workplace becomes the most important factor in delaying the appearance of the first child within a family—a family willing to fully embrace

and provide all the attention and love that a child needs for harmonious development. Time becomes the number one enemy because the workplace represents the place where an independent woman with a satisfactory salary dedicates at least 8-9 hours a day. When she returns home after an exhausting day, she needs time for relaxation and peace to clear her mind and forget about all the tasks she had to fulfill at work.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2022, the lowest number of babies born in the past 130 years could reach a record negative figure. Thus, the aging process of the population occurs, and we observe that the number of elderly people has increased by half a million, while the number of young people continues to decline. Individuals who want to start a family move to other countries and give birth there due to better living conditions, while those who decide to stay in the country focus on their professional field and career advancement.

Opinions of young women about childfree

Below, I will record some of the opinions of young women from the study conducted by Park, as well as two online publications that evoke women's feelings regarding the motive that prevent them from wanting a child and how society's pressure to align with the rest of the world becomes a burden.

"Rebecca has decided to invest her salary and savings by becoming the 'big sister' of a girl with limited financial possibilities. People say you're selfish when you don't want children. I believe you're selfish when you have them. Oh, I want a soul that is flesh of my flesh, that I can create and mold as I want. No, I don't desire that. I want to love someone else's child and become a responsible adult and role model for them. I feel that my decision is less selfish." Ann and Margaret cite disinterest in babies and children in general, as well as the lack of maternal instincts, as motive for not having children: "We have no idea how maternal love feels, but we don't want to procreate to find out." (Park, 2002, p. 35-36)

For Rebecca, it is more important than the feeling of having her own child to be able to become a role model for other children in her life, to pass on the values and knowledge she possesses, and to help those children become responsible adults with principles and a unique education. As for Ann and Margaret, children have never been a goal for them, and they cannot envision themselves in the role of a mother with all that it entails, from bodily changes to lifelong devotion, love, and care.

"According to Miruna, women in Romania feel a unilateral pressure to give birth while they are fertile and bear the responsibility for both miscarriages and premature births. Then there is the responsibility for infertility, the emotional safety of the child, the fact that the partner does not acknowledge the child, and they end up being single mothers or the option where they become 'monsters' because their fulfillment does not revolve around procreation. The young woman also notes immense tension between the social or religious pressure on women to have children and the complete lack of suitable infrastructure. Although a woman is the only being capable of giving life, this attribute is a result of the interaction with another being. Yet, the shared responsibility of the man and the woman is a completely absent topic." (Teșanu, 2021)

Thus, for Miruna, the main reason and her greatest fear are the relationship she has with the child's father, a relationship that should not be ephemeral but one of equality. The father should take on some of the mother's responsibilities and be equally involved because the child belongs to both of them. The trauma of losing a fetus from the womb cannot be healed by anyone or anything, and at the same time, no one understands the mix of emotions one goes through and the fear one feels. No one can empathize with your suffering if they haven't experienced at least similar and equally painful experiences.

"In our twenties, we are still shaping our personalities and discovering the direction we should focus on. At this age, you don't have a stable job or salary to support and invest in a child's education. Personally, I believe a suitable time to have a child is after the age of 30 when you should already have some financial stability, know what you're focused on in your career, and have emotional balance, says 23-year-old Olivia." (Matei, 2022)

Olivia considers it essential to have a very good financial situation before being open to the idea of welcoming a soul into her life and dedicating herself to it. She still considers herself young and hopes that as she gets older and advances in her career, she will become responsible and mature enough to raise a child.

Methodological aspects

The research method I will employ in my study is qualitative content analysis, defined as "a research technique that involves the systematic, objective, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952, p. 18). Qualitative content analysis represents "a method that allows for the inductive generation of a theory about a cultural, social, or psychological phenomenon through the progressive and valid conceptualization and correlation of empirical data" (Mucchielli, 1996). Thus, using the content grid created for my research, I analyzed the comments posted on the YouTube social media platform regarding the motive why women do not want to give birth to children and, implicitly, become mothers. These comments were extracted from the channels of digital content creators MsAnneGreen and Nicoleta Stănciuca. The unit of analysis I used was the comment. As a result, I identified and categorized six different vocabulary categories of motive to describe why respondents vehemently refuse to imagine themselves in the position of giving birth and raising a child.

I chose to conduct my research through the YouTube social media platform, specifically on the channels of the two aforementioned content creators, because they are followed by thousands of subscribers who resonate with their life philosophy and the online content they create. The selected videos had hundreds of comments in support of the decision not to have children, and I believed that from this variety of comments, I could extract passages that would assist me in conducting the research. The respondents had different ages, as I will exemplify, came from completely different backgrounds, and used either their real names or combinations of names and numbers to ensure anonymity. I selected comments relevant to the idea of not conceiving children and that resonated with

the message conveyed by the content creators, who were also against the idea of giving birth in the near future.

The selected videoclips that I found to convey a clear and coherent message were titled "10 motive why I don't want children" and "5 motive why I DON'T WANT CHILDREN," originating from MsAnneGreen's channel between 2016-2018, and "Why I don't want to have children?! And about the hysteria of some people regarding children!" from Nicoleta Stănciuca's channel in 2018. From the first video clip, I extracted 45 comments, from the second video, 23 comments, and from the last one, 17 comments, totaling 85 comments, all providing well-formulated arguments in favor of not having children. Although these comments were posted years ago, there are still comments collected from the time of posting until now that continue to support what the creators evoked in their videos with the aim of raising awareness about this sensitive and widely debated subject. This temporal reference is useful to observe how the decisive motive regarding the "childfree" subject have changed over the years.

By employing thematic analysis, I classified the comments into six categories of motive developed using the indicators and representative groups into which I divided the opinions of these women who voiced their thoughts by responding to and commenting on the respective videos. I modified certain selected comments to ensure grammatical correctness and added diacritics where they were missing. I selected only the comments that clearly conveyed the motive women provided to support their choice of living "childfree," focusing on motive unrelated to health issues or infertility. Some motives are only mentioned briefly, while others are detailed extensively, pertaining to each individual's personal life.

The main objective of this research is to identify the main vocabulary of motive evoked by YouTube platform users who commented on the childfree-themed videos of Romanian content creators over a period of seven years. I chose to use Mills' concept of "vocabulary of motive" to better understand the foundations upon which women in Romania adopt and justify this attitude towards children and how they relate to individuals who constantly pressure them. This pressure manifests through the idea that women need to hurry in order not to waste their lives and not end up alone and childless in old age, with no one to carry on the family legacy or ensure personal and familial well-being at advanced ages, through various forms of support. In the following pages, I will illustrate the classification of the identified motives using the comments through which the respondents justified their choices.

Data analysis and interpretation: Six vocabularies of motive

Vocabulary of responsibility in raising a child

This subsection focuses on the vocabulary of responsibility in raising a child, which consists of four main motives. These motives include assuming involvement in the child's life and taking care of them throughout your life as a mother, the lack of necessary resources for a decent living and financial support, as well as emotional support to cope with the daily

challenges of motherhood and the child's upbringing, and the formation of personality and cultural baggage through education.

According to the respondents, having a child represents an immense responsibility that every woman takes on when she decides that it is the right time to bring this being into the world to fulfill her as a woman. Therefore, the women who commented on YouTube have concluded that they are not yet ready to dedicate themselves to a child for an unlimited period of time and provide them with all the love and attention they need. It is also emphasized that the lack of affection from the mother could negatively affect the children in the long run, leaving them with trauma and other psychological/psychiatric issues (Table 1, a).

Financial resources are a strong motive in the decision to have a child, as observed by the respondents. It is challenging to provide for the child's needs in a world where the cost of living is increasing daily, and it becomes difficult to offer the child everything they require, from clothes and food to a simple toy they see other children have and desire. Firstly, parents need to have a stable financial situation and a steady job to bring another person, a mouth to feed, into their lives and homes. Additionally, strong emotional resilience is necessary to handle daily difficulties (Table 1, b).

The motives mentioned regarding education are closely related to the concept of "poverty". The Dictionary of Sociology provided by Zamfir and Vlăsceanu (1998, p. 517) defines poverty as "a situation characterized by the lack (insufficiency) of material means necessary for life, with various forms and degrees of severity depending on the nature of the deficiencies regarding the means of subsistence that affect individuals, families, communities, social groups, or even societies as a whole." In other words, education is a characteristic of the wealthier individuals, as only they can afford to support their children's schooling to learn and succeed in life (Table 1, c).

Another reason mentioned by the participants in the discussions is the fear of abandonment when children are unwanted or unloved. These children, lacking a nurturing environment to develop, often choose the wrong paths that offer them authority and independence. These children can become a burden to society, and over time, their childhood issues become irreparable, potentially leading to committing irreversible acts that disrupt and affect the tranquility of society, ranging from theft to murder (Table 1, d).

Table 1. Vocabulary of responsibility in raising a child

(a) Lifelong dedication	"It is very important that when you have a child, you love them and dedicate yourself 100%, and if you're not ready to do that, it's better not to have children." (Loredana Pop)
	"I don't agree with the fact that for at least 18 years you put all your needs aside if you have a child, this period can last a lifetime." (Liliana Ramona Paraschiv)
	"Finally, someone opened this topic and expressed their point of view. I share the same opinion, and sometimes I get annoyed when I see that there are still many teenagers and even women who don't realize the importance of bringing a child into the world and the immense responsibility it entails, thus raising children and future adults with possible frustrations and other problems." (Bianca)

(b) Lack of financial and emotional support	<p>"Love is not enough. I think about how many things I would have to prioritize below the child/children, and I don't feel prepared for that. Not emotionally, nor financially. One thing is certain: I need to have a substantial amount in my bank account to ensure that my offspring don't lack food, clothes, etc. Plus, the partner matters too. And honestly, sometimes I can't envision myself as a mother." (Andrea Roth)</p>
	<p>"I know that what I'm saying now can be interpreted, but on the one hand, you're right. A child should be conceived when you have a decent job that can provide a decent living and a somewhat fulfilling life." (Diana)</p>
	<p>"I relate to your reasons. In January, I'll be turning 29, and the thought of having a child feels quite distant. I don't feel prepared, neither emotionally nor financially." (Iwi S)</p>
(c) Lack of education due to poverty	<p>"Being a parent is a great responsibility. The child needs to receive love but also a healthy education. A family must provide that healthy education and know how to protect their child from psychological trauma from a young age. Otherwise, it will be a major problem for the child in the future, for the respective parents, and for society. Attention, we shouldn't play around with these aspects." (Mihaela Lăiu)</p>
	<p>"Wouldn't it be more selfish to have a child just because society says so and then live in poverty, unable to provide them with proper education? To have children and then not be able to raise them adequately? Or to rely on others to help and keep them close to you? If everyone thought like her, maybe we wouldn't have so many abandoned or abused children. Maybe there wouldn't be so many suffering children." (Ionela Pinteă)</p>
	<p>"I disagree with having children in poverty, in a low level of education, in the absence of the freedom to aspire to heights that the child cannot reach just because they were born in an unfavorable place (and I know there are many smart poor children, while there are also many wealthy children who lack interest)." (Ryna)</p>
(d) Abandonment and lack of involvement	<p>"Instead of having children and abandoning them, causing them to suffer in life because of their parents, it's better NOT to have them... To have children, you need to feel a strong desire and be fully prepared, and love them with all your heart... Personally, I relate to what I said above; I didn't receive love from my parents, and I can tell you it's very difficult." (Jo)</p>
	<p>"I believe that some tests should be passed before becoming parents. It's very sad what happens with domestic violence, abandoned babies, and all the troubles that innocent souls go through. I think that if you don't see yourself as a parent, then it's a wise decision not to have children." (Vebs)</p>
	<p>"I see so many terrible parents on the street: people who beat and curse their children, mistreat them, abandon them in front of gadgets, blame their children for sacrificing themselves for them (as if the child asked to be born into this world). And many other things. It's evident that they weren't meant to be parents. But still, they have children because that's what everyone does. They fail to realize that it's not the world that raises their child. And out of frustration, they start throwing insults at those who think twice and take a step back. Or don't take it at all. Because yes, some people aren't meant to be parents. And rather than raising a child through violence and only seeing them once every two years out of obligation, it's better not to have one. It's not my case, I like children, even though I don't want one right now. But it was an example." (Georgi ABC)</p>

Vocabulary of planet Earth's continuity of life

This vocabulary includes three main motives that invoke the survival of the species or the continuity of life on this planet in the coming years. The vocabulary is invoked in a context where we can already observe how the planet is suffering due to the consequences of human habitation, which negatively impacts the environment.

It is very difficult to bring a child into a world where they are not wanted. We can observe that one of the respondents considers the appearance of a child in her and her spouse's life as a couple's decision and respects their desire because she doesn't want them to suffer later on. For other respondents, perpetuating the species is not a priority because there are already many individuals actively contributing in that direction (Table 2, a).

Table 2. Vocabulary of planet Earth's continuity of life

(a) Desire to not perpetuate the species	"People are free to choose whether they want to perpetuate the species or not. At 35 years old, I don't want to have children. I believe it is not my job to have kids. I have much more important things to do in this life than perpetuating the human species. There are others who can do it!" (Vlassya D)
	"I want a child, but my husband doesn't currently. How would it be if I forced it and had a baby? That child should be loved and desired by both parents. I respect my partner's decision because it's more important. I don't want to force them into an irreversible situation and have them love an unwanted child." (Nicoleta Emilia)
	"Do you know any fools who don't want children? There's no such thing. All fools feel the need to leave something behind, which is why we've reached over 7 billion people and a lot of poverty. The dumber you are, the better your reproductive system works. In 2020, giving birth to a child is not an accomplishment. Every time someone asks me why I don't have children, I tell them that I want to live without worries and responsibilities." (Mire Core)
(b) Society is headed toward self-destruction	"I don't like the direction society is going, and it's not just me." (NoizinTimisoara)
	"I don't want children, and I wouldn't bring one into this sick world that is heading toward self-destruction..." (Teodora hxb)
	"Nowadays, it's hard to raise a child. Plus, the world is too crowded, not necessarily with idiots or people who are worthless, but it's about the environments and the society that has been closed-minded since 2016." (AlexaKnightFall)
(c) Air pollution harms health and the environment	"I don't want to have a child. I watch documentaries about the continuity of this planet, mainly related to pollution and economic crises, and I can honestly say that our Earth cannot support two generations of people anymore." (Andreea Virto)
	"As for the planet's resources, that's a false notion. We have resources for 12 billion people, and we are approximately 8 billion people. The only problem is that some are dying of hunger while others consume food unnecessarily." (Valentina Rafaela)
	"I think more people should have children later because we are simply too many on this planet, and poor planet cannot sustain all of us." (Lutic)

Some respondents believe that the world is becoming increasingly worse and is not a pleasant place for a child. The multitude of social changes and uncertainties about the future are factors that prevent them from considering this world as a conducive environment for a child's upbringing and education (Table 2, b).

Concern for the planet and one's own health has become very important, especially in the context of escalating pollution and continuous population growth in underdeveloped countries. Pollution is difficult to combat, and the environment in which we live is becoming toxic, affecting our health daily and reducing life expectancy. The respondents believe that due to these drastic changes the planet is undergoing, it will not be able to be the home for humans and all living beings in the near future (Table 2, c).

Vocabulary of self-centeredness

Another vocabulary of motive invoked is self-centeredness, which refers to an attitude of concern for personal interests. The participants in the discussion stated that they prefer to be at the center of attention, to be at peace with themselves, and then to care about the rest of the world or another being. They also prefer to have a peaceful old age without children or grandchildren around, as long as there are other loved ones nearby.

One reason is the feeling of satisfaction with one's own choices and life. Women believe that the most important thing is for them to be content with the decisions and choices they make. Their own happiness comes first, and then, if necessary, the happiness of a potential child. The desire to provide the best for a child leads to postponing the decision to have a child in the near future until the mother feels completely fulfilled (Table 3, a).

Many women don't resonate with the famous saying, "a glass of water in old age," and consider it selfish to have a child solely for them to return the favor by taking care of them in old age. In this view, old age is not solely about the support received from children simply because you've become helpless due to advanced age (Table 3, b).

Table 3. Vocabulary of self-centeredness

(a) Well-being of one's own being	"I can be called selfish, I don't care, it's my life, my body, I love it the way it is. So, enjoy life!" (Oanna C)
	"<<Those who have, let them live, those who don't, shouldn't desire it>> - that's all that needs to be said on this subject." (Andrada)
	"If you are selfish because you want to make sure that when you bring a child into the world, you can help them in every way, then all of us who think like you are SELFISH!" (Andreea Toma)
(b) Support in old age	"From my point of view, 'having a child so that someone is there to bring me a glass of water in old age' seems much more selfish than the ten 'cons'!" (Ciornei Elena)
	"I am selfish, and I don't want anything to disrupt my relationship with my husband, nor do I want to put myself in second place. As for the famous 'glass of water in old age,' someone else can find someone to bring it to me, as long as I think this way, I accept whatever will happen in old age." (Noi2inTimisoara)

Vocabulary of life priorities

Apart from giving birth to a child, women have stated that there are other priorities in their lives that they want to prioritize before children. Among these priorities, career and

financial stability, travel, and the freedom to do whatever they want without being constrained by external factors are particularly noteworthy.

Some women prefer to prioritize their careers in their lives. Thus, we again find the reason of financial stability, which takes precedence and guides many women. Whether it's about education or the workplace, the decision to have a child is postponed until the woman feels that she has enough money and a satisfactory salary to raise a child. Additionally, age is a key factor that goes hand in hand with career advancement (Table 4, a).

Traveling represents a method of relaxation and getting to know different cultures, traditions, and the beauty that each country and place has to offer. Some consider it quite challenging to travel with a small child, so they prefer to do it before having children (Table 4, b).

As mentioned earlier, it becomes quite complicated to do everything you want when the family grows with one more member who needs all the parents' attention and guidance at every step. While some women prefer to focus on work or travel, others enjoy simple pleasures such as reading, cooking, shopping, or watching their favorite TV shows (Table 4, c).

Table 4. Vocabulary of life priorities

(a) Career as the top priority	"It's the choice of each of us when we want to bring a child into the world or not. It's our life, and everyone has the right to make their own choices. I'm a medical student, and I don't want to have a child until my career is settled, which means until around 35 years old." (Sayuri Lawliet)
	"In New York, I noticed that most women prioritize their careers over having children. Some regret the decision, while others don't." (Romanians in America)
	"I have to choose between my company and having a child. I choose the company. I dedicate myself to it so that everything goes smoothly, and I can afford to have a child." (Bianca Mihaela Berinde)
(b) Travel	"I recently got engaged. At some point, the wedding will happen, and children will come, but before that, I want to enjoy everything, to travel as much as possible (I haven't seen even 10% of my country)." (Alexandra Gavrilă)
	"Just like you, I want to travel and enjoy life. It's funny that we have no problem with those who have children, but those who have children always have something to say about us who don't have and don't want them." (Ana Ieremie)
(c) Freedom	"Of course, I don't want children either. Like you, I prefer to do what I want, to relax when I feel like it, and enjoy the money I earn and spend it on whatever I want!" (Little Princess)
	- "I don't want children either. I've been married for 2 years, I'm 27, and I feel EXCELLENT! I have friends with children who are struggling all day, tired, unable to go on vacations, and their universe revolves only around their children. Meanwhile, my husband and I focus on our careers, we like to do what we want and when we want, we've already planned our next trip, I can buy clothes, books, have time to read, pursue a doctorate, feel the way I want, live a bohemian life, and I have NO REGRETS!" (Oana)

Vocabulary of emotional difficulties

Children's emotional crises occur when they don't know how to manage their conflicting feelings and end up having fits of anger, uncontrollable crying, screaming, and hitting. In other words, their frustrations can manifest themselves violently. Some women say they don't want children precisely because they fear they won't know how to react to these strong emotions, which can also disturb them. Other women are concerned about other challenging emotional states, which they invoke to justify their choice, such as postnatal depression.

The states described below by certain women often occur in children between the ages of 1 and 5, a period when they are growing and discovering what is new around them. All these fears of women and the states of the little ones can lead to an inability to resonate with the needs and demands of the child because everything that happens with their baby seems uncontrollable and overwhelming. Additionally, women's hormones undergo numerous chemical changes that can lead to depression (Table 5, a).

Some women see children as sources of stress that disrupt their plans and disturb them, or in the worst case, they break things in the house. They believe they don't need such a person in their life to dedicate themselves to teaching right from wrong. Simply put, the peace that reigns in a quiet home brings them peace, and the absence of a child in their life and home means avoiding stress and nerves. The idea of being the cool aunt takes shape over the idea of having their own child to take care of constantly (Table 5, b).

Table 5. Vocabulary of emotional difficulties

(a) Emotional unavailability	"I'm selfish, I don't want to share my time, money, and energy taking care of a screaming, spoiled being that tests my patience." (Nicole Dumitru)
	"It's terrifying how much work and investment there is, as you said. You put everything aside to prioritize children no matter what. Oh, I forgot to mention, the noise that children make is unbearable." (Alexandra Bercaru)
	"I'm 30 years old, and I really don't even think about bringing a stressor into my life, someone who keeps me up at night. I'm extremely happy that I have a great partner who thinks the same way!" (ByRox)
(b) Avoiding stress	"I also want privacy; I don't want a child to create chaos, knock down my laptop, or force me to give up plans just to be with the child." (Little Mermaid)
	"If you think about it, there are more reasons. Anyway, in my opinion, those who don't have children are smarter, meaning they don't get stressed for anyone, they don't create a source of stress, they are simply smart." (Streja Sonia)
	"I'm 18 years old, and I already know I don't want children. They annoy me, and I can tolerate them for a limited period. I prefer to be that cool aunt who comes to see her nieces and nephews for a few hours and then go on with my life." (Jessica J)

Vocabulary of "public opinion"

In patriarchal societies, women without children are often negatively judged. These judgments are a source of suffering, especially in the context of those who experience infertility. There is constant social pressure on women, which can leave deep scars, according to the women participating in the discussion. They distance themselves from the

vocabulary of motive used to persuade them to have children and reject the invoked motive in this persuasive effort.

Table 6. Vocabulary of "public opinion"

(a) Purpose of life	"I cringe when I hear discussions in the family like 'Oh, poor her for not having children' or 'Those without children live in vain.'" (Florina Z)
	"Exactly, you don't have children if you don't want them, and you don't make them the purpose of your life. Some people use children as currency or trophies, as many do. People should seek their own happiness, whether it includes a child or not doesn't matter." (BeautyBarometer)
	"I'm 20 years old and I don't want children. It's very difficult to survive in a world that practically forces and imposes having a child because, you know, for what else are you living? Why should you live for a child? There are other things in life to live for!" (Rebecca Furtuna)
(b) Not fulfilled without children	"I'm 29 years old, and I still don't want children. I'm tormented and stressed by people who think that if I don't have a child, I'm not fulfilled. If you want children, good for you, have them, but don't impose it on others." (Detras de la sonrisa)
	"For the past 10 years, I've been pushed aside by 'friends' with kids because, according to them, 'I haven't fulfilled myself in life by being unmarried and childless.' They can have their 10, but I never want them!" (Claudia Cardinale)
	"I also don't want children. Everyone says, 'Life is sad without children; you'll definitely have them!' I simply don't want them because I don't like them." (Bibi)
(c) Biological clock	"I'm tired of this 'society' dictating what we should do and how. I've heard many times, 'Your biological clock will tick, and you'll want children!' I'm waiting for it to tick, and if it does before I turn 33 (so I can have a child before 35), well and good. If not, hello my childfree life!" (Ciornei Elena)
	"Many say that in this world, you have to leave something behind, a child, because that's natural, that's what everyone does. You can leave something behind without having a child. Most of the time, after the first child, people ask you, 'When's the second one?'" (Madalina Patriche)
	"I don't want a child; I don't feel ready for it. Society makes me feel like a monster. But I want to be a good example for myself and feel fulfilled with what I have, and especially not end up regretting that I decided to bring an unwanted soul into this world." (Yoru Chan)
(d) Gossip	"There are people who feel the need to have children, and others who don't. You're 30 years old, it's not a big deal that you don't have a child. Why have a child if you don't want one? Most people have children for the sake of appearances and don't raise them properly. Those children end up cursing you on the street because they didn't receive the 7 years of proper upbringing at home." (Alehandra Marzia)
	"A child is a big responsibility, and it doesn't make sense to have one just because society says so. I mean, we all prefer to see a child who is happy because their parents wanted them rather than a child who, poor thing, wasn't fortunate enough to come at the right time and later has to pay for therapy sessions. The world is full of children who didn't feel wanted, and that's because of society. It's sad, my dear people." (Ioana Rosu)
	"You have every right not to have children until you feel fulfilled, until you know you've done everything you wanted to do. I understand you, and I applaud you for not letting the 'gossip' influence you." (Denisa)

Social pressure is still very present in the lives of the women included in the study, and questions about children arise quickly. People asking such questions give the impression that having a child is the main purpose of life, and everything revolves around children and procreation. However, not everyone feels this way or resonates with this life philosophy (Table 6, a).

Although for many people, having a child brings joy to the family and fills the house with love, it doesn't mean that everyone feels the same way about babies and children in general. The lack of this emotion and the desire to have a child come with exclusion from certain social groups where women no longer identify because they don't have children. Phrases like "you're not fulfilled" and "life is sad without children" aim to make them aware of the mistake they made when choosing not to have children and, at the same time, to make them accept children as part of inclusion in society (Table 6, b).

The biological clock for women is no longer a real issue nowadays because nothing and no one stops women from getting pregnant after the age of 35 and having a perfectly normal pregnancy and a healthy baby, according to the women included in the study. Pregnancy after the age of 35 is called "geriatric pregnancy" because the maternal age is advanced, and sometimes complications can arise that need to be monitored more frequently compared to pregnancies in younger girls (Table 6, c).

The respondents believe that if they were to listen to all the opinions of those around them and have a child out of obligation, they would feel very unhappy, and at the same time, that child would grow up without receiving love from their parents and could become an unhappy child with many problems due to a lack of affection. Children's traumas are not easily healed and require a lot of work, awareness, and understanding that parents couldn't give them all their attention due to personal motive (Table 6, d).

Conclusions

Through my research, I conducted an exploratory case study of comments posted on YouTube regarding the vocabularies of motive women use to justify their decision not to have children in the near future. I selected three video clips with the title "I don't want children" and analyzed 85 relevant comments posted over a period of seven years. Using keywords, I identified six main vocabularies of motive, which further encompassed multiple individual motives. The research method I employed was qualitative content analysis.

The selected comments that I found relevant helped me identify the justifications invoked by women who do not wish to visualize themselves as mothers too soon. The main vocabularies of motive I identified originate from various domains. These domains were addressed and debated based on the topic of the video to which the comments were posted.

As such, the first and second vocabularies of motive (the vocabulary of responsibility for raising a child and the vocabulary of continuity of life on this planet) share the common focus on the child, on how they are raised, protected, loved, cared for, and educated, as well as on the child's quality of life in a place that is not particularly welcoming

for a child due to air pollution, and also because the world around is perceived as harsh, and a child is a sensitive and innocent soul who cannot differentiate between good and evil. It is interesting to note that some respondents have decided not to have children too soon for motives related to the happiness and prosperity of the child. They contemplate how they cannot currently provide these attributes and consequently postpone the moment until they are prepared from all perspectives (financially, emotionally, with unlimited love and attention).

The next three vocabularies of motive (the self-centeredness vocabulary, the vocabulary of life priorities, the vocabulary of emotional difficulties) focus on the desires of the woman, on what she wants at the present moment, on her needs and aspirations. Thus, the woman is the primary factor in the choices she makes regarding the subject of childbirth. For some respondents, it is crucial for them to be happy and content with their own lives, and they believe that it is not necessary to have children just to have help in old age. For others, their career takes precedence, or they desire freedom and the ability to travel without the burden of a child. Another category of respondents prefers to avoid the stress and chaos that a child brings into family life, and the frequent emotional crises of little ones could disrupt their peace.

The last vocabulary of motive (the vocabulary of "public opinion") focus on the society's reaction. This category of respondents feels constrained and is pointed fingers at for not having been able to establish a family and have a child within a certain age. Society imposes this unjustified pressure on the "biological clock" and the notion that a child is the primary goal of life, and procreation is obligatory for the perpetuation of the human species.

In conclusion, the exploratory case study I conducted using the comments posted on YouTube identified six vocabularies of motive through which women explain and legitimize their intention not to have children. The identified vocabularies of motive revealed the feelings and thoughts of the female respondents regarding this delicate subject. Thus, the six vocabularies of motive contribute to a better understanding of how women who do not want to become mothers legitimize their choices and how they justify, from different perspectives, the "childfree" option.

REFERENCES

- Agrillo, C., Nelini, C. (2008). Childfree by choice: A review. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 25(3), 347-363.
- Berelson, B. (1988). *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. Glenchoe, The Free Press.
- Healey, J. (2016). Rejecting Reproduction: The National Organization for Non-Parents and Childfree Activism in 1970s America. *Journal of Women's History*, 28(1), 131-156.
- Matei, A. (2022). De ce nu mai vrea Gen Z copii. [Online] Available at: <https://www.zf.ro/special/vrea-gen-z-copii-ii-fac-dupa-pregatit-fiu-cea-importanta-persoana-20921160>. [Accessed on March 27, 2023].

- Mills, C. W. (1940). Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive. *American Sociological Review*, 5(6), 904-913.
- Mocanu, S. (2022). Vigneta fertilității familiei. Studiu de caz: arborele decizional privind fertilitatea. *Sociologie Românească*, 20(2), 122-147.
- Mucchielli, A. (1996). *Dictionnaire des méthodes qualitatives en sciences humaines et sociales*. Paris, Armand Collin.
- Park, K. (2002). Stigma Management among the Voluntary Childless. *Sociological Perspectives*, 45(1), 21-45.
- Rich, S., Taket, A., Graham, M., Shelley, J. (2011). 'Unnatural', 'Unwomanly', 'Uncreditable' and 'Undervalued': The Significance of Being a Childless Woman in Australian Society. *Gender Issues*, 28, 226-247.
- Tepșan, A. (2021). "Nu sunt un uter ambulant " – Tinere din România mi-au zis de ce nu vor să fie mame. [Online] Available at: <https://www.vice.com/ro/article/5db8xk/femei-din-romania-care-nu-vor-copii>. [Accessed on March 27, 2023].
- Zamfir, C., Vlăsceanu, L. (1998). *Dicționar de sociologie*. București, Babel.

Bianca-Andreea Costache is a master's student in Advanced Sociological Research, University of Bucharest. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Human Resources. Her academic interests concern topics like Sociology of the family, Sociology of Health and Illness and Sociology of Artificial Intelligence.