

THE LEVEL OF POLYGAMY KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE AMONG MALAYSIAN MUSLIM

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Abstract:

Marriage is a Sunnah in Islam because it creates a family. In reality, everyone desires a happy family. This thesis sought to investigate the level of knowledge and practice of polygamy among polygamous couples in Malaysia. The problem of marital failure among Muslim families in Malaysia, particularly among Malays, is caused by a variety of factors. This study has two goals: (i) identifying the practice of polygamous families in Malaysia, and (ii) analyzing the level of knowledge and practice of polygamy among polygamous couples. The quantitative method employs a set of structured survey questions. According to the survey, the practice of polygamous families in Malaysia usually involves a Malay male who has a diploma and runs his own business. They would usually engage in polygamy by marrying two wives, most likely Malay women. The marriage would take place in public rather than in private in Malaysia. They would not, however, stay with their partners. When asked why they were polygamous, they usually said they wanted to avoid adultery. The findings of the survey, the majority of respondents still have a poor understanding of polygamy's knowledge and practice. The survey also discovered that there are various responses to the internal challenges that polygamous couples face in terms of emotional, spiritual, and mental health.

Keywords: Polygamy, Muslim Polygamy, and Malaysian Muslim.

Background of Study

Marriage is a Sunnah in Islam because it forms a family. In reality, everyone desires a happy family. Happiness is dependent on the husband and wife. A couple who obeys God's commands and meets all conditions and laws will create an atmosphere of harmony and love, and mutual respect will give birth to a happy family until the end of life. According to Islam, people look for a partner to marry. This is evident in some of the Qur'anic verse's arguments concerning marriage. One of them is in Surah Ar-Ruum, (30):21, as shown below:

And of His Signs is that He has created mates for you from your own kind that you may find peace in them and He has set between you love and mercy (30:2).

Marriage is also important as marriage is mentioned in surah Adz Dzariyaat (51:4), “And of all things We created two mates; perhaps you will remember” (51:49). The same reminder about humans is created in pairs also appeared in Yasin, “Glory be to the One Who created all ‘things in’ pairs— ‘be it’ what the earth produces, their genders, or what they do not know!” (36:36). These Quranic verses explained that marriage is important and that everyone is created in pairs. Furthermore, this surah was associated with Allah's authority and marriage.

This call for marriage can also be seen in the Muslim community's local culture, which often encourages marriage, especially at a young age. Those who do not marry after a certain age are often perceived as having problems or not receiving attention from society. This is often more noticeable in older women who are still unmarried than in men. In fact, this group is given a special title, *andartu*, which means "old virgin." (Yusof & Mustafar, 2019). However, some men are interested in having more than one wife, which is known as polygamy. Polygamy is an Islamic law that is based on the Prophet's Sunnah. It must be conditional from a legal standpoint. Terms can be reasonable and affordable. To be fair, it is not an easy task. It sometimes involves a type of pressure in the life of the wife or towards the husband that necessitates a great deal of patience.

Polygamy is the practice of a man marrying more than one woman. Polygamy is frequently rejected by women, despite the fact that a small percentage accepts it (Ardhian et al, 2015 in Rohman, 2020). Marriage in Islam is typically monogamous, with one wife. Nonetheless, polygamy or marriage to more than one wife is legal. However, this polygamous marriage has its own set of rules, which anyone who wishes to be polygamous must understand and follow (Mustofa, 2018).

Polygamous marriage elicits a variety of reactions, both positive and negative. This is because polygamous marriages, particularly unregistered ones, have a negative psychological impact on old wives and children, causing the children to feel insecure and ashamed (Azizah, 2020). Unauthorized polygamous marriages harm the family and, in fact, have a significant impact on legal provisions. This is due to the polygamist's wife's oppressive nature (Shah & Meerangani, 2021). These are the factors that

lead many women to oppose polygamy, believing that it will destroy the family's happiness. This is because, in their opinion, the husband cannot be just to all of his wives (Hamid & Abdullah, 2019).

The purpose of this research was to investigate the level of knowledge and practice of polygamy among polygamous couples in Malaysia. This is rarely done because gathering data from willing polygamous practitioners is difficult. Polygamy should be measured by the level of knowledge about polygamous procedures, allowing the application of appropriate polygamous practices that would please Allah SWT. Polygamy among couples, particularly in Malaysia, must contend with the objections of the first wife, the first wife's family, as well as the husband's family, and relatives of the husband's family who wish to be polygamous. If a polygamous couple's level of knowledge and practice of polygamy is low, the marriage with the first wife will be destroyed. As a result, the level of knowledge and practice of polygamous couples (PP) in Malaysia plays an important role in achieving domestic harmony. Polygamous husbands who are successful in polygamy provide the concept of external and internal sustenance well.

Statement of Problems

The problem of marital failure among Malaysian Muslim families, particularly among Malays, is caused by a number of factors. Among the usual reasons are witchcraft, the husband's irresponsible behavior, moral issues, and domestic violence. Among the other issues is the husband's addiction to alcohol or drugs. Husbands who practice polygamy are also associated with household crises, which is most likely due to a lack of knowledge and knowledge about polygamy. Polygamists, in general, are insensitive or, whether intentionally or unintentionally, do not follow the guidelines established by Al Quran and Al Hadith as provided in Islamic family law.

Muslims are encouraged to marry. This can be seen in several surahs discussed in the previous section. Despite this, Allah SWT still promises retribution to those who are careless and irresponsible. This can be seen in marriage responsibility and polygamy. A husband's responsibility does not end with providing sex to his wife. He would also be accountable for carrying out the duties and another right for his wife. In Islam, the rights of

husband and wife are absolute because Allah bestowed them and cannot be challenged. This is distinct from rights established by humans. This is also evidence that marriage is extremely important in Islam (Bakar & Abdullah, 2008).

Women's rights are highly valued in Islam, particularly their rights as wives. Polygamists are also protected and have their own set of responsibilities. This is evident in the third verse of Surah an-Nisa, which states that a man should marry in accordance with his abilities. They are considered to be hurting their wives if they marry beyond their means, such as marrying more than two when they could not afford it. Polygamy was legalized in order to provide equality to polygamists and keep them from being exploited or victimized (Ichsan, 2018).

Polygamy is a practice in Malaysia that is often stigmatized and distorted by some members of the Muslim community. This is due to a flaw introduced by the polygamists themselves. Polygamists are typically associated with having a high sex drive, being abusive to their wives and husbands, and causing marital failure (Mokhtar et al., 2020). Based on this situation, a study like this one is needed to ensure that understanding and knowledge about polygamy, whether right or wrong, is identified. As a result of this identification, a guide module will be created to assist in the education of those who wish to be polygamous.

Research Objectives and Questions

This study has two objectives:

- (i) Identify the practice of polygamous families in Malaysia.
- (ii) Analysing the level of knowledge and practice of polygamy among polygamous couples.

For the purpose of achieving the objectives, several questions had been set up the researcher. These questions are:

- (i) What is the practice of polygamous families in Malaysia?
- (ii) What is the level of knowledge and practice of polygamy among polygamous couples?

Methodology

Sampling Methods

This study employs a population of polygamous couples (PP) comprised of men and women aged 30-50 who have engaged in polygamy. The process of finding a polygamous partner employs chain referral (Chain referral), which is referred to as accidental or snowball sampling by half of the researchers (Goodman, 1961; Parker, Scoot & Geddes, 2019; Etikan, Alkassim, Abubakar, 2016). Snowball sampling also allows for the identification and isolation of a sample's personal network. This is frequently appropriate for use in establishing a personal connection between respondents, allowing the researcher to study their behavior and attitudes (Audemard, 2021). The polygamous couples' method is introduced by a friend, who then introduces them to other polygamous couples, and so on, in accordance with the goals of the study.

Methods of Collection and Analysis of Study Findings

Quantitative Method

A set of structured survey questions is used as the quantitative method's instrument. Survey methods, or even surveys used in the study to collect data from PP (polygamous couples), are less difficult to implement than other methods (Mohd. Majid Konting, 1998). A survey, according to Zaiton Sharif (in the study of Gay & Airasian, 2003), is a study that is carried out to identify and describe the situation of the subject matter being studied by collecting data from selected respondents over a set period of time. Survey research allows data to be taken and collected from a large population and on a large scale for research findings. The obtained data is calculated using percentages and can be displayed in the form of graphs for easy viewing.

Result

Demographic

Number/Order of wives	1	2	3	4
Male	0	33	10	1
Female	9	10	2	1

Table 1 Number/Order of Wives

The number of male respondents outnumbered the number of female respondents in this survey. There are 44 male respondents (66.7%), compared to only 22 female respondents (33.3%). Based on the survey, we could see that the majority of the male respondents (33 individuals) are married to two wives. Ten of them are married to three wives, while only one person is married to four wives. Nine of the female respondents are the first wife, 10 female respondents are the second wife, two of them are the third wife, and only one is a fourth wife.

Ages	Frequency	Percent
30 – 39	5	7.6
40 – 49	15	22.7
50 – 59	28	42.4
60 – 69	16	24.2
>70	2	3

Table 2 Respondents' age group

Based on table 2, the majority of the respondents, 28 individuals or 42.4%, are in the age group of 50-59 years old. The lowest age group for the respondents is 70 and above, which only consisted of two respondents and represent 3% of the total respondents.

Ages	Frequency	Percent
20 – 29	35	53.0
30 – 39	20	30.3
40 – 49	8	12.1
50 – 59	3	4.5

Table 3 Respondents' partners' age group

Based on table 3, the majority of the respondents have a partnership between the age of 20 to 29 years old. They are 35 individuals or 53% of the respondents' total number. The lowest age group for the respondents' partners is 50 – 59 years old, which only consisted of three respondents and represent 4.5% of the total respondents.

Respondents Race	Frequency	Percent
Malay	49	74.2
Chinese	3	4.5

Indian	2	3.0
Others	12	18.2

Table 4 Respondents' Race

Based on table 4, the majority of the respondents are Malays. They are 49 individuals or 74.2%. The lowest number of respondents could be seen are from the Indian background. They are a total of two persons and represent 3.0% of the respondents.

Period	Frequency	Percent
<10	51	59.1
11 – 20	2	3.0
21 – 30	3	4.5
31 – 40	4	6.1
>41	6	9.1

Table 5 Polygamy period

Based on table 5, the majority of the respondents have been in polygamy for less than 10 years, they are representing 51 individuals of the whole respondents or 59.1%. However, only two respondents had been polygamists from 11 to 20 years old, or 3.0%.

Sectors	Frequency	Percent
Government	14	21.2
Private	11	15.2
Self-employed	34	51.5
Retiree	1	1.5
Others	4	6.1

Table 6 Working Sectors

Based on table 6, the majority of the respondents that have been in polygamy are self-employed. They are 34 individuals or 51.5%. There is only one respondent who is a retiree. He represents 1.5% of the total respondents.

Income Group	Frequency	Percent
0 – 1000	3	4.5
1001 – 3000	14	21.2
3001 – 5000	12	18.2

5001 – 10000	20	30.3
>10000	14	21.2
Others	3	4.5

Table 7 Respondents' Income

Based on table 7, the majority of the respondents have an income of around 50001 – 10000. They are 20 individuals or 30.3% of the respondents. There are two categories that share the number of respondents. There are three respondents each for income groups of 0 – 1000 and >100000. They respectively represent 4.5% of the total respondents.

Academic Background	Frequency	Percent
PhD	3	4.5
Master Degree	3	4.5
Degree	25	37.9
Diploma	29	43.9
Others	6	9.1

Table 8 Respondents' Academic Background

Based on table 8, the majority of the respondents have a diploma. They are 29 individuals or 43.9% of the respondents. There are two categories that share the number of respondents. There are three respondents each for the academic background group of Ph.D. and Master's Degrees. They respectively represent 4.5% of the total respondents.

Polygamy Club Member	Frequency	Percent
Yes	27	40.9
No	39	59.1

Table 9 Participation in Polygamy Club

Based on table 9, the majority of the respondents are not participating in polygamy clubs. They are 59.1% or 39 individuals. The rest of the 27 respondents are not participants in the polygamy club. They represent 40.9% of the respondents.

No. of Children	Frequency	Percent
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1	14	21.2
4	12	18.2
>6	32	48.5
None	8	12.1

Table 10 Number of respondents' children

Based on table 10, the majority of the respondents have more than six children. There are a total of 32 respondents or 48.5% who are parents to more than six children. The number of respondents without any children is the lowest. Only eight or 12.1% of respondents are in this category.

Partner Race	Frequency	Percent
Malay	58	87.9
Indian	2	3.0
Others	6	9.1

Table 11 Respondents' Partner Race

Based on table 11, the majority of the respondents are married to Malays partners. They are 58 individuals or 87.9%. The lowest number of respondents could be seen marrying an Indian partner. They are a total of two persons and represent 3.0% of the respondents.

Marriage Condition	Frequency	Percent
Public	35	53.0
Private	27	40.9
Others	4	6.1

Table 12 Respondents' Marriage Conditions

Based on table 12, the majority of the respondents are publicly polygamists. They are 35 individuals or 53.0%. The lowest number of respondents could be seen being in other conditions. They are a total of four persons and represent 6.1% of the respondents.

Marriage Location	Frequency	Percent
Malaysia	48	72.7
Overseas	18	27.3

Table 13 Respondents' Marriage Location

Based on table 13, the majority of the respondents were married in Malaysia. They are 48 individuals or 72.7%. The lowest number of respondents could be seen being married in other countries. They are a total of 18 persons and representing 27.3% of the respondents.

Live Together	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	4.5
No	63	95.5

Table 14 Does the Respondents Live Together?

Based on table 14, the majority of the respondents did not live together with their partners. They are 63 individuals or 95.5%. Only a small number of respondents are living with their partners. They are a total of three persons and represent 4.5% of the respondents.

Polygamy Method	Frequency	Percent
Agency	8	12.1
Self-manage	56	84.8
Syndicate	2	3.0

Table 15 Respondents' Polygamy Method

Based on table 15, the majority of the respondents self-manage their polygamy marriage. They are 56 individuals or 84.8%. Eight or 12.1% of the respondents used agency services for their polygamy processes while only two people or 3% of the respondents relied on the syndicate to complete the process of marriage.

Reason for Polygamy	Frequency	Percent
Avoid adultery/immorality	36	54.5
First wife's request	2	3.0
Spouse does not pay attention	1	1.5
Survival	10	15.2
Want offspring	8	12.1
Religious reasoning	9	13.5

Table 16 Respondents' Reason for Polygamy

Based on table 16, the majority of the respondents involve with polygamy since they wanted to avoid adultery or immorality. They are 36 individuals

or 54.5%. Only a respondent that involves with polygamy due to the fact that the wife is not giving attention.

Descriptive Analysis

Knowledge Level and Practice of Polygamy

Statement	Mean	S.D	Score
I read books about polygamy	2.29	1.21	Low
I learned to add knowledge of polygamy from teachers	2.36	1.29	Low
I emulate my father and uncle who is polygamous	2.20	.827	Low
I followed a polygamy course on social media	2.48	.561	Low
I followed the organized polygamy course religious Department	3.20	.898	Moderate
I am polygamous because of the influence peers who are polygamous	2.12	.621	Low
I am polygamous because of my love	2.52	.932	Moderate

Mean Score Guide: Weak: <1.75; Low: 1.76 – 2.51; Moderate: 2.52 – 3.25; High: >3.26

Table 17 Knowledge Level and Practice of Polygamy

Based on table 17, the majority of the statement related to the knowledge level and practice of polygamy shows that the respondents still have a lower understanding of the knowledge level and practice of polygamy. Only statements such as “I followed the organized polygamy course religious Department” (3.20) and “I am polygamous because of love” (2.52) scored moderately in the survey.

Level Of Readiness to Be Polygamy (When You Want to Be Polygamy)

Statement	Mean	S.D	Level of Readiness
Mental Aspect	1.71	.873	Low
Physical Aspect	2.18	.893	Moderate
Monetary Aspect	2.02	.832	Moderate

Property Aspect	2.02	.832	Moderate
Close Family Support	2.00	.823	Moderate
Peers Support	2.02	.823	Moderate

Guide: Weak: <1.75; Moderate: 1.76 – 2.50; High: >2.51

Table 18 Level of Readiness to Be Polygamy (When You Want to Be Polygamy)

Based on table 18, we could see that the readiness of the respondents to polygamy is moderately affected by physical, monetary, property, close family support, and their peers' support. Only mental readiness is low.

Internal Challenges Affecting Polygamous Couples

Statement (Emotional)	Frequency	Percent
Anger Management	5	7.6
Holding grudge against a partner	14	21.2
Jealous with partner's wife	8	12.1
Scared of polygamy realities	9	13.6
Ashamed of polygamy status	7	10.6
Happy with polygamy	15	22.7
Feeling appreciated in a polygamous relationship	8	12.1
Statement (Spiritual)		
Polygamous lives create problems	24	36.4
Adequate outward support	22	33.3
Sufficient inner sustenance	19	28.8
Sufficient time allowance	1	1.5
Pleased with God's Provision	0	0
Statement (Mentality)		
Equal	39	59.1
Different	27	40.9

Table 19 Internal Challenges Affecting Polygamous Couples

Based on table 19, we could see that there are varied answers on the internal challenges affecting polygamous couples in terms of emotional, spiritual,

and mental. Based on the table, two of the main internal challenges affecting polygamous couples are the emotional impact of holding a grudge against not partner (21.2%) and being happy with polygamy (22.7%). The internal challenge that is not seen as a big issue among the respondents is their struggle with anger management (7.6%). From the aspect of spiritual internal challenges, the respondents had felt that “polygamous lives create problems” (36.4%) and they also got “adequate outward support” (33.3%). The spiritual internal challenges that did not affect the respondents majorly are “Sufficient time allowance” (1.5%) and “Pleased with God’s Provision” (0%). From the aspect of internal challenges in terms of mentality, the respondents had felt that they are “equal” to their partner (59.1%) rather than “different” (40.9%).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the level of knowledge and practice of polygamy among polygamous couples in Malaysia. A survey was conducted in this regard.

Based on the survey, we could understand the practice of polygamous families in Malaysia. From the survey, it could be seen that the majority of the male respondents (33 individuals) are married to two wives. Ten of them are married to three wives, while only one person is married to four wives. Nine of the female respondents are the first wife, 10 female respondents are the second wife, two of them are the third wife, and only one is a fourth wife. The majority of the respondents, 28 individuals or 42.4%, are in the age group of 50-59 years old. The majority of the respondents have a partnership between the age of 20 to 29 years old. The majority of the respondents are Malays. The majority of the respondents have been in polygamy for less than 10 years. The majority of the respondents that have been in polygamy are self-employed. The majority of the respondents have income around 50001 – 10000. The majority of the respondents have a diploma. The majority of the respondents are not participating in the polygamy club. The majority of the respondents have more than six children. The majority of the respondents are married to Malays partners. The majority of the respondents are publicly polygamists. The majority of the respondents were married in Malaysia. The majority of the respondents did

not live together with their partners. The majority of the respondents self-manage their polygamy marriage. The majority of the respondents involve with polygamy since they wanted to avoid adultery or immorality.

According to this, the practice of polygamy in Malaysia typically involves a Malay male who has a diploma and runs his own business. They would usually engage in polygamy by marrying two wives, most likely Malay women. The marriage would take place in public rather than in private in Malaysia. They would not, however, stay with their partners. When asked why they were polygamous, they usually said they wanted to avoid adultery.

In terms of the level of knowledge and practice of polygamy among polygamous couples, the survey found that the majority of the statement related to the knowledge level and practice of polygamy shows that the respondents still have a lower understanding of the knowledge level and practice of polygamy. Only statements such as “I followed the organized polygamy course religious Department” (3.20) and “I am polygamous because of love” (2.52) scored moderately in the survey. Besides that, the readiness of the respondents to polygamy is moderately affected by the physical, monetary, property, close family support, and their peers’ support. Only mental readiness is low.

The survey also found that there are varied answers on the internal challenges affecting polygamous couples in terms of emotional, spiritual, and mental. Based on the table, two of the main internal challenges affecting polygamous couples is the emotional impact of holding grudge against a partner (21.2%) and being happy with polygamy (22.7%). The internal challenge that is not seen as a big issue among the respondents is their struggle with anger management (7.6%). From the aspect of spiritual internal challenges, the respondents had felt that “polygamous lives create problems” (36.4%) and they also got “adequate outward support” (33.3%). The spiritual internal challenges that did not affect the respondents majorly are “Sufficient time allowance” (1.5%) and “Pleased with God’s Provision” (0%). From the aspect of internal challenges in terms of mentality, the respondents had felt that they are “equal” to their partner (59.1%) rather than “different” (40.9%).

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