



Exploring Attitudes of People towards Polygamous Marriages: A Qualitative Analysis in District Battagram, Pakistan

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to empirically investigate the attitudes of people towards polygamous marriages in District Battagram of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. Polygamous marriage is a family pattern, and marital arrangements in which one spouse simultaneously keeps several partners of an opposite sex are known as polygamy. In the current study, the qualitative research paradigm was employed, purposive sampling was used, and a total 40 participants, both male and female from various backgrounds were interviewed using semi-structures interviews (SSIs) based on the principle of data saturation. In order to conduct a thorough analysis of the problem, data was gathered using additional tool like Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). The Braun and Clarke model (2006) proposed a six-step methodology for thematic analysis of the gathered data. The results clearly pointed out that religious beliefs constituted the major reason as to why polygamous marriages were practiced. The economic factors, as a result, became a top issue identified as respondents said that most of the time, being able to cater for multiple households puts a financial squeeze. The culture and social pressure play a very vital role in encouraging polygamy, and we have some who see it as being trendy while others see it as being an issue of old ages. Adjustment to polygamous relationships created tensions between co-wives and stress on children. Some young people began to criticize the continuation of polygamous practices and values in present society owing to changes in education standards. This research establishes that the residents of District Battagram hold diverse views towards polygamy due to religion, economic conditions, emotion, and social issues irrespective of traditional trends, while the new generation's perspective appears likely to reduce the tolerance towards polygamy. On this basis, the following recommendations are made: the government should pass a law legalizing polygamous marriage provided that it meets this requirement. For wives' and children's protection, as well as the sake of the society, these rules in subject should aim at controlling polygamous

partnerships. That is why society should also be informed about the existence of polygamous relationships and other consequences of polygamy in general.

Keywords: Marriage, Family disputes, Religious perspectives, Psychological impacts and Thematic analysis

Introduction

Polygamous marriage brings together more than two spouses in unions which are practiced within diverse cultures throughout history (Din et al., 2024). The practice of polygamous marriage continues to exist across different regions of the world most strongly in Africa while also being seen in Middle Eastern countries together with certain areas of Asia (Daoud et a 2014). Multiple influences from social traditions and religious beliefs and legal systems along with economic factors determine modern-day sentiments about polygamous unions. The practice of polygamy receives varied societal acceptance because some cultures honor its traditional nature combined with religious commandments yet other societies view it as an institution leading to financial stress and gender inequality and family inequality (Din et al., 2024).

The worldwide discussion about polygamous marriages intensifies because of increasing support for gender equality and human rights according to Singh and Mathur (2024). While proponents argue that polygamy provides economic security and extended familial support, critics contend that it often results in emotional and financial hardships, particularly for women and children (Fasika, 2021). in many Islamic societies, polygamy is legally permitted but comes with strict conditions, such as the requirement for a husband to treat all wives equitably in contrast, Western legal frameworks largely prohibit polygamy, associating it with potential exploitation and coercion (Fulas, 2018).

The research investigates public opinions about polygamous marriages and the impact that social elements together with economic and religious variables have on the opinions of society. This investigation uses existing research and theoretical frameworks to establish a thorough grasp of polygamy-related public opinion factors since they operate differently throughout legal systems and cultural settings.

Problem of Statement

The practice of polygamous marriage exists commonly in District Battagram, Pakistan, and attracts intense controversy because religious practices, economic circumstances and local customs continue to drive its development. Collectively some defend polygamy since they see it as both religiously necessary and traditional while other groups oppose its negative consequences for families as well as personal wellbeing. The financial burdens of sustaining multiple households cause men to face financial hardships which results in uneven distribution of resources between the wives and their children. Co-wives together with their children experience wide-ranging emotional distress which includes the symptoms of jealousy and the pressures of competition and psychological stress. Young generations today doubt polygamous relationships will persist given how educational values combined with contemporary social attitudes have shifted during recent years. Society maintains its historical acceptance of polygamy yet needs evaluation to understand its social and gender-based effects throughout marriages and family dynamics. This research investigates District Battagram's polygamous marriage attitudes using three analytical dimensions of religion beliefs and economic circumstances and emotional responses.

Objectives

1. To Examine the influence of religious beliefs on perceptions of polygamy
2. To Analyze the economic challenges faced by families in polygamous marriages.
3. To Investigate the emotional impact of polygamy on women.

Literature Review

Research about polygamous marriages appears within sociology and anthropology as well as psychology and legal fields of study. Academic research about polygamy explores different aspects through historical and cultural examinations of this practice as well as gender effects and social repercussions. A complete assessment of polygamous marriage research appears in this section through its examination of historical factors and cultural-religious foundations as well as psychological effects on genders and economic effects and legal considerations.

Historical Background of Polygamous Marriages

Throughout different historical periods various societies have practiced polygamous relationships. Polygamous marriage was practice among the leader class of Mesopotamia, Egypt and China in ancient times for creating political bonds and safeguarding genetic heritage (Thobejane, & Flora, 2014). During the medieval era European nobility could receive approval for polygamy from the Christian church to expand dynastic power (Ferraro & Pedersen 2021).

Native peoples in Africa and the Americas practiced polygamy because it served social position and economic expansion. Within Zulu and Maasai communities of South Africa and Kenya a man traditionally demonstrated his economic prowess through having many wives and children since it revealed his ability to operate extensive farming or herding operations (Seligson & McCants, 2022). Premodern Islamic societies allowed polygamy as long as men respected religious guidelines by restricting their wife count to four positions (Benhalim, 2023).

Western imperial laws enforced monogamous marital models upon native populations which triggered major changes in social structures of polygamous communities in the era of colonialism (Bala, 2009). The laws of colonial powers in African and Asian territories prohibited or banned polygamy even though polygamous relationships persisted unofficially. Regions within the Middle East alongside parts of Asia continued polygamous traditions by adapting these customs through state-made regulations according to Rawat (2024).

Cultural and Religious Perspectives on Polygamy

Several cultures together with multiple religions have retained polygamy as part of their traditional heritage. Al-Krenawi demonstrates that polygamy exists strongly in Islamic and African and indigenous societies because these communities invoke religious doctrines and traditional customs to explain it. Under Islamic law polygamy remains permissible yet requires men to fulfill requirements of equal treatment and financial ability to multiple spouses despite disagreement about these matters in present-day Muslim communities (Ibrahim, 2024).

The research shows polygamous unions experience different levels of approval in different geographic areas. The Hausa-Fulani community in Nigeria supports polygamous relations because its members follow religious traditions while using polygamy as a financial tool. Young urban population in diverse geographical areas tend to become doubtful about polygamy due to economic changes and Western cultural influences (Benhalim, 2023). Rural agrarian communities throughout sub-Saharan Africa practice polygamous marriages more frequently than urban areas because modernization combined with financial limitations has decreased this tradition. (Ibrahim, 2024).

Gender and Psychological Implications of Polygamous Marriages

Research demonstrates that women in polygamous relationships face greater psychological problems together with marital dissatisfaction as well as financial instability than monogamous women do. First wives commonly experience hurt feelings because they find their husbands remarrying because they feel abandoned and socially devalued (Elbedour et al., 2003). These emotional consequences affect kids by causing sibling conflicts for resources which produce both emotional difficulties and academic setbacks.

Feminists commonly scrutinize polygamous systems because they sustain imbalanced gender power structures that restrict women from controlling their lives. Societies with accepted cultural practices of polygamy force women to accept co-wives even if doing so goes against their personal desires. Such dynamics shape distinct gender discrepancies that worsen openness to economic resources in regions that already enforce limited rights for women (Mabweazara, 2024).

Economic and Legal Dimensions of Polygamous Marriages

The economic situation plays an essential part in determining public reactions to polygamous relationships. The research shows agrarian and pastoral communities employ polygamous marriages to gain economic benefits from multiple wives who assist each other with household work and child care (Eldin et al., 2024). Economic transformations together with the high cost of maintaining extra households have resulted in fewer people choosing polygamous lifestyles. The scarcity of available resources within modern economies leads to increased monetary problems for families from lower-income brackets who enter into polygamous marriages. (Mobolaji & Folowose, 2024).

The legal understanding of polygamy stands at opposing ends throughout different legal jurisdictions. Polygamous relationships face legal restrictions in the United States and Canada because authorities perceive that their anti-coercive measures and protection of gender equality would use polygamy as an example. Conversely, countries such as Saudi Arabia and Indonesia permit polygamy under religious laws, albeit with certain restrictions and legal conditions (Quackelbeen, 2024).

Polygamous communities function illegally in various Western nations even though multiple marriage is outlawed in these regions. Sects belonging to the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) in the United States follow the practice of polygamy despite legal restrictions which leads to sophisticated legal disputes about child protection as well as marital rights (Wolfe, 2024). The ongoing dispute occurs between cultural traditions and legal requirements that define marriage regulations.

Methodology

The research adopted qualitative methods to study population attitudes toward polygamous marriages among District Battagram residents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. The researchers selected qualitative research methods because it allowed them to study personal perceptions and interactive experiences and cultural context of polygamous marriages within participant viewpoints. The selected participants numbered 40 through purposive sampling while achieving gender and background diversity to obtain multiple views. The research participants included people who faced polygamous marriage experiences or actively held opinions regarding polygamy. Data saturation served as the main criterion to establish the required number of research participants. SSIs enabled researchers to gain extensive meaningful information from their participants. Open-ended questions structured the interviews so participants could freely share their ideas and the researcher could ask additional follow-up questions regarding important matters. The researchers utilized Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for gathering information

which promoted group interaction between participants to generate multiple viewpoints about polygamous marriages. The local language served as the official medium of communication during SSIs and FGDs so participants could easily understand information throughout the discussions. The method of thematic analysis served to analyze the gathered data. The research adopted the Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step methodology for analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The entire research methodology obeyed ethical rules. Participants received information about the research goal after which they signed consent documents as voluntary participants. The research protocol included maintained anonymity with full confidentiality as a way to protect participants from identity disclosure. The study satisfied all ethical research requirements by acquiring relevant approvals from academic and research institutions beforehand.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the research findings while adhering to the study objectives based on an analysis of the qualitative data source. Research analysts studied in-depth interviews to determine key themes that included religious Justifications and Perceptions alongside Economic Challenges of Polygamy and Impact on Women's Emotional Well-being and Social Pressures and Cultural Norms.

Themes

The analysis reveals several main themes as part of this research study.

Religious Justifications and Perceptions

Islamic religious tradition allows polygamy when its specific guidelines are met in the same way that other teachings do. The religious guidelines about polygamy face increasing criticism since they sometimes get misapplied by individuals for personal advantage rather than fulfilling societal needs. The interviewees showed their discontent about polygamy because its intended purpose of fairness and responsibility gets transformed into unfair and hurtful practices. A research participant explained the polygamous religious origins but noted widespread misuse of the practice:

“The Islamic faith allows polygamous relationships to assist widows and women without family units. The practice of polygamy in Islam requires both fairness and accountability. The Quran explicitly discourages polygamy when men lack the ability to distribute equal treatment among their wives. Men abuse polygamy laws by pursuing personal interests rather than fulfilling their agreement to equal treatment of multiple wives. People exercise their right to multiple marriages yet they disregard their obligation to act with fairness. The sudden change leads to substantial distress particularly among first wives who feel obsolete and unimportant.”

A research participant shared awareness about the conflict between religious principles and their actual implementation.

“Men who practice polygamy under religious pretenses instead neglect their multiple wives by offering insufficient resources according to religious duty. According to the men who practice polygamy they do it for religious reasons yet their motives stem from selfish personal drives instead of religious obligations. Multiple instances have shown that the original wife along with her children experience hardship because the second wife receives all available attention and resources. The practice of polygamy results in problems which run against Islamic spiritual doctrines. Does justice as a main reason for polygamy explain why numerous women experience emotional pain due to neglect.”

The current real-life consequences of polygamy contradict basic religious principles about this practice. Although rooted in notions of fairness and social responsibility polygamy as applied today creates more emotional turmoil and ethical issues along with any perceived equality.

Economic Challenges of Polygamy

The practice of polygamous marriage brings significant economic problems to married couples. Large numbers of men who practice polygamy fail to properly evaluate the economic demands placed on them by having multiple family groups. Economic strain produces stress that leads families to develop tensions and causes both resentment and neglect of the first wife and her children. According to a male interviewee he has witnessed financial difficulties within polygamous families.

“These men have gone through two to three marriages yet struggle to support all their families adequately. Household tension develops extensively due to this situation. The wife who has stayed with her husband since the beginning discovers that her financial support decreases unexpectedly. The situation for the newer wife seems to come with more advantages including greater gifts and enhanced attention compared to the first wife. The preference shown towards the more recent wife leads to discord between married women and causes negative consequences for the children. My observations reveal how first wives stay in inferior living arrangements after their husbands bring second wives into their households. Society grants this arrangement although what happens consistently does not sit well with anyone.”

This participant pointed out that financial constraints have turned polygamy into an obstacle that most individuals struggle to achieve in contemporary society.

“The current economic scene makes it challenging for a single man to support his existing family. Living costs have reached high levels in these modern times while it takes substantial funds to educate children. Being responsible for multiple wives stands as a duty which most men find unfeasible to manage. The women and children face severe consequences when a man is unable to support his multiple wives. The financial troubles of polygamous marriages affect women since their husbands lack equal ability to support their families thus the women must use their own resources for children's expenses and basic needs. Several men lack enough financial means to make polygamy work since it needs concrete financial security.”

Economic difficulties faced by polygamous families cause the original wife to develop profound emotional pain. Polygamous marriages subject her to dual betrayals since she discovers her husband has wed another partner while her fiscal stability faces imminent danger. Marital status changes while leaving first wife uninformed about his plan result in stress and self-doubt coupled with public humiliation because society finds out about his decision before she has processed it. These stories demonstrate that despite continuing religious and cultural support for polygamy modern economic realities and emotional complexities turn it into a difficult social institution.

Impact on Women’s Emotional Well-being

Polygamous marriages inflict severe emotional distress on wives especially the first wife who confront various psychological and social problems. Women express intense feelings of betrayal after their husbands pursue a second marriage while skipping necessary communication about it. The sudden transformation of marital status both damages their personal esteem and subjects them to social embarrassment when their loved ones and acquaintances find out before they begin to accept the reality. The woman described her traumatic experience after discovering that her husband took a second wife while her sense of security was completely destroyed.

“My husband took a decision to remarry without sharing any information with me. I experienced complete humiliation when my husband's choice to take another wife led to my public disgrace

before everyone including the people I consider family. The way my views and emotions seemed to lack any importance in that situation. I lost my position as his single wife in that instant while simultaneously experiencing no control over my situation. I experience continuous feelings of being compared to his second wife. Others compare physical attractiveness, compare cooking abilities and evaluate which woman satisfies him best. The situation has harmed my mental well-being extensively since I constantly fight for attention in my home environment.”

After suffering from betrayal numerous women experience difficulty discovering who they truly are. When another wife enters the household people often push women to doubt their value. Married women who maintained confidence before entering polygamy start doubting their worth and believe they can be replaced easily. The woman reported her character underwent significant changes when her husband added a second wife to their marriage.

“The process of becoming a bigamous wife requires much more than splitting the husband because it involves the complete loss of your personal identity. Your self-regard diminishes and doubts about your worth start raging through your mind. Before my husband’s second marriage I felt certain about myself but after it began I see my reflection in the mirror and ask myself whether he still finds me appealing or if our romance remains the same. Your husband now discloses his secrets to two women and spends his nights with two women as well. The experience makes you believe that you become nothing more than an expected dedication he must complete. This ordeal leaves me completely exhausted as it makes me doubt every aspect of who I am.”

Many initial wives struggle with an emotional fight after learning about polygamy because it disrupts their place in their marital residence.

Social Pressures and Cultural Norms

Different social groups together with younger and older populations view polygamy through separate lenses. Traditional communities maintain a positive perspective toward polygamy because it represents wealth alongside masculinity and social standing. Older adult men taking multiple wives serves as a badge of honor showing their power and financial well-being. The elderly male interviewee explained the reasons behind his community's positive attitude toward polygamy.

“The people in our village view men who have multiple wives as affluent and powerful figures because polygamy signifies their monetary strength and productive status. Women view multiple wives as a necessary attribute to demonstrate masculine power. Society considers unmarried men with single wives to demonstrate inadequate financial power or lack sufficient authority to care for multiple partners. Polygamy becomes a sign of strength because a man who enters into multiple marriages demonstrates his ability to manage large household responsibilities. Women typically accept these marriage arrangements because this is what they learned to accept through their upbringing. In our community people admired my father because he had three wives while he remained an influential figure among us. Our culture predates this marital practice.”

The long-established belief is now challenged by younger generations especially those belonging to the educated demographic. Young women and many younger people view polygamy as an indicator that men have faced failures in life instead of demonstrating success. These modern individuals recognize multiple marriages as signs of a man's inability to maintain enduring healthy relationships instead of regarding them as successes. A younger participant described the altered views on polygamous relationships in today's society.

“People nowadays spreading rumors about male polygamous marriages. Modern culture no longer views polygamy with respect. Women who have completed their education view polygamy negatively because they believe the husband cannot properly sustain his marriage with one partner. People assume that because a man failed to keep his first wife he simply advances to

remarriage with new partners each time he faces marital issues. The public shows negative reactions to his past marital struggles and the reasons behind his search for another woman. Most men choose polygamy as a way to avoid handling their marriage responsibilities rather than improving their current relationships. Young female generations display less interest in polygamy because of this reason.”

The changing social values among educated people actively challenge traditional cultural norms related to polygamous relationships in contemporary society. Older people continue to treat polygamy as a sign of status but modern youth evaluate its significance and equity in current relationships differently.

Discussion

This research reveals the multi-dimensional structure of polygamous marriages in District Battagram because religious doctrine interacts with the economy at the same time as emotional issues and cultural developments do. The religious and legal permission for polygamy in Muslim societies does not match the authentic teachings of Islam regarding this practice. Religious beliefs served as a basis for polygamy according to numerous participants in this study who focused on the Quranic permission for men to practice polygamy when fairness exists (Ibrahim, 2024). The study participants repeatedly emphasized the practical challenges in implementing fairness when it comes to polygamy. A key problem reported by multiple respondents was how men usually offer unequal aid both financially and emotionally and socially to their multiple wives which creates substantial unequal relationships between spouses. Findings in this study mirror those presented in research about polygamous marriage in Muslim-majority communities (Eldin et al., 2024) because academic findings match real-life marital experiences that produce ethical and social problems. The lack of fairness in polygamous marriages violates both religious intentions while generating destructive conflicts between married women and damaging household relationships.

The economic limitations between husband and wives became a fundamental factor that shaped the actual experience of polygamous marriages. The majority of male participants indicated that several family responsibilities created overwhelming financial needs resulting in unequal resource sharing between their multiple wives. The economic challenges in polygamous marriages often produce more household disputes alongside emotional turmoil according to (Quackelbeen, 2024). Women suffer the most from polygamous marriages because they receive limited financial resources. The neglect of finances leads wives to experience a combination of resentment and inferiority feelings along with emotional isolation which results in worsened psychological quality of life. The survey participants revealed they underwent stress alongside humiliation together with identity-related crises while dealing with marital marginalization. Previous academic research about polygamous households showed that women suffer worse mental health when financial resources and emotional responsibilities are unevenly shared (Din et al., 2024). These women reported additional psychological difficulties because their husbands chose extra wives without involving them in the decision. Gender inequalities are obvious in polygamous family settings because women lack financial power and decision-making control.

Social standards together with cultural ideals function as essential factors in helping maintain polygamy and fighting against its practice in District Battagram. Within the older demographics of District Battagram people use polygamous marriages to show their financial success and power while gaining respect and status within society. The practice experiences social acceptance because those men who take multiple wives get community recognition and respect. The younger generation along with their level of education now challenges the traditional acceptance of polygamous marriages in District Battagram. Students with advanced education among the younger respondents see polygamy as a useless custom that claims gender equality and produces

domestic problems. The trend toward decreasing polygamous support matches regional changes since educated urban and economically developed populations show reduced acceptance of this custom (Thobejane, & Flora, 2014). The research data shows that better-educated individuals tend to challenge conventional social practices when such behavior interferes with both marital peace and gender equality.

The essential approach to handle polygamy demands the implementation of legal guardianship alongside social structures and educational programs. The religious grounds supporting polygamy stay strong but the society requires immediate attention to achieve fair and sustainable financial arrangements within polygamous marriages. The protection of women and children in polygamous marriages may be enhanced through law enforcement of stronger financial rules and marriage agreement process requirements. The public can benefit from awareness initiatives which demonstrate both the financial expenses and emotional burden of polygamous marriages to increase individual and family decision-making quality. The establishment of support services which include counseling programs and community-based aid would global help women overcome emotional dilemmas in polygamous marriages.

Future investigations need to examine both mental and societal consequences which polygamous households generate over extended time periods specifically when studying children who grow up in these families. Researchers must study how children deal with complicated family situations together with their emotional status alongside their understanding of marriage to evaluate polygamy's effects on household systems (Din et al., 2024). The comparison of monogamous household families to polygamous household families would lead to deeper knowledge about marital arrangement impacts on family unity and individual quality of life. Current research and policy changes alongside community-based programs will create an equitable and stable family setting for everyone within them.

Conclusion

A range of religious elements together with economic status and emotional responses coupled with social dynamics determine public perspectives on polygamous marriage in District Battagram. Islam gets frequently mentioned as the core justification for polygamy yet respondents raise concerns about successfully satisfying religious requirements of fairness leading to issues of ethics and society. The economic difficulties faced by many men create extra stress because they find it impossible to maintain adequate support for multiple families while leading to family breakdowns and interpersonal conflicts. Women who enter polygamous marriages confront emotional damage caused by the inadequate communication and absence of consent which results in their experience of abandonment and fear along with humiliation. However modern social norms alongside cultural beliefs create polygamy as a sign of wealth and male dominance despite these traditions facing modern views supported by youth populations. The research reveals the necessity to view polygamy comprehensively since it impacts family units together with individual members while modern social changes influence its perception.

Recommendations

- The government needs to establish polygamous marriage permissions through legislation which defines necessary requirements for fair and secure practices.
- The law needs to contain detailed provisions which protect wives and children from polygamous marriages against possible mistreatment.
- Every husband must show evidence of solid finances and match resources with multiple wives and children before beginning a polygamous marriage.

- All wives should receive identical legal conditions to obtain equitable financial aid along with emotional support and full legal protections.
- A husband must gain informed written consent from existing wives to legally wed another woman according to a law.

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