

The Impact of Polygynous Marriage on Select Mëranaw Families in Marawi City

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Abstract. Polygyny is an Islamic practice that allows Muslim men to marry up to four under special conditions and circumstances. This paper specifically seeks to address the following objectives: a. give a glimpse into the families' lives in a polygynous marriage; b. discuss the impact of polygyny among the Mëranaw families in Marawi City; c. enumerate some pros and cons of polygyny among the families involved. Furthermore, this study used qualitative research approach that is narrative in design. For the raw data used in this study, twenty (20) key informants—spouses, wives, and children—who were part of polygynous families were personally interviewed. Secondary sources such as articles and books were also used to support the primary source. The data reveal that several scenarios have demonstrated that polygyny is possible within a family and that members can coexist peacefully, based on the three perspectives of wives, husbands, and children. Polygyny undoubtedly has disadvantages, just like any other type of relationship and, in the wrong hands, can cause a family to disintegrate. Nevertheless, others see polygyny as a solution to their problems with husbands' reproductive needs and wives' infertility—as well as seeking for companionship. Keywords: Polygyny, Islam, Marawi City, Marriage, Mëranaw

1 Introduction

Family is the basic unit of society that constitutes the husband, wife and children who performed varied essential roles in establishing the relationship that connects between them. In developing a blissful family, a couple must have a mutual deep affection that often ended up to marriage. Marriage is generally solemnized by religious authorities from various religious denominations. In Islam, marriage is classed into monogamous and polygynous marriages. The former is what is strictly required to all believers at reaching the age of puberty while the latter fell into the category of *Sunnah* that simply categorized as “*optional*” and was not declared obligatory to Muslim men. Furthermore, certain guidelines must be followed, and Muslim men are only permitted to have a maximum of four (4) wives. In fact, Islam became the center of controversy because of its tolerance for this practice, particularly in the West. Perhaps criticizing this behavior stems from an ignorance of its origins and characteristics.

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History was a witness to a society where polygyny was a prevalent practice everywhere in the world. In the Bible, King Solomon is recorded to have seven hundred (700) wives and three hundred (300) concubines. In the case of China, emperors had many wives and concubines who lived in the imperial harem that even reached thousands in numbers [1]. King Henry VIII of England had three wives but was rumored to have six (6) wives [2]. These are just some examples of the existence of polygyny in history, which has, up to date, remained intact. Though this tradition was made legal in Islam, it is practiced differently based on its proper rulings from the Qur'an and Hadith.

The Philippines had a considerable number of Muslims that accounted for approximately eleven percent (11%) of the country's total population [3]. From this number, only a few resort to this practice, the majority of whom are in late adulthood. Among the thirteen (13) existing ethnolinguistic Muslim groups in the Philippines, the researchers intentionally chose the Mëranaws who lived in Marawi City due to its proximate location that can be easily accessed. Furthermore, this study specifically aims to answer the following:

- (1) What are the experiences of the families involved in a polygynous marriage?
 - a. Wives' Narratives
 - b. Husbands' Narratives
 - c. Children's Narratives
- (2) How does polygyny affect the basic unit of Mëranaw society in Marawi City?
- (3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of polygynous marriage based on the experiences of the families involved?

Additionally, this study is important in four ways. First, is to rectify one's extrapolation of the purported empirical notion on families involved in polygynous marriages; this will first give facts illustrating the actual circumstances within a polygynous household. Second, narratives that depict the families' experiences with polygyny and how it affected their relationships will be presented. Third, researchers' interest in Mëranaw study can use this as a reference to learn about a particular aspect of their culture, namely the close-knit family relationships.

Fourth, this will help the readers comprehend the virtue of polygyny by understanding the Muslim-Mëranaw families' situation within the framework of Islam.

As for the scope and breadth of this study, this will only focus on the impact of polygyny in Mëranaw families. Further, the researchers being Muslim-Mëranaw, are not into advocacy of whether promoting or averting someone to practice polygyny. This is a purely academic research aiming to raise awareness of the pros and cons of polygyny as well as how this practice brought a major impact on the core unit of society. To achieve a comprehensive grasp of polygyny, specific stories will be shared on the following pages about the kind of established relationship between families under polygyny.

2 Framework of Analysis

Before the development of monogyny, polygyny has for long time prevalent in many societies. Large religious denominations like Christianity and Judaism permit polygyny with no restrictions on the number of wives. In the Bible, several noble prophets were depicted to have many wives such as Prophet Ibrahim/Abraham (AS) who had three wives: Sara, Hajira and Qatoora; Prophet Jacob had four (4) wives; Prophet David had nineteen (19) wives and; King Solomon married seven hundred (700) wives. In a similar vein, Hinduism permits as many wives as possible and has no restrictions on marriage. In contrast, prior to Islam's reintroduction by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, Arab women were treated poorly and there were no restrictions as for the numbers of wives to marry. This practice ceased to evolved

until Islam came that put proper rulings on polygyny. One of Islam's main sources, the Qur'an, contains the following verse:

“Marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one” [4]

The Prophet Muhammad SAW commanded his followers to choose four (4) and divorce the others if anyone among them exceeded the limit as soon as this ayah (verse) was revealed. A few well-known sahaba (companions) such as Ghailan RA who had ten (10) wives, divorced the six (6); Qais bin Haris who had eight(8) wives, divorced the four (4) and; Nofal bin Ma’awiya had five (5) wives and divorced one (1) of them [5].

This act as ordained in Islam progressively shed light on women’s rights. In a society that was tainted by corruption and treated women worse than slaves, this demonstrates a great deal of respect. Part of the virtues of polygyny is to protect women, as the Qur’an stated:

“Men are in charge of women by (right of) what (qualities) Allah has given one over the other and what they spend (for maintenance) from their wealth. . .” [6]

Muslim men are aware of the general belief that women are more prone to commit sin and are frequently the target of abuse due to their vulnerability. They are also mentioned to have multiple numbers in hell as they curse often and ungrateful [7]. It is the responsibility of men in Islam to protect women from this threat. Getting married to them is one method to demonstrate this protection and offers men complete control over them. Women must be protected from behaviors that could endanger them, such as social problems that are progressively transforming into accepted social norms. Prostitution, premarital sex relationships, live-in partnerships, rape, and other situations are a few instances of these. Almost all religions denounced these act and are sanctioned at all cost. The fact that the number of women is rapidly rising while that of men is falling only serves to exacerbate this problem. Several factors contribute to these, including the fact that most men served in wars, which raises their mortality rate while some became crippled. As in the case of the Philippines, only 7-8% is the current strength of females in the Philippine army while the rest are all males [8].

Additionally, some women would prefer not to have a husband who is disabled, and medical research has shown that women have stronger immune systems than males. Their body is able to combat illnesses with ease [9]. Also, there is a rising toll of sodomy as a result of LGBTQ+ campaigns, which in return, reduces the number of straight men that prefer to have wives. Further, their liking for their fellow males will have a significant impact on the number of males that remain [10]. Prisons globally also housed many numbers of men compare to women. Given all of these factors, a significant portion of women will be unable to find a husband if an equal number of men and women choose to marry in a monogamous union. In Islam, polygyny was proposed as a remedy to these perceived issues. Contrary to other types of relationships, like polyamory, polygyny may be the most reasonable way to solve the issue of human immorality, which is considered a serious sin in religious contexts. One such issue that destroys every household is adultery and concubinage.

Undoubtedly, there are monogamous households in today's world that simply promote monogamy on the surface, but in practice, concubinage betray and undermine its formidability. For the sake of their children's future, many of these wives frequently choose to ignore it. According to medical specialists, the problem of concubinage stems from the belief that a husband has greater sexual demands than a wife [11]. Sometimes a wife can't meet her husband's biological demands at the same time because she's too busy taking care of the kids, the house, and recently as idea on women empowerment became a norm, to their careers. Further, women experienced menstrual cycles and pregnancy thus, could not afford the sexual demand of her husband for a long span of time. Because of this, some would

inevitably turn to an immoral relationship given the nature of males. The polygynous marriage on the other hand, compare to concubinage, appeals as more morally decent since it is not considered as a sin and also wife/wives are aware of the said relationship.

Furthermore, polygyny can be a need if 1. A woman has infertility issue 2. Men has more sexual desire than women 3. War period such as World War II that sliced a great number of men and leaving their widows alone 4. Procreation [12] 5. Address societal ill ‘the injustice towards the orphans’ [13]. There is a one specific instance according to the general fatwa (Islamic rulings agreed by the Ulama) that in times of war when men fought and died in the process, polygyny can be made obligatory to a particular place where war is taking place. This is for the purpose of remaking the population of Muslim community in the place. One example for this is the current situation today in Palestine where genocide is currently taking place.

Regarding the basic Islamic injunction on polygyny, males are not required to practice polygyny if their goal is to satiate their own desires only. Widows and divorcees are also given first priority in this practice. The primary source of inspiration for a Sunnah that all males should adhere to is the example set by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, whose wives are all widows except Aisha RA, and were all treaty with equity. To engage in such a practice, one must demonstrate a noble intention to marry women in order to support them and uphold their rights. Additionally, men who are willing to incur the risk of polygyny should understand the importance of treating their spouses with justice. This implies that wives and children should receive an equal amount of attention, time and financial assistance otherwise; men will be accountable for a serious transgression. It would be best for him to have just one wife if these requirements cannot be met.

3 Research Methodology

This is qualitative research employing a narrative research design. This aims to collect stories of families involved in polygynous marriages in Marawi City and how it affects the family structure of Mèranaw society. A case study is also employed in presenting the confidential stories of the informants who are directly involved. However, some of these key informants chose to hide their identities for security purposes, thus being given pseudonyms. Most of the respondents involved are Muslim religious leaders and *Ustadh* (teachers), who are both males and females; *Talamidh* (Arabic students), who are composed of both students from *madrasah* and *toril*. *Madrasah* refers to a formal schooling where multi-disciplines of Islam are taught, while *toril* refers to a school where students are confined in a private school for at least two consecutive school years to learn the proper recital of the Qur’an and also to let them memorize the entire text of the Qur’an.

In addition to the religious sector, the research's informants include multi-stakeholder participation, which includes college students from different universities, such as students from various universities who are at the college level, government employees, self-employed, and unemployed, is among the informants of this research. There are a total of twenty (20) informants who were reached through purposive and snowball sampling methods. A semi-structured questionnaire is the primary research instrument used to communicate with the informants, along with an in-depth interview. From this twenty (20) are five (5) husbands, five (5) wives, and ten (10) children engaged in polygynous marriages.

3.1 Locale of the Study

Marawi was originally founded as Dansalan which means ‘a place where ships berth’ in 1639 by the Spaniards led by Francisco Atienza who came from Iligan in an effort to take control of the Lake Lanao region. However, thousands of Méranaw warriors drove the Spaniards outside the frontiers and retreated to Iligan, clearly failing in their conquest plot, leaving it abandoned afterward. It wasn't until they launched another assault on the Sultanate of Maguindanao in the late 1900s that the invaders made a comeback to the region. During the American era, from 1907 to 1940, Marawi was the capital of the undivided province of Lanao.

Marawi became a charter city in 1940. The granting of charter to the old Dansalan municipality was jointly conceived by the Philippine Commonwealth President Manuel L. Quezon and Senator Tomas L. Cabili. The changing of official name from Dansalan to Marawi was through Congressional amendment of the Charter on 1956 sponsored by Senator Domocao Alonto which embodied by RA No. 1552 on June 16, 1956. Later, the city was renamed as Islamic City of Marawi through a Parliamentary Bill No. 261 in the defunct Batasang Pambansa, during Marcos Regime [14].

The city is the home of Mindanao State University, the largest university in the entire Mindanao next to the University of the Philippines. Other institutions and colleges were also established in the city. Simultaneously, it is also the location of numerous prominent madaris, the most of which are supported by Middle Eastern nations. Given that 99.96% of people in the city identify as Muslims, Arabic is taught in the majority of the schools. It is fairly typical for them to build madaris in Marawi City. This is because hundreds of thousand Muslim children acquire their primary education and perhaps the only formal education in terms of learning Quran and Hadith.

The Méranaw in the region founded and run these institutions, either on a private or government-registered basis. In reality, many of Marawi's esteemed asaatih/ulama received their education in several Middle Eastern nations, like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the like. These individuals are in charge of Marawi City's extensive network of maktabas (libraries), masajids, and madaris, or higher Islamic schools. Through these channels, the Islamic culture had a significant impact on the Marawi community.

3.2 Review of Related Literature

3.2.1 Marriage in Islam as an Obligation

Because Marriage in Islam is an incumbent practice for those who are capable and have the means to marry. To be part of this noble institution according to Arabani[15] will: (1)refrain someone to commit immoralities that ruin morals and eliminate degradation of one’s dignity; (2) keeping the existence of the human race, increasing the number of Muslims, causing annoyance to the disbelievers through the procreation of those striving in the cause of Allah as well as those defending His religion; (3) marriage leads to maintaining chastity and keeping away from unlawful sexual intercourse that ruins human communities; (4) it involves the responsibility of men toward women that includes sheltering them and providing for them and; (5) Marriage creates atmosphere of tranquility, mutual concord, security, and spiritual comfort between both husband and wife. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them” [16]

“It is He who created you from a single person and made his mate of like nature in order that he might find tranquility in her. When they are united she

bears a light burden and carries it about (unnoticed). When she grows heavy they both pray to God, their Lord (saying): If you grant us goodly child we vow we shall (ever) be grateful”[17]

“It is He Who created you from one soul and created from it its mate that he might dwell in security with her”[18]

This idea is further supported in the Ahadith (list of hadith narration) such as: “O young people! Whoever among you has the ability to marry should marry, for it helps in lowering one’s gaze and guarding one’s chastity (it guards one’s private parts against immorality)”[19]

“Marry women who are loving and very prolific, for I shall be proud of great number of you (i.e. Muslim nation) in comparison with (other) nations on the Day of Resurrection”[20]

This proves that marriage in Islam is an obligatory practice that is beneficial to the believers. Treating one’s spouse like the wife will elevate one’s honor. As what the Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

“The believers who show the most perfect Faith are those who have the best behaviour, and the best of you are those who are the best to their wives”[21]

3.2.2 The Concept of Polygyny

The Rights and Duties of Women in Islam by Abdul Ghaffar Hasan (1999), Polygyny defined as a practice where a man is allowed a maximum of four wives provided he treats them with equality and justice [22]. If this could not be achieved then the best for him is a monogamous marriage. Accordingly the primary purpose behind polygyny is to provide for war widows and orphans. Due to the decreasing number of men during wars, polygyny became the only decent solution for widows and orphans who were left alone.

From Monogamy to Polygyny: A Way Through by Umm AbdurRahman Hirschfelder and Umm Yasmeen depicted polygyny in a positive light that addresses social issues such as rape, growing numbers of women, prostitution, etc. [23]. This also provides practical advises towards women who are both engaged and not into polygyny. Accordingly, polygyny is one prominent practice that will make one neutralize its emotion leading to the attainment of a high level of iman (faith). Practically, this book contributes on the clear explanation of the concept of polygyny from the Islamic perspective as provided in the study.

In the book Polygyny: What It Means When African American Muslim Women Share Their Husbands by Debra Majeed (2015) [24], shed light on polygyny in a more extensive discussion. She featured the side of women who accept and oppose polygyny as a practice making the African American Muslim Women as examples on this narrative. Further, Majeed also highlighted the legal, emotional, and communal implications of polygyny and implored on the recognition of the state with women and children who are likely neglected. The book showed a balance perspective on polygyny presenting the two contradicting narratives.

Mormon Polygamy History by Richard S. Van Wagoner elaborate the history of Mormon polygamy who preached and advocate the practice of polygamy among the followers of the Church in England [25]. This advocacy became the central mission of the Mormon in the second half of the 19th century. Further, this presented narratives from the bible that depicts noble Prophets such as King Solomon, David, Abraham who engaged in polygamy. Polygamy was viewed as an eternal gospel principle and practicing such will make someone achieve the highest state of exaltation in the hereafter. Another interesting revelation from this book is the disclosing of another monogamous form of relationship for women called as polyandry that is accordingly a practice in the early days of Mormonism. This book shows that polygyny was an old practice since the early times as evident from the available records.

The literature evaluation indicates that there hasn't been much research on polygyny actual cases hence, this study provides. Data on the favorability and vulnerability of a particular Muslim community were not shown on the sources available on polygyny. This study aims to enhance the existing research on polygyny in the context of Mēranaw family matters, specifically focusing on people who engage in this practice.

4 Results and Discussions: Narratives on Polygyny: Insider's Perspectives

4.1 Wives' Narratives on Polygyny

The Polygyny is not a new issue among the Mēranaws of Marawi City. While it is true that many Mēranaws today won't be willing to enter such relationship, there are also Mēranaws who leniently welcome the idea of polygyny. According to the interviews, first wives are typically the ones who suggest polygyny to their husbands. Some of these wives have a strong background in Islam, which suggests that they understand the virtue of polygyny. One example is the case of Umno Yusri, who is now sixty-three years (63) old, a graduate of kolya (baccalaureate level in Islamic education) at Al-Azhar University, Egypt, and also involved in Da'wah (Islamic propagation) activities. According to her, she ordered her husband to contract a marriage in order to bear a child. They had a fruitful marriage together for almost five (5) years before her husband married another with her consent. It was difficult for her to conceive because she was thirty-eight (38) years old when she got married. The second wife was around twenty (20) years old but failed to provide a child. In order to fulfill his goal to become a father, which the first wife approved of but the second wife did not, the husband therefore looked for a third wife. They were divorced because the second wife did not accept the proposal. Umno Yusri as patient and supporter as she is, she stayed and did not grow resentful of the third wife. Being a flawed person, she was unable to keep her heart healthy and acknowledge that, despite having co-wives for a very long period, she had once been broken when her husband had abandoned her to attend to the needs of the third wife. Her spouse was unaware that she was ill at the time. She started to feel depressed about not having somebody to rely on at that very moment. She was nevertheless able to build a good relationship with the third wife in spite of this. She said that reading Surah-yasin, a chapter from the Qur'an, is the best way for her to get over jealousy. She went on to say that while there may be pain in the early years of having a co-wife, eventually things will just become normal [26].

The third wife was a divorcee when she got married to Umno Yusri's husband. They were co-wives for fifteen (15) years, and accordingly, they have developed good relationships, treating each other like friends. Even though they were housed separately within MSU, Marawi, they maintain close ties. Every time the husband takes a visit to the third wife based on the appointed two-day arrangement, Umno Yusri will always send food through her husband to her co-wife. The third wife, on the other hand, used to do laundry for Umno Yusri, and they constantly meet in the workplace as they are both employees in the same university. Umno Yusri confessed that having a co-wife is to her advantage since she has someone to rely on and is given more time for herself with the absence of her husband. Unfortunately, the husband, despite marrying a third wife, was still unable to bear a child. But one positive impact of polygyny on him is that he becomes more affectionate, similar to his two wives towards him.[27]

A woman who similarly agreed to her husband getting married again because of his "chick boy" demeanor and the fact that most of her family members support polygyny told a similar scenario. Like in the case of this wife, sometimes having a good-looking husband puts a wife

in a disadvantage position. Because of her immense affection for him, she permitted him to wed a Mēranaw nurse. She claimed that for the first two years of being a co-wife, she was broken. It got to the point where she used to get possessive and wouldn't allow her husband to see the other wife during his appointed schedule. The two women were residing in Taif and Makkah, Saudi Arabia, in separate homes. Despite having another wife, the husband's affection for the first one did not diminish. He was considerate of her first wife's emotions and made her feel valued at all times. He always makes sure to console his first wife when he visits her second wife, and he never leaves until the first has given the go-ahead signal. Similar with the case of Umno Yusri, the first wife expressed that the struggle will only occur at the first stage but as time passes through, everything will fall into place. They will get used to it until acceptance would prevail among them. The second wife having no child helped the couple in rearing their seven (7) children both financially and morally. The children also considered the second wife as their own mother, on par with their biological mother, because of this closeness, a key element keeping the two ladies' positive friendship together. When the first wife looked after the second when she was ill, their love was strengthened. As of right now, this has persisted for the past 25 years and is still growing stronger every day [28].

The third narrative is the account of Noronisah Abdullah, a revert who hails from Ifugao, Philippines. She is the second wife of her Mēranaw husband. The first wife, who was in late adulthood, made her husband decide to enter polygyny. Her marriage to him was rooted in the condition of the first wife's marriage to their husband of marrying a revert or a widow. Exactly as she is, she was found by her husband, who married her with the consent of the first wife. In fact, she already had two (2) children from her previous husband and was practically looking for someone to help her take care of her children. She got along well with the first wife along the way, and the two of them were co-wives for about two (2) years. She said the first wife was always bringing meals for the family and was sweet and considerate. Regretfully, the first spouse passed away in 2004. The first wife's seven (7) children did not treat her any differently. The elder children of the first wife actually provided financial and moral support for her offspring. She wouldn't dispute, though, that occasionally it hurts her when her kids are compared to their elder siblings because all of them are accomplished professionals. The revelation that her husband had taken a third wife devastated her sense of fulfillment and happiness. She claimed that her husband had taken her to the Hajj so as to at least placate her about the prearranged marriage that would take place following her arrival. That's when she began to feel duped and began to judge herself harshly for her shortcomings as a wife, all the while maintaining that she had fulfilled her obligations. She ended the pain quickly and subsequently came back to her senses for her children's sake. The relationship of the husband to the third wife who was a nurse and divorcee did not last long due to the husband's unequal attention. The husband, however, continued to look for a new bride and married a fourth (4th) without getting his wives' permission, even after they split up. It was a covert union up until the family's eldest child discovered his father in Sarabi, MSU-Marawi with the fourth wife. Even though they have been co-wives for three (3) years, they have never seen each other. Unfortunately, the fourth wife was childless. There were times that her kids complained to her about how weak she was and how she wasn't fighting for her husband's attention. The fourth wife unluckily did not bear a child [29].

One noble reason for polygyny is the marriage of a widow for the purpose of helping her raise her children well. Such was the story of Jannah, who was a revert, a graduate of BS Commerce, now seventy (70) years old, and a retired employee. She had six (6) children from her previous husband. Having been mourning the death of her husband for a span of time, she practically longs for companionship, protection, and primarily to refrain from committing sins. She confessed that it was she who first expressed the motive and took a liking to her soon-to-be husband. They got married when she was fifty-five (55), and she knew very well

that her husband had wives, making her the fourth wife. She never set an eye on her co-wives but met their children, who used to call her omie (mother). In spite of not meeting her co-wives, she still provides support for them and even for their children [30].

Another interesting narrative where selflessness is depicted is the account of the two wives, who are best friends. Both of them are kolya graduates and are all niqabi (the way of wearing hijab; all body parts are covered except the eyes). The first wife had seven (7) children when she personally recommended her best friend Norque Musa to her husband. Norque also agreed with the arrangement because she needs someone to complete her, and she also had admiration for her best friend’s husband. After the marriage, they bore a daughter. The first wife, being an ustadha (Arabic teacher), would normally spend her half day in a madrasah (Arabic school). Thus, she leaves her seven (7) children under the care of her best friend, which she dearly loves to do as these children treat her as if she were their mother. These wives were separated in two rooms and had no quarrel all throughout the period [31].

A kolya graduate who also gave her husband commands to get married again gives a somewhat similar story, but she was occasionally distracted by her childrens' responses. She nevertheless went ahead with her plan to wed her husband off to a particular prospective wife despite this. She personally went to the girl's residence and made the marriage proposal as a sign of her dedication. In addition, the girl sent out invitations to the invitees to show that she was sincere about the marriage after her family and she gave their approval. She did not, however, attend the wedding, even though all six (6) of her children were there. She admitted that she didn't feel any discomfort at first, but as the wedding got closer, she suddenly realized that she was in pain. At that point, the only thing she could do was to adhere to her principle of being happy with her life. The second marriage disintegrated quickly as a result of unsolved problems. She claimed that following the divorce, their bond grew stronger [32].

Based on these testimonies, it appears that wives generally agree to polygyny in previous marriages, but occasionally it may not work out in the second marriage because of personal problems. In these stories, women are portrayed as resilient, strong individuals who, if they have a solid Islamic foundation and are aware of the benefits of polygyny, can be kind enough to surrender their most beloved man to other women. As these stories show, first wives can be generous in offering their spouse to other women for a variety of reasons, such infertility problems or the simple desire to have a co-wife so they can assist one another with domestic chores. Not all wives in these marriages, though, are like this portrayal; others give in and file for divorce because they can't handle the intense emotional toll that a polygynous marriage exacts.

Table 1. The table shows some underlying factors of Mèranaw females’ approval of polygyny.

Name of Wives	Age	Occupation	No. of co-wives/Order of Marriage	Reason for Entering Polygyny
1. Ummo Yusri	63	<i>Aleema</i>	Two (2), 1 st wife	Infertility issue
2. Informant 1	40	Housewife	One (1), 1 st wife	Husband’s personal desire
3. Noronisah Abdullah	53	Revert, Housewife	Three (3), 2 nd wife	Fulfill the <i>Sunnah</i> of protecting women
4. Jannah	70	Widow, Housewife	One (1), 2 nd wife	Fulfill the <i>Sunnah</i> of marrying a widow, for companionship
5. Norque Musa	45	<i>Ustadha</i>	One (1), 1 st wife	1 st wife desire to have a co-wife pointing out to her best friend
6. Informant 2	45	Housewife	One (1), 1 st wife	1 st wife desire to have a co-wife

4.2 Husbands Narratives on Polygyny

Nowadays, some Mëranaw would say that those men who had wives are commonly the ones who always seek satisfaction for another partner outside of their primary marriage. Perhaps it is a nature among men. Rutgers University biological anthropologist Helen Fisher, author of “Why Him? Why Her? And Why We Love”[33] says men are more likely to cite sexual motivations for infidelity and are less likely to fall in love with an extramarital partner. This rationale is only a supplement to the Sunnah, which is recognized as the primary driver behind having no more than four spouses. Though, acting on Sunnah, all of them claimed that choosing a spouse was their personal preference. Like the case of Disomimba, a faculty member of the KFCIAAS, who said that her second wife was his own option. He was married to his first wife, with whom he spent a long period of time; hence, he established a deep bond of companionship that is unbreakable until the arrival of his second wife. As a man, he always longs for a number of children that will bring happiness to his household. Having a few children drove him to the decision of entering into a polygynous marriage; thus, he agreed to the proposal of the group of Mëranaw, who came to his house and offered the girl. He told this woman prior to the wedding that he already had a wife and that he intended to stay married despite her presence. He ensured that she would accept the agreement that she had made. His first wife, who at the time was also afflicted with a serious illness, was unaware of this when they were married. However, the word spreads quickly, and the first wife, learning of the marriage in question, became enraged. Her sickness gets worse since she can't just accept that her spouse is already married to someone else. Feeling horrible, the husband tried everything to appease his unhappy wife, but he was unable to quickly put an end to her misery. Conversely, the children have grown to despise the second wife and feel sympathy for their mother. Eventually, the youngest child grows to appreciate the second wife, but not the eldest. In this instance, polygyny did not arise successfully and only persisted briefly following the passing of the first wife [34].

The narrative of Disomimba may appear unsuccessful, but the account of Aleem Pangarungan contradicts this experience. As a religious leader, his constant goal is for Islam to triumph under all conditions. He felt that in order to strengthen Islam, it was his responsibility to multiply numbers by raising children in a devout Islamic manner. He had nine (9) children with his two wives, yet he still yearned for many more. Just seeing the lovely faces of his children will paint a wide smile on his face, thus making him want to have more. His principles on polygyny centers on the idea of Sunnah which he claimed he had fulfilled its obligations by providing his two families with an equal share of attention and resources. He claimed that the concept of “justice” as it is expressed in the Qur’an never includes the emotional side of women since it necessitates a high standard that is difficult for the average person to meet. As he said “*apiya antonaa e piyanganuma o mama na sii bo khaulog ko first wife*” (whoever the man marries, he will still fall under his first wife). Additionally, he thought that if a man wanted to get married again, he did not need to get permission from his wife. He went on to say that it is not necessary for his two wives to dwell in the same house since there will probably be arguments that will arise. As a result, his two wives lived in different houses. He confessed that polygyny will only be hard during the second marriage while it is still new, which naturally will anger the first wife. Eventually, though, they will grow accustomed to it and come to terms with it. He claimed that following her outbursts during the early years of their polygynous marriage, his first wife had calmed down and had even grown more devoted to her husband. Perhaps the wife, having someone to challenge her position, will become more persistent to look after her husband. Thus was the common attitude of his first wife after coming from the second wife. He said that he is like being elevated in heaven, with his two wives taking charge of his needs. However, he never compelled his two wives to befriend each other because, for him, it was not obligatory. Whenever the two women happen to cross paths on specific days and there's a chance that a fight would break out, the husband steps in as the go-between and pacifies them both. His children get along well with both of his spouses, despite their minor disagreements

between their mothers. They sometimes ask each other to visit their separate homes and treat the two wives as if they were their own mothers. He said that he's always elated with excitement every time he fulfills his schedule for his two wives; it presents him with calmness and comfort [35].

A similar reason for entering polygyny was shared by Jun Alonto, who currently has one wife. Previously, he had four wives who lived in different areas. Three of his wives lived in Saudi Arabia, while the second wife stayed in the Philippines. Jun married his first wife, who was in her middle adulthood and was thirty-seven (37) years old. She had an infertility issue and could not bear a child. She consequently advised her thirty-year-old (30) niece to wed her husband, but still, it did not bear fruit. After their in-laws intervened on their behalf about personal matters, they quickly got divorced. Jun immediately got married once more for his third wife while employed in Saudi Arabia. He was accordingly forced to marry his third wife, who was a divorcee and had children with her previous husband. His first wife gave her approval to the marriage once more. Sadly, their union was short-lived, and he eventually divorced his third spouse. He was once again allowed by his first wife to remarry his fourth wife, whom he met in Saudi Arabia, because he never had children from the previous marriages. He eventually gave birth to a boy from this woman after a protracted waiting time. But misunderstanding ruins their bond, forcing the first wife to confront the fourth and then allowing their husband to pick between the first wife and his only child. The husband, caught in the middle, ultimately chose his first wife since he believed that his child would always be his child. In terms of the kind of relationship between wives, definitely the first two wives are on good terms due to their blood relations. These two were not able to meet the third wife. While the fourth, as mentioned in the previous account, is in conflict with the first, which resulted in her divorce from her husband. Although the fourth, as previously stated, conflicts with the first led to her divorce with Jun. As a result, only the first wife remains as the wife of Jun today. This account of Jun and his first wife provides compelling evidence that the adage "first love never dies," since even polygyny could not sour their unadulterated love [36].

The sixty-one-year-old Aberdon B. Deca, Administrative Staff of the Shari'ah Center at the KFCIAAS- MSU-Main, provided another example of procreation as the primary cause of polygyny. He is currently married to four (4) women. Because his first wife was a model for a branded trousers factory and her employer would not permit her to become pregnant, he agreed to Aberdon getting married again. In addition to wanting children, he also wished to carry out the Sunnah. He asserted that he had no intention of practicing polygyny and that his decision to do so was motivated by his strong faith in Islam. According to him, he never planned to engage in polygyny and claimed that it was the will of Allah SWT that brought him to such a commitment. As a practicing Muslim who engages in polygyny, he would heartily advise Muslim men to adopt this practice for the following reasons: (1) it can assist widows, divorced, and single mothers in raising their children; and (2) it is the most honorable way to address societal issues like the growing population of women, rape, prostitution, etc. His marriages with four wives had a positive effect on him in terms of bearing children. He claimed that all throughout his experience with polygyny, he never encountered his wives quarreling with one another. This good relationship has properly been established by providing equal attention, affection, and financial sustenance to both his wives and children. Unlike Aleem Pangarungan, Aberdon believed that the preceding wives deserved to be asked for their permission as a sign of respect. He said that each of his wives is becoming more affectionate, patient, and kind towards him every day. His spouses cohabited peacefully, apart from one another, and they never got into arguments. He continued by saying that he feels fortunate and blessed to be in this role. He declares with pride that he is reaping the full benefits of being a parent to his kids in terms of fatherhood. In contrast to Jun, his account demonstrates the viability of polygyny, which may be maintained between four wives [37].

As depicted from the previous accounts, men typically become polygynous in order to fulfill their desire for procreation, follow the Sunnah, and support women—particularly widows and divorcees, as in the cases of Jun and Aberdon. This is illustrated in the preceding instances. Furthermore, men seem to view polygyny as a remedy to societal issues that strongly criticize humanity's moral decadence. It is equally indisputable, though, those males are, as Aleem Pangarungan asserts, realizing their own ambition to become the master of every household.

Table 2. The table shows some underlying factors of Mëranaw males contract subsequent marriages.

Name of Husbands	Age	Occupation	No. of wives	Reason for Entering Polygyny
1. Abdussalam Disomimba	55	Faculty at MSU-Marawi	Two (2)	Procreation, fulfill the Sunnah
2. Aleem Pangarungan	58	Religious leader	Two (2)	Procreation, fulfill the Sunnah
3. Jun Alonto	60	OFW	Four (4)	Procreation
4. Aberdon Deca	61	Staff at MSU-Marawi	Four (4)	Procreation, fulfill the Sunnah

4.3 Children's Narratives on Polygyny

Families believe that children are the source of happiness for the husband and wife. The demoralization of children resulting from divorce has a profound impact on society. Because of shattered families, several children nowadays live independently. According to the paper "Demographic Study of Divorce and Its Implications to Mëranaw Families in Marawi City" by Wedad Minodad et al. (2019), polygynous marriage is one of the reasons for divorce. As mentioned on the pages before, there are instances in the Mëranaw family where polygyny causes the spouses to file for divorce. However, it should be noted that this is not true for all polygynous families. There are also successful ones that bore great benefits among the members of the families. To understand more about this, it is better to narrate the story of the two sisters from the previous story of two mothers who are best friends. This time, the focus will be on their children. The eldest child, Nosaiba Musa, who is now working as a teacher, is 31 years old and single. She developed a good relationship with her half-sister from the other mother. These sisters are the same age but differ by only a few months. Nosaiba from the first order of marriage had six (6) siblings, and every time her mother was not around, she used to leave her young siblings under the care of her sister from the second order of marriage with her mother. They constantly rely on each other in terms of finances and moral support. Nosaiba also treated the other wife as her own mother since they grew up under her care [38].

From this good experience among the siblings, Adelah Hasan, 30 years old and a teacher, opposed the positive effect of polygyny. As she said:

I strongly disagree with polygyny. Our family used to be very happy until my father married another woman when I was in sixth grade. Being the eldest, I was the one who suffered a lot next to my mother. I can feel all her pain and sorrow. Not a day goes by that I never hear her sobbing. She even attempted to kill herself, even though she was a devout Muslim believer. My studies were affected. I couldn't focus. I'm always worried about her. It took almost 4 years before she could accept the reality. Thus, I am against polygyny because it ruins a happy family [39].

Adelah's narrative resembles Mickey's in several ways. Mickey's memories of his father's relatives, who used to tease his mother, ordered as second marriage, as well as his siblings, remain ingrained in his memory. His father was from Wato, Lanao del Sur, and he shared

ancestry with his first wife. Their use of the word "saopak" (half-breed), which indicates that he was born in Ramin, Lanao del Sur, has drawn harsh criticism. In the Mëranaw culture, it is customary to select a spouse who shared the same municipality in order to preserve close ties of relationships. His mother is from a distant municipality; therefore it's likely that their family received unfair treatment from his paternal side, which has a big impact on this second family. The first wife's mistreatment and her children—apart from the fourth, who used to discriminate against them—adds to this load. The first family's fourth elder sibling was nearly the same age as her mother. Hence, they were significantly younger compare to his siblings from the first family. This fourth senior sibling from the first family pays for these seven (7) younger siblings' education and gives financial support to make up for her mother's and the older siblings' unfriendly behavior. She gets along well with Mickey's mother as well [40].

One intriguing narrative about polygyny is the story of a politically active family. Within this framework, polygyny functions as a political platform endorsed by the entire clan in an attempt to garner additional votes from the voting public. In Butig, Lanao del Sur, for example, Mamalinding, a prominent datu (traditional political title given to a leader in the community), had three children that he purposefully married off to well-known local families in each barangay in order to get their support during political elections. Bao, one of his two sons, was successful in pursuing his political aspirations by marrying seven (7) wives. He had seventeen (17) children from his seven (7) wives. They are all the children of powerful families in their individual barangays. Consequently, the Bao family won support from the people of Butig and earned the mayoralty position in the municipality. Following the passing of their father, these seventeen (17) children help each other for mayoralty position. Since they had already made their reputations for themselves, several of this clan's successors were able to secure significant positions in the administration. Members of this clan still run for office, carrying on the tradition of their forefathers. Occasionally, children who have survived to this day show solidarity with one another and get together for elections. Supports have been expressed thru financial, physical and moral support. Thru polygyny, they became as one of the largest families in Butig by virtue of their numbers which reached to over a thousand [41].

Children from a polygynous marriage may deem their experience as either beneficial or detrimental. Not getting enough attention from the father is bad because it leads to conflict between the children because some of them used to fight for his attention. Good in a way that polygyny can augment the size of the family and is complementary to the culture of Mëranaws. Within the clan, it preserves kinship and intimate bonds. Further, it also brings prestige, honor and power to the families involved in polygyny. Lastly, polygyny is good thru enhancing the reliance of children with the other mothers and siblings from the other families whether financially and morally. Financially, by having more options for resources and morally by having a large network of supporters to rely on, particularly in unforeseen conflict situations.

Table 3. The table shows the impact of polygynous marriage to Mëranaw children.

Name of Children	Age	Occupation	No. of mothers (from polygyny)	Impact of Polygyny
1. Nosaiba Musa	31	School Teacher	Two (2)	Has established good relationship with siblings and mother from other family
2. Adelah Hasan	30	School Teacher	Two (2)	Has a negative impact
3. Mickey	32	Businessman	Two (2)	Discriminated by the other family except for one sibling
4. Canapia Bao	42	Businessman	Seven (7) grandmothers	Benefited polygyny thru political means; multiplied number of progenies

5 Conclusion

Historically, polygyny was accepted as the norm in many communities, and Islam even granted it legal status. In the Islamic context, polygyny denotes men being allowed a maximum of four wives, provided they can be treated justly. Specific circumstances should be met first based on the given regulations in Islam before a man can contract a subsequent marriage. From this principle, most of the Mēranaws derive their justification for entering polygyny. The result of this study demonstrated that polygyny, though allowed in special circumstances, was not practiced by the majority of Mēranaws. Comparably, male Mēranaws are more likely than female Mēranaws to engage in polygyny due to their susceptibility.

The results of this study refute the widely held belief that polygyny cannot potentially function in a family. Based on the three views of wives, husbands, and children, a number of situations shown that polygyny can be feasible within a family and that members can live in harmony with one another. Undoubtedly, just like other kinds of relationships, polygyny has drawbacks that, like other forms of relationships, can ruin a family if they are not handled appropriately. In contrast to others, some view polygyny as a means of resolving their issues with infertility for wives and procreation for husbands. Additionally, in terms of the emotional component, suffering will never go away; rather, it will only manifest during the initial years of succeeding marriages. Eventually, it will be balanced out until mutual acceptance between the spouses is achieved. A deep commitment to Islam is another element that contributes to this readiness to engage in polygynous relationships.

Additionally, this study comes to the conclusion that polygyny has the power to strengthen or weaken relationships between the families involved. If sunnah is the primary value upheld by the family, it can aid in the development of a strong family. Similarly, it might bring about the dissolution of a family when a husband fails to uphold the rights granted by Islam to his wives and children.

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