Psychological Dimensions of Polygamy: Exploring Motivation, Adaptation, and Marital Conflict in Multiple-Partnership Relationships

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Abstract

Polygamy is a form of plural marriage that generates complex psychological dynamics for all individuals involved. This practice is not only associated with legal and religious dimensions, but also engages deeper psychological aspects, including personal motivations, emotional adaptation processes, gender-based power relations, and intrapersonal as well as interpersonal conflicts within family life. This article aims to analyze the psychological aspects of polygamy by focusing on three main dimensions: (1) individuals' psychological motivations for engaging in or accepting polygamous marriage, (2) patterns of psychological adaptation that develop within polygamous families, and (3) forms of psychological conflict and their implications for mental health. This study employs a qualitative method through a library research approach and a descriptive-analytical analysis of literature in psychology, family sociology, and gender studies. The findings indicate that polygamy is often associated with high levels of emotional tension, particularly among women and children, and tends to encourage coping mechanisms that are not always adaptive in the long term. This article emphasizes that a psychological perspective is a crucial element in understanding, evaluating, and formulating social and policy responses to polygamous practices in a more comprehensive manner.

Keywords: Polygamy, Family Psychology, Motivation, Psychological Adaptation, Marital Conflict.

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A.   INTRODUCTION

Marriage, in the study of social sciences and psychology, is understood as an institution with multidimensional functions, encompassing biological, emotional, social, and symbolic roles. Marriage serves not only as a legal mechanism to regulate sexual relations and reproduction but also as a space for personal identity formation, emotional stability, and a psychosocial support system for the individuals involved. From the perspective of family psychology, marriage is understood as an intimate relationship that requires sustained emotional attachment, psychological security, and a relatively stable division of roles and responsibilities to maintain relational balance over the long term (Bowen, 1978). Therefore, marriage cannot be reduced merely to a formal legal contract but must be understood as a living, dynamic psychological relational system in which family members mutually influence one another.

Within this framework, the practice of polygamy, as a form of plural marriage, presents psychological dynamics that are far more complex than those found in monogamous marriages. This complexity arises because polygamy

structurally involves more than one intimate relationship within a single-family unit, increasing the potential for emotional tension, conflicts of interest, and imbalances in the distribution of affection and psychosocial resources. Globally, polygamy continues to be practiced in various regions, including parts of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, with varying legitimacies ranging from customary norms and economic considerations to religious justification (Zeitzen, 2008). However, the persistence of this practice does not always align with findings in modern psychology, which emphasize the importance of emotional exclusivity and relational fairness within marital relationships.

In Indonesia, polygamy is legally accommodated under limited conditions through Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage and the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), which principally affirms the principle of monogamy with conditional exceptions. Nevertheless, in social practice, polygamy remains a controversial phenomenon, particularly regarding gender equality and mental health. Legal provisions that are primarily administrative often fail to fully protect the psychological experiences of women and children, especially when polygamy occurs without official registration or without freely given consent, free from social and structural pressures (National Commission on Violence Against Women, 2023). This situation highlights a gap between formal regulations and the psychosocial realities at the family level.

In contemporary psychological studies, marital relationships are understood as affective and exclusive, requiring emotional bonding, a sense of security, and relational equity to function healthily. Attachment theory emphasizes that emotional security forms the foundation of individuals' psychological well-being within intimate relationships (Bowlby, 1988). Structurally, polygamy challenges all three of these elements because the presence of multiple partners within one intimate relationship can dilute the focus of affection, obscure a sense of security, and create relational imbalances. In practice, these conditions often lead to chronic jealousy, competition for affection, emotional uncertainty, and conflicts of self-identity, particularly for wives.

Empirical studies indicate that women living in polygamous families tend to experience higher levels of psychological stress, anxiety, and depression compared to women in monogamous families (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2006). Moreover, children raised in polygamous households have been reported to be more vulnerable to emotional disturbances, behavioral problems, and academic difficulties due to parental relational instability and internal family conflicts (Elbedour et al., 2002). These findings underscore that polygamy is not merely a matter of morality or legal formalities but constitutes a significant mental health and psychosocial welfare issue with intergenerational implications.

B.   METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research to analyze the psychological dynamics of polygamous relationships, focusing on motivation, adaptation, and conflict within plural marriages. A qualitative approach was chosen

because the complexities of polygamy cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures alone, but require an in-depth understanding of meaning construction, emotional experiences, and the social relations accompanying the practice (Creswell, 2013). Library research enables the integration of theoretical and empirical insights across family psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology, gender studies, and sociology, providing a comprehensive understanding of recurring psychosocial patterns in diverse social contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Data were collected through a review of relevant scholarly literature, including psychology textbooks (e.g., attachment theory, stress and coping theory, and family systems approaches), peer-reviewed journal articles examining the psychological consequences of polygamy, empirical reports on women's and children's mental health in polygamous families, and academic publications on power relations and patriarchal family structures (Bowen, 1987). Sources were selected based on relevance to polygamy and mental health, methodological rigor, currency, and interdisciplinary representation (Cooper, 2016).

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis to systematically identify, code, and organize key themes emerging from the literature (Krippendorff, 2018). Thematic categories focused on (1) psychological motivation (e.g., needs for affection, social-religious legitimacy, relational control, cognitive rationalization), (2) psychological adaptation (e.g., coping strategies, role adjustment, emotion regulation, social support), and (3) psychological conflict (e.g., chronic jealousy, competition for affection, resource imbalance, identity conflict) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thematic synthesis was then used to compare patterns across studies, identify consistencies and variations, and examine factors influencing the psychological impact of polygamy in different cultural contexts (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2006).

Finally, a descriptive-analytical approach was applied to present findings systematically: describing dominant concepts and empirical findings, analyzing the relationship between polygamous structures and their psychological consequences, and providing a critical interpretation of the social implications of polygamy, particularly regarding gender inequality and mental health (Zeitzen, 2008). This approach allows for a nuanced evaluation of polygamy as a socio-psychological phenomenon, emphasizing well-being and mental health risks rather than solely moral or legal legitimacy, and informs evidence-based recommendations for family counseling, mental health protection, and social support interventions (Connell, 2005).

C.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
1. Marriage Psychology and Family Systems

Family psychology views the family as an interconnected emotional system, where each individual does not exist in isolation but is embedded within relational patterns that mutually influence one another. From the perspective of family systems theory, the family is understood as a dynamic emotional unit, in which

changes, stress, or conflicts experienced by one member affect the psychological balance of the entire family system. Bowen (1978) emphasizes that family stability is largely determined by the system's capacity to manage anxiety, differentiate the self, and maintain emotional relationships among its members.

In the context of monogamous marriage, the family system typically revolves around a single core relationship between husband and wife, which serves as the central axis for affection distribution, communication, and decision-making. In contrast, in polygamous families, the system becomes far more complex due to the simultaneous involvement of multiple marital relationships. This complexity increases the potential for emotional tension, relational fragmentation, and imbalances in the distribution of attention and psychological resources. From a family systems perspective, polygamy can be understood as a condition with a higher emotional load, rendering it more vulnerable to conflict and relational dysfunction (Minuchin, 1985).

In addition to the family systems approach, attachment theory provides a crucial foundation for understanding the psychological dynamics of marriage. Bowlby (1988) argues that healthy intimate relationships require emotional security (secure attachment), which allows individuals to develop trust, emotional stability, and adaptive affective regulation. This sense of security is cultivated through consistent affection, partner responsiveness, and relational certainty. In marital relationships, secure attachment forms the foundation for long-term psychological well-being.

In polygamous contexts, the need for emotional security is often fragmented. The presence of multiple spouses within a single intimate relationship may disrupt the emotional exclusivity necessary for stable attachment. Wives—particularly the first wife—often experience emotional uncertainty, anxiety over potential loss of affection, and a diminished sense of security due to the necessity of sharing their partner's attention. Such conditions can foster insecure attachment, which, over time, contributes to psychological stress, chronic jealousy, and compromised emotional well-being (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

2. Gender Psychology and Power Relations

From a gender psychology perspective, polygamy cannot be separated from the patriarchal social structures that position men in dominant roles within family relations and the institution of marriage. Gender-based power relations create normative frameworks that often normalize male dominance over women's bodies, affection, and reproductive roles. Connell (2005), through the concept of hegemonic masculinity, explains that dominant masculinity is not only manifested through physical or economic power but also through control over sexual and familial relations. Within this context, polygamy can be understood as a structural manifestation of hegemonic masculinity.

The power imbalance inherent in polygamy directly affects women's psychological well-being. When polygamous decisions are dominated by male

authority, women often occupy weak bargaining positions emotionally, economically, and socially. From a feminist psychology perspective, this situation generates psychological vulnerability characterized by emotional suppression, internalization of injustice, and rationalization of suffering as moral or religious compliance (Fox & Murry, 2000). Asymmetric power relations also make it difficult for women to express refusal or discomfort without facing social stigma.

Furthermore, a gendered perspective in psychology emphasizes that individual psychological experiences cannot be separated from the surrounding structural and cultural contexts. Therefore, the psychological impact of polygamy cannot be explained merely as an individual issue, but as a consequence of the interaction between patriarchal structures, cultural norms, and family relational dynamics. By integrating family systems theory, attachment theory, and gender psychology, this theoretical framework provides an analytical foundation for understanding polygamy as a relational phenomenon imbued with emotional tension and power dynamics. This framework enables a comprehensive analysis of motivation, adaptation, and conflict in plural marriages and provides a strong conceptual basis for critically examining the impact of polygamy on mental health and psychosocial well-being.

3. Psychological Motivation in Polygamy

The psychological motivation of men in practicing polygamy is multidimensional and cannot be understood through a single factor. Studies indicate that such motivation encompasses sexual needs, the desire to have more offspring, the pursuit of social legitimacy, and religious or cultural justification institutionalized within specific societal norms (Zeitzen, 2008). In many social contexts, polygamy is not only perceived as a personal choice but also as a symbol of status, authority, and masculine success, particularly in societies that maintain strong patriarchal structures.

From a personality psychology perspective, these motivations are often linked to the need for control and dominance in intimate relationships. Individuals with a high-power orientation tend to perceive marriage as a space for affirming self-identity and gender superiority rather than as an egalitarian relationship based on emotional reciprocity (Connell, 2005). In this framework, polygamy can function as a psychological mechanism to maintain or expand control over affection, sexuality, and family structure. Successfully managing multiple marital relationships is often perceived as an indicator of personal competence, whether economic, social, or symbolic.

Several studies also associate polygamous practices with specific personality traits, such as narcissism and social dominance orientation. Individuals with narcissistic tendencies generally exhibit a high need for recognition, validation, and admiration from their environment (Campbell & Foster, 2007). Within this context, plural marriages may serve as a means to satisfy unilateral affection needs and reinforce the self-image as a central figure in the family. Hierarchical and

asymmetrical relationships allow individuals with high control needs to minimize the emotional reciprocity typically expected in egalitarian monogamous marriages.

Religious and cultural legitimacy often functions as a psychological rationalization mechanism for engaging in polygamy. Through this lens, personal motivations such as the need for affection, sexual desire, or dominance are reinterpreted as moral obligations or normatively sanctioned practices. Such rationalizations not only serve to gain social acceptance but also reduce internal conflict and cognitive dissonance in polygamous men (Bandura, 1999). Thus, men's motivations in polygamy emerge from a complex interaction between individual psychological needs, patriarchal social structures, and available normative legitimacies within a given cultural context.

In contrast to the generally active and initiative-driven motivations of husbands, wives' acceptance of polygamy often occurs under conditions of limited choice and structural pressure. Economic dependence, weak bargaining power within the family, and prevailing social and religious norms are primary determinants influencing women's decisions to accept or remain in polygamous marriages (Al-Krenawi, 2013). In many cases, such acceptance does not reflect fully voluntary consent but results from psychological negotiation within an imbalanced power relation.

From a cognitive psychology perspective, wives' acceptance of polygamy can be explained through cognitive dissonance reduction mechanisms. Festinger (1957) posits that individuals tend to adjust their beliefs and perceptions to align with unavoidable realities to reduce psychological tension. In the context of polygamy, wives may rationalize their situation through internalizing religious narratives, emphasizing patience and sacrifice, or reframing their suffering as a moral test. This mechanism functions as a short-term adaptive strategy to maintain psychological stability, albeit with potential long-term negative effects.

Social pressure and stigma against women who refuse polygamy or leave the marriage further reinforce passive acceptance. Cultural norms that position women as guardians of family harmony often impose disproportionate emotional responsibilities on wives (Fox & Murry, 2000). Under such conditions, accepting polygamy can become a survival strategy to avoid social marginalization, loss of economic support, or stigma as a woman who fails to maintain the household.

Within a gender psychology framework, wives' acceptance of polygamy also reflects the internalization of culturally embedded patriarchal power relations. When relational injustice is normalized as part of social or religious order, women's psychological experiences tend to be privatized and unrecognized as structural issues. This explains why acceptance of polygamy is often accompanied by emotional suppression, denial of personal needs, and sacrifices in psychological well-being to preserve relational stability.

Overall, examining psychological motivations in polygamy from both the husband's and wife's perspectives demonstrates that this practice cannot be understood neutrally or solely as an individual choice. These motivations are shaped

by the interaction between psychological needs, power structures, and social and cultural legitimacies.

4. Psychological Adaptation in Polygamous Families

Wives in polygamous families develop various coping strategies to manage emotional stress arising from imbalances in affection, emotional uncertainty, and layered role demands. These pressures are often chronic, persisting not only during the initial phases of polygamy but throughout the marital relationship. Under such conditions, coping strategies serve as the primary psychological mechanism enabling wives to maintain emotional stability and everyday social functioning (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Common coping strategies among wives include emotional suppression, religious rationalization, and passive adjustment to existing relational conditions. Emotional suppression involves withholding expressions of jealousy, anger, or sadness to preserve family harmony and avoid open conflict. Religious rationalization provides a meaning-making framework that allows psychological suffering to be perceived as a moral test or spiritual devotion. Passive adjustment reflects acceptance of the situation without active efforts to change the unequal relational structure (Pargament, 1997).

According to stress and coping theory, these strategies are classified as emotion-focused coping, which aims to manage emotional responses to situations perceived as difficult or uncontrollable, in contrast to problem-focused coping, which seeks to address the stressor itself. In polygamous contexts, limited bargaining power, social norms, and economic dependence often restrict wives' opportunities to employ problem-focused coping, making emotion-focused coping the most feasible psychological option.

Although such strategies may alleviate stress in the short term and support basic social functioning, research indicates that prolonged reliance on emotion-focused coping can produce long-term negative psychological effects. Continuous emotional suppression may hinder healthy affect regulation and increase the risk of latent psychological disorders such as depression, chronic anxiety, and psychosomatic symptoms (Gross & John, 2003). Similarly, religious rationalization without critical reflection may normalize suffering and impede the pursuit of more adaptive psychological support.

From a gender psychology perspective, wives' coping strategies reflect the internalization of patriarchal norms that position women as primarily responsible for maintaining family emotional harmony. When relational continuity is prioritized over individual psychological well-being, wives' adaptations often take the form of self-sacrificing strategies. This underscores that psychological adaptation in polygamy is inseparable from structural and cultural contexts that constrain women's coping options (International Journal of Social Sciences, IJSOC).

Children in polygamous families also face significant adaptation challenges. Environments marked by latent conflict, parental relational instability, and unequal

distribution of attention and emotional resources create developmental risks. In developmental psychology, emotional stability and consistent caregiving are crucial for children's sense of security and emotion regulation. Disruptions to these factors increase vulnerability to adaptation difficulties (Papalia & Martorell, 2015).

Empirical studies show that children in polygamous families are at higher risk for behavioral problems, emotional dysregulation, and lower academic achievement compared to children from monogamous families (Elbedour et al., 2002). Inter-wife conflict, competition for affection, and parental emotional tension often create environments that impede healthy psychosocial development. Children may experience loyalty conflicts, role confusion, or develop maladaptive adjustment strategies such as social withdrawal or aggression.

Ambiguities in family structure and hierarchy can further affect children's identity formation. Children may experience uncertainty regarding their position within the family, particularly when differential treatment exists among children of different wives. This may undermine self-esteem and interpersonal trust. Long-term exposure to unstable adaptation during childhood can carry psychological consequences into adulthood, including difficulties in establishing secure and healthy intimate relationships.

Overall, psychological adaptation in polygamous families, for both wives and children, involves substantial psychosocial pressures and risks. Analysis of these adaptation processes demonstrates that polygamy not only demands individual adjustment but also generates structural emotional burdens affecting all family members. The descriptive-analytical literature-based approach employed in this study provides a comprehensive mapping of these adaptation dynamics, offering a conceptual foundation for psychosocial interventions and mental health policies sensitive to the polygamous family context.

5. Psychological Conflict in Polygamous Marriages

Intrapersonal conflict is one of the most prominent psychological challenges experienced by wives in polygamous marriages. This conflict arises from ongoing internal tension between individual emotional needs—such as the need for exclusive affection, emotional security, and self-recognition—and the structural realities of polygamy, which demand shared attention and asymmetrical relationships. Wives often experience chronic jealousy, feelings of worthlessness, and identity conflicts as partners, women, and family members (Salovey & Rodin, 1989).

Jealousy in polygamous families tends to be chronic rather than situational, as its sources are permanent and institutionalized. Unlike temporary relational conflicts in monogamous marriages, polygamy generates continuous competition for affection, making negative emotions difficult to regulate adaptively. Threats to receiving a partner's love can develop into relational anxiety and emotional hypervigilance, which over time weaken individual psychological stability (Guerrero, Spitzberg & Yoshimura, 2004).

Intrapersonal conflict also manifests as identity conflict. Wives often experience dissonance between their ideal self-concept as fully loved and valued partners and their actual experiences, marked by divided affection and relational inequities. This conflict can reduce self-esteem and trigger internalized guilt, particularly when cultural and religious norms demand acceptance and patience without allowing the expression of negative emotions (Higgins, 1987). Unresolved intrapersonal conflict may evolve into chronic stress, with serious consequences for mental health, including depression and anxiety disorders.

Beyond intrapersonal conflict, polygamous marriages are characterized by complex and layered interpersonal conflicts. These include conflicts between co-wives, between husband and wives, and between parents and children. Inter-wife conflicts often stem from competition for affection, jealousy, and perceived inequities in the distribution of attention, time, and material resources (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2006). Such tensions may surface overtly or remain latent, creating an emotionally unstable family environment.

Husband-wife conflicts in polygamous families also have distinct characteristics. Power imbalances often make it difficult for wives to express dissatisfaction or emotional needs openly. When communication is asymmetrical and unequal, conflict tends to manifest indirectly, such as through emotional withdrawal, passive-aggressive behaviors, or increased psychological stress (Gottman, 1999). This undermines communication quality and obstructs constructive conflict resolution.

Interpersonal conflict also affects parent-child relationships. Children in polygamous families often witness or are directly affected by adult conflicts, which can impact their sense of security and interpersonal trust. Inconsistent parenting, differential treatment among co-wives' children, and inter-parental conflict create a tense developmental environment. Children may experience loyalty conflicts or internalize parental conflict as a normative relational pattern, potentially influencing their own relational behavior in adulthood (Elbedour et al., 2002).

6. Psychological Impact of Polygamy on Mental Health

Empirical studies indicate a significant correlation between polygamous practices and diminished mental health, particularly among women. Women living in polygamous families report higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress-related disorders compared to women in monogamous families (Al-Krenawi, 2013). Chronic emotional pressure, power imbalances, and limited access to social support exacerbate these psychological conditions.

The psychological impact of polygamy does not stem solely from the marital structure itself but also from the cultural and religious normalization of suffering. When negative emotional experiences are perceived as moral or spiritual obligations, individuals tend to postpone or avoid seeking psychological help. This normalization contributes to the invisibility of women's psychological suffering and prolongs unaddressed stress (Bandura, 1999).

Limited external social support further amplifies polygamy's negative effects on mental health. In many social contexts, women in polygamous families face stigma if they express dissatisfaction or seek professional assistance. Consequently, they are more vulnerable to social isolation and emotional alienation, which can exacerbate mental health symptoms and impede psychological recovery (Thoits, 2011).

Overall, the psychological conflicts inherent in polygamous marriages and their impact on mental health highlight that polygamy is a high-risk socio-psychological phenomenon. This analysis underscores that polygamy should not be understood merely as a relational choice or cultural practice but as a relational structure that carries serious psychological consequences for the individuals involved.

7. Polygamy in the Indonesian Social and Legal Context

In Indonesia, polygamy has distinct social and psychological characteristics due to its position at the intersection of religious norms, patriarchal culture, and state regulation. Normatively, Indonesian law upholds monogamy as the principal marital form, as regulated by Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage. However, the law allows limited polygamous practices under strict conditions, including court approval and the consent of existing wives, as further detailed in the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI). These restrictions are conceptually designed to protect the rights of women and children and to prevent the misuse of the marital institution.

In practice, polygamy in Indonesia often occurs outside formal legal mechanisms through unregistered marriages (*perkawinan siri*). Such practices directly remove legal and psychological protections for women and children, depriving them of economic rights, legal guarantees, and conflict resolution mechanisms available under state law. From a social psychology perspective, lack of legal recognition reinforces women's subordinate position within the family, increasing vulnerability to emotional pressure, relational uncertainty, and structural dependence (Butt & Lindsey, 2018).

Normative legitimacy of polygamy in certain communities also creates strong social conformity pressures for women. Religious and cultural norms frequently frame acceptance of polygamy as an indicator of piety, obedience, and successful fulfillment of the wife's role. In such situations, wives face a psychological dilemma between maintaining personal emotional well-being and upholding their social image as devout and culturally compliant women. These conformity pressures reinforce passive coping mechanisms, such as emotional suppression and religious rationalization, which may initially stabilize relationships but, in the long term, increase the risk of mental health problems (Pargament, 1997).

National reports indicate that women in polygamous marriages in Indonesia are particularly vulnerable to psychological abuse, economic neglect, and emotional marginalization. The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) consistently documents that both registered and unregistered

polygamous marriages correlate with increased vulnerability to domestic violence, especially psychological abuse, which often remains unidentified and unaddressed within formal legal systems (Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan, 2023). Psychological abuse includes emotional manipulation, neglect of affection, excessive control, and the normalization of women's suffering as a consequence of unequal relational structures.

Children in Indonesian polygamous families also face significant psychosocial development challenges. Unequal parenting practices, inter-parental conflicts, and unclear legal status of children in unregistered marriages undermine children's sense of security and emotional stability. Children raised in conflict-laden and relationally uncertain environments are at risk of emotional dysregulation, academic difficulties, and social relational problems (Papalia & Martorell, 2015). When these experiences are not recognized as structural issues, their psychological impact tends to be privatized and borne individually by the children.

Thus, polygamy in Indonesia cannot be understood merely as a private family matter or as an expression of individual religious choice. Rather, it is a socio-psychological phenomenon with broad implications for public mental health and social justice. Analysis of the Indonesian context shows that the psychological impact of polygamy is shaped by the interaction between legal regulation, cultural norms, and gender-based power relations.

8. Social and Policy Implications

A comprehensive understanding of the psychological aspects of polygamy carries significant implications for public policy, family counseling practices, and premarital education programs. Findings from this study indicate that polygamy affects not only the formal family structure but also has profound psychosocial consequences for women and children. Therefore, policy approaches that focus solely on legal-administrative aspects are insufficient without considering the mental health and psychological well-being of the individuals involved (WHO, 2013).

In the realm of public policy, the state needs to integrate mental health perspectives into the regulation and implementation of polygamous practices. Existing regulations, such as court approval and the consent of existing wives, are normatively intended to protect women's rights. However, without adequate psychological assessment mechanisms, these procedures risk becoming mere administrative formalities. Independent, professional psychological evaluations of prospective polygamists and existing wives could be considered as part of the decision-making process, assessing emotional readiness, conflict risk, and potential impacts on family mental health (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Policy implications also extend to the strengthening of family counseling services that are sensitive to the context of polygamy. Current counseling practices often do not fully account for power dynamics, latent conflicts, and normative pressures experienced by women in polygamous families. Gender-sensitive and trauma-informed counseling approaches are necessary to allow individuals to safely

express their emotional experiences without stigma or moral judgment (Herman, 1997). Such counseling services function not only as mechanisms for psychological recovery but also as preventive tools against more serious conflicts, including psychological abuse and family dysfunction.

In the context of premarital education, this study underscores the importance of explicitly incorporating psychological and relational dimensions into marriage education curricula. Existing programs often emphasize normative, legal, and moral aspects, but need to be complemented with knowledge on mental health, emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and the psychological impact of unequal relationships (Gottman & Silver, 2015). Evidence-based information delivery can help individuals make more informed and reflective decisions regarding marital relationships, including in polygamous contexts.

Furthermore, the social implications of this study highlight the need to strengthen social support for women and children in polygamous families. Social stigma against women who express dissatisfaction or seek psychological assistance often impedes access to supportive services. Social policy should therefore aim to normalize mental health discourse and reduce stigma through public campaigns, training of social service personnel, and collaboration with civil society organizations (Thoits, 2011). This approach aligns with the public mental health paradigm, which frames psychological well-being as a collective responsibility rather than solely an individual concern.

Overall, the social and policy implications of analyzing the psychological dimensions of polygamy emphasize that this practice should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon requiring cross-sectoral responses. Integrating psychological, gender, and mental health perspectives into public policy and social practice is essential to minimize psychosocial risks and protect vulnerable groups. Through a descriptive-analytical approach based on scholarly literature, this study aims to contribute to academic discourse and policy development that are more sensitive to the social and psychological impacts of polygamy.

D.   CONCLUSION

Polygamy presents complex psychological dynamics at both individual and relational levels, affecting not only spouses but also children across generations. Motivations for polygamy emerge from the interplay of individual psychological needs, gendered power relations, and sociocultural norms, resulting in relational imbalances that shape adaptive and coping strategies. While emotion-focused coping, such as emotional suppression and religious rationalization, may provide short-term stability, prolonged exposure increases the risk of latent psychological distress. Polygamy also generates sustained intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts, including chronic jealousy, identity struggles, marital tensions, and intergenerational relational instability, which compromise emotional well-being and child development. These impacts are exacerbated by cultural and religious normalization of suffering, limited social support, and insufficient mental health

services, particularly in contexts where polygamy occurs outside formal legal recognition.

The findings underscore the necessity of integrating psychological perspectives into the evaluation, regulation, and social practice of polygamy. Legal-administrative measures alone are insufficient without addressing mental health and psychosocial well-being. An interdisciplinary approach combining family psychology, gender studies, and social policy is essential to understand polygamy comprehensively and to develop interventions that protect vulnerable groups. Polygamy must thus be analyzed as a multidimensional socio-psychological phenomenon, embedded in structural, cultural, and emotional complexities rather than merely an individual relational choice.

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