

Polygamy among *Muallaf* in Manado: Islamic Legal Perspectives and Social Challenges

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Abstract: The practice of polygamy is often a controversial topic and raises questions about religious and cultural identity. Although Islamic law permits polygamy under certain conditions, how this is understood and applied by the convert community in a Christian setting is complex. This study explores the dynamics of polygamy among converts (*Muallaf*) in the multicultural environment of Manado, Indonesia, from the perspective of Islam and society. Using an empirical normative approach, the study involved 35 informants, consisting of 25 *Muallaf* who were married in Islam and ten who were engaged in polygamous marriages. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, and the analysis identified common patterns and significant findings, focusing on factors influencing attitudes towards polygamy. The results revealed differences in views among *Muallaf* regarding polygamy; some accept this practice as part of Islamic teachings, while others reject it as contrary to their previous values. Factors such as religious interpretation, pre-conversion values, and legal and social barriers affected their attitudes toward polygamy. The problematic legal hurdles of obtaining polygamy permits in court highlight additional challenges in implementing this practice in Manado. Nevertheless, polygamy remains a controversial issue in this predominantly Christian society, reflecting the complexity of the interaction between religion and culture. This research provides important insights into how polygamy is perceived and practiced in multicultural environments and the challenges *Muallaf* faces in understanding and applying Islamic law in their social contexts.

Keywords: Polygamy; *Muallaf*; Religion; Islamic Law.

Introduction

Polygamy in Islam is a prominent and controversial topic in various countries, especially in an environment where the majority hold strong monogamous values. In Indonesia, a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, the practice of polygamy is regulated by state law, which requires approval from a religious court (Rohmansyah, 2020). However, its application often varies depending on the local social and cultural context (Ridwan et al., 2024). In Manado, a city in Indonesia with a majority Christian population, views on polygamy can be very different from other Muslim communities in Indonesia (Sarib & Alimashariyanto, 2022). This creates a unique situation for converts navigating Islamic religious law and dominant local social norms. In Egypt, a country with a Sunni Muslim majority, polygamy is also a hot debate in society, even though it is legally allowed (El Fegiery, 2016). Views on polygamy are influenced by cultural, social, and political factors, creating diverse perspectives across society (Al-Krenawi, 2014). In Turkey, a country with a strong history of secularism, polygamy has been banned by civil justice law since 1926. Converts in Turkey tend to have a negative view of polygamy, along with an emphasis on secular values and social progress (Yilmaz, 2022). This reality reflects the understanding and application of Islamic law on polygamy, as well as how local social and cultural norms influence and shape the practice. This research seeks to explore how the concept of polygamy is accepted,

interpreted, and practiced by converts, as well as how they navigate the various challenges that arise from differences in religious and social values.

Various studies have explored polygamy from various perspectives, ranging from the study of Islamic law to sociological and anthropological analysis. In Islamic legal literature, polygamy is allowed on the condition that justice between wives must be maintained, as explained by several researchers such as Santoso, Amaliyah, and Huda (2023) and Surahman (2018). They emphasized the importance of maintaining balance and justice in polygamous relationships to prevent injustice to the wives concerned. On the other hand, sociological and anthropological studies highlight that the acceptance of polygamy is greatly influenced by the cultural context, social values, and power dynamics in local communities. Research by Zeitzen (2020) and Al-Krenawi (2014) describes how polygamy can be accepted or rejected based on existing cultural norms and social order. In Indonesia, research also shows that economic, social, and personal factors play an essential role in the practice of polygamy. Nurlaelawati (2020), Ridwan, Abdullah, and Idham (2024), and Gunawan and Hasan (2017) found that economic conditions, social status, and personal motives of husbands influence the decision to become polygamous. A deep understanding of polygamy requires a cross-disciplinary approach considering aspects of religion, culture, and social context.

Researchers found gaps in the literature that specifically focus on how converts in non-Muslim-majority areas, such as Manado, interpret and practice polygamy. Most of the literature focuses on Muslim communities that are majority or in regions where Islam is the dominant religion. Little attention has been paid to how converts in Christian-majority areas confront and interpret the teachings of polygamy in Islam. Previous research has also lacked exploration of the experiences of converts who adjust to social norms different from their home environment. This raises questions about how converts internalize and implement the teachings of Islam in a social context that may not support these practices.

Although many studies have addressed polygamy in the Muslim context in Indonesia, there are still shortcomings in studies that focus on converts in a multicultural environment such as Manado. Existing literacy tends to ignore the specific experiences of converts who adjust to social norms different from their home environment. In addition, few studies have explored how differences in values before and after conversion affect attitudes toward polygamy. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the experiences of converts related to polygamy in Manado.

This research aims to explore the views and attitudes of converts in Manado towards polygamy from the perspective of Islamic and social law. This study also seeks to identify factors that affect the acceptance or rejection of polygamy among converts. In addition, this study will analyze the legal and social obstacles faced by converts in the practice of polygamy in Manado. Thus, this research can provide insights into how converts navigate the interaction between religious law and local social norms in a multicultural context.

Literature Review

Polygamy in Indonesia is governed by a combination of national laws and religious principles, with the primary legal framework provided by Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage and its accompanying Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 9 Tahun 1975, along with the Kompilasi Hukum Islam (KHI) which offers guidance for Muslim communities (Djawas et al., 2022). Central to these regulations is the principle of monogamy, although exceptions for polygamy are allowed under stringent conditions (Danial, 2023). According to Article 3 (1) of the Marriage Law, monogamy is the norm, but Article 3 (2) allows for polygamy if the husband can obtain permission from the Religious Court, provided specific conditions are met, such as the consent of the existing wife or wives and proof of financial capability and fairness (Khalilurrahman et al., 2022; Nuruddin et al., 2023). The implementation of these laws is designed to ensure that polygamy is not practiced arbitrarily and that the rights of all parties involved are protected.

Islamic teachings further contextualize polygamy, particularly in the Qur'an's Surat An-Nisa' ayat (3), which permits a man to marry up to four women provided he can ensure justice among them (Makka & Ratundelang, 2022). This concept of justice is pivotal and poses a significant ethical and practical

challenge, as highlighted by scholars like Jauhari et al. (2023) and Rohmansyah (2020). They argue that the stringent requirements for fairness effectively discourage polygamy, aligning with the broader Islamic ethos of justice and equality. However, in practice, issues such as unregistered marriages (*nikah siri*) and the lack of formal approval from the first wife pose legal and social challenges. These include disputes over inheritance and the legal status of children from such unions, demonstrating the complexities and potential conflicts inherent in polygamous arrangements.

Muallaf (converts to Islam) represent a unique and dynamic group within the Muslim community, facing distinct challenges and opportunities as they integrate into their new faith. The term *muallaf* refers to individuals who have recently embraced Islam, and their experiences often involve significant cultural, social, and psychological adjustments. Studies by Moors & Vroon-Najem (2019) and Sarib & Alimashariyanto (2022) highlight that *muallaf* may encounter resistance or misunderstanding from their previous religious communities, family members, or even within their new Muslim communities, where their knowledge and practice of Islam might initially be limited. This transitional phase requires significant support to help *muallaf* navigate their new religious identity and practice.

The successful integration of *muallaf* into the Muslim community largely depends on the availability of a supportive environment that fosters religious education and social inclusion. Research by Wijaya Mulya (2021) emphasizes the importance of support systems such as mentorship programs, Islamic education classes, and community activities. These initiatives are crucial in aiding *muallaf* in understanding Islamic teachings, practicing religious rituals, and navigating the socio-cultural landscape of their new identity. Additionally, Sadiani et al. (2023) highlights the necessity of tailored outreach programs that address the specific needs of *muallaf*, ensuring that their transition to Islam is both spiritually fulfilling and socially supportive. Such programs are essential in helping *muallaf* overcome challenges and fully integrate into the Muslim community, strengthening their faith and sense of belonging within the broader Muslim society.

Method

This study uses a normative-empirical approach, which combines normative legal studies with empirical analysis to understand how polygamy is practiced and accepted by converts in Manado (McCrudden, 2017). The normative law study analyzes Islamic legal texts governing polygamy, while empirical analysis involves collecting field data through various social research techniques. This approach allows researchers to examine how legal norms are applied in practice and how social and cultural experiences influence the interpretation and application of those laws.

The research was carried out in the city of Manado, North Sulawesi, which is known for its ethnic and religious diversity. The selection of Manado City as the location of the study was based on its high ethnic and religious diversity, which makes it ideal for studying social and religious dynamics, including the process of religious conversion and marriage in diverse societies (Salma & Rajafi, 2020). The existence of converts and the practice of polygamy in Manado, with a significant Muslim community amidst a non-Muslim majority, provides a rich context for research. The diversity in Manado creates complex inter-group relationship dynamics, providing insight into the navigation of converts' identities. The subjects of the study were 35 converts, who were selected using a purposive sampling technique, consisting of 25 converts who were married in Islam and ten who were involved in polygamous marriages. The selection of subjects aims to ensure the relevance of their experiences to the research topic, particularly in the context of polygamy.

Data is collected through several methods. In-depth interviews were conducted with a semi-structured approach to explore the views and experiences of converts about polygamy. Participatory observation is conducted in various community events and religious activities to understand their social and cultural interactions. In addition, documentation is used to collect additional data from Islamic legal literature, local regulations, and other relevant documents such as court records and government policies (Moleong, 2021).

Data analysis is carried out through a thematic analysis method that involves several steps (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Harper & Thompson, 2011). First, interviews and observation notes are transcribed verbatim and coded to identify key themes. These themes are then identified and analyzed to understand patterns and relationships between themes. Second, these themes are interpreted in the context of existing theories and literature to provide an in-depth explanation of the experience of converts related to polygamy in Manado.

Results and Discussion

Understanding and Acceptance of Polygamy

The study's results reveal various factors that affect converts' understanding and acceptance of this practice. Religious understanding and the level of Islamic knowledge are key points that influence their views. *First*, converts who are deeply involved in Islamic teachings tend to have a deeper understanding of the concept of polygamy, including the conditions associated with it, such as justice and responsibility. They see polygamy as part of religious teachings that must be carefully understood and applied correctly. However, cultural background also plays an essential role in shaping their views. Converts from cultures that traditionally accept polygamy may be more open to the practice. In contrast, those from unfamiliar cultures may face more significant challenges in accepting this concept, as it is considered unorthodox or immoral in their culture.

"After studying the teachings of Islam more deeply, I realized that polygamy is not just a personal choice, but there are strict conditions that must be met, such as justice and responsibility. Polygamy in Islam is not just about marrying more than one, but how to act fairly and responsibly towards all wives." (Interview, AK *Muallaf*, Manado June 24, 2023)

Religious understanding and the level of Islamic knowledge play a central role in shaping the views of converts toward polygamy (Wirastri & van Huis, 2021). According to Muabsa (2021), converts who study Islamic teachings in depth tend to have a more nuanced understanding of the concept of polygamy, including an understanding of the conditions associated with it, such as justice and responsibility. They see polygamy as part of religious teachings that must be understood and applied with full awareness.

Secondly, personal experience and observation within the Muslim community also play an essential role. Converts who witnessed examples of fair and harmonious polygamy tended to be more open to this concept. However, negative experiences or observations about injustice in the practice of polygamy can lead to skeptical or even opposing views towards it. Some converts feel worried or doubtful about one's ability to be fair in polygamy, while others see it as a practical solution in certain situations.

"I have witnessed the practice of polygamy that is unfair and full of conflicts. This makes me skeptical and inclined to oppose polygamy because I see the negative impact that comes from the lack of justice and responsibility. I also see that polygamy can run well with justice and responsibility, and all parties can feel happy." (Interview, NI *Muallaf*, Manado June 24, 2023)

Personal experience in the Muslim community is a factor that influences the convert's view of polygamy. In this context, research by Seligson & McCants (2022) highlights that direct experience in the community plays an essential role in shaping their views. From the results found, converts who witnessed a harmonious and fair-based polygamous relationship tended to accept the practice as part of religious teachings. However, as highlighted by Higdon (2017), negative experiences such as injustice or conflict in polygamy can generate views that are skeptical or even against it. Sinai & Peleg (2021) also add another important dimension by highlighting that it is not only personal experiences that affect people's views, in this case, their perception of the examples of polygamy they see in the broader society. They found that exposure to polygamy that is perceived as fair and harmonious in the general community tends to form a more open attitude towards the practice. In contrast, exposure to polygamy colored by injustice or disharmony can lead to more skeptical or even anti-it-taking attitudes.

Converts who accept polygamy, especially those who support religious interpretations that justify the practice, can feel that polygamy is a legitimate part of Islamic teachings and can provide social benefits

to families and communities. However, for those who reject it, especially those who have pre-converted values that oppose polygamy or who are constrained by legal and social barriers, polygamy is seen as a practice that is incompatible with their previous beliefs or values. Diverse interpretations of religion, both in the context of Islamic law and in social values, also influence how converts understand and accept or reject polygamy. Legal and social barriers, such as the process of obtaining polygamy permits in court or social stigmatization of the practice, are also significant factors in shaping the attitudes and views of converts toward polygamy (Al-Krenawi, 2014).

In addition, polygamy is also influenced by external factors such as legal and social barriers that exist in the society in which they live. Diverse interpretations of religion give rise to diversity in understanding and acceptance of polygamy, where some converts may adopt views that justify the practice as an integral part of Islamic teachings, while others may interpret it differently. The pre-converted values they had before converting to Islam may also have influenced their attitudes toward polygamy. In contrast, those who have previous views against the practice may be more likely to reject it. Legal and social barriers, such as the process of obtaining polygamy permits in court or the social stigma against polygamy, are also essential factors in shaping their views.

This research reveals various factors that affect the understanding and acceptance of polygamy by converts, which is one of the controversial aspects of Islamic teachings. In the process of conversion, converts often have to navigate a new understanding of religious teachings that encompass various legal and social dimensions, including the concept of polygamy. Polygamy in Islam is regulated by strict conditions, such as justice and responsibility, which must be understood and applied correctly. Religious understanding and level of Islamic knowledge are the main factors influencing their views. Converts who are deeply versed in the teachings of Islam tend to have a deeper understanding of this concept, and they see polygamy as part of religious teachings that must be applied carefully. However, cultural background also plays an important role. Converts from cultures that traditionally accept polygamy may be more open to the practice. In contrast, those from cultures that are unfamiliar with it may face more significant challenges in accepting the concept because it is considered unorthodox or even immoral. Personal experiences and observations in the Muslim community also influence their views; Converts who witness examples of fair and harmonious polygamy tend to be more open to this concept, while negative experiences can lead to skeptical or even opposing views. In addition, legal and social obstacles such as the process of obtaining polygamy permits in court, or social stigma against the practice are significant factors in shaping the attitudes and views of converts towards polygamy.

The Impact of Polygamy According to Converts: Social and Psychological Perspectives

The practice of polygamy in Islam often has a complex and varied impact on converts or people who have just converted to Islam (Pearsall, 2022). Their views on polygamy can be influenced by a variety of factors, including their interpretation of religion, previous cultural values, and their personal experiences (Hasan et al., 2022). Some converts accept polygamy as an integral part of the teachings of Islam, especially if they adopt an interpretation that justifies the practice. However, for some converts, especially those who come from cultures that prioritize monogamy, polygamy can be a source of internal conflict and discomfort (E. Gunawan & Hasan, 2017). They find it challenging to accept polygamy as part of their new beliefs, especially if they have had negative experiences or trauma related to polygamy in a previous environment.

In a social context, the practice of polygamy can also affect the relationship between converts and the surrounding community. Although polygamy is legally allowed in Islam, non-Muslim societies or those who prefer monogamy tend to have different views. Converts who practice polygamy may face stigma or judgment from the surrounding environment, which can exacerbate internal conflicts and social isolation. On the other hand, some converts feel supported and accepted by their community in understanding and practicing polygamy.

"As a convert, I often experience stigma because of polygamy, especially from non-Muslim communities who do not understand this practice. However, a very supportive community also

helps me feel welcome, even though social pressure and isolation remain challenging." (Interview, AK *Muallaf*, Manado June 24, 2023)

From a psychological perspective, polygamy can also have a significant impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of converts, especially in interpersonal relationships and self-identity. In some cases, polygamy can cause stress, anxiety, and depression in converts, especially if they feel unrecognized or undercared for by their partner or society. Conflicts between wives in polygamy can also cause tension and instability in the family, which in turn can affect the well-being of children and parent-child relationships (Zulkifli, 2019).

The results show differences in views among converts regarding polygamy, some of whom accept the practice as part of Islamic teachings. In contrast, others reject it because it contradicts their previous values. Factors such as religious interpretation, pre-conversion values, and legal and social barriers influence their attitudes toward polygamy. For example, the majority of converts who accept polygamy tend to have a literal interpretation of the teachings of Islam. In contrast, those who reject polygamy prefer a contextual interpretation that emphasizes the principles of justice and gender equality in Islam. This change in attitude often involves an internal conflict between the previous values and the teachings of the new religion. Converts from monogamous cultures show a higher resistance to polygamy, and the process of internalizing Islamic values often takes a long time.

"I still find it difficult to accept polygamy even though I have been a Muslim for ten years. In my previous religion, polygamy had never been discussed, and I felt very jealous and insecure about the idea of my husband having another wife. I am trying to understand, but it is tough for me." (Interview, AAP *Muallaf*, Manado June 12, 2023)

In addition, another product also stated that the first wife, who came from a monogamous culture, often experienced anxiety and decreased self-esteem. This can happen because the first wife feels insecure and threatened by the presence of a new wife, which can be considered a form of betrayal or a decrease in their social and emotional status in the household. Jealousy and competition for the husband's attention and affection also worsen the first wife's psychological state. This condition reinforces feelings of isolation and worthlessness, which can negatively impact their mental and emotional well-being. In addition, the first wife may feel social pressure and stigma from a community that generally has a negative view of the practice of polygamy.

"I never expected to be in a polygamous situation. At first, I was very receptive, but after studying more deeply and seeing the fair practice of polygamy in my community, I began to see it as a legitimate option in Islam. However, it was still difficult to accept emotionally." (Interview, NB *Muallaf*, Manado June 10, 2023)

The researcher underlined that converts who come from monogamous cultural backgrounds often experience high resistance to the concept of polygamy because it conflicts with the values they previously embraced, thus creating internal conflicts that are exacerbated by personal experiences or trauma related to polygamy. The first wives of monogamous cultures, for example, often feel anxious and experience low self-esteem because they see the presence of a new wife as a threat to their status and position in the family. Competition for a husband's attention also exacerbates their psychological state, which can lead to feelings of isolation and worthlessness. Although there are converts who have succeeded in accepting polygamy through the internalization of new values according to the teachings of Islam, this acceptance does not necessarily eliminate feelings of jealousy or discomfort and is more of an attempt to adjust to the new faith. In a social context, the relationship between converts who practice polygamy and the surrounding community is often influenced by the community's perception of polygamy, which can be in the form of support in an environment that understands the religious context or social stigma and judgment in society that tends to reject polygamy. Positive social support can help converts overcome these challenges, while social stigma deepens internal conflicts and hinders their integration into the community. The impact of polygamy on converts is highly dependent on their social and cultural context, and their ability to navigate the value differences between their cultural background and the teachings of new religions, so social

support and cross-cultural education are needed to reduce stigma and strengthen social cohesion in a multicultural and multireligious society.

Challenges and Adaptation of Polygamy for Converts

For converts, the legal principles governing polygamy have a significant impact on their adaptation to new religions and cultures (Bukido et al., 2024). Although the Marriage Law affirms the principle of monogamy, some exceptions allow polygamy by applicable law, with the Religious Court as the institution that certifies the ability of polygamy. For converts who come from cultural backgrounds that adhere to monogamy, the concept of polygamy often causes internal conflicts or discomfort. However, a deep understanding of Islam's legal context and religious values and support from communities and religious leaders can help them undergo a better adaptation process. In interviews, many converts revealed that the process of adaptation to the understanding of polygamy is often complex. Especially for those who previously grew up in a culture that emphasized monogamy, the idea of polygamy often contradicts the values they have internalized before. These internal conflicts or discomforts reflect the challenges faced by converts in embracing the teachings of Islam that sometimes contradict their previous cultural values.

"The process of adapting to the understanding of polygamy is indeed complex. Especially for me, who previously grew up in a Christian culture that emphasized monogamy, the idea of polygamy often contradicted the values I had internalized before." (Interview, ID *Muallaf*, Manado June 19, 2023)

In the context of religion, polygamy is an integral part of Islamic teachings, allowed under strict conditions according to the interpretation of Surah An-Nisa verse 3 (Sadat & Ipendang, 2020). It provides an ontological dimension related to understanding the relationship between man and God and individuals' moral obligations towards their religion. Polygamy is reflected in the values, norms, and family structure embraced by a society (Widiani, 2022). The view of polygamy is influenced by a culture that is rooted in the values of justice, responsibility, and the understanding of the ideal family structure. This is how polygamy is understood and accepted within the framework of a particular culture (Summers, 2021).

Islam regulates the ordinance of polygamy by providing strict provisions, which include vital requirements such as fairness in the treatment of wives, the ability to provide fair maintenance to each wife and her children, the consent of the wife, the ability to account for actions before Allah, and the proper purpose (Jauhari et al., 2023). Fairness in terms of material support, attention, time, and emotional treatment of wives, as well as the consent of the first wife and ethical considerations, are essential points in the implementation of polygamy (Hafidzi & Hayatunnisa, 2018).

Although polygamy is allowed in Islam with strict conditions, it often raises questions, internal conflicts, and discomfort for some converts, especially those who come from more monogamous cultures. In the understanding of religion, polygamy raises various ethical and moral questions, especially about the concept of justice among the wives involved. This requires a deep understanding of religious values and their principles, as well as how the practice of polygamy is understood in the context of Islamic teachings (M. S. Santoso, 2023). In addition, cultural background also plays an essential role in shaping the converts' view of polygamy. Those who come from cultures that adhere to monogamy tend to have a different view compared to those who are used to polygamy. Personal experience is also a determining factor in shaping attitudes toward polygamy (Sofiana & Sunni, 2021). Converts who witness examples of fair and harmonious polygamy tend to be more open to this concept. In contrast, negative experiences in the practice of polygamy can lead to skeptical or even opposing views of it.

Polygamy, as a practice found in several cultures and religions, has a complex and often controversial impact on social life (Nasir, 2022). Although there are arguments about the social and humanitarian benefits of polygamy, especially in the context of protecting widows and orphans, as mentioned in Surah An-Nisa verse 3, the psychological impact on the first wife is often a significant concern in the discussion of this practice. According to Summers (2021), significant psychological impacts can be felt by first wives, ranging from feelings of disturbance and heartache to internal conflicts in the family

involving wives, stepchildren, and children from different wives. Unhealthy competition between wives also often arises, where they seek to attract more attention from their husbands, leading to division between wives. In addition, the psychological impact on the first wife also includes a change in self-image to negative, a loss of importance in relationships with husbands, and a loss of relationships with others (Al-Krenawi, 2021). This can result in feelings of loneliness and loss of identity, as well as increased stress and anxiety levels in the first wife, which can ultimately interfere with their mental and emotional well-being. This is in line with the findings of Stopes (2021), This revealed that first wives often experience a loss of good relations with their husbands, feelings of meaninglessness for their partners, and become more sensitive and irritable.

In the global context, the views of converts towards polygamy are also influenced by different social, cultural, and legal factors in different countries. In Indonesia, the practice of polygamy is still common, especially among traditional or conservative societies. In contrast, in urban areas and among more educated communities, polygamy tends to be seen as something less common and controversial. In Turkey, a country with a strong history of secularism, polygamy has been banned by civil justice law since 1926. Most converts in Turkey, therefore, tend to have a negative view of polygamy, and this practice is sporadic in the country (Al-Krenawi, 2014). In Egypt, a country with a Sunni Muslim majority, polygamy is also a hot debate in society, even though it is legally allowed (El Fegiery, 2016). Views on polygamy are influenced by cultural, social, and political factors, creating diverse societal perspectives. In Morocco, a country with a long history of polygamy, people's views on this practice are also diverse, with some couples choosing monogamy due to social and economic changes in society (Yamani, 2022).

In addition, the views of converts on polygamy are reflected in various perspectives in several countries. For example, in Nigeria, a country with a sizeable Muslim population, polygamy is still common among some ethnic and religious groups despite social changes that have led to more and more couples opting for monogamy. In Pakistan, a Sunni Muslim country, polygamy is legally allowed and is still common, but there are also community groups that oppose the practice. In Bangladesh, polygamy is legally allowed, but acceptance of the practice varies among communities, depending on cultural and religious factors. In Saudi Arabia, polygamy is more socially and legally acceptable, although some women activists are fighting for reforms in family law to protect women's rights (Al-Krenawi, 2014). In the United States, where Islam is a minority, the practice of polygamy is often viewed negatively and even illegal in state law. The experiences and views of converts towards polygamy are greatly influenced by cultural, religious, and legal factors in their respective countries and social changes that occur in society (McClain, 2020).

Socially, polygamy is not only an individual phenomenon but also linked to broader social dynamics, including political and economic changes in society (Nafi'ah et al., 2024). For example, in some areas, such as Manado, the difficulty of obtaining polygamy permits in court shows legal challenges that must be overcome. To address this complexity, recommendations can include an inclusive approach, legal reforms that pay attention to the protection of individual rights, education, and socialization approaches to change public perceptions, women's empowerment to make more independent choices, and cross-agency cooperation to develop holistic solutions (Mitchell et al., 2021; Sofiana & Sunni, 2021). Advocacy for cultural change is also needed to promote a more inclusive understanding of gender relationships and justice.

In the face of the complexity of the practice of polygamy, several recommendations can be put forward to improve understanding and handling of this issue. *First*, a more inclusive approach is needed that considers various religious, cultural, and social dimensions in the context of polygamy (Muttaqin, 2021). This includes efforts to deepen understanding of religious values and promote intercultural dialogue to understand diverse views on polygamy (Surahman, 2018). *Second*, legal reform is essential in clarifying the requirements and procedures related to polygamy by paying attention to the protection of individual rights, especially justice among the wives involved (Ramli et al., 2023). This can help overcome difficult legal obstacles in obtaining polygamy permits in court, as observed in Manado. *Third*, an education and

socialization approach is also needed to change public perception of polygamy (S. O. Gunawan & Bahri, 2023). Especially in areas such as Christian-majority Manado, this education can strengthen understanding of cultural and religious diversity and promote the values of gender equality and justice.

Conclusion

There are significant differences of opinion among converts regarding the practice of polygamy, which is reflected in their attitudes that vary from acceptance to rejection. Some converts accept polygamy as an integral part of the teachings of Islam, interpreting it according to the religious values they profess. However, some reject it because it is considered contrary to the values they held before, especially those from a cultural background that adheres to monogamy. Factors such as different interpretations of religion, the pre-converted values they have internalized, and legal and social barriers also influence their attitudes toward polygamy. Especially in Manado, the problematic legal obstacles in obtaining polygamy permits in court highlight the additional challenges faced in the implementation of this practice, adding complexity to the process of adaptation and integration of converts in a society where the majority hold different views. Thus, a deeper understanding of the factors influencing attitudes towards polygamy, as well as efforts to overcome existing barriers, is needed to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for those who choose to practice this practice.

Considering religious, cultural, and social dimensions, an inclusive approach is needed to address these complexities. This includes legal reforms that ensure fairness among wives involved in polygamy, as well as educational approaches that aim to change public perceptions of the practice. Especially in Christian-majority areas such as Manado, special efforts are needed to provide a better understanding of the social, economic, and psychological impacts of polygamy, as well as to promote the values of equality and respect for human rights.

The limitations of this study include significant differences in views among converts regarding the practice of polygamy, which is reflected in their attitudes that vary from acceptance to rejection. Factors such as different interpretations of religion, the pre-converted values they have internalized, and legal and social barriers also influence their attitudes toward polygamy. Especially in Manado, the problematic legal obstacles in obtaining polygamy permits in court highlight the additional challenges faced in the implementation of this practice, adding complexity to the process of adaptation and integration of converts in a society where the majority hold different views.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest by authors.

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