



RESEARCH PAPER

**Analyzing the Effects of Polygyny on First-Wives among Pashtun
Community in Quetta, Pakistan**

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ABSTRACT

The current study examines the concept of polygyny, which refers to the practice of having two or more spouses simultaneously. Despite, of its existence in Pashtun population, there was still a lack of scholarly research on the subject. This study aimed to investigate the effects of polygyny on first-wives in terms of their emotional relationships, family dynamics, and financial well-being. Consequently, the researcher opted qualitative technique to examine the experiences of first wives. The researcher has selected population from Quetta using snowball sampling. A total of twenty interviews were done by in-depth interviews, adhering to the principles of data saturation. Thematic analysis was utilized to examine the data. The findings highlighted that polygyny resulted in distant, nervous, and broken relationships with first wives. This study uncovered an adverse environment characterized by a lack of emotional and financial support for first wives, leading to maladjustment. The present study only determined the effects of polygyny on first-wives. Moreover, the future researchers must investigate the different age's people in this area such as children, adolescents.

Keywords: Emotional Experience, Familial Relationship, Financial, First-Wives, Polygyny

Introduction

Polygyny refers to the practice of a man being married to two or more female partners, resulting in extended family arrangements. In the past two decades, polygamy has been the subject of considerable advancements in social, political, and academic discussions. Polygyny is the act of a man being married to multiple wives or female partners simultaneously (Yang, 2003). prior literature has commonly used the term polygamy interchangeably with polygyny, as polygamy is widely recognized by the general public. Furthermore, prior articles predominantly focused on polygyny and thus employed the term polygamy more frequently. In Pakistan, polygyny is socially accepted among Muslims, where a man is allowed to marry multiple women simultaneously, a practice known as polygyny. In addition, it is worth noting that Pashtun households exclusively engage in the practice of polygyny, as documented by (Barfield, 2003), due to their affiliation with Muslim society. The current study examines polygynous marriages, which involve a legal sexual relationship between one male and multiple females (often ranging from one to four) simultaneously. This study aimed to qualitatively investigate the impact of polygyny on the intimate relationships of first-wives within the Pashtun community in Quetta, Baluchistan, Pakistan. The phenomenon was deemed necessary to investigate in the present circumstances, as it has been identified as a concern in previous studies. Additionally, the researcher has personally observed significant negative effects of polygynous marriages on the lives of children and adolescents, as noted by (Al-Shamsi, & Fulcher, 2005). Furthermore, there is another significant deficiency that the researcher has identified from previous literature reviews. These reviews suggest that conducting a qualitative research study on family relationships in polygynous families would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Additionally, (Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo 2008) have already initiated a

progressive intervention in this area. Thus, building upon the preceding suggestions, this research study specifically examines the longevity of marriages involving first-wives within a polygynous household setting.

Previous literature reviews have highlighted the negative aspects of polygynous marriages, such as strained family relationships and low socioeconomic status. (Graham, & Slonim-Nevo 2002) have found that children and women in such marriages experience behavioral and emotional issues. Despite the regular occurrence of the same phenomenon in the Pashtun population in Quetta, there are currently no scholarly publications on the subject. There was a requirement to adequately address this gap, and it was recommended to examine the experiences of first-wives in connection to polygyny practices and ascertain the impact of polygyny on their relationship with their spouse. According to (Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan ,1999) in today's society, the significant role of partners and the strong relationship between parents are considered crucial for creating a positive family environment and promoting the emotional, social, and self-esteem development of children. If a second wife enters the family, the husband's attention becomes divided between the two spouses. The researcher was interested in examining how first-wives see their intimate relationship with a polygynous family.

Literature Review

In the current literary investigation, the researcher consulted secondary materials such as research papers, scholarly publications, and periodical reports to find any gaps and gain a deeper grasp of the subject matter by examining it through the lens of previous investigations. (Thobejane & Flora, 2014) argue that the practice of polygamy has a long history and is considered an ancient phenomenon. Every civilization worldwide has experienced it for extended periods of time. Approximately 83% of human societies permit polygyny because of the global imbalance in the male-to-female ratio. Furthermore, American Muslim women have expressed a strong perception of polygamy as being associated with emotional abuse, manipulation, and unequal treatment by their husbands. (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001) demonstrated the occurrence of physical violence resulting from animosity between co-wives. In Sierra Leone, significant tensions and anxiety arose among co-wives due to the inequitable distribution of resources and time by their spouse in their daily routines. However, studies conducted at Brandeis, an American private research university in Waltham, showed that polygamy was a disastrous battle that left women vulnerable financially and mentally. Surprisingly, it was difficult to share the love, feelings, and other material activities of one's husband with others. (Joffe, 2016) argues that the polygamous setting has a negative impact on the upbringing of children. Both genders observe the aggressive and competitive conduct of co-wives vying for the sexual attention of the husband, which has detrimental effects on the well-being of the progeny. In Bedouin Arab culture, (Al-Krenawi, & Kanat-Maymon,2017) discovered that teenagers from polygamous homes experience more mental and social challenges compared to their peers from monogamous families. Additionally, they documented a greater prevalence of mental issues, violent conduct, and anxiety among adolescents from non-monogamous households when compared to those from monogamous families (Muzaffar, et. al., 2018) According to a study by (Hakami ,2017), people who live in polygynous households face numerous difficulties in building their sense of security, self-confidence, and wellbeing. (Pervez & Batool, 2016) conducted a study in Pakistan that revealed a similar situation of polygyny as observed in other Asian countries. The research found that the second marriage of husbands had a negative impact on the interpersonal relationships of their wives. The wives reported experiencing broken, distant, uncomfortable, and detached associations with their husbands. The portrayal of the relationship with the stepfamily was depicted as complex, characterized by intense animosity and disapproval.

Material and Methods

This study has chosen to use the qualitative method to allocate specific phenomena. In addition to employing a qualitative method, the phenomenon was examined using descriptive research to elucidate the precise intricacies of a situation and the close bond between family members. The researcher has opted for conducting in-depth interviews as the method of data gathering. Quetta served as the focal point of this study. The researcher has specifically chosen Pashtun polygynous families using the snowball sampling method. A total of twenty individuals were nominated for this qualitative work. All of the women were elder spouses, ranging in age from 30 to 60. Furthermore, to ensure the participants' privacy, the researcher employed numerical identifiers instead of their actual names. Numbers ranging from 1 to 20 were selected for first wives. Data saturation would determine the study's sample size. A total of twenty interviews were done in accordance with the principles of data saturation. However, after conducting 10 interviews, the data collection process is complete for replication. A Pashtu-language audio recording was made using an interview guide to gather detailed information in a face-to-face setting. Moreover, data was analyzed through thematic analysis tool.

Results and Discussion

In addition, the first wives saw their relationship with their husbands and their second family as more harmful. Furthermore, the first wives reported experiencing a significant amount of emotional distance, separation, and marital conflict, as well as mental distress, health problems, and the neglectful behavior of their husbands. All participants belonged to Pashtun families, and the unit of analysis consisted of the first wives from polygynous Pashtu families. The family structure is entirely based on the joint family concept. In this ongoing study, the majority of participants resided in joint families, with only two families residing in nuclear households. Many of the first wives were chosen from their own tribe or from among their cousins, as they adhered strictly to their traditional traditions. The bulk of participants were unemployed, with only three of them being employed in low-paying positions. Ultimately, the representation of suffering the injustice of husbands by first wives in polygynous homes can be attributed to religious and cultural influences, as well as the need for the survival of the younger generation. Moreover, women were unemployed and entirely reliant on their husbands for their financial needs. Consequently, the researcher conducted a thorough examination of the data using the method of thematic analysis. Additionally, the subsequent subjects were thoroughly illuminated as the primary focal points of inquiry.

Familial Relationship Experience of First-Wives

The first spouses saw their marital experience as more unpleasant and harmful due to their husband's involvement with his second family. Furthermore, the first wives reported experiencing a significant amount of emotional distance, detachment, and high levels of marital conflict. They also mentioned their husbands' mental instability, health concerns, and their 'tendency to ignore their needs.

Distant Relation: Social Disaffiliation

Most of the women encountered a tense and weak intimate relationship with their spouses. The practice of polygyny has had a detrimental impact on their love, resulting in a diminished ability for women to engage in robust and unrestricted communication with their partners. After entering into a second marriage, the husband's genuine behavior towards his previous wife comes to an end. The male group was shown to be disloyal in their relationships, prioritizing their own personal interests above all else. The majority of women reported that one woman abandoned her entire family for a single spouse. However, if the husband then disregarded her for another woman, the resulting emotional pain would

become overwhelming. Another woman usurped the first wives' happiness. In a rigorous study conducted by (Al Krenawi ,1999), it was also found that the senior wives had a similarly poor-quality relationship with their husbands compared to the junior wives. This is because the husband's second marriage is solely based on love. The husband's excessive concentration on second wives is causing first wives to experience poor self-esteem, worry, and dissatisfaction in their marriages.

The 14-year-old female respondent claimed:

“that his second wife had abducted her husband and taken control of both his material and intangible assets. Furthermore, she significantly contributed to the vast emotional barrier that developed between my spouse and me. The spouse initiated a significant differentiation between us, creating a stark contrast akin to the distinction between the sky and the ground ”.

She expressed that she no longer felt genuine emotions towards her husband because of the arrival of a new person. She refrained from disclosing any information to him due to her perception of him as a deceitful and manipulative individual. According to her, the husband's second marriage created a significant barrier between them. The husband exhibited unequal treatment towards both individuals, while she assessed this disparity by comparing it to the difference between the sky and the earth. The husband became distant from her. She regarded polygyny as the most unfavorable facet of Islam.

Detachment: Social Isolation with Husband

First wives in polygynous families have commonly reported experiencing a greater degree of alienation from their husbands. They have specifically noted that their husbands undergo a noticeable change after entering into a second marriage. Nevertheless, their indifference had waned. They shifted their attention to another spouse, and their love for each other faded away. Prior to their second marriage, there was still affection between them. However, after the second marriage, both the husband's thoughts and emotions became detached from their first wives. Now, the first wives refuse to communicate with their husbands due to their husbands' complete transformation. According to them, her husband was highly cherished by her, but now her heart is shattered. The husband's attitudes have undergone a full transformation since his second marriage. Furthermore, his thoughts were solely focused on acquiring a new spouse. The husband's love and affection were only directed towards his other wife's children. The survival of polygynous families was described as arduous, with the women's presence mostly for the goal of ensuring the survival of the youth. After his second marriage, he completely disregarded his first wives and the vitality of their youth as the central aspects of their lives.

Impact of polygyny on Family integration setup

Marital Conflict: Domestic Violence

The occurrence of intense marital conflict is evident among co-wives and their husbands due to the heightened levels of discrimination in terms of household and emotional resources. The respondents exemplified the intense rivalry that exists within a polygynous family setting. Women were increasingly reporting instances of exploitation by their husbands. This resulted in a conflict among the members of the family. The women remained in a setting that was filled with sorrow and regarded the polygynous family as the primary source of disputes. This disrupted the emotional tranquility of wives, particularly those who are young. The act of sharing a husband with other women was perceived as a challenging endeavor by the first spouses. Nevertheless, the evidence is closely intertwined with prior studies, indicating that first wives symbolize a negative social connection and a lack of interest in their husband and his second wife. The family disputes resulted in the

manifestation of heightened emotional and hyperactive problems. In the study conducted by Al-Krenawi ,1997, As the participant stated,

sharing one's husband with another person is equally as terrible as wearing someone else's outfit. However, it is unbearable when you are a person with a great deal of compassion.

The respondents highlighted the different degrees of marital conflicts among themselves, specifically highlighting the severe bodily injuries they experienced. Despite the daily problems, the youth engage in fights with their father, resulting in a highly hostile family situation. The husband consistently subjected the youth to maltreatment, resulting in their emotional distress. They conveyed that the father's approval of a second marriage without any valid reason was extremely difficult.

Husband's Ignorance: Negligence

The study was conducted on women who were previously married to their partners. Occupying the role of a figurative spouse. The second priority took precedence over all other considerations. The idea of compromising with a second marriage for the spouse was entertained, but it was endured owing to the exuberance of youth. The second wives held greater value compared to the first wives, as most of them entered into their second marriage by their own volition. Historically, the first marriage was typically contingent upon parental authorization. The husband devoted his entire life to his second spouse.

The task of accepting the husband's second wife was deemed arduous, although the respondents managed to adapt to this situation as a result of cultural and religious influences. Survival has become an imperative for first wives and their offspring. When the husband entered the room of his second wife, Therefore, the initial thoughts of the first spouses coincidentally occurred in this direction. Even they themselves were unable to focus on their children's socialization. Sharing the husband with others proved challenging due to the significant amount of time they had spent with him. However, the idea of her husband was having an impact on the other woman. The husband abandoned his first wife and their youthful vigor in order to devote himself entirely to his new partner.

Emotional Connection of First-Wives with Their Spouses

Disinterest: Husband's Unavailability

The survey found that husbands did not provide support or assistance to their first wives and children at times of illness or celebration. They handled everything alone. The husband's participation in the concerns concerning the first wives and their youth was insufficient. First-wives living in polygynous families have a higher degree of aversion towards their husbands. The majority of women asserted that their husbands were not fulfilling their tasks adequately. All the focus was being directed at second wives and their offspring. The equitable allocation of time and affection was observed to be less favorable in polygynous families.

The study revealed that Pashtun first wives were typically chosen from the husband's own clan or from among his cousins as a means of preserving a robust lineage. Furthermore, the majority of the participants regarded exchange marriage traditions as a contributing factor to polygyny. In the end, religious and cultural factors as well as the need to ensure the survival of the younger generation had an impact on how first wives represented suffering the injustice of husbands in polygynous homes. Moreover, women were unemployed and entirely reliant on their husbands for their financial needs. All of these aforementioned findings exhibit some degree of dissimilarity and present novel information compared to earlier research investigations.

Health Experiences of Women in Polygynous Relationships

Women reported a higher prevalence of health difficulties, attributing their condition to the practice of polygyny by their husbands. The majority of cases involved elevated blood pressure (BP), gastrointestinal issues, intense headaches, and mental patients. A significant number of individuals sought treatment from a psychiatrist. Furthermore, as a result of the intricate levels of tension and despair, they had various health complications. The majority of them demonstrated a correlation between the onset of diabetes and the husband's remarriage. Moreover, the Bedouin-Arab Study (Al-Krenawi , 1997) reported that women have somatic complaints such as headaches, restlessness, and nervousness, which are associated with anxieties and stress.

The individual being referred to is a 15-year-old female.

"I attribute my heart disease problem to my husband." On the day that I was in the hospital with my son, who was suffering from anemia, my husband informed me that he had entered into a second marriage. Upon hearing this news, I was overwhelmed with emotions and lost consciousness due to a sudden increase in blood pressure, which exacerbated my existing heart condition.

Respondent 5 said that the husband's second marriage had a detrimental impact on her emotional and physical well-being. She experienced cardiovascular ailments as a result of her husband's practice of polygyny. Her family likewise fell victim to financial difficulties.

Emotional Disturbance: Absence of Unity

Several women experienced psychological distress following their husband's practice of polygyny. Since their wedding day until now, their former spouses and early years have been disrupted. The participants said that the husband's second marriage has also impacted the first wives' emotional attachment to their own children, mostly owing to several persistent issues arising from the polygynous setting. Polygyny significantly diminished their life satisfaction.

A single participant, aged 19, stated:

"Due to her husband's frequent conflicts and aggressive behavior, she saw herself as a mere ornament, and this led to the elimination of her social activities. She had a state of mental distraction and was unable to focus well on any aspect of life".

The husband's profound ignorance fueled their aggression towards their kids. The spouses in polygynous families had a profound state of emotional depression. The ladies found the husband's second marriage to be exceedingly intolerable, without any discernible cause. Polygyny practices were universally condemned, save in cases of significant coercion, since they were held accountable for the disruption of a harmonious family environment. Increased friction within the family leads to the development of health issues among its members. In a study conducted by (Klomegah ,1997), it was found that there were significant levels of tension and anxiety among co-wives due to the unequal allocation of resources and time by their husbands in their daily activities.

The Impact of Polygyny on the Financial Status of First Wives

Experiences in the Economic Situation: Financial Stress

According to the study, first wives play a crucial role in how husband polygyny affects families' financial well-being. The participants said that the financial situation has deteriorated following the husband's remarriage. Their husbands were not going to adhere

to the typical business routine, and they spent the entire day with their new wives. Additionally, their financial costs have been bifurcated, resulting in economic detriment to their family position. The requirements and amenities of life for the first wives and their youth have been entirely disregarded.

Participant 17 stated:

In addition, during their second marriage, the husbands themselves experienced emotional distress due to frequent domestic conflicts. He lacks the ability to effectively handle the financial needs of both families.

The practice of polygyny has had a detrimental impact on our economic well-being. Previously, my husband's salary alone supported me and our children, allowing him to meet their requirements and fulfill their wishes. However, even my husbands are unable to provide them with essential amenities like nutritious meals, proper clothing, healthcare, and educational opportunities owing to the excessive number of family members. Intense competition was observed among co-wives for the financial resources of their shared spouse. Recent research conducted in Africa has shown more evidence of the significant impact of polygyny on the financial resources of both children and women. When a guy enters into a second marriage, his family size inevitably increases dramatically within a short period of time. What shape does a family take on as a focal point of conflict? According to (Jonas,2012) in polygynous families, the members often compete with one another for the limited financial resources provided by the father.

Respondent 14 stated

that they had endured severe financial hardship to the point where their own brothers were providing for their basic needs and those of their children. They find it extremely challenging to always rely on their brothers for everything, and at times, they even contemplate suicide due to the overwhelming pressure.

She accused her spouse of being responsible for the destruction of her life and youth.

Discussion

The objective of this qualitative study was to examine the personal narratives of women who are the first spouses in polygynous homes within the Pashtun community in Quetta. However, the current analysis discovered a significant amount of overlap with the previous literature evaluations. Although the present study's findings align with previous research, it is important to note that this study is the first sociological scientific effort on polygyny practices among the Pashtun in Quetta, Baluchistan, Pakistan. Additionally, the survey revealed that Pashtun first brides traditionally belonged to their husbands' own clan or were chosen among their cousins, with the purpose of preserving strong connections with their own lineage. Furthermore, the majority of the participants saw exchange marriage traditions as a contributing factor to polygyny. In the end, religious and cultural factors as well as the need for the survival of the children have an impact on how first wives in polygynous homes portray the injustice of their husbands. Moreover, women were unemployed and completely reliant on their husbands for their financial needs. All of these aforementioned findings exhibit dissimilarities and present novel information in comparison to past study investigations.

The polygynous family setting was characterized by intense interpersonal connections, harsh parental conduct, and the presence of destructive and nervous conditions among both wives and husbands. All participants expressed negative emotions in their relationships due to the husband's remarriage, resulting in the development of distant, anxious, and weak social connections or strained relationships. These findings align

with previous studies conducted in Pakistan and Arab countries, which also highlighted the significant lack of knowledge and emotional avoidance manifested as strained and broken relationships among co-wives in polygynous households. The references used are (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan 1999; Pervez & Batool 2016), and Yang 2003). Furthermore, in prior research, competition amongst women was commonly observed in terms of the social and emotional support they received from their spouse. The references used are (Alean Krenawi, 2006 ; Hassouneh-Phillips 2001). The current study data establishes a connection with previous findings, namely the significant difficulties experienced by women and their husbands due to increased discrimination in household and emotional resources. The respondents exemplified the intense rivalry that exists within a polygynous household setting. However, the current study revealed that spouses and their children in stepfamilies universally exhibit behaviors such as discontent, dislike, envy, competition, and a lack of willingness to share with their stepfamilies. Verse 4:3 of Surah 4 (An-Nisa) states that Allah has allowed polygyny primarily to provide support to orphans and vulnerable women, such as widows and divorcees, as a means to address the socioeconomic issues highlighted by (Rahman, 2016). Regrettably, (Nemat, & Werner, 2016) delineated the actual manifestation of this phenomenon in society, wherein men's second marriages were predominantly with young, attractive, intelligent individuals who held esteemed positions in society. This practice directly contradicts the teachings of the Quran in Islam. In line with the previous study, a similar pattern was seen among the Pashtun community. The majority of second wives were between the ages of 16 and 30, and they were much younger than their husbands. The majority of second wives are often of a similar age as their husbands' first daughters from their previous marriages. In the Pashtun community in Quetta, there was a preference for second marriages with women who were not only stunning and attractive but also had high social status.

Conclusion

According to Elbedour et al.'s earlier research from 2002, polygyny was seen as a controversial phenomenon on a national and international level. In the past twenty years, polygamy has gained substantial attention and advancement in communal, governmental, and theoretical spheres. Although the same occurrences have been seen among the Pashtun people of Quetta, there has been a lack of adequate research. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the experiences of first-wives within the Pashtun community in Quetta, Baluchistan, Pakistan. By employing qualitative methods, the researcher has elicited the subjective emotions, perspectives, and experiences of individuals inside polygynous families to understand how they attribute meaning to the presence of this phenomenon. The researcher opted for conducting in-depth interviews to individually examine the subjects and get comprehensive information. The interview sessions varied in duration, lasting between 47 and 60 minutes. With the participants' consent, they were primarily audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. The 20 respondents were allocated via snowball sampling, based on the data saturation points. The data was evaluated using thematic qualitative analysis. Moreover, by centering the primary inquiries on the perception of first-wives on their relationship experiences inside a polygynous home, what is the impact of polygyny on their financial, emotional, and social well-being? Basically, answering the following questions, the present study has highlighted the adverse effects of polygynous family environment on the first-wives and their children. As the first-wives' perception reported in insecure, social tensions environment and mal-adjustment to the emotional and financial adjustment.

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