



RESEARCH PAPER

**Phenomenological Exploration of the Causes of Polygamous Marriages
in District Battagram of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to conduct an empirical investigation of contributing factors of polygamous marriages in District Battagram of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. Qualitative research paradigm was used wherein data was collected from 32 male and female participants having polygamous marriage. The study findings, which were based on a thematic analysis of the data gathered, indicate that polygamous marriages are practiced situations such infertility, love marriages, family pressure, and financial considerations. Numerous participants observed that disputes and strife inside the household, especially between co-wives, frequently resulted in the choice to remarry. Tension was frequently caused by arguments over the husband's resources, affection, and attention. However, sharing household chores was noticed as a possible advantage of polygamous marriages by a few respondents. Respondents reported a decrease in personal workload and a sense of shared responsibility in homes with many spouses who assisted with daily household chores. It is suggested that the government make laws permitting polygamy in specific situations. These laws ought to make sure that polygamous unions are controlled to safeguard the rights of all parties, especially spouses and children. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to educate society on the intricacies and consequences of polygamous marriages to lessen the detrimental effects of polygamy.

KEYWORDS Disputes, Family, Marriage, Polygamy, Responsibility

Introduction

Polygamy is a marital pattern in which an individual has multiple marital partners at the exact same period. The relationship of a single man to multiple partners is a particularly prevalent type of polygamy. Polygamous connections are classified into three main categories: polygyny, polyandry, and polygynandry. Polygyny is commonly described as a male partner engaging multiple wives at one time. Polyandry happens when a woman marries two or many spouses; Polygynandry is a type of collective marriage whereby a number of wives are wedded to more than one man at the same time (Ibiloglu et al., 2018). Polygamy, according to many anthropologists, was common in the history of humanity prior to declining in the contemporary age. Patricia Dixon, an instructor of family and marital studies at Georgia State University, explains that over the ages, during history, prior to the European global supremacy, polygyny was practiced by more than 80% of the world's cultural groups, especially in the West. According to Dixon, polygyny has historically been observed in select categories of nations in the West. Nevertheless, she claims that's why polygyny occurs behind the cover of monogamy, this results in an "exceptional" version of the activity.

This unusual sort of polygyny, for instance, was used at the beginning of European history by Greek and Roman cultures. Polygyny also took place in America in the era of slavery, which harmed African American women and their loved ones (Qurtuby, 2022). Researchers have paid close attention to the practice of polyandry in India where it has been linked to population reduction in general. Polyandry has been practiced for millennia in

Tibet and the Himalayan countries of India, Nepal, and Bhutan. In this region, a polyandry marriage is a marriage whereby a woman marries more than one brother. The citizens of this area, as many polyandry communities, do not restrict themselves entirely to polyandry. Polyandry is most well-known in Africa within the indigenous people of the Jos Plateau and the Lele of the Kasai in western Congo. These peoples, nevertheless engage another kind of polyandry. The Lele's polyandry is unusual, possibly peculiar to their locality. The type of polyandry they practice promotes local unity. Polyandry has long been recognized within various Native North American cultures. The Shoshoni of Nevada were a specific nation who practiced this kind of marriage style. They belong to a community of hunters and gatherers that was known to engage in polyandry relationships (Thobejane, 2014).

Literature Review

The causes for polygamous marriage are often numerous, different and multifaceted between and among societies. These causes may include some religious groups, cultural practices, and social concepts of family members, agrarian and demographic demands. However, attitudes about polygamous relationships differ widely among nations and household members, between various ages and gender, and additionally across and within those who actually practice it (Shepard, 2013).

Polygamy was discovered as an element and practice, particularly present in Muslims, when colonial missionary data were examined. Polygamy is permitted and promoted in Islam given specific conditions; in polygamous unions, fairness and equality among the partners must be provided. Polygyny, according to Sayyid Ahmad, is merely 'justified' by 'true necessity'. 'Divorce is regarded as forbidden in Muslim patriarch family systems, which is reason the first spouse typically permits her partner to marry again rather than divorce (Wardatun & Smith, 2020). Polygamous relationships are accepted by society and supported, especially in circumstances of fertility problems or a woman's inability to give birth to a male child. According to Al-Krenawi's research, one of the key causes for marriages with several wives was a lack of resources desire to increase number of male children. Since divorce is strongly discouraged and has been considered a social stigma for women, therefore, if a male partner is not happy with his first wife; his second marriage is socially justified and preferred over divorce It has been discovered that barren women are more likely to be in polygamous relationships than reproductive women Polygamy is viewed as a strategy for ensuring a family's economic stability and safety in several areas. The extra children provided by this marriage practice are treasured for their labor, emotional support, and potential to offer stability for their elders in old age. The greater a family's number of kids the better financially successful a family can be (Elbedour et al., 2002). As far as we understand, the causes for polygamy vary by society and can be quite diverse. One of the key motives for polygamous homes (PH) was to have more sons. (Ibiloglu et al., 2018). While Pakistan is an Islamic country where polygamous marriage is legal, the most common causes reported in the present research by many fellow wives, including fertility issues, a woman becoming a mother solely through female offspring, love marriage, or pressure from family members based on the teachings of religion. Fertility issue makes up one of the grounds for divorce in Pakistani society. Exploring other factors like love marriage and family pressure, and religious reference are also common factors. The average duration of polygamy was about 11 years so most of the co wives had been accepted co-wives and engaged themselves in several activities and got comfort considering it fate role, religious permission, and compromise for the sake of their children's future rather than divorce (Naseer et al., 2021).

Polygamy is wrong because it causes a lot of harm to the family. One common result of polygamy is that it causes discord among wives (Macabangon, 2022). Conflict between wives in polygamous marriages typically stems from family management. Family management is challenging, particularly when it comes to organizing and delegating tasks.

However, it is challenging for a husband to treat his wives fairly. Children in polygamous families may also come to despise their parents (Sultana & Lazim, 2010).

Some people consider polygamy to be oppressive, particularly feminists who see it as "the abuse of women" (Iturriaga & Saguy, 2017). The researchers refer to the cultural, economic, and psychological aspects of polygamy and assert that there is very little equality between the wives. They further explain that, if it is feasible, there will always be feelings of betrayal, jealousy, and resentment among spouses in polygamous relationships (Hendricks, 2004).

Richardson (1987) asserts that polygamy can be seen negatively because it leads to emotional turmoil for both wives. The first wife experiences feelings of being replaced, cheated, and jealous, while the other wife endures the anguish of having to share a lover. One could argue that polygamy discriminates against first wives based on their lack of choice. While the first wife is forced to stay in the marriage against her will, the subsequent wives are free to join the polygamous union knowing everything about the first and previous wives. Socioeconomic considerations like her financial reliance on her spouse could compel her to remain in the marriage (Ahmed, Muzaffar, Javaid, & Fatima, 2015; Sooliman, 2021).

Negative aspects of polygamy include lack of trust, jealousy, competition and opposition, husband partiality, and other psychological disorders. Children in families where there are multiple wives are victims of situations beyond their control. Children are traumatized by this troublesome and contradictory family issue, which impacts their academic performance and social outlook on life (Malik et al., 2018). Children in polygamous marriages may experience maltreatment, psychological distress, low self-esteem, and conflict within the marriage. Due to disputes, anxiety, discrimination by the polygamous father, and jealousy, these students may suffer emotional harm from their regular marital disputes and stress. These kids often have unfulfilled feelings towards their families (Chikwature & Oyedele, 2016)

Sometimes a woman has a chronic illness (such as an infectious disease) that prevents her from getting pregnant. A man in this situation has two options. In the first scenario, the first wife loses everything since he must divorce her and marry the second. In a different situation, a man must marry a second woman and keep his first. The spouse is responsible for providing for all the wives' needs, including food, clothing, and medical attention. And the husband and the wife both win in this situation (Muzaffar, Yaseen & Ahmad, 2018; Khan & Zahoor, 2015).

When a husband learns that his wife is not fertile despite his natural desire to have children and inherit property, he will either must live without being a father or divorce his unproductive spouse and remarry someone who is fertile. Neither of these options is ideal, though, as polygamy would allow the couple to continue living together while maintaining their marital status without denying the man his right to procreate or the woman hers as a wife (Prior, 2020).

Material and Methods

In District Battagram, where polygamous marriages are prevalent, this study sought to investigate the contributing factors to polygamous marriages. Due to the nature of the study, a thorough investigation of the social and cultural factors, underlying causes of polygamous marriages was conducted using the qualitative research paradigm. A phenomenological technique was used to record the study participants' actual experiences with polygamous marriages, including their causes and consequences. This method focused on the study and understanding of people's lived experiences, which makes it easier to analyse in-depth each person's unique perspectives and interpretations of the phenomenon.

Using a phenomenological methodology, the investigator captured the fundamental elements of the participants' experiences (Creswell et al., 2007).

District Battagram has been chosen as the study's location. Five villages including Landi Numan Abad, Cham Saidan, Gijbori, Trand, and Dedal were purposefully chosen in order to gather data from potential respondents. This was done because a high percentage of polygamous marriages occurs in these villages, which makes it possible for the researcher to gather information from a sufficient number of respondents. A total of 32 male and female research participants were interviewed utilizing semi-structured interviews (SSIs) while adhering to data saturation criteria. The snowball sampling technique was used.

Data was gathered from individuals who were part of polygamous marriages, both male and female. The female respondents were gathered through conversations with female undergraduate students in the relevant villages and Lady Health Workers (LHVs) in the district; the male respondents were surveyed by the investigator directly. The researcher provided the LHV and students with instructions on data collecting tools prior to beginning data collection. Additionally, the researcher personally collected data from a few female relatives who were engaged in polygamous marriages. Snowball sampling was used by the researcher to collect data from the subjects. Data submission was requested of respondents who were older than eighteen (18).

Results and Discussion

Field notes were used to record the gathered data in the native language. Every interview was recorded and kept in a separate file that was reviewed several times in order to become acquainted with the information gathered and spot recurring themes. The Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step approach was used to analyse the data. Themes were identified from the transcriptions of each interview.

Themes indicating the contributing factors and consequences were being derived from the data based on the transcripts of the interviews. The researcher used in-depth interviews and narratives to shed light on the various aspects of family life that are impacted by several marriages. Following are the themes of Study.

Infertility/ Health Issue

The practice of having numerous marriages at the same time, or polygamy, has been discussed for several reasons, including circumstances including illness and infertility. In certain cultures, polygamy is viewed as a possible means of allowing a spouse who is infertile to conceive within the marriage. Furthermore, polygamy might be considered a way to guarantee the continuation of a family line in the event of illnesses that could impair fertility. respondent narrated

"I was infertile, and an infertility expert verified it, therefore I made the decision to accept second wife for my husband. When it was clearly confirmed that there is no possibility to be pregnant. I showed proactive attitude to the particular circumstances surrounding my family relationships by actively seeking a suitable spouse for my husband, without any external pressure from my husband or in laws."

The above narratives of a female study participant indicate that her inability to conceive a baby was a major cause of her agreement to the husband's decision of second marriage. The narrative indicates that women express sympathy with regard to the second marriage of their husband when they are infertile. This is treated as a medical complexity that put both husband and wife as a consequence they decide to marry another woman to have babies. Although, polygamous marriage is considered as a social strain on women whose husband brings another wife but under these circumstances, polygamy is socially

accepted and culturally desirable. This flexible approach on the part of women is generally appreciated in the community because it is considered as a positive and friendly step towards resolving the challenge of reproductive complexity.

Family Pressure

Another crucial factor that leads towards polygamous marriage is the financial dependencies of women that compelled them to have a life partner who can bear and manage the expenses. Marrying with a financially sound man is often taken by women and girls to secure their social and economic status in the future. In this regard, poor financial status of women pushes them to accept a person already having a wife and children. This social pressure usually indebted in the societal norms and familial expectations which are more forceful to take the decision of marrying with a person having children and a life partner.

Societal and family pressure compelled me to marry an older man who was previously married and had two kids. I took this decision because I found myself in a financially difficult position and there was no hope of getting myself out of that condition. There was no other option for me than marrying a person having a wife and kids. Initially, I resisted being married to such a person, but ultimately I had to decide between the two undesirable options. Under the family pressure, I had to take this decision. This decision reflects that I had made a major compromise by accepting and living in a polygamous life.

Economic Considerations

Family financial conditions play a pivotal role in women marrying to a man having a wife and children. It is because of the financial consideration of a woman and mounting social pressure from other family members. Women in poor families had no social security particularly when she perceived the absence of parental support and social security in the future. Family and parental decision is binding in such cases even if it goes against the personal choices of girls or women. Within the framework of family systems, this complicated dynamic demonstrates the interaction between individual autonomy and societal expectations.

My lifestyle was improved by marrying the hospital owner and taking advantage of his stable income. As a nurse working for his organization, finances played a role in the choice. My entrance into polygamy was driven by the attraction of better financial security and my desire for a stable future. Managing several relationships in this setting was never easy, but the financial base gave me a sense of security and shaped my life as well as the complex dynamics of polygamous marriages.

Most women in polygamous societies are unemployed and thus are economically dependent on their husbands or families. With few other options for money, they feel pressured to marry into a polygamous household as a means of meeting their financial demands since they are unable to support themselves via employment. Another respondent added:

I married a wealthy person because I was facing financial problems and thought that our union would raise my lower-class family's standard of living. My decision forced me to live a polygamous lifestyle while deliberately pursuing financial security. But managing several relationships inside this structure proved to be a constant source of difficulty. As I worked to provide for my family and manage the challenges of polygamy, financial concerns become increasingly important, influencing both my personal decisions and the complicated dynamics of my life.

Women who are polygamous have both emotional and financial consequences. According to the study, many men from lower- and middle-class backgrounds choose second

spouses to support their polygamous families financially. Muslim husbands are expected to provide for their families, a duty that women help to fulfill but which polygamous husbands sometimes neglect. In certain cases, polygamy is practiced primarily because of economic stability.

Desire for Male Child

A person's status and authority are increased when they marry many women since this increases the probability of producing multiple sons. Consequently, despite the financial strain of sustaining several children, polygamy and big families are still seen as symbols of status and authority in society. Respondent said:

I sincerely hope for a boy to continue our family name because my family consists solely of girls. Many generations have passed down this yearning. I'm starting to consider taking multiple wives into consideration to live up to society's expectations. Combining the traditional methods with the modern obstacles is akin to a powerful motivation. To attempt and achieve this deep-seated yearning for a son and to maintain our family traditions, I'm thinking of becoming polygamous. I must make decisions in this intricate circumstance where the past and present collide.

One feature of polygamy that has persisted throughout history in many different cultures is the desire for a male kid to carry on a family legacy. Polygamy can result from the urge to have a male heir in communities where family tradition and lineage are highly valued.

Sharing Household Chores

The division of domestic duties among members of a polygamous family might change depending on their dynamics and agreements. Harmony is mostly dependent on mutual understanding and effective communication. While some families may choose a more flexible method depending on each member's availability and strengths, one respondent narrated:

"I have been living in a joint family and practicing polygamy for a long time, but I am satisfied with both of my wives and children, because sharing household chores in a polygamous setting has a profound impact on my emotional well-being. As a husband I actively participates in daily tasks, it fosters a sense of connection and emotional support among my wives. My co-wives living very friendly. Their shared responsibilities create an environment where everyone feels valued and understood, leading to increased emotional resilience and a stronger bond within the polygamous family".

Chore sharing encourages cooperation and mutual support, which in polygamous homes promotes emotional wellbeing. An equal division of duties promotes unity and lowers the likelihood of conflict. A peaceful and encouraging atmosphere is created inside the polygamous setting by the cooperative approach, which strengthens the emotional ties between family members. Another male respondent said:

My quality of life has improved with marrying a second woman. Personally, I got the support and friendliness from my wives as they both provide strength to my family. Each wife contributes to the strength and social harmony of my family and it has expanded the social circle of my relatives and friends. The social wellbeing of my family enhanced than earlier and I consider myself emotionally more stable than before. We have good marital communication which has tuned my home as a happy and entertaining place. I can say that polygamy has improved my family bond and helped a lot in bringing all of us together.

It is evident from the above narrative that polygamous marriage may also lead towards broadening social ties with other family members. Not only this enhances the social circle but also increases the chances of being strengthening and improving the social ties within the family. The narrative suggests that man with two wives have enhances his emotional strength by social support he is receiving from his wives. In this case, every partner adds different viewpoints and abilities, creating a rich fabric of friendship and support.

Family Disputes

Beside the positive outcome, another dimension of polygamous alliance is that of marital disruption, domestic disputes, competition, hatred and jealousy among wives. These disagreements are likely to occur on the basis of financial distribution of family assets, inheritance, parenting love spousal care, and interpersonal ties. These are the issues confronted by every member of polygamous alliance wherein husband is always on the central point. Considering these social difficulties, the congenial family circle witnesses' social disruption and reduced marital satisfaction.

The biggest issue with regard to polygamous marriage is the distribution of family assets, property and ownership. The distribution of assets among wives and their children becomes a complicated process resulting in family disputes, hatred and jealousy. It often becomes difficult in polygamous marriage that who shall get what and how much? It often become a big challenge for family, husband and relatives to resolve these intricacies associated with polygamous marriages.

Regarding the complex nature of the issues associated with polygamy, another respondent has narrated that:

Many spouses result in many problems. Large number of children with step moms, sons and daughters form a complicated web of social ties. It resembles sailing the rough surf. Things get difficult because of the way our family handles several weddings. I frequently find myself engaged in these arguments and battles as I attempt to deal with a variety of issues brought on by our family structure. I must learn how to handle that since it's not easy.

Families experiencing polygamy frequently experience financial strain, jealousy, and conflicts between members. Relationships and emotional health may be impacted by this complex interplay, which highlights the value of honest dialogue and comprehension, researchers and academics are becoming more interested in polygamy due to its popularity and the states' ambiguous laws on polygamous marriages. Unfortunately, a lot of instability in polygamous families eventually results in violence and disputes between family members

The present study has discovered various significant characteristics that are associated with polygamous marriages in District Battagram. These factors include love marriages, infertility, economic reasons, the desire for a male offspring, family conflicts, and the division of household tasks. The themes that the respondents described are indicative of the social and personal factors that propel polygamy in this area. This section will explore these findings considering the body of research already in existence as well as the larger background of marriage and family in Pakistani society.

The foremost factors behind the practice of polygamy in the context of District Battagram is infertility especially on the part of first wife. This has been considered as the first driving force that led towards polygamous marriage. Interviews accounts of many study participants reveal that inability on the part of first wife to conceive a baby is the most significant factors involving in the decision of second marriage by the husband. It is further revealed that this decision is often unanimously taken by the wife and husband as the first

wife consider her future uncertain and instable. Our findings in this regard is in line with the findings of Khan and Zahoor (2015) who have reported that the triggering point in polygamous alliance is that of infertility especially on the part of woman. Research has consistently reported that infertility and the societal demand for having children may compel the couples to decide regarding polygamous marriage. In the context of District Battagram, the couples are expected to have a baby and the inability for having a child is considered as social stigma for the couples, wife, husband and entire family. Social network, family ties builds more societal pressures surrounding the couples having no children as a consequence they decide to choose polygamous alliance.

Another common factor that propels polygamous marriages in District Battagram is the desire for a male child. Respondents emphasized how crucial male heirs are to upholding the family name and giving elderly parents financial support. This cultural expectation is consistent with research from similar patriarchal society and other parts of Pakistan, where sons are highly esteemed (Dissa, 2016). If the first marriage fails to produce male children, the urge to have a male kid may force families into polygamous relationships. In South Asian communities, where sons are viewed as a source of social and financial security, this desire reflects deeply ingrained gender preferences.

Family conflicts were often mentioned as a cause of polygamous marriages as well as one of their outcomes. Numerous participants observed that disputes and strife inside the household, especially between co-wives, frequently resulted in the choice to remarry. Tension was frequently caused by arguments over the husband's resources, affection, and attention. This result is consistent with other research highlighting the psychological stress and interpersonal strife that polygamous families always bring (Phillips, 2001). The entrance of a second or third wife, frequently made preexisting arguments worse and worsened family dynamics. According to the literature, polygamous relationships are more likely to end in divorce, especially when there are resource constraints.

However, sharing household chores was mentioned as a possible advantage of polygamous marriages by a few respondents. Respondents reported a decrease in personal workload and a sense of shared responsibility in homes with many spouses who assisted with daily household chores. Some families were able to handle large households more skillfully thanks to this collaborative approach to household management. In this situation, assigning chores to one another might foster a helpful community where co-wives can lean on one another for support, perhaps lowering stress levels and improving household dynamics.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the study that a complex web of familial, financial and cultural factors potentially determines the decision of couples, husband, wife and family regarding polygamous alliance in District Battagram. The study reveals that infertility, desire for child, desire for male child, sex biased ratio are the potential driving forces behind the practice of polygamous marriage. Furthermore, financial strains, poor family conditions, lack of social security especially for girls are pushing women and their families to marry men having wife and children. It is further concluded that the gain of polygamous marriage is less while there is a greater loss are associated with polygamous marriages. For instance, family disputes, hatred, jealousy and competition over the distribution of family assets, inheritance right and ownership are likely to be evident in the polygamous marriages. Such social disputes badly affect the social hormone, peace and loving atmosphere with the families. One of the positive thing emerged from the respondent narrative that wives share household chores as a result work burden on women is reduced and made the household structure easy to manage. It is also evident from the study the child care, elderly care and care of sick persons in these families are easily managed.

Recommendations

Polygamy is a longstanding cultural practice in the Northern districts of Pakistan and very little changes have been witnessed in the attitude of people regarding this practice in the region. It is recommended that the government, policy makers, policy influencers, social activists and community leaders shall come forward to address this cultural practice. The government should frame policies in which polygamous marriages may be allowed under peculiar circumstances with the condition that the wives may be given full social, financial and psychological protection.

Further, the high prevalence ratio of polygamy in the area has put large number of women and children at risk demanding immediate psycho-social support and financial assistance. The government and other humanitarian agencies should provide financial support, social security and counselling to the affected women, children and families.

Furthermore, researchers, educationists and academicians shall intervene to explore dynamics, causes and impacts of polygamous marriages. They shall organize awareness campaign, seminars, workshops and conferences to inform the general public regarding the negative impacts of polygamous marriages in the area. Religious scholars shall shed lights on the cultural, social and religious dimensions of polygamy to raise public awareness on polygamy in the area.

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