



Six Motives of Polygamists in Indonesia

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Abstract

One of the important aspects to understand about the issue of polygamy is the motives of the perpetrators, as polygamy has psychological impacts on the wives and children involved. This study aims to explore the motives of polygamists and the effects on their wives and children. A qualitative method with a phenomenological approach was employed, and data were collected through in-depth individual interviews with five informants selected using purposive sampling. The six informants in this study are individuals who have two wives. All data were analyzed thematically using the Miles and Huberman analysis technique. The findings revealed six key motives of polygamists: i) the ability to be fair, ii) having sufficient economic resources, iii) the first wife suffering from a chronic illness, iv) hypersexual behavior, v) incompatibility between the first wife and the family, and vi) raising the dignity of the second wife due to economic hardship. These six motives challenge the negative perceptions of polygamists often held by society, which tend to view their actions as inherently wrong. In reality, these motives are driven by good intentions and align with the values of being a good Muslim.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue and problem of polygamy is actually not an interesting discussion if examined in the legal aspect, but the aspect that has not been touched before is related to the motive of a person to commit polygamy. Motive is the reason or cause of a person's conscious and real action (Rahmanian et al., 2021). The motives for polygamy in Indonesia are very diverse. The community's assumption that one of the strongest motives for polygamy is economic problems is not always correct because there are other factors that support this (Dakhoir, 2017; Engkizar et al., 2024). Polygamy in Indonesia is not prohibited, but restricted (Santoso & Nasrudin, 2021).

Polygamy is the practice of marrying more than two partners at the same time (Sam'ani et al., 2023). Although in practice, polygamy is widely accepted by

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Muslims, it remains a hot issue and discussion among the community. Feminists especially oppose polygamy because it is considered unfair and discriminates against one of the parties, namely women (Yunus & Rahwan, 2024). The main reason is due to the shift in the motive of polygamy, which causes harm to one of the parties (Aprilia, 2018).

In Islam, the practice of polygamous marriage is found in QS. An-Nisa Verse 3:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْبَيْتِ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثَلِيٍّ وَتَلْتِ وَرُبِعٌ ۖ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةٌ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا ۗ

Meaning: *If you fear that you will not be able to do justice to the rights of orphans (when you marry them), marry any other woman you like: two, three, or four. But if you fear that you will not be able to do justice, (marry) only one or a female slave whom you own. That is closer to not doing injustice*

Although interpretations of this verse vary. This verse is the theological law that regulates the practice of polygamy in Islamic society to this day. The perception of polygamy is inseparable from the perspective of local culture (Ichsan, 2018; Langputeh et al., 2023). Polygamy is justice that must be upheld by the husband towards his wife. However, the first wife's permission is not explicitly mentioned as a mandatory requirement in the classics. Instead, this requirement is more often regulated through *ijtihad* and *fatwas* of scholars who consider the local social and cultural context (Marzuki, 2019).

The principle of marriage in Indonesia is monogamy, but polygamy is allowed if the religious court approves it (Sugitanata et al., 2024). Only having a spouse as the only sexual partner during the marriage period (Peoples et al., 2019). This is regulated in Law Number 1 Year 1974 article 3 paragraph (1). However, in Law Number 1 Year 1974, article 3 paragraph (2), Indonesian law opens the opportunity for men to marry more than one woman (polygamy). For a husband who wants to be polygamous, the conditions for obtaining permission are that the wife cannot fulfill her obligations, such as the wife is sick or has an incurable disability, and the wife cannot bear children (Cantika et al., 2018; Satrianis et al., 2021). To apply for polygamy in court, the consent of the wife or wives must be obtained; the husband must guarantee that he can fulfill the needs of his wife and children and the husband can provide justice (Miski et al., 2022). But historically, polygamy has been a part of Indonesian society. As Indonesia progresses into a more democratic society, the rights of women in polygamous households have become a topic of tension among Indonesian society. There must be efforts to fulfill the rights of women in polygamy (Apriliani, 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research related to polygamous motives of Muslim men in Indonesia has been studied by previous researchers such as Aprilia (2018); Muzzammil et al (2021); Ridwan et al (2024); Santoso & Nasrudin (2021); Wirastri & van Huis (2021), but the researchers above only focus on the problem of the relationship between polygamy motives and the assessment of the surrounding community and according to Islamic law. Meanwhile, research that specifically discusses the motives of Muslim men to commit polygamy has not been found. The fundamental difference between this research issue and previous research is that the previous researchers discussed the study of the motives of Muslim men to commit polygamy in the views of the community and the objectives according to Islamic law, but on

the issue of this research discussing the motives of Muslim men to commit polygamy.

The issuance of Law Number 1 of 1974 aims to regulate and limit polygamy, so that Indonesian society has more respect for the dignity of women, as well as respect for humanity (Dalimunthe & Milhan, 2023; Darmawijaya, 2020; Sururie, 2017; Wahyono, 2022). In this case, family law reform in Indonesia acts as a tool of social engineering, which is law as a means of changing the culture of society. Thus, the enactment of polygamy restrictions is done in order to protect the rights and dignity of women, as well as the future of their children (Scanlon et al., 2019). The regulation of polygamy in Islamic sharia and Islamic law in the form of the inclusion of conditions can be applied so that polygamists can treat their wives and children fairly. The reason is so that the marriage does not harm or even cause victims for the wife and her children, thus tarnishing the sanctity of marriage and contradicting the essence of the purpose of marriage itself (David & Stafford, 2015; Murphy, 2016). The inclusion of the polygamy requirement must be based on the wife's permission in Law Number 1 of 1974; so that the polygamy carried out does not get challenges from both the wife and other family members so that the polygamy carried out on the one hand causes pleasure for the husband and his new wife (Santoso & Nasrudin, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to reveal the basic motives of husbands to commit polygamy (Darmawijaya, 2020).

Based on the database from Scopus, previous research from 2019-2023 using several keywords that refer to research on “Motive”, “Polygamy”, in the following figure 1:

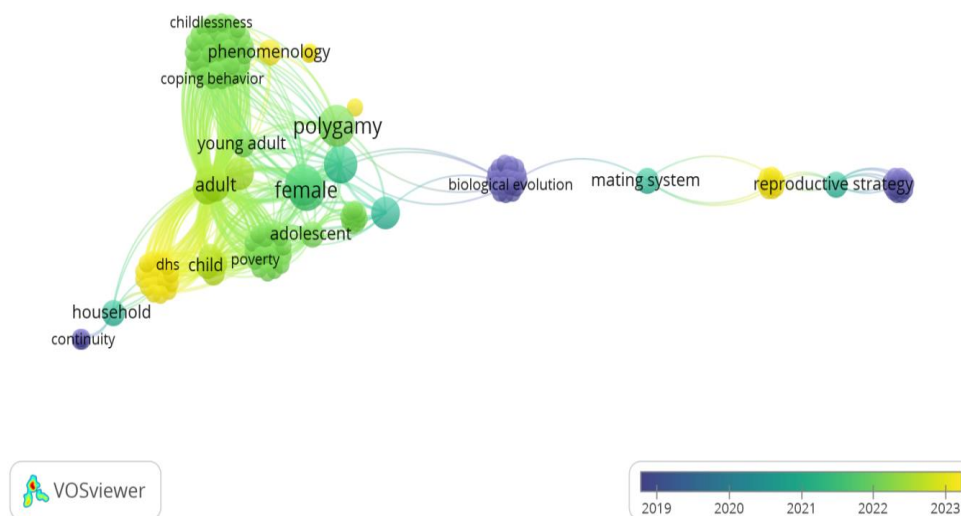


Fig 1. Keywords referring to Polygamy Motives by world researchers (Scopus database)

Research on polygamy developed from various countries is still very little, especially about what are the motives of people doing polygamy. This research is proven by VOSviewer data by looking at scopus-based research data in various countries. There are still few found that discuss how the Motives of Polygamy Actors. The research in this scopus data is research that discusses the impact of polygamy on children, household unity, behavior of coping with not having children, women, the marriage system. So this research is worth doing because there are no research findings that discuss the motives of polygamy (Rahmanian et al., 2021).

METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methodology is to explore and investigate research studies (Alase, 2017; Engkizar et al., 2024; Herzog et al., 2019; Taylor, 2013). By using qualitative methods with a type of phenomenological approach (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). The phenomenological approach is a research response to an event that is based on the lived experience of seeing from the point of view that occurs. Phenomenology emerged as an analysis of social phenomena or experiences (Guillen, 2019; Asril et al., 2023). Related to the perception of an object, event, or situation. In this context, phenomenology implies that things appear as they are or events that are happening now (Ardiningrum et al., 2021; Nuryana et al., 2019).

The data collection method was carried out with individual in-depth interviews. Informants were selected using purposive sampling technique, which is to select respondents or sources that meet the criteria for collecting the necessary data (Islam & Aldaihani, 2021). The informant in question is an individual who has two wives. All data were analyzed in a thematic way using the data analysis technique of this study using the Miles and Huberman theory (Yusnia, 2018). Which includes data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and data conclusions or data verification (Rini & Aldila, 2023). The author conducted this analysis process using qualitative analysis. According to Green et al., (2007); Mohanty & Verma, (2013); Saldaña, (2020); Sentosa & Apriliani, (2020) qualitative analysis is an effective way for a researcher to analyze interview results so that they can be seen in detail and in depth.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the author's interviews with five informants, the analysis identified six themes related to individuals who practice polygamy, illustrating their reasons for engaging in polygamy. For clarity, these six themes are presented in Figure 2 below:

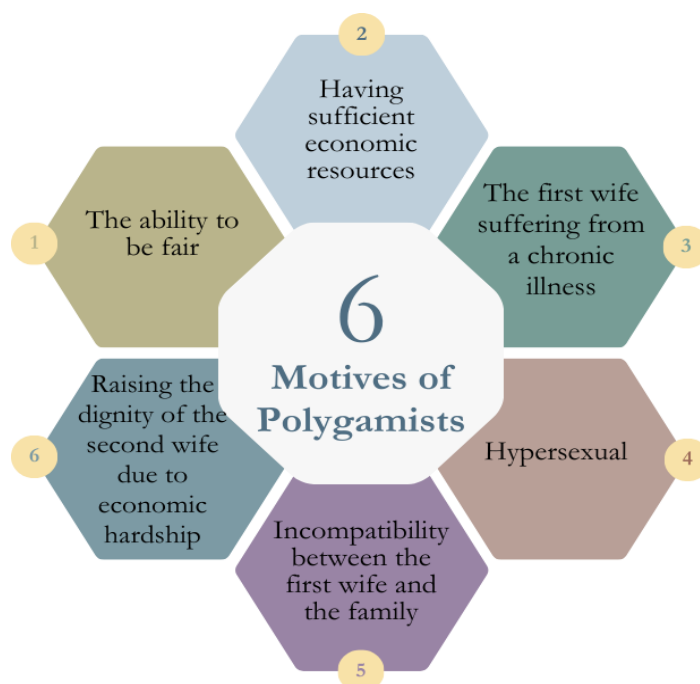


Fig 1. Motives of Polygamists

First, being fair, the ability to be fair is one of the main requirements in carrying out polygamy. This was emphasized by informants 1 and 3 as in the following interview excerpts:

If he is not sure that he is able to be fair, then it is forbidden for him to practice polygamy because polygamy is not just a right, but also a great mandate that demands responsibility. Therefore, before deciding on polygamy, a husband must really measure himself, whether he is ready to fulfill all the rights of his wives fairly, both in terms of material and attention (informant 1). ... In Islam, justice is the main requirement in polygamy. A husband must be able to fulfill the basic rights of his wives in a balanced manner, both in terms of maintenance, attention, and time (informant 3).

Islam has required husbands as polygamists to be fair to their wives (Septiandani & Astanti, 2021). In QS. An-Nisa: 3, the verse explains that qualitative fairness is impossible to fulfill even if the polygamist wants to do it. Therefore, religion allows polygamy only in cases of emergency or necessity. Polygamy is prescribed to realize two things. First, to make some people prefer halal things and keep away from haram things. Second, to teach justice in living a household with wives, therefore Shari'a does not allow polygamy without being fair in interacting with his wives (Madelı et al., 2022).

According to Yusuf Qardhawi, justice in the practice of polygamy must be realized through the proportional fulfillment of wives' rights, including in terms of eating, drinking, clothing, housing, overnight stays, and maintenance. This fulfillment requires readiness from the husband, both financially and emotionally, to carry out his responsibilities towards each wife (Cahyani, 2018; Sayyidah et al., 2021). This justice includes not only material aspects, but also attention and emotional balance in interacting with his wives (Surya et al., 2024). If a husband has doubts about his ability to fulfill these obligations fairly, then Islam considers that polygamy should not be practiced. This approach aims to safeguard the welfare of all parties and prevent injustices that can damage domestic relationships (Dakhoir, 2017).

Second, having a sufficient economy is an important requirement in carrying out polygamy, because this relates to the ability to meet the needs of all family members. This was explained by several informants as in the following interview excerpts:

Polygamy requires strong economic preparedness, as a husband must be able to fulfill the needs of his wives fairly, both in terms of daily sustenance and the education of his children (informant 2). ...practicing polygamy because it helps women who need financial support without compromising the welfare of the existing family (informant 5).

Economy plays a significant role in motivating polygamy, as financial stability can be a decisive factor in addressing the challenges faced by women with limited financial support and educational opportunities. In some cases, women may choose or agree to enter a polygamous marriage, driven by the prospect of improved financial security. Polygamists, in this context, may justify their actions with the intention of providing assistance and better living conditions for these women, aligning their motives with a sense of social responsibility or compassion (İbiloğlu et al., 2018). Furthermore, economic stability is often seen as an essential prerequisite for someone considering polygamy, as the financial capability to support multiple households is crucial to maintaining harmony and preventing conflict among family members (Galieva, 2021).

Third, the first wife is chronically ill, based on the informant's information, one

of the reasons for polygamy expressed is the condition of the first wife who is chronically ill, so she cannot fully meet the husband's needs. This was expressed by the informant as in the following interview excerpt:

My first wife understood my desire to have offspring. Because of her health condition, polygamy became the best solution by not neglecting my first wife (informant 4).

A diagnosis of a chronic illness can lead to significant changes in a person's life, often creating emotional and physical challenges for both the individual and their family (Sari & Kartini, 2024). In certain situations, these challenges may affect a marital relationship, particularly when the person diagnosed is unable to meet some of their spouse's needs due to health limitations. In such cases, the first wife may agree to her husband remarrying, viewing it as a way to address practical concerns within the family (Naseer et al., 2021). Additionally, remarriage may be seen as an opportunity to fulfill cultural or personal expectations related to continuing the family lineage (Mulder, 2017).

Fourth, hypersexual behavior, based on informants' information, one of the reasons for polygamy expressed is the husband's hypersexual behavior, which makes him feel that these needs cannot be met by one wife alone. This was expressed by several informants as in the following interview excerpts:

I felt my needs were quite great, and after discussing it with my first wife, we considered polygamy as one of the solutions. This decision was not an easy one, but we wanted to find a way that was still in accordance with religious rules (informant 6). ... This situation is not my wife's fault, but I feel that I need more than most people. Polygamy is a solution so that I can stay on the halal path and not violate my marriage commitment (informant 1).

Hypersexuality is a condition in which a person experiences excessive sexual urges, which causes them to be trapped in an addiction to sexual activity. People with this disorder tend to engage in sexual intercourse at a much higher intensity compared to the average person (Glica et al., 2023; Lew-Starowicz et al., 2020; Rettenberger et al., 2016). Various factors can lead to hypersex, such as exposure to pornography, excessive masturbation habits, or engaging in paid sex with multiple partners. This condition can disrupt an individual's life balance, including work and personal relationships, as uncontrollable sexual urges often affect other aspects of their lives (Madelı et al., 2022).

Hypersexual disorder can affect marital relationships, especially when couples feel their sexual needs cannot be met with one wife alone. In some cases, husbands who are dissatisfied with their sexual relationship with their first wife may seek ways to fulfill these needs, including remarriage (Gottman & Gottman, 2017; Reczek, 2020). First wives who feel unable to fulfill their needs may choose to consent to a second marriage, rather than face the possibility of divorce. This shows how the influence of psychological conditions, such as hypersexual disorder, can affect decisions in domestic life (Supraptiningsih et al., 2023).

Fifth, the first wife does not get along with the family, this being one of the reasons for polygamy is disharmony between the first wife and the husband's family, which causes tension in the household. This was conveyed by informant 4 as in the following interview excerpts:

From the beginning, my first wife found it difficult to establish a good relationship with my

extended family. This was often a source of conflict that made the household less harmonious. After a long discussion, we decided that polygamy might be a middle way to reduce this pressure (informant 4).

Family pressure is one of the common reasons for polygamous marriages, the main factor of which is having children or not having children (Naseer et al., 2021). From a psychological point of view, couples who are able to adapt to each other in a family structure are better able to create comfort, happiness, and cohesiveness between family members (Abd Razak et al., 2022). So that the blessing of the respective families of both parties before marriage is very important (Andriati et al., 2023). Because it will affect household harmony (Syafrudin, 2023).

Sixth, raising the dignity of the second wife, aims to help the second wife who is in a weak economic condition, so the marriage is considered an effort to raise her dignity. This was conveyed by several informants as in the following interview excerpts:

Initially, I never thought about remarrying. However, when I saw the condition of the second wife who had to work hard to meet her family's needs, I felt the need to help with the first wife's consent (informant 2). ... I made this decision after considering her weak economic condition and I was able to ease her burden by discussing it with the first wife (informant 5).

The community's perception of one of the motives for polygamy is very strong because of economic problems (Dakhoir, 2017). Because the second wife is unable to feed her family, and looks for other alternatives, namely by being willing to be used as a second wife to a man who has enough economy to depend on him (Mengistu et al., 2022). Polygamy can also increase the dignity of women and protect their morals from being polluted by vile and immoral acts prohibited by Allah SWT, such as engaging in sexual activity for pay (prostitution), and others (Ridwan et al., 2024). Because of the weak economic situation, it attracts community sympathy to the second wife and also to the husband's family. So that the second wife gets more affection than the first wife (Salsabiela & Prananda, 2023; Wirastri & van Huis, 2021).

We can see that Islam has regulated life in great detail. From some of these motives, it is known that the background of polygamy is not only in terms of economics, but also other things (Muzzammil et al., 2021). Therefore, polygamy does not always have a bad impact, but there is also a good impact (Rohmah & Budihardjo, 2021). Of course, for those who run it according to Islamic law, which is fair. Polygamy is a middle way for married couples who do not want to divorce or have their households 'finished' with the various factors above. Although there are still pros and cons, polygamy has become part of Indonesian society (Masri, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This research provides insight into the diverse motives behind polygamists' decisions and their impact on the families left behind. By understanding these motives, important lessons can be learned about the complexity of the reasons behind the practice of polygamy, which often involves moral, social and personal considerations. It is hoped that the findings will serve as food for reflection to raise awareness of the importance of justice, communication and responsibility in married life, especially in the context of polygamy. It also serves as a basis to encourage a more constructive dialogue on the issue of polygamy in society.

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