

**WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE IN POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGES:
A STUDY OF NATURE OF, FORMS, EFFECTS ON AND
RESPONSES OF ABUSED WIVES IN POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGES
IN TEMANGGUNG, CENTRAL JAVA, INDONESIA**

NOVI WIDYANINGRUM

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NOVI WIDYANINGRUM 4637971 SHHS/M

M.A.(HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)

THESIS ADVISORS: SIRIWAN GRISURAPONG, Ph.D., ILJAS BAKER, M.Phil.

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to describe women's experience in polygamous marriages especially the nature and forms of polygamy and wife abuse, sexual and reproductive health experiences, effects on and responses of abused wives in polygamous marriages. Feminist ethnographic methodology was used in this study. Participant observation, in-depth interview, group interview, oral history and personal narrative were employed in order to understand the experiences of eight wives who live in polygamous marriages in the study site.

Polygamy practices in Sendang Sari are a result of patriarchal ideology, which is reproduced and maintained through Islamic interpretation, Javanese culture and Indonesian secular marriage law. This ideology also influences wives' perception and acceptance of their polygamous marriages and their response to abuses.

All wives reported experiencing types of abuse since entering polygamous marriages. The most commonly reported were that they live in a jealous and competitive atmosphere and are abandoned by the husband. Also significant were physical abuse and sexual force by husbands, which had effects on their and physical health. Wives used some resistance strategy such as silence, symbolic gesture, fighting back, verbal resistance and seeking divorce. For the long-term violence wives mostly coped by adapting to the situation by using their spirituality.

It is recommended that Indonesian government should strictly enforce the law 23/2004 to protect wives from domestic violence. Moreover, there's a need to develop a community-based educational program in order to strengthen the wives' awareness of gender issues, reproductive health and sexual rights. Also there is a need to reinterpret the religious teaching and deconstruct culture in order to build a new ideology that gives more respect to women's rights. There is a need for a critical and systematic movement to reject the normalization of polygamous practices in Indonesia. In terms of further research, comprehensive research that involves children, husbands and other wives in order to get information about family conditions and the underlying cultural belief system in which these polygamous marriages are rooted is needed.

KEY WORDS: ABUSED WIVES/ POLYGAMY / PATRIARCHY/ EFFECTS OF ABUSE/ RESPONSES TO ABUSE

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