Socio-Legal Construction of Marital Harmony in Polygamy: Comparing First–Second Wife Relations in Islamic and Sasak Perspectives

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Abstract:

Polygamous marriage often creates complex relational dynamics that require culturally grounded strategies to maintain harmony. This study analyzes the construction of marital harmony between first and second wives through a comparative socio-legal lens, integrating perspectives from Islamic law and Sasak cultural norms. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected from polygamous families, religious leaders, and customary figures through in-depth interviews and focused observations in selected Sasak communities. Findings show that marital harmony is shaped by three key factors: structured role negotiation between wives, the husband's equitable fulfillment of nafkah and emotional responsibilities, and the cultural mechanism of silepak, which encourages conflict mediation. Data also reveal that first wives tend to emphasize legal guarantees, whereas second wives rely more on cultural acceptance to maintain relational stability. This study contributes a dual-framework model for analyzing polygamous harmony and recommends strengthening community-based counseling that integrates Islamic legal ethics with local wisdom.

Key Words: *Polygamy; Marital Harmony; Islamic Law; Comparative Socio-Legal Study*

Abstrak:

Pernikahan poligami seringkali menciptakan dinamika hubungan yang kompleks yang membutuhkan strategi berbasis budaya untuk menjaga keharmonisan. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konstruksi keharmonisan perkawinan antara istri pertama dan istri kedua melalui lensa sosio-hukum komparatif, mengintegrasikan perspektif dari hukum Islam dan norma budaya Sasak. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari keluarga poligami, pemimpin agama, dan tokoh adat melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi terfokus di komunitas Sasak terpilih. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa keharmonisan perkawinan dibentuk oleh tiga faktor kunci: negosiasi peran terstruktur antara istri, pemenuhan nafkah dan tanggung jawab emosional suami secara adil, dan mekanisme budaya silepak, yang mendorong mediasi konflik. Data juga mengungkapkan bahwa istri pertama cenderung menekankan jaminan hukum, sementara istri kedua lebih mengandalkan penerimaan budaya untuk stabilitas hubungan. Studi ini memberikan model kerangka ganda untuk menganalisis keharmonisan poligami dan

merekomendasikan penguatan konseling berbasis komunitas yang mengintegrasikan etika hukum Islam dengan kearifan lokal.

Kata Kunci: *Poligami*, *Keharmonisan Perkawinan; Hukum Islam; Studi Sosio-Legal Komparatif*

INTRODUCTION

Marital harmony represents a critical foundation for sustaining social stability, emotional well-being, and intergenerational resilience within Muslim families. Its significance extends beyond the private domain, as harmonious marital relations contribute directly to social order, moral continuity, and community cohesion. Research shows that family conflict, particularly within plural marriages, often results in psychological distress, economic vulnerability, and the weakening of social trust (Horii, 2021; Muzakki, 2025; Tabroni, 2025). Islamic teachings position marriage as a space for sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah; however, the achievement of these ideals becomes increasingly complex when marital structures involve more than one wife. Empirical evidence in several Muslim communities demonstrates that polygamous households exhibit higher levels of jealousy, emotional tension, and inequality when mechanisms of justice are absent (Ali, 2024; Harisudin, 2021) . Therefore, examining marital harmony in polygamous contexts is essential not only for understanding religious-family dynamics but also for informing policies, community education, and the development of legal norms that protect the dignity and rights of all family members.

Despite Islamic law permitting polygamy under strict conditions of justice, its practical implementation in various Muslim societies often diverges from the ethical standards mandated by scripture (Muhsin, 2024; Study et al., 2025). The gap between theological ideals and social realities creates significant challenges, particularly for wives who must navigate emotional disparities, economic uncertainties, and unequal treatment. These tensions are further intensified by persistent patriarchal structures that normalize male dominance in decision-making, thereby limiting women's agency in constructing relational harmony. In many communities, the concept of marital harmony becomes narrowly defined as the wife's obedience rather than mutual respect, affection, and fairness (Fauzah, 2025; Watoni, 2025). This divergence generates an urgent problem: how can marital harmony be meaningfully realized within polygamous households when sociocultural norms, legal interpretations, and practical realities conflict? Understanding this problem is crucial for addressing injustices, reducing household conflicts, and reorienting polygamous practices toward more ethical and humanistic frameworks.

In the Sasak community of Lombok, polygamy persists as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon shaped by traditions, kinship structures, economic factors, and local values. Polygamy is frequently associated with social prestige, male authority, and community recognition, making it not only a private marital decision but also a public symbol of status (Ikhsan, 2023; Rozikin, 2025). Field observations reveal that first wives often experience emotional instability, social

pressure, and fear of stigmatization, while second wives encounter community judgment or accusations of disrupting existing households. Reports from community leaders, local researchers, and women's advocacy groups highlight recurring issues, including jealousy, clandestine marriages, competition for resources, and unequal affection, which directly affect marital harmony (Husni et al., 2026; Tabroni & Izudin, 2025). At the same time, customary Sasak values such as saling wirang (shared honor) and saling jaga (mutual protection) attempt to regulate behavior and maintain household stability. These contrasting realities illustrate that the construction of harmony in polygamous marriages is not automatic but negotiated through complex social interactions.

Previous studies on polygamy in Indonesia have emphasized mainly normative-theological analyses within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence. Horii (2021) and Jamilah (2025) discusses polygamy as an institution permissible only under strict requirements of justice. Misery (2024) and Sugiyono (2020) highlights the gendered impact of legal interpretations that often overlook women's lived experiences. Supriyadi et al. (2025), Grossman (2021), and Birhane (2021) critique polygamy as socially harmful and inconsistent with maqāṣid al-syarī'ah principles of justice and human dignity. Meanwhile, Chona et al. (2023) and Xie et al. (2022) examine the psychological burdens experienced by wives in unequal marital structures. Although these works contribute valuable insights, most remain textual, doctrinal, or advocacy-oriented, leaving limited space for understanding how harmony is socially constructed in specific cultural settings. They seldom address how local customs, kinship systems, and cultural negotiations intersect with Islamic legal norms in shaping marital relations. Consequently, research that integrates socio-legal approaches with culturally specific realities becomes necessary to fill the knowledge gap.

While socio-anthropological studies by scholars such as John Bowen, Mark Woodward, and Kathryn Robinson offer broader perspectives on marriage, kinship, and Islamic practice in Indonesian communities, they rarely compare the lived experiences of first and second wives in polygamous households. Moreover, prior research often neglects the dialogical relationship between Islamic law and local customs, how texts and traditions interact to influence daily marital behavior (Haruna et al., 2024; Simons et al., 2021). Few studies examine how the concept of harmony is negotiated, constructed, and internalized by individuals within culturally embedded polygamous practices. This gap is critical because theoretical discussions of justice and equality remain abstract unless connected to real sociocultural contexts. Therefore, the present research responds to these limitations by proposing a comparative socio-legal analysis that foregrounds both Islamic legal principles and Sasak cultural dynamics, thereby offering a more holistic understanding of polygamous marital harmony.

This study introduces a novel focus by comparing the experiences, perceptions, and relational dynamics of first and second wives within Sasak polygamous practices, an area rarely examined through a socio-legal lens. Its novelty lies in conceptualizing "marital harmony" not as a fixed ideal but as a socially constructed reality shaped by religious norms, cultural expectations, and

interpersonal negotiations. By employing Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory, the study moves beyond doctrinal debates to illuminate how harmony is created, contested, and maintained through daily interactions (Habibi et al., 2023; Khaniabad et al., 2021). It also advances the analysis by integrating Islamic legal principles, particularly justice, compassion, and maqāṣid al-syarī'ah, with empirical cultural realities. This approach produces a more contextual, humanistic, and dynamic understanding of harmony that challenges simplistic narratives and offers substantial contributions to contemporary Islamic family law discourse.

Based on these gaps, the central research problem concerns how marital harmony is constructed within polygamous households in the Sasak community, particularly in relation to interactions between first and second wives. The study argues that harmony in such contexts cannot be reduced to compliance with legal texts or cultural expectations alone; instead, it emerges from continuous negotiations shaped by emotional needs, social pressures, structural inequalities, and religious commitments. By combining socio-legal analysis with cultural interpretation, the research proposes an alternative analytical framework that reveals the nuanced mechanisms by which harmony is produced or disrupted. This argument responds to the lack of research that holistically addresses the complexity of polygamy across legal, emotional, and cultural dimensions.

This research offers an original contribution by articulating a contextual model of marital harmony that synthesizes Islamic legal ethics with the lived sociocultural experiences of Sasak women. It provides a nuanced understanding of how wives interpret justice, negotiate emotional boundaries, and manage relational tensions within plural marriages. The findings are expected to enrich the development of Islamic family law in Indonesia by offering insights grounded in empirical reality rather than abstract textual interpretation. Moreover, the study contributes to socio-legal scholarship by demonstrating how cultural norms and religious teachings interact dialectically in shaping family life. Ultimately, this research seeks to promote a more humane, equitable, and culturally sensitive understanding of polygamy, one that acknowledges women's voices and emphasizes the ethical principles of fairness, compassion, and social responsibility.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative comparative socio-legal research design to explore how the values of justice, harmony, and gender relations are constructed and practiced within polygamous households in the Sasak community. The qualitative approach is selected because the phenomenon under study involves subjective experiences, emotional negotiations, and cultural meanings that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement (Thomann, 2020). A socio-legal perspective is employed to integrate the normative dimension of Islamic family law with the sociocultural realities of the

community, allowing for an examination of how legal norms interact with customary practices ('urf) in shaping marital dynamics. The comparative aspect of the design focuses specifically on the experiences of first and second wives, enabling a nuanced analysis of similarities and differences in their perceptions of marital harmony. This design is appropriate because it enables researchers to examine not only how norms are articulated in Islamic legal texts but also how they are lived, interpreted, challenged, and reconstructed in everyday social life.

The research was conducted in several villages within the Sasak community in Lombok, chosen because polygamy remains a socially embedded practice supported by cultural norms, religious interpretations, and kinship structures (Rifa'i, 2023). This location provides a rich and authentic context for examining how marital harmony is negotiated within plural marriages. The study involved 40 informants selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance and depth of experience. These informants consisted of 15 first wives and 15 second wives who directly experienced the relational dynamics of polygamy, five Tuan Guru (Islamic religious scholars) who played influential roles in interpreting and guiding Islamic marital norms, and five customary elders responsible for enforcing awiq-awiq as local cultural regulations. This combination of informants enables the researcher to capture complementary perspectives from family practitioners, religious authorities, and cultural leaders.

Data collection was carried out through three complementary techniques that allow for an in-depth exploration of the research problem (Zaragoza et al., 2023). First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with first wives, second wives, husbands, Tuan Guru, and customary leaders to capture their perceptions, emotional experiences, and interpretations of harmony and justice within polygamous relationships. Second, participant observation was undertaken in selected households to observe daily interactions, communication patterns, decision-making processes, and cultural practices that shape marital life. This technique offers insight into behaviors that may not be explicitly expressed in interviews. Third, a document analysis was conducted of classical Islamic legal texts, fiqh munakahat, the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), local customary rules, and relevant socio-legal literature. The combination of these techniques strengthens the depth and breadth of the data, ensuring that the phenomenon is explored from doctrinal, experiential, and sociocultural dimensions.

Data analysis in this study followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model, which emphasizes the iterative and cyclical nature of qualitative interpretation (Hasanah, 2023). The process began with data condensation, in which interview transcripts, field notes, and documents were selected, simplified, coded, and categorized according to emerging themes, including emotional dynamics, justice, cultural negotiation, and harmony construction. The next stage involved data display, in which the researcher organized the condensed data into thematic matrices, comparison charts between

first and second wives, and conceptual maps illustrating the interaction between Islamic legal norms and Sasak cultural values. The final stage, data verification, consisted of interpreting the patterns, linking them with relevant theories, and confirming their validity through repeated checks and triangulation. Through this analytic cycle, conclusions were gradually developed and refined to produce a grounded understanding of how marital harmony is constructed within Sasak polygamous households.

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, this study applied several validity strategies, including triangulation of sources, methods, and theories. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from first wives, second wives, religious scholars, and customary elders to ensure consistency across perspectives. Method triangulation involved integrating interviews, observations, and document analysis, enabling the researcher to cross-check data against multiple forms of evidence. Theoretical triangulation incorporated Islamic legal principles, socio-legal approaches, and social construction theory to avoid a one-dimensional interpretation of findings. Ethical considerations were rigorously maintained through informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymization of all participants' identities. These safeguards ensure that the data produced are reliable, ethically collected, and capable of supporting conclusions with high levels of academic integrity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result

The study shows that marital harmony in Sasak polygamy relies on two key pillars: financial support (*nafkah*) and spousal rotation (*qism*). These arrangements function as both material obligations and symbolic markers of justice. When husbands consistently fulfill them, wives perceive fairness legally and emotionally, thereby reducing conflict and supporting psychological stability within polygamous households.

Theological Meaning-Making as the Core of Resilience

This sub-finding examines how polygamous families in the Sasak community build household resilience through theological interpretations of the principles of justice and shift allocation. In this context, the *qism* schedule is understood not only as a legal obligation but also as a spiritual, emotional, and social mechanism that determines a wife's sense of security. The accuracy of the schedule, the clarity of the night allocation, and the consistency of income are operational indicators of whether the relationship between wives is in balance. Thus, "theological meaning-making" refers to how wives and husbands interpret this allocation as a form of devotion and obedience, and as an effort to maintain family harmony.

Interviews with the first wife indicate that husbands' adherence to the schedule is a key factor in maintaining stable relationships between their half-siblings. The first wife stated, "When my husband does not follow the schedule,

I feel neglected, and my relationship with the second wife becomes strained. However, if the schedule is clear, we can respect each other's shifts." This statement suggests that schedule uncertainty not only triggers jealousy but also reduces emotional security and impacts social relations between wives. The researchers interpret the *qism* schedule as an instrument of justice for the first wife, directly influencing the second wife's acceptance.

An interview with the second wife corroborated these findings. She stated, "If the schedule is clear, I can adapt to the existing household situation, and conflict is less likely to arise." Meanwhile, the husband explained, "Arranging shifts is difficult, but it is important for fairness. If it is unclear, the first and second wives can fight, and I am the one who has to calm things down." From these two statements, the researchers concluded that a clear schedule not only provides certainty for the second wife but also helps the husband maintain a balanced relationship. The *qism* schedule serves as a tool for negotiating fairness recognized by all parties and is a key pillar of emotional resilience in polygamous households.

Observations in several polygamous households indicate that families that consistently implement the *qism* schedule tend to have lower levels of conflict than families that implement it flexibly or unclearly. The researchers found common distribution patterns, such as three nights with the first wife and three nights with the second wife, with one night flexible. A restatement of this data suggests that a well-organized schedule allows each wife to adjust expectations, manage personal needs, and minimize suspicion. The pattern emerging from all the data is that a clear schedule serves as an emotional balance, a mechanism of social control, and a symbol of mutually accepted fairness. When schedules are broken, tensions increase; when they are maintained, harmony is more easily established.

Religious Institutions as Social Capital Networks

The flow of this sub-theme begins with religious institutions offering shared moral frameworks, which are then translated into practical norms within households. These norms shape daily behaviors, including mutual respect, controlled interaction, and the maintenance of personal boundaries. The reinforcement provided by religious gatherings strengthens each wife's understanding of her role, reduces potential tensions, and enhances the overall relational equilibrium. As a result, the religious community becomes an external support system that sustains internal household harmony.

Field observations show that participation in religious institutions contributes to stable emotional conditions among wives, particularly through routine moral reminders and community-based support. Members of the household consistently engage in religious activities that encourage patience, self-control, and mutual respect. These interactions indirectly regulate the dynamics between co-wives by reducing the likelihood of rivalry and reinforcing

behavioral expectations. The households observed tend to exhibit greater emotional stability when religious social spaces actively mediate shared moral norms.
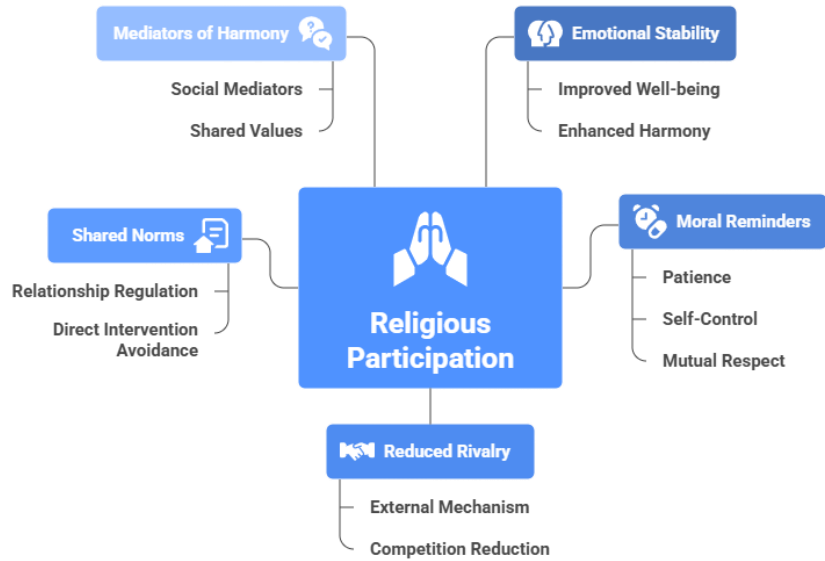
Figure 1. Religious Participation and Emotional Stability in Polygamous Families

These findings indicate that religious institutions function as external mechanisms that support internal household relationships. In simple terms, the data show that community-based religious engagement strengthens the wives' emotional resilience, clarifies behavioral expectations, and reduces unnecessary friction. This influence is evident in the way household members consistently align their conduct with the moral narratives promoted in religious settings. Thus, the social capital generated by these communal networks directly contributes to household harmony.

The overall pattern that emerges is that religious institutions provide structured moral reinforcement that becomes integrated into household practices. The recurring participation in communal worship and study fosters a stable flow of values that guides interactions, minimizes conflict, and maintains emotional balance. These patterns illustrate that harmony in polygamous households is not solely the product of internal arrangements; instead, it is supported by ongoing external moral resources. The data reveal a consistent interplay between community networks and domestic stability, forming a cohesive system of social capital that underpins marital harmony.

Pedagogical Transmission of Family Ethics and Roles

This sub-finding concerns how family ethics and spousal roles are transmitted and internalized within polygamous households through everyday arrangements, including communication patterns, rotation schedules, and the spatial organization of the home. In practice, this concept refers to the

mechanisms by which fairness, emotional balance, and mutual respect are maintained among household members. The operational form of this process is evident in how each spouse understands her personal boundaries, fulfills responsibilities, and aligns her behavior with shared expectations to prevent conflict and preserve harmony.

Table 1. Observation of Pedagogical Transmission of Family Ethics and Roles

Observation	Indicator
Regular communication between husbands and wives regarding rights, duties, and domestic issues	Clarity of role distribution
Structured rotation schedule implemented consistently.	Stability of marital interactions
Spatial separation of personal areas between co-wives	Respect for personal boundaries
Low frequency of interpersonal tension during joint household activities	Emotional balance in daily interaction

The observational data indicate that family ethics and role transmission occur through practical mechanisms that operate continuously in daily routines. Regular communication helps each member clarify her responsibilities, reducing potential misunderstandings. The consistent rotation schedule demonstrates that predictability functions as a stabilizing element that prevents emotional friction. Spatial separation of personal areas reflects the household's strategy for upholding boundaries and minimizing unnecessary contact that may trigger tension. Low levels of visible conflict reaffirm that these arrangements support emotional balance. In essence, the table shows that communication, scheduling, and spatial arrangements work together to maintain order and mutual respect in the household.

The pattern emerging from the data indicates that household harmony is sustained by a coordinated structure that blends clarity, predictability, and boundary management. The combination of open communication, consistent scheduling, and spatial separation forms a holistic system that regulates interaction and reinforces fair treatment. This system is not fragmented; instead, each component supports the others, resulting in a stable relational environment. The overall pattern demonstrates that ethical and role-based order in the household is not produced by a single dominant factor but by the integration of multiple daily practices that together preserve balance and minimize conflict.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that marital harmony in Sasak polygamous households rests on three central mechanisms: financial justice, rotation schedules (*qism*), and emotional balance, which collectively align in unique ways with classical Islamic legal discourse and contemporary socio-legal scholarship. Existing literature on Islamic family law emphasizes the husband's obligations of nafkah and *qism* as primary indicators of justice, yet it often treats these obligations as strictly normative and legal-formal (Fathoni et al., 2024;

Munir, 2021). In contrast, the Sasak community demonstrates a substantive reinterpretation of these principles, where justice is constructed not through numerical equality but through proportional fairness, mutual consent, and social legitimacy. This convergence between legal doctrine and cultural adaptation supports socio-legal theories that argue law becomes effective only when grounded in local values and lived realities.

Comparing the findings with broader scholarship on polygamy and household dynamics reveals both alignment and divergence. Prior studies highlight that emotional justice, though not mandated normatively in Islamic texts, is often the most challenging dimension for polygamous families (Kounadi, 2021; Wira et al., 2023). The Sasak case confirms this challenge but also illustrates a culturally driven effort to transform emotional justice into an achievable moral practice through structured communication patterns, spatial arrangements, rotation stability, and mediated interactions among wives. The involvement of religious institutions and customary leaders further distinguishes the Sasak model from literature that describes polygamous households as primarily private spheres; instead, this study shows that external moral communities function as stabilizing social capital networks (Aleghfeli, 2023; Romenska et al., 2020). This indicates that harmony is produced not only inside the household but also through sustained communal reinforcement.

The implications of these findings underscore a significant theoretical development: the shift from formal to substantive justice within polygamous arrangements. The evidence suggests that Sasak families interpret Islamic legal obligations through contextual filters, including economic capacity, emotional needs, and social expectations. This supports a *maqāṣid*-oriented approach to polygamy, where *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (preservation of offspring) and *ḥifẓ al-'irḍ* (preservation of honor) become more relevant indicators of successful polygamous practice than rigid compliance with textual rules (Aleghfeli, 2023). Practically, this implies that legal reforms or family counseling frameworks addressing polygamy should not focus solely on procedural requirements but must incorporate psychological resilience, transparency, financial proportionality, and relational ethics (Burke et al., 2023; Jackson, 2021). The findings reinforce that household harmony is more sustainable when law operates alongside local wisdom rather than above it.

The practical implications extend further to policy and community intervention. The study shows that religious institutions and customary networks play an essential mediating role, shaping behavioral expectations and offering moral reinforcement that reduces inter-wife rivalry. This suggests that community-based programs such as premarital counseling, religious study groups, and family mediation systems can serve as effective platforms to enhance the psychological and relational competencies of polygamous families. Moreover, the consistent success of proportional financial strategies, negotiation-based rotation schedules, and structured communication indicates that

practitioners working in family development, religious counseling, or social welfare should adopt a culturally sensitive approach that emphasizes adaptability rather than uniformity. These findings highlight the need for integrated models of family education that combine Islamic legal principles with cultural pragmatism.

In summary, the comparative socio-legal analysis demonstrates that marital harmony in Sasak polygamy emerges from a dynamic interplay between Islamic law, cultural norms, and interpersonal adaptation. Contrary to predominant legalistic interpretations, the Sasak case reveals that justice is constructed through layered everyday practices that balance rights, obligations, and emotional realities. The coordinated system of financial proportionality, stable rotation schedules, clear communication, spatial boundary management, and communal moral support produces a relational ecosystem that stabilizes polygamous households. Theoretically, these findings contribute to contemporary debates on Islamic family law by illustrating how *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* can function as a bridge between text and context. Practically, they offer a culturally grounded framework for strengthening marital harmony, guiding policy formulation, and informing educational programs for communities navigating the complexities of polygamous family life.

Conclusion

This study concludes that marital harmony in Sasak polygamous households is constructed through a dynamic combination of financial justice, consistent rotation schedules, emotional regulation, and community-based moral reinforcement. The key insight revealed by the research is that harmony is not an automatic outcome of polygamy, but a product of continuous negotiation shaped by proportional fairness, clear communication, and structured boundary management. The theological internalization of justice, particularly the wives' interpretation of qism and nafkah as spiritual obligations, strengthens resilience and reduces conflict. This finding offers an important lesson: polygamous harmony is achievable when legal norms, cultural practices, and emotional needs operate in synergy rather than in opposition. The study thus provides a significant scholarly contribution by integrating Islamic legal ethics with lived cultural realities, demonstrating how socio-legal frameworks can illuminate the practical mechanisms through which justice and harmony are socially constructed.

Despite its strengths, this research acknowledges several limitations. The findings are based on a specific cultural setting, the Sasak community, so the patterns of harmony identified may not fully represent other Muslim societies with different traditions, economic structures, or gender relations. The qualitative design, while rich in depth, limits generalizability and relies heavily on subjective interpretations of participants and researchers. Furthermore, emotional dynamics between wives, though observed, may require

psychological instruments for more comprehensive measurement. Future research should therefore expand comparative analyses across regions, integrate mixed-methods approaches to quantify emotional well-being, and more critically examine the role of husbands as negotiators of justice and stability. Studies may also examine how legal reforms, education programs, or digital communication technologies reshape polygamous relationships. These directions will strengthen theoretical development and enrich socio-legal understandings of polygamy in contemporary Muslim contexts.

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