

Community Perspectives on Polygamy from the Perspective of Islamic Law: A Study in Makassar, Indonesia

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Abstract

the community through observation, interviews, and documentation. The analysis involved data reduction, presentation, and conclusion verification to obtain a comprehensive understanding of societal views. The findings indicate that formal cases of polygamy in Parang Tambung Village, Tamalate District, Makassar City are rare, with only one case officially recorded by the Office of Religious Affairs in recent years, while most cases occur informally through unregistered marriages due to legal constraints. Community perspectives were classified into three categories: supportive, neutral, and opposing. Supporters generally justified polygamy if financial capability and fairness were ensured, in line with Islamic principles. The neutral group recognized its permissibility in religion but criticized the lack of fairness in practice, while opposition was limited to one respondent who rejected polygamy based on personal experience. Overall, the study highlights how religious norms, legal frameworks, and individual experiences shape diverse community responses to polygamy in the Indonesian context..

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Introduction

In Islamic tradition, marriage may take the form of monogamy or polygamy. Polygamy, defined as a man marrying more than one wife, has long been practiced and explicitly permitted in the Qur'an under strict conditions of justice, as emphasized in Surah al-Nisa verse 3 (Kementerian Agama, 2019; Hamka, 2015). While it has been justified for social and religious reasons—such as ensuring women's protection or maintaining kinship networks—it has also generated debate and criticism across Muslim societies (Nailiya, 2016; Muhammad, 2020). Christianity, for comparison, prohibited polygamy largely due to Greco-Roman cultural influence rather than explicit scriptural commands (Sabiq, 1983). This comparison highlights that the institution of marriage, including its permissibility or prohibition, is deeply shaped by cultural and historical contexts rather than theological absolutes alone.

From a broader anthropological and sociological standpoint, polygamy has existed across civilizations for centuries, serving diverse functions within different communities—from economic survival strategies to social prestige or lineage preservation. In many pre-Islamic societies, including among the Arabs, Hebrews, and Africans, polygamy was

accepted as a customary practice prior to its formal regulation under Islam. Islam introduced ethical and legal boundaries to this practice by limiting the number of wives to four and making justice a non-negotiable precondition. This principle distinguishes Islamic regulation of polygamy as both a moral and social framework designed to ensure fairness and responsibility in family life (Zuhaili, 1985).

In contemporary scholarship, polygamy remains contested. Some scholars and groups consider it permissible or even commendable (sunnah), others allow it only under strict conditions of distributive justice and spousal consent, while a third group rejects it as incompatible with modern realities (Zuhaili, 1985; Nailiya, 2016; Muhammad, 2020). These differing views represent the state of the art in current research, demonstrating that interpretations of polygamy are far from uniform. The debate is not limited to theological reasoning but extends into legal, gender, and sociocultural dimensions—particularly regarding women's rights, family welfare, and social equity. Feminist interpretations of Islamic law, for example, have re-examined Qur'anic verses on marriage to question whether polygamy aligns with the spirit of justice promoted in Islam, while conservative scholars maintain that it remains a divinely sanctioned option under defined conditions (Basri, 2019; Muhammad, 2020).

In Indonesia, Law No. 1 of 1974 regulates polygamy by requiring judicial approval, reflecting a balance between religious permissibility and state governance (Basri, 2019). The law stipulates that a husband seeking to practice polygamy must demonstrate the consent of his first wife and the ability to provide equitable treatment. This legal arrangement mirrors the broader Indonesian approach of harmonizing Islamic values with modern state law—a synthesis that makes the Indonesian context particularly significant in the global discourse on Islamic family law. As a Muslim-majority nation with plural legal systems, Indonesia offers a unique case for examining how religious doctrines are interpreted and enacted within community life.

Previous studies on polygamy in Indonesia have predominantly examined it from a normative or legal perspective, focusing on scriptural interpretations and state regulation. However, there has been limited attention to how local communities themselves perceive and negotiate the practice in their everyday lives. While jurists and policymakers have articulated theoretical and regulatory frameworks, the lived realities and moral reasoning of ordinary Muslims remain underexplored. Understanding these local perspectives is crucial, as they reveal how people internalize, reinterpret, or resist the norms prescribed by both religion and the state.

This research seeks to address that gap by analyzing community perspectives on polygamy in Makassar within the framework of Islamic law. Its novelty lies in integrating empirical community voices with normative legal principles, showing how cultural, legal, and religious contexts shape the lived understanding of polygamy. This approach contributes to the scientific novelty statement by situating the discourse on polygamy not only within doctrinal or legal boundaries but also within the sociocultural experiences of Muslims at the grassroots level. Unlike most prior studies that remain text-centered, this research highlights how people's interpretations of fairness, obligation, and religious adherence operate within their actual family and community dynamics.

The study investigates how Muslim communities perceive polygamy, the conditions they associate with its practice, and the extent to which these perceptions align with Islamic legal discourse. By bridging the normative and empirical dimensions of Islamic law, this study aims to generate a more comprehensive and human-centered understanding of polygamy as both a theological concept and a social institution. Ultimately, the article provides a contextualized understanding of polygamy as both a religiously sanctioned and socially debated institution in Indonesia. The purpose of this article review is to deepen scholarly comprehension of how Islamic legal ideals interact

with community values, revealing the dynamic relationship between doctrine, law, and lived experience in contemporary Muslim societies.

Research Methods

This study employed a field research design, involving the direct collection of data from the community at the research location in line with the research focus. To obtain valid findings, interviews were conducted with community members regarding issues directly related to the topic under investigation. The study used a qualitative approach, emphasizing descriptive analysis expressed through words and narratives rather than statistical or numerical data. This approach was chosen to enable an in-depth exploration of social phenomena and community perspectives concerning polygamy (Waruru, 2023; Sahir, 2021).

The research was conducted in Makassar City, specifically in Parang Tambung, Tamalate District. This location was chosen due to its accessibility and proximity to the researcher's residence, which facilitated mobility during fieldwork. The research informants consisted of 17 community members, including youth, adults, university students, religious leaders, and ordinary citizens residing in Parang Tambung.

The main focus of the study was to examine community perspectives on polygamy, particularly their understanding of its legal and religious dimensions within the framework of Islamic law. Data sources comprised both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from respondents, categorized by gender and marital status (married men, unmarried men, married women, and unmarried women), as well as key figures such as religious leaders, community leaders, and representatives of the local Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). Secondary data were drawn from supporting references including academic journals, books, and online resources relevant to the study (Hardani et al., 2020; Nasution, 2023).

The researcher served as the primary research instrument, supported by additional tools such as observation checklists, interview guides, documentation instruments, smartphones, and stationery (Pewangi et al., 2019). Data collection techniques included: (a) observation, where the researcher observed community behaviors and practices related to the research theme; (b) interviews, conducted directly with respondents to obtain detailed information about their perceptions of polygamy; and (c) documentation, involving the collection of photographs, recordings, and written notes to support the data.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model of qualitative analysis, consisting of three stages: (1) data reduction, where data were summarized, sorted, and focused on relevant aspects to identify emerging patterns and themes; (2) data display, in which findings were presented in descriptive text and, where necessary, supported by tables or charts; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, in which interpretations were continuously tested against new evidence to ensure the credibility and validity of findings (Nasution, 2023; Hardani et al., 2020).

Results and Discussion

The field research conducted in Parang Tambung, Tamalate District, Makassar City revealed significant insights into how local communities perceive and respond to the practice of polygamy within the framework of Islamic law and Indonesian state regulations. Although polygamy has long been a debated institution in the Muslim world, its manifestations and the discourses surrounding it differ considerably depending on local culture, socio-economic structures, and legal frameworks. This study therefore sought to uncover the voices of community members and analyze their perspectives in relation to both Islamic normative principles and the legal system of Indonesia. Through interviews with religious leaders, married men and women, and youth groups, as well as document analysis at the local Office of Religious Affairs, the research captured not only statistical

trends but also the underlying moral reasoning guiding community attitudes. The methodological triangulation ensured that findings reflected both the quantitative rarity and the qualitative depth of local perceptions.

The study's focus on the intersection between Islamic law (sharia), state regulation, and social norms allows a deeper understanding of how communities negotiate between religious ideals and legal realities. Polygamy, as a practice, cannot be understood merely as a theological allowance; rather, it reflects a socio-religious negotiation process shaped by legal restrictions, economic pressures, and gender expectations (Bowen, 2003; Fealy & White, 2008). The case of Parang Tambung illustrates how local interpretations of Islam are embedded in everyday social contexts, where the authority of the state and the influence of religious discourse intersect in complex ways. In this sense, the findings align with the broader pattern of Indonesian Islam, which is characterized by legal pluralism and moral pragmatism (Lindsey & Pausacker, 2016).

The empirical findings highlight that formally recorded cases of polygamy in Parang Tambung are rare. The Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama, KUA) reported only one case officially documented in recent years. This rarity is not due to a complete absence of polygamous practices but rather because many are conducted informally through unregistered marriages, or *nikah siri*. Such marriages are often chosen as a way to circumvent the bureaucratic and legal obstacles imposed by Indonesian marriage law, particularly Law No. 1 of 1974 and Government Regulation No. 9 of 1975, which stipulate that men seeking to practice polygamy must meet certain requirements such as spousal consent, financial capability, and judicial approval (Cammack, Bedner, & van Huis, 2015). In practice, these legal requirements are viewed as restrictive, and therefore many opt for unofficial arrangements that avoid formal scrutiny. Interviews with local clerics confirmed this pattern; one informant explained, "Some men still take a second wife, but quietly, because the court process is long and costly." This statement reinforces the idea that socio-economic realities and procedural barriers play a decisive role in how Islamic law is practiced at the grassroots level.

These findings mirror national trends, where informal or *siri* marriages persist despite being legally non-binding. Scholars such as Latif and Fadhilah (2019) argue that *nikah siri* reflects the disjuncture between state regulation and social legitimacy, as many Muslims consider religious solemnization sufficient to constitute a valid marriage, even without state registration. The phenomenon thus exposes an ongoing tension between *fiqh*-based legitimacy and legal recognition, demonstrating that religious authority often prevails over state power in regulating private life. This dynamic has also been observed in other regions of Indonesia, such as Lombok and South Sulawesi, where polygamous unions are often sanctified through local religious networks but remain invisible in state data (Idrus, 2003; Nurlaelawati, 2010).

The perspectives of the local community were diverse and could be grouped into three main categories: supportive, neutral, and opposing. The supportive group justified polygamy primarily on religious grounds, often referring to Surah al-Nisa (4:3), which explicitly permits men to marry up to four wives under strict conditions of justice. For many of these respondents, polygamy was acceptable provided that the husband demonstrated financial stability and the ability to treat all wives equitably. This reasoning reflects classical Islamic jurisprudential positions, such as those outlined by Sabiq (1983) and Zuhaili (1985), who emphasize that polygamy is permissible but conditional upon fairness and responsibility. Several respondents also highlighted the social benefits of polygamy, including the provision of economic security for women who may otherwise remain unmarried, thereby framing polygamy as a form of social protection in line with traditional justifications (Rahman, 2020). Such views were typically voiced by older male respondents and by certain religious leaders who perceived polygamy as a continuation of prophetic tradition, thereby associating it with moral virtue and communal responsibility.

The strong religious foundation behind these justifications indicates that scriptural interpretation continues to play a dominant role in legitimizing polygamy. However, this acceptance is rarely absolute. Many respondents emphasized *keadilan* (justice) as the core condition, revealing an implicit awareness of Qur'anic caution regarding fairness. This mirrors the broader discourse in Islamic legal thought, where the ethical dimension of justice (*adl*) often functions as a moral limit against potential abuse of the right to polygamy (Kamali, 2008). Thus, the findings highlight not only theological adherence but also moral reasoning embedded within community ethics.

The neutral group, which was substantial in number, acknowledged that polygamy is religiously permissible but raised concerns regarding its implementation. Respondents in this category often cited Surah al-Nisa (4:129), which states that men will never be able to treat multiple wives with complete equality, as evidence of the inherent difficulty in achieving the fairness demanded by Islamic law. While they did not categorically reject polygamy, their responses reflected skepticism about its feasibility in real life. Many from this group pointed to cases in their community where husbands had failed to provide equal treatment, leading to family conflicts, financial instability, and emotional distress. Their perspectives are consistent with findings from previous scholarship, such as Umar (2019), who noted that in Indonesia, while religious discourse legitimizes polygamy, women's lived realities often highlight the challenges of fairness and justice. One female respondent explained, "Polygamy may be allowed by religion, but in real life, equality is impossible. Feelings cannot be divided fairly." This statement illustrates the psychological dimension of the debate and the extent to which emotional and ethical considerations inform community perceptions beyond mere legal permissibility.

This middle-ground stance may also signify the growing influence of contemporary Islamic thought that seeks to harmonize religious norms with human experience. Scholars such as An-Na'im (2008) and Abou El Fadl (2014) argue that contextual interpretation (*ijtihad*) must account for evolving social conditions, including gender equality and emotional welfare. In this sense, the neutrality observed in Parang Tambung could reflect an ongoing moral negotiation within the community—one that respects scriptural authority while critically engaging with the realities of human relationships.

The opposing group was very small in Parang Tambung, represented by only one respondent who categorically rejected polygamy. This respondent's opposition was based on personal experience rather than religious or legal reasoning, suggesting that emotional and subjective factors can also influence community attitudes. While limited, this perspective reflects a broader discourse in Indonesia, where women's rights activists and reformist scholars have critiqued polygamy as incompatible with gender justice in the modern era (Syamsuddin & Nurlaelawati, 2021). Such critiques argue that polygamy perpetuates patriarchal structures and often results in psychological and economic harm to women. Even though this view remains a minority within the studied community, its presence signals an ongoing transformation of gender consciousness influenced by education, urbanization, and exposure to national debates on women's rights.

This minority voice, though small, is sociologically significant because it represents the shifting contours of Islamic gender discourse in Indonesia. The increasing access of women to education and media has expanded public awareness of gender equality within Islamic frameworks (Blackburn, 2010). Thus, while conservative norms remain strong, modern interpretations promoting monogamy as the ethical ideal are gradually gaining traction, especially among younger, urban Muslims.

Gender differences were significant in shaping perceptions of polygamy. Male respondents, particularly those already married, tended to be more supportive of the practice, often citing religious permissibility and the possibility of expanding family networks. In contrast, women—both married and unmarried—expressed more reservations, focusing on the emotional and financial burdens that polygamy could impose.

This gendered divide echoes the findings of Idrus (2003), who documented Bugis perspectives on marriage and gender roles, showing that women often bear the brunt of unequal marital arrangements. Such differences also resonate with wider debates in Indonesian scholarship, where male dominance in religious interpretation has historically marginalized women's voices in legal and social discourse (Nurlaelawati, 2010). Field observations also indicated that even among men, support for polygamy was often conditional; some admitted that they would only consider it under extreme circumstances such as illness of the first wife or infertility, indicating a pragmatic rather than ideological stance.

Gender thus functions as both a lens and a determinant in understanding polygamy's acceptance. The differing views between men and women underscore how interpretations of Islamic law are mediated by lived experience and social position. This aligns with Mahmood's (2005) argument that women's agency within Islamic societies often operates through complex negotiations of power, emotion, and faith.

The legal dimension of polygamy in Indonesia adds further complexity. Law No. 1 of 1974 requires men to obtain permission from the Religious Court before contracting a polygamous marriage, and judicial approval is contingent upon meeting specific conditions such as the inability of the first wife to perform marital duties, infertility, or incurable illness. Furthermore, the husband must demonstrate financial capability and secure consent from the existing wife or wives. In practice, however, these regulations are often bypassed through *nikah siri*, which is socially recognized but legally unregistered, thereby creating a gap between state law and community practice (Latif & Fadhilah, 2019). This legal dualism reflects what Cammack et al. (2015) describe as the "pluralistic" nature of Indonesian family law, where state regulations coexist with religious norms and community customs. The persistence of informal polygamy in Parang Tambung reveals that religious and customary legitimacy often outweigh formal legality in the moral reasoning of the community.

This tension between law and lived religion is a defining feature of Indonesia's socio-legal environment. Bowen (2003) notes that Muslims in Indonesia navigate multiple sources of authority—religious, customary (*adat*), and governmental—each carrying its own moral weight. In Parang Tambung, the findings illustrate how local communities negotiate these overlapping jurisdictions, prioritizing moral legitimacy over bureaucratic compliance. This mirrors similar findings by Nurlaelawati (2010), who observed that many Indonesians perceive legal restrictions on polygamy as administrative rather than moral, leading to the persistence of unregistered marriages justified through religious reasoning. Consequently, while the state aims to regulate polygamy for social stability and women's protection, its effectiveness is limited by competing frameworks of moral legitimacy and cultural autonomy.

A significant finding of this research is the way in which community members interpret religious principles in light of their own social realities. While classical Islamic jurisprudence provides the legal framework for polygamy, its application is filtered through local culture, gender dynamics, and economic considerations. Respondents who supported polygamy frequently stressed the importance of financial capability, which indicates a practical awareness of the economic burdens associated with multiple households. Similarly, the neutral group's emphasis on fairness highlights the challenges of translating Qur'anic injunctions into lived reality. These interpretations align with what Rahman (2020) has described as the "contestation of polygamy" in Indonesia, where religious texts are reinterpreted through the lens of contemporary social and gender justice concerns. Consequently, polygamy is not simply a matter of religious obedience but also a reflection of socio-economic negotiation and ethical reflection within the community.

The dynamic relationship between textual authority and lived experience suggests that Islamic law, as practiced in Parang Tambung, operates as a form of moral reasoning rather than rigid jurisprudence. Hallaq (2009) asserts that sharia in Muslim societies

historically functioned as a moral-ethical framework embedded in social life rather than a state-enforced code. The community's approach reflects this tradition: Qur'anic ideals of justice and responsibility are internalized and contextualized according to everyday realities. As a result, polygamy becomes a site where theology, economics, and gender ethics converge, revealing the adaptability of Islamic practice in local contexts.

The sociological implications of polygamy in Parang Tambung extend beyond individual households. Supporters framed it as a solution to broader social problems such as the presence of widows or unmarried women in the community, reflecting a collectivist perspective rooted in traditional social structures. However, critics emphasized the psychological toll on women and the potential for family breakdown, highlighting a more individualist concern with personal well-being and rights. This tension mirrors the broader debates within Indonesian Muslim society, where polygamy is simultaneously defended as part of Islamic tradition and critiqued as a source of gender inequality (Umar, 2019). Furthermore, observations showed that public discussions about polygamy usually occurred informally in religious gatherings (*pengajian*) or neighborhood meetings, suggesting that communal opinion is shaped through social interaction rather than through formal institutions.

This finding underscores the role of informal social spaces in shaping moral discourse. As Fealy (2008) and Howell (2011) point out, Islamic understanding in Indonesia often circulates through community networks rather than state institutions. In Parang Tambung, *pengajian* groups and *majlis taklim* serve as crucial arenas for moral deliberation, where interpretations of scripture and gender roles are negotiated. Within these circles, senior religious figures—often male—serve as moral authorities whose interpretations hold considerable weight. Consequently, the legitimacy of polygamy is not merely derived from textual sources but is socially constructed through communal discourse, *habitus*, and leadership influence.

The findings also reveal that local religious leaders play a significant role in shaping community perceptions. While some leaders reaffirmed the permissibility of polygamy under Islamic law, others stressed the importance of justice and fairness, implicitly discouraging the practice by highlighting its near impossibility. This reflects the ambivalence of Islamic legal discourse itself: while polygamy is allowed, it is heavily qualified by conditions that are difficult to meet in practice (Zuhaili, 1985). As such, the voices of religious leaders often reinforce the neutral stance of the broader community, acknowledging the legitimacy of polygamy but expressing doubts about its practical viability. One imam interviewed during fieldwork noted, "It is allowed, yes, but justice is the key. If you cannot be fair, even one wife is enough." This pragmatic theological advice exemplifies how scriptural interpretations are adapted to local moral reasoning.

The influence of these clerical voices demonstrates that Islamic leadership functions not only as a religious authority but also as a mediator between divine text and social ethics. In the Indonesian context, the *ulama* serve as interpreters of both *fiqh* and community morality, bridging the gap between theological ideals and real-world constraints (Salim, 2015). In Parang Tambung, this mediating role ensures that religious interpretation remains responsive to the complexities of family life. This dynamic also reflects the ongoing "vernacularization" of Islamic law (Merry, 2006), wherein global religious norms are localized through cultural translation and social adaptation.

When compared with existing scholarship, the findings of this study both confirm and nuance previous analyses. Nurlaelawati (2010) emphasized the role of Indonesian religious courts in regulating polygamy, showing how the state negotiates between Islamic norms and modern governance. This study, however, demonstrates that at the community level, many bypass these institutions altogether, opting for informal arrangements. Similarly, Latif and Fadhilah (2019) documented how public discourse on polygamy in Indonesia is deeply polarized, with proponents citing religious freedom and opponents

emphasizing women's rights. The perspectives uncovered in Parang Tambung reflect this polarization but also reveal a large neutral group that navigates between the two extremes. This middle position may represent a more realistic reflection of contemporary Muslim social life, where piety coexists with pragmatism.

The fieldwork also sheds light on the limitations of legal enforcement in addressing polygamy. Despite the strict requirements imposed by Law No. 1 of 1974, the prevalence of *nikah siri* illustrates how communities continue to find ways around state regulations. This gap between law and practice underscores the pluralistic legal environment of Indonesia, where state law, Islamic law, and customary practices coexist in a complex and sometimes contradictory relationship (Cammack et al., 2015). For policymakers, this suggests that legal reforms alone may be insufficient to address the issue of polygamy without also engaging with community norms and religious discourses. This reinforces the idea that cultural legitimacy often carries more weight than legal authority, particularly in rural and semi-urban Muslim communities.

From a theological perspective, the findings resonate with the Qur'anic tension between permissibility and justice. Surah al-Nisa (4:3) permits polygamy but conditions it on fairness, while verse 4:129 acknowledges that complete fairness is unattainable. This creates a paradox within Islamic legal discourse: polygamy is permissible but practically constrained. Community members in Parang Tambung appear to intuitively recognize this paradox, as reflected in the large number of respondents who neither fully support nor outright reject polygamy but instead adopt a cautious stance. This demonstrates how lay interpretations of scripture can parallel scholarly debates, highlighting the dynamic relationship between textual authority and lived experience.

The recognition of this paradox also reveals the moral consciousness of the community. Rather than viewing polygamy as an absolute right, many respondents framed it as a moral trial—a practice that, while permissible, carries heavy ethical responsibility. This aligns with al-Ghazali's (1997) conception of *maqasid al-shariah*, where the ultimate aim of law is not the mechanical application of rules but the realization of justice, compassion, and social welfare. The community's prudence, therefore, reflects an internalized awareness of Islam's ethical priorities beyond mere legal formalism.

The implications of these findings extend to broader discussions of gender and marriage in Indonesia. The gendered differences in perceptions highlight how polygamy is not merely a legal or religious issue but also a deeply social and psychological one. Women's reservations reflect concerns about fairness, emotional well-being, and financial security, which align with feminist critiques of polygamy as a patriarchal institution (Syamsuddin & Nurlaelawati, 2021). Men's support, on the other hand, reflects traditional understandings of male authority and religious permissibility. This divergence underscores the importance of incorporating women's voices into legal and religious debates about polygamy, an area where historically they have been marginalized (Umar, 2019). Furthermore, the findings suggest that gender-sensitive interpretations of Islamic law are needed to ensure that its ethical objectives (*maqasid al-shariah*)—particularly justice and family welfare—are meaningfully realized in modern contexts.

In light of these gendered dynamics, future discussions on polygamy in Indonesia must consider the intersection between faith and gender justice. As Barlas (2002) and Wadud (2006) have argued, Qur'anic interpretation must be re-engaged from a gender-equitable perspective that reclaims the ethical core of revelation. The neutral and critical voices within Parang Tambung's community indicate a growing awareness of these discourses, even if indirectly, through exposure to national conversations about women's rights and Islamic reform. This suggests that the transformation of gender attitudes is already underway, albeit gradually, within local communities.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that polygamy in Parang Tambung is characterized by a complex interplay of religious norms, legal regulations, and community

practices. Formal cases are rare, and many marriages occur informally through *nikah siri* due to legal constraints. Community perspectives are diverse, with some supporting polygamy under conditions of financial capacity and fairness, others adopting a cautious neutrality due to concerns about practical justice, and a small minority opposing it outright. These perspectives are shaped by gender roles, personal experiences, and the influence of religious leaders, reflecting both the normative frameworks of Islamic law and the lived realities of Indonesian society. Ultimately, the findings highlight the importance of contextualizing polygamy within local social and cultural dynamics, suggesting that any meaningful engagement with the issue must address not only religious texts and legal frameworks but also the everyday experiences and voices of community members.

By grounding the discussion in both doctrinal analysis and ethnographic evidence, this study contributes to ongoing debates on Islamic family law reform, gender equity, and moral reasoning in Muslim societies. The Parang Tambung case underscores that effective understanding of polygamy requires moving beyond legalistic or theological binaries toward an integrative perspective that recognizes the interplay of law, culture, and lived experience.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the practice and perception of polygamy in Parang Tambung, Tamalate Subdistrict, by investigating both its legal-religious framework and its social reality. The findings reveal that polygamy, while permissible under Islamic law and accommodated within Indonesia's Marriage Law, is rarely implemented in its formal, legally registered form. Instead, most cases occur through unregistered marriages, reflecting the community's tendency to prioritize religious procedures over state regulation. This pattern confirms the research hypothesis that polygamy in Parang Tambung is limited in practice and strongly shaped by the tension between law, religion, and social norms. The study further shows that gender is the most decisive factor in shaping attitudes toward polygamy. Married men generally support it as a religiously justified solution to marital or moral problems, while unmarried men express more cautious or ambivalent positions. In contrast, both married and unmarried women overwhelmingly oppose polygamy, citing its negative consequences for justice, family harmony, and emotional well-being. This confirms the expectation that women's perspectives would diverge significantly from men's, with opposition grounded in lived experiences of inequality and insecurity. At the broader level, this research demonstrates that the principle of fairness—central to the Qur'anic allowance of polygamy—is difficult, if not impossible, to realize in practice. The results indicate that polygamy often undermines rather than upholds the ethical ideals of justice and compassion in family life. Consequently, while the practice remains religiously legitimate, its social legitimacy is increasingly contested, particularly among younger generations influenced by discourses of gender equality. In light of these findings, future studies could explore strategies for strengthening women's legal protection in unregistered marriages and examine how religious leaders might guide communities toward practices that align more closely with both Islamic principles and contemporary understandings of justice. Such research would provide valuable insights for policymakers, religious authorities, and civil society in addressing the complex realities of polygamy in Indonesia.

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