

Women in Polygynous Marriages: Their Perceptions and Experiences

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Polygyny or the marriage of a man to two or more women at the same time is not a common norm in Philippine culture but is adopted by the Muslim populace under Shari'ah or Islamic Law. In this study, sixteen Muslim Filipino women from various ethnic groups such as Maguindanaon, Iranun, and Bulakenya participated in focus group discussions and interviews where they described their perceptions about polygyny and their relationships with their husbands as well as their husbands' relationships with their wives and their children. They also described the problems they usually encounter in their families and what their suggestions of a happy or harmonious polygynous family are. Findings reveal that the participants tend to have dichotomous perceptions on polygyny. They perceive polygyny either favorably or unfavorably depending on their Islamic background and marital life experiences. The women, who had favorable experiences in their marriages, tend to have favorable perceptions about polygyny, while those who had unfavorable experiences tend to also perceive polygyny unfavorably. For a polygynous family to be happy, the participants suggested that the woman must accept the marriage based on faith in God, the husband has to fairly treat and provide for his families, the wives must imbue good character and respect for each other, and all family members must maintain open communication and good relationship.

Keywords: Filipino Marriages, Muslim marriage, marital life and adjustment, polygyny, polygamy

Polygyny has been defined as the marriage of a man to two or more women at the same time. It is used synonymously with polygamy, although polygamy could also be used to encompass polyandry which refers to the marriage of one woman to two or more husbands (Loue, 2006). Al Faruqi (2005) stated that taking of plural wives by a man is commonly called polygamy but the more correct sociological designation is polygyny. Shari'ah or the Islamic Law allows a man to marry more than one woman at a time as revealed in Qur'an, Chapter An-Nisa' (The Women), Verse 3: "...Marry of the women that please you; two, three, or four, but if you fear you will not be able to deal justly, then only one..."

Polygyny is not imposed by Islam nor is it a universal practice. It is instead regarded as the exception to the norm of monogamy. Muslims view polygyny as an institution which is to be called into use only in most needed circumstances. The Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines which sets the rules of Muslim marriages in the Philippines states that: "Notwithstanding the rule of Islamic law permitting a Muslim to have more than one wife but one wife unless he can deal with them with equal companionship and just treatment as enjoined by Islamic law and only in exceptional cases."

Studies reveal the effects of polygyny or polygamy on women and the children. When women in polygamous families were compared with those in monogamous families, the women in polygamous marriages showed significantly higher psychological distress, and higher levels of somatization, phobia and other psychological problems. Women in polygamous families also revealed more problems in family functioning, marital relationships, and life satisfaction (Al Krenawi & Graham, 2008). In a polygamous marriage, senior wives reported lower self-esteem and poorer relationships with their husbands compared with those of junior wives (Al Krenawi, 1999). A study where children in polygamous families were compared with children from monogamous families showed that children from polygamous families reported more mental health and social difficulties as well as poorer school achievement and poorer relationships with their fathers than did their counterparts from monogamous families (Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2006).

A study conducted by Campbell (2005) stated that women married to the same man might commonly view one another with jealousy and perhaps even animosity; some women in plural marriages view their relationship with co-wives as enriching and valuable. This was the perspective held by a South African woman studied by Anderson in Campbell (2005), who perceived relationships with co-wives as providing critical and economic support, companionship, and childcare assistance. The relationships between co-wives have been found to be especially beneficial to women's economic and political power where there is a familial relationship between the co-wives.

Challenges confront women in polygynous marriages, but there are guidelines for males and females in Islamic plural marriages that can be drawn from the Qur'an and Hadith: the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him) (Philips, A.A.B. & Jones, J., 2005). Among Muslims, the Qur'an, just like the Bible to Christians, governs all aspects of human life.

METHOD

The Research Participants

Sixteen Muslim Filipino women participated in the FGD and interviews, the youngest of whom was 25 years old and the eldest was 59 years old. They belong to the Maguindanaon and Iranun tribes, the two most common tribes in the locality; while one is a Bulakenya, a convert who is married to a Muslim. Seven of the participants work as government employees, four are engaged in teaching, and one is a housekeeper who has a sari-sari store while the rest are plain housekeepers.

Majority of them are married to men with two wives; one is married to a man with three wives while another participant's husband is married to four wives. The average number of children that their own families have is three (3). The highest income earned by a family is 100,000 Php while the lowest is 5000 Php. Their husbands' occupations vary. They are businessmen, government employees, nongovernment organization employees, a college instructor, Arabic teachers, overseas contract workers, a retired police officer, and an MILF combatant. One husband has no occupation.

Research Design, Procedure, and Data Analysis

The study is a qualitative research in which FGD (focused group discussion) and individual interviews among Muslim women who are in polygynous marriage were conducted. The FGDs were held in Cotabato City State Polytechnic College (CCSPC). The prior plan was to conduct the study through FGD only, but some of those who were invited to the FGD declined to participate and chose to answer the research questions in a face-to-face interview; hence, the interviews were held in the places chosen by the research participants at their most convenient time.

The research team which comprised four faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences of CCSPC assumed specific tasks relative to the conduct of the research. One was assigned as the interviewer, two were documenters, and one was tasked to transcribe the FGD and individual interview proceedings. Before the actual conduct of the FGDs and the interviews, the participants were requested to read and sign a consent form and fill out a profile form. An interview guide was used in the FGDs and face-to-face interviews. During the FGD or the interview, the questions were translated in Filipino or when necessary, in Maguindanaon language. The proceedings of the FGDs and the interviews were written and tape recorded with the consent of the research participants. Photo documentations were also done with the consent of the participants. The taped proceedings were transcribed and content analyzed on the basis of the commonalities and variations of the responses. Generally, Filipino language was used in the FGDs and interviews because it is the language most commonly spoken in the locality and understood by all of the participants. Likewise, the responses of the participants were mostly Filipino even though they belong to different Muslim indigenous groups because it is the language which they can all speak and understand.

RESULTS

The research questions asked during the interviews and focused group discussions were the following: (1) What is your perception about polygyny? (2) How would you describe the relationship of your husband with: (a) His wives? (b) His child/children with you and the other wife/wives? (3) How do you describe your relationship with the other wife/wives of your husband? (4) What problems do you usually encounter in your family? and (5) What are your suggestions for a happy polygynous family?

The responses of the research participants were analyzed and categorized accordingly. It was revealed in the content analysis of the FGD and interview proceedings that the research participants have varied perceptions on polygyny and the expressed relationships that prevail in their families have either favorable or unfavorable connotations. Perception is understood in Maguindanaon language as “kenal” and in Iranun language as “kenar”.

On the other hand, the participants’ suggestions for a happy polygynous family had revealed three main themes such as acceptance and faith, disposition, and advices to the family members, specifically to the family as a whole, to both husband and wife, and to the woman and the other wives.

Perceptions on Polygyny

Polygyny as Applicable and Allowed in Islam. Polygyny is applicable only in Islam, said one research participant. Among the responses of the other participants was, “*Nasa Religion na allowed mag-asawa hanggang apat ang lalaki*” [It’s in the religion (Islam) that men are allowed to marry up to four]. Others perceive engaging in polygyny as a form of obedience, an option, and that it cannot be avoided. They said: “*Sinunod ng asawa ko ang utos about pag-aasawa*” (My husband followed what is commanded about marriage). “It is an option and there is wisdom in it”, said another. Another participant remarked, “*Kung ikaw ay isang Muslim, hindi ito maiiwasan pag ginusto ng asawa mo na mag asawa ng iba*” [If you are a Muslim, you cannot avoid it when your husband will want to marry another (woman)]. “I am in favor of polygyny since I read a lot of Islamic books.”

Unfavorable Perceptions on Polygyny. One participant, a first wife, who did not have a favorable experience about polygyny said that polygyny is not a joke. It is a big disaster. Her husband got into a relationship with his second wife while she was working abroad. She could not accept it and did not agree to the marriage of his husband to the second wife. She even attempted to commit suicide when his husband was about to marry the second wife.

Most of those who narrated unfavorable perceptions on polygyny had their own unfavorable experiences. Three women narrated:

“*Nagkukulang ang asawa ko sa financial support. Wala siya pag may sakit ang mga bata*” (My husband has shortcomings in financial

support. He is not around when my children are sick). “*Masakit sa part ko dahil hindi ko alam na nag-asawa na pala ang asawa ko*” (It’s painful on my part because I did not know that my husband already got married).

“*Kung ako ang tatanungin hindi ko gusto na magkaroon ng duwaya. Pero ito ang kapalaran ko na magkaroon ng duwaya kaya tinanggap ko na ito*” [If I were to be asked, I don’t like to have a “duwaya” (i.e., another wife of the husband). But this is my fate, that I would have a “duwaya”, that is why I accept it].

“Honestly, I don’t want to have ‘duwaya’. But, since I have now converted to Islam, I accepted this norm. However, in a real situation, marrying more than one is not the answer to an ideal family. It only caused many problems that a man cannot fulfill his full responsibility to manage his time and to provide the needs of his families.”

Favorable Perceptions about Polygyny. Other participants perceive polygyny more positively. One said, “*Aden kapyanan nin u matuntul su ukit nin*” (There is good in it if the rules are followed). Polygyny, according to one respondent, can save women financially and provide her need emotionally. The other said, “*Hindi ka masyado mapapagod kapag nasa pangalawang pamilya ang asawa mo*” (You will not be very tired if your husband is in the second family).

A participant said that men marry more than one woman to avoid adultery. The other participant adds, “*Umiwas ang asawa ko sa tukso*” (My husband avoids temptations). Furthermore, another participant shared how she saw the advantage of polygyny based on her own experience. She narrated: “*My father has three wives and I realized na maganda pala pag marami ang asawa. Ang kagandahan ng polygyny, pag maganda ang flow, nagtutulungan. Tulad ng tatay ko, hindi tinago na may iba siyang pamilya*” (My father has three wives, and I realized that having many wives is good. The advantage of polygyny is, if when the flow is good and when there is cooperation. Like my father, he did not hide from us that he has other families).

Relationships in the Family

Based on the analysis of the research participants’ responses on their relationships in the family, it was found out that there were likewise favorable

and unfavorable accounts in their lives in terms of their relationships with their husbands, their husbands' relationship with their children, and their own relationships with the other wives.

Relationship between the Husband and His Wives

Unfavorable. Some of the research participants expressed their unfavorable experiences about the husband's lack of time with his family and his unfair treatment among his wives. "Unequal time" was the comment of one participant. "*Mas marami siyang time sa second wife*" (He has more time with the second wife). "I feel *na* there's an unfair treatment on the part of my husband."

There are instances when either the first or the second wife controls the husband. One participant said: "Feeling *niya* (husband), *wala siyang freedom sa first wife*" [He (husband) feels that he has no freedom from his first wife]; while the other participant said: "Dictatorial ang second wife" (The second wife is a dictator) "maybe because she is older than my husband. She decides for my husband's schedule with us, and my husband is a follower." "*May pera ang second wife kaya hindi maka-hindi ang asawa ko*" (The second wife has money; that is why my husband cannot say no.)

"Most of the time we are not compatible in other things, but I can say that I do my responsibility of being a wife and a good mother. *Dinadaan ko sa sab'r* (Arabic term for patience) *ang galit ko...*" (I just turn my anger into patience. I just resort to patience instead of being angry).

Favorable. On the other hand, research participants also narrated favorable experiences about polygyny. One participant said "Jealousy is normal on the part of the woman. *Mahirap ang maging equal* but at least *may justice* (It's difficult to be equal; but at least there is justice). My husband said, '*Alam ko ang pangangailangan ng bawat isa sa inyo*'" (I know the need of each of you).

"*Mas nadagdagan ang pagiging caring nya at mas sweet siya sa akin ngayon* since *nag-asawa sya ng iba. Nagdagdagan din ang monthly allowance namin ng mga anak ko. Yun ang demand ko sa kanya*" [My husband has been more caring and sweet now since he married another (woman). Our monthly allowance has increased. That is my demand to him].

“Our husband is fair with us. *Kung ano ’ng turing nya sa first, ganon din sa akin. Pantay angtrato niya.*” (Whatever his treatment to the first, it is the same with me. He treats us fairly).

“*May kanya-kanya kami ng araw sa asawa namin...Kung ano ang pagkain sa kabila ay ganon din sa amin ng mga anak nya. Ang akin na share ay ganon din*” [Each of us have time with our husband...The food they have in the other (family) is the same as the food we have with our children. The same with myshare].

“*Hindi ko inaalang kung ano ang binigay nya dahil ayokong masaktan kung meron syang masabi na higit pa sa bigay nya sa akin*” [I do not bother to ask what he (husband) gives (to the other wife) because I don’t want to be hurt, if he would say that he has given to her less than what he has given me).

“About *sa* income, *mas malaki ang sa* first family *kasi marami syang anak at may mga students siya doon kaya okay lang*” (About the income, the first family has more because he has many children and students there, so it’s just okay).

The other participant also expressed her good relationship with her husband: “*Maganda ang pakikitungo namin sa isa’t isa. Hindi lang maiiwasan na meron sama ng loob kapag nagkukuwentuhan*” (We treat each other well, although sometimes, but we cannot avoid being hurt in conversations).

A participant said that her husband is responsible, loving, and a good provider. Another participant who is the first wife to a man with three other wives narrated: “*Maganda ang relasyon namin kahit meron siyang tatlong asawa bukod sa akin. Malapit kami sa isa’t isa. Nagkakasundo sa lahat ng bagay. Pinapaalam niya sa akin ang mga ginagawa niya. Yung pag-aasawa pa niya, pinagkasunduan na namin, kasi lapitin siya ng babae kaya alam kong makakapag-asawa siya ng higit pa sa isa*” (We have a good relationship even if he has three other wives aside from me. We are close to each other. We are compatible in all things. He lets me know his affairs. We have already agreed on his having married another woman because women are close to him; that is why I knew he would marry more than one).

Relationship between the Husband and His Children with His Wives

Unfavorable. The unfavorable relationships between the husband and his children with his wives are expressed in terms of their father's unfair and unequal support. The respondents who had witnessed such a situation expressed their sentiments. "Unequal *ang* treatment *ng* husband *ko* with my children" (My husband has unequal treatment with my children). "Unfair *ang* husband *ko dahil may mga binibili siya sa mga anak niya sa* second family *na wala sa* first family" (My husband is unfair, because there are things that he buys for the second family which he does not buy for the first family). "He is very supportive to his first wife," said another participant who further said that, "*Hindi siya namimiss ng mga anak ko*" (My children do not miss him).

Favorable. The favorable relationship between the husband and his children with his wives, on the other hand, is expressed in terms of their father's fair treatment among his children. The participants who had observed this narrated:

"Fair *ang husband ko* in treating our children (My husband is fair in treating our children). He is also a loving father to my daughter, a good adviser and a teacher too."

"*Kung wala sya sa field sa akin sya pumupunta at nakikipaglaro sa mga anak ko. Mabait siya sa kanyang mga anak*" (If he is not in the field, he comes to our home and plays with our children. He is good to his children).

"*Kapag pumupunta sya sa mga anak niya, minsan sinasama nya ang mga anak ko. Nagkakaintindihan sila. Walang away na namamagitan sa aming mga anak*" [When he goes to his children (in the other family), sometimes he brings along my children. They understand each other. There is no conflict between our children).

"Malapit sya sa mga anak ko. Malambing ang mga anak ko sa kanya. *Sa tagal ng aming pagsasama halos lahat ng kanyang mga anak ay nagkakasundo pero hindi masyadong malapit sa bawat isa. Pinagkakasundo nya mga anak nya*" (He is close to my children. My children are sweet to him. In the long period that we've been together, almost all of his children are in good terms, though not so close to each other. He settles matters among his children).

The Woman's (Research Participant's) Relationship with the Other Wife/Wives of Her Husband

Unfavorable. The participants who have unfavorable impressions of their relationships with the other wife/wives expressed their observations like the other wife's insecurity, the feeling of jealousy on their part, and the character of their husband's other wives. They narrated:

"May mga insecurities ang first wife (The first wife has insecurities). Minsan maka-feel ka ng jealousy (Sometimes you would feel jealous). Hindi kami yung ideal na close (We are not that ideally close)."

"Okay, pero may mga arguments with other wives (Okay, but there are arguments with other wives). Hindi kami nag-uusap ng second wife dahil mas matapang pa siya (I and the second wife do not talk to each other because the second wife is more brave)."

"I am a friendly person, respectful, but the second wife is such an insecure, unprofessional, and no manners. That's why, even how friendly and respectful I am, it didn't work. We are still not in good terms."

Favorable. The participants who have favorable impressions describe their relationships with their husband's other wives.

A participant who was chosen by the first wife to be his husband's second wife narrated: *"Smooth ang relationship naming tatlo. Mahirap ang equal but at least may justice. Nagtutulungan kami ng first wife in all aspects. Para kaming magkapatid ng first wife. Hindi ako nagseselos dahil nafe-feel ko na mahal niya ako"* [Our relationship is smooth; me, the first wife and our husband. It is difficult to be equal, but at least, there is justice. I and the first wife help each other. We are like sisters I do not get jealous because I feel that she loves me).

One participant said: *"May samaan din ng loob kung minsan pero nagkakaunawaan din kami"* (We have hurt feelings sometimes but eventually we understand each other). And a participant who is married to her husband who has three other wives said: *"Hindi maiiwasan ang samaan ng loob pero hindi naman masyado kasi wala naman grabeng mga pangyayari na nakakaabot na sa Barangay"* (It cannot be avoided to have hurt feelings; but not too much, because it had not gotten worse to the point that it reached the Barangay).

Problems Usually Encountered by the Women

Unfavorable Characters and Attitudes of the Husband and the Wives. A participant mentioned that the characters and attitudes of both husband and wife can cause problems in marriage. The other remarked, “*Pagsisinungaling ng lalaki. Magmula ng makapag-asawa siya, natuto na siyang magsinungaling — natuto na siyang mag-alibi* (Lying by the man. Ever since he got married again, he learned to lie and make alibis). Weak *ang asawa ko* especially in decision making (My husband is weak, especially in decision making).” Other problems expressed were hypocrisy and insecurities. “*May insecurities pag magkaiba ang level ng wives*” (There are insecurities when the wives are of different levels).

Lack of Time and Attention. Problems on time and attention are also experienced by the participants, both by them and their children. A second wife who is newlywed said, “I miss him.” Two other participants who have children remarked, “Attention *sa mga bata* (Attention for the children). His time, his attention, and his income are shared by me and my daughter and his second wife. These are also the reasons that we always argue on one’s decision.”

Financial Matters. Financial support is the most common problem experienced by those whose husbands are not so financially well-off. When they were asked about other problems they experience, one participant said, “About financial matter, because it is no longer the same with our situation before when he had only one wife.”

Another participant said, “*Noong kami pa lang ang pamilya nagkakaproblema man kami sa pera ay hindi naman masyadong malala sapagkat iilan lang kami. Ngunit nang magkaroon ng pangalawang pamilya medyo nabawasan na ang pera sa amin*” [When the family was still us (meaning only one family), we encounter problems about money but not much worse because we were just few. But there was already a second family, the money for us decreased). The other participant related that, “*Kahit na magkakasundo at nag-uusap kami hindi rin maiwasan ang pag-aaway at bangayan. Kaya lang hindi rin yon tumatagal. Kalimitan din sa problema ay tungkol sa pera*” (Even though we are in good terms and we talk to each other, quarrel and arguments cannot be avoided. But it does not stay long that way. The usual problem is about money).

At some instances, one participant had observed among her children: *“Minsan kapag may marinig na iba sa pagkukuwento ng mga anak, na meron bagong binili na gamit na wala ako nagkakaroon kaagad ng misunderstanding pero nagkakalinawagan din kaagad* (Sometimes when something different is heard among our children who tell about something bought which I do not have, misunderstanding arises; however, it is immediately settled). *Sa pagkain naman ang mga bata kapag nagkakayayaan sila sa labas kailangan may extrang pera para merong mabili na iba dahil talagang problema kung hindi mabili. Hindi naman malaking problema sa amin ang materyal na bagay”* (Regarding the food, when the children decide to go out, there has to be extra money, so they can buy other things; because problems will arise when they cannot buy. Material things, however, are not a problem to us).

Another participant affirmed that the common problem they usually encounter is financial. “Common problems that we usually encounter are about financial matter because it is no longer the same with our situation before when he has only one wife. Now his time, his attention, and his income are shared by me and my daughter and his second wife.”

Suggestions for a Happy Polygynous Family

The main themes that emerged in the analysis on the research participants’ suggestions for a happy polygynous family are the following: acceptance, faith, and disposition; as well as their advices to the husband, the wives, and their family as a whole.

Acceptance and Faith. The research participants’ responses to the FGD and interview questions expressed acceptance and respect, acceptance of both positive and negative experiences, and acceptance that everything happens for a reason. “Accept your fate as Qadar (Allah’s predestined plan for you)”, said by one participant.

Two among the participants suggested: “Strengthen your faith in Allah (s.w.t).”

“Faith in Allah will be very helpful in maintaining the relationship of a good and happy family.” “When I’m down, I read Islamic book like, *The Ideal Muslimah*.”

One participant suggested that counseling is needed when problems arise. It will help the couple be enlightened especially about the teachings of

Islam on polygyny. Another two participants would like that symposiums will be conducted for both husband and wife. “Conduct symposium about acceptance of polygyny. Symposium for husbands and wives in polygynous family will be very helpful.”

Positive Disposition in Life. In some aspects, the participants find that disposition is important. Among their suggestions are the following: “always have a positive outlook in life”; “say, it is just a test to us”; and “be objective”. “*Dapat parating maganda ang tingin mo sa bukas* (You should always have a good vision of the future). Dapat active, optimistic, and objective. (You should be active, optimistic, and objective). There has to be forgiveness. Stop jealousy. Sabar” (Be patient).

Advices to the Family Members

To the Family. For the whole family, the participants suggest: “Constant communication throughout the family. Respect and trust will be very helpful in maintaining the relationship of a good and happy family.” They also reiterated acceptance and respect in the family.

To the Husband. The participants view control, honesty, and the nobility of intention of the husband to marry, as very important factors to a happy polygynous family. “*Nasa lalaki ang control* (The control is in the man.); honesty on the part of the husband; the husband should be honest to the children.”

The participant who said she married for a noble purpose and even chose to marry a married man to help her family suggested that: “*Sana ang intention ng mga lalaki to marry again ay maging noble na rin*” (I hope that the intention of men to marry would be noble too).

“You can never be equal to both wives, but you can be just. Justice is important,” said the other participant who is a second wife. This is how her husband is to her and the first wife. She shared that she is in good terms with the first wife including her family.

To the Woman/Wife Concerned. Having undergone the experience of being in a polygynous family, the participants have several suggestions to the woman who are into a polygynous marriage:

“*Intindihin mo ang pinasukan mo* (Understand what you have gotten into); *alamin mo ang capacity ng asawa mo*, financial,

physical, and spiritual (know the financial, physical, and spiritual capacity of your husband); *alamin ang background ng first wife at ang pamilya niya*” (know the background of the first wife and her family).

“Bilang second or nadagdag sa pamilya, mas malakas dapat ang pasensya o sabar mo kaysa first wife. Kung mapapansin mo na hindi ok ang first wife, mag-adjust tayo para di maglala ang kanyang galit” (As second wife, or someone “added” to the family, you should have more patience than the first wife. If you notice that the first wife is not okay, adjust so that her anger will not worsen).

“Mahalin mo ang asawa mo, ang unang asawa at ang kanyang pamilya, at higit sa lahat ang kanilang mga anak” (Love your husband, the first wife and her family, and most of all her children).

“Huwag kalilimutan si Allah. Laging isali sa du’a na magiging maganda rin ang kahihinatnan ng lahat, at likas din ang pagtanggap ng first wife sa iyo” (Do not forget Allah. Always include in your prayer that everything will be alright; and the first wife’s acceptance of you will be sincere).

“Maggahalan, magtulungan kasi diyan ang blessings ni Allah, sa pagiging totoo. Hindi dapat magpapakita ang second wife ng pagmamalaki. Dapat laging mapagkumbaba” (Love and help each other, because that is where the blessing of Allah is; in being real. The second wife should not show arrogance. She has to be always humble).

“Huwag makipag-compete” (Do not compete).

“Kailangang magbigayan. Halimbawa kung kailangan ng isang pamilya niya ang asawa mo dahil may sakit ang anak nila” (There has to be give-and-take/sharing. Example, if the other family of your husband needs him because their child is sick).

“Forgiveness for husband and second wife, is an advice for those first wives whose husband married another woman.”

“Ano mang mga difficulties nararamdaman mo, kailangang labanan kasi wala namang perfektong relationship. Kung malalagpasan ang mga challenges, mapafinancial o time, doon makukuha ang reward na ipagkakaloob ni Allah” (Whatever

difficulties you feel, you have to fight it, because there is no perfect relationship. If the challenges have been overcome, may they be financial or time, that is where you will get the reward that Allah grants).

To the Husband and Wife. For both husband and wife, the participants suggested:

“Good character and attitude of both husband and wife.”

“*Pagmamahalan at pagbibigay ng atensyon sa iyong pamilya* (Loving and giving of attention to your family). *Mag-date kayo sa husband and wife*” (You date as husband and wife).

“Respect and trust will be very helpful in maintaining the relationship of a good and happy family.”

“Open communication, *yung hindi nagtatago ang bawat isa para magkaintindihan. Hindi dapat gawin ng lalaki o ng babae na maglihim sa asawa para walang gulo*” (Open communication; not that you hide from each other, so you will understand each other. The husband or the wife should not keep secrets from each other so that there will be no conflict).

“*Mauunawaan ang mga pamamaraan ng pag-aasawa na ligaya sa bawat isa ang maramdaman*” (Understand the ways in marriage so that you will feel happiness between yourselves).

To the Wives. The participants suggested to both wives:

“Stop jealousy; do not look into the affairs of the other family of your husband. Mind your own family.”

“Know your limitations. *Dapat alamin ng bawat asawa ang lugar nila*” [Both (wives) should know their place/position].

“The wives should be obedient and compliant to their husband.” “*Para sa masayang pamilya ng mga lalaking maraming asawa ang suggestion ko ay pang-unawa at pag-iintindi ng mga asawang babae sa kanilang asawang lalaki. Huwag makinig sa ibang tao.* (For a happy family of men who are married to many women, my suggestion is to be understanding of the wives to their husband. Do not listen to other people.) Seek advice from good people.”

DISCUSSION

The kinds of perception the women have on polygynous marriage appear to be associated with their individual experiences as well as knowledge about marriage in Islam. The women who have understood the acceptability of polygyny in the light of Islam view polygyny more favorably than others who do not have as much knowledge. The women who have favorable experiences with their husbands and their family life have more favorable perceptions about polygyny, while those who have unfavorable experiences tend to have unfavorable perceptions.

Present findings reveal that the problems which the women usually encounter pertain mostly to the husband's fairness in treating his wives and the children, as well as the other wives' unfavorable character and attitude. Women in a polygynous marriage often experience deep-seated feelings of angst that arise over competing access to their husbands, and conflicts with her co-wife during the early years of marriage tend to be pervasive and marked by outbursts of verbal or physical abuse (Jankowiak, Sudakov, & Wilreker, 2005). First and second wives in poorly functioning families have relationships that are characterized by unresolved conflicts, tension, hate, and animosity (Slonim-Nevo and Al-Krenawi, 2006).

The lack of time and attention of the husband for his family and financial difficulties have also been considered as problems. It was likewise established in the study of Thobejane and Flora (December, 2014) that some families in polygamous marriages may experience psychological problems as a result of the man favoring children of other wives instead of all. Material support for a wife and her children frequently declines when the husband marries another wife (Meekers & Franklin, 1997).

A happy polygynous marriage, in the opinion of the research participants, is realized through a) the woman's acceptance of the circumstances surrounding the marriage; b) faith in God; c) positive disposition in life; d) constant and open communication in the family; e) respect and trust for each other; f) self-control; g) honesty; h) nobility of intention; i) understanding of the situation; j) patience; k) love and consideration between and among the wife, her husband, and the other wife/wives; l) humility; m) good character and attitude; n) fairness on the part of the husband in treating and providing for his wives and their children; and o) forgiveness.

Similarly, based on the study conducted by Slonim-Nevo and Al-Krenawi (2006) in an Arab town in Israel, polygamy in both well-functioning and poorly functioning families is painful, particularly for wives, but there are ways and techniques that enable members of the family to function well. Among them are the acceptance of polygamy as God's wish or destiny, equal allocation of resources among both families by the husband, separation of the two households, avoidance of "minor" conflicts and disagreements, maintaining an attitude of respect toward the other wife, and allowing open communication among all siblings and among children and the other mother. First wives in well-functioning polygamous families accept second marriage as their fate, as God's wish; think that both wives are equally treated, financially, emotionally, and physically; maintain good relationships with second wives; and are able to solve conflicts. On the other hand, second wives in well-functioning polygamous families maintain civilized and cooperative relationships with first wives, respect her senior status, and are able to solve conflicts and disagreements.

Generally, it is revealed that Muslim women who are in polygynous marriages tend to have dichotomous perceptions on polygyny. Their perceptions may be either favorable or unfavorable depending on their Islamic background and the favorable or unfavorable experiences they have gone through as a wife whose husband is married to another woman. Women who have favorable family and marital experiences tend to have favorable experiences on polygyny, and those who have unfavorable experiences tend to also have unfavorable perceptions. The study also indicates that, to have a happy polygynous family, it is most advisable for the woman in a polygynous marriage to accept the marriage based on faith in God for the husband to fairly treat and provide for his wives and children, for the wives to imbue good character and respect for each other, and for all family members to maintain open communication and good relationship.

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