



The Rise of “Polygamy” Campaign in Contemporary Social Media

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Abstract. Albeit polygamy is culturally accepted in Indonesia, it remains a controversial issue. Local perception to this topic relates to the cultural and religious interpretation. While many people use social media of Facebook as a space for expression, such campaign on polygamy arise and widespread in this online platform. The invitation to join what so called polygamy community or group is quite reaching either man and women or young and mature people. Previous studies have been carried out observing its meaning based on religious perspective, however, only few who endeavor to describe its relation to contemporary online campaign phenomenon. By applying reception theory, this paper shows that polygamy group of *Poligami Syarie* promotes the idea of polygamy through Facebook account. More than four thousand members of the group tend to agree with polygamy. Most reasons rely on Islamic texts while few of them express social motivation.

Keywords: Polygamy · Facebook · Islamic texts

1 Introduction

The discussion of husbands having two or three wives is a heated conversation in Muslim majority country of Indonesia. It is commonly called polygamy in Islamic teaching. As a gender issue, polygamy is inherent gender asymmetry; the fact that one man can be married to several women but one woman can only be married to one man, or vice versa. It paves the way for potential conflict between the sexes [1]. The word “polygamy” is often conversed by men rather than women either in office or café as primary joke. This word often become triggered joke in some Islamic based communities. The most debated content is around the Islamic text and social facts. From the Islamic text, there are two verses mentioning polygamy in al-Nisa’ (4): 3 dan 129. These verses reflecting the possibility to do polygamy. Meanwhile, social fact of polygamy refers to the gender and child’s issues for being affected during polygamy. Both sides have positive and negative effects.

Some people said that polygamy in Islam is a solution for emergencies that make it necessary to do so. Nevertheless, nowadays, many groups and individuals are interpreting polygamy from their own perspective which based on Islamic texts and cultural life. In social lens, polygamy has many adverse effects on the integrity of a family, especially women. Justification for polygamy considers several reasons, including the obligatory

apostolic circumcision, even though it is clear that some people do polygamy not for biological reasons, as is the case today [2, 3]. In addition, another reason is the more significant number of women than men, so there are still several groups that make this reason to do polygamy. Unfortunately, hoax news shows that the government requires polygamy to reduce widows [4].

Previous researchers conducted research on polygamy in terms of interpretation and adverse effects. For instance, Ali's [5] and Bunyamin's research observe polygamy and its interpretation or the impact of polygamy as cited also by Barzah [6]. A research observing similar group comparing to CEDAW argues that members' Facebook group of Poligami Syar'i believe in polygamy as vital practice to achieve Islamic piety [7]. This research focuses on CEDAW rather than the community members' comments in the community. Besides, research on the polygamous community on social media accompanied by followers' responses is still limited. Therefore, this study seeks to see the group "Poligami Syar'i," a polygamous community group on Facebook, and the members' response to opinions or explanations about polygamy.

2 Methods

This study uses Stuart Hall's Reception theory [8], which focuses on specific social circumstances when reading occurs. In this case, individuals will negotiate the meaning in the reception analysis based on their life experiences. Reception theory attaches importance to the audience's opinion on media content or work, which can be a general opinion that can change a work. According to Fiske, the theory of reception analysis advocates the study of audiences who utilize the audience as cultural agents (cultural agents) who have the power to produce meaning from various content discourses offered by the media. The meaning the media carries can then be open or polysemic and can even be oppositely responded to by the audience 3.

In this case, the reception theory used in this study is to analyze the audience, where the meaning of the audience is an adaptation of the encoding-decoding model. That audience members can play an active role in decoding messages because they depend on their social context and may be able to change their messages through collective action. There are three possible positions in decoding, namely:

1. A dominant hegemonic position is a situation where "the media produces the message; the masses consume it. The audience reading coincides with the preferred reading" (the media conveys the message, the audience receives it. What the media delivers by chance is also liked by the audience). So in this position, the audience will receive the whole meaning desired by the program's creator or message.
2. Negotiated position In this position, the audience will accept the dominant ideology and refuse to apply it in some instances. As Stuart Hall said, "the audience assimilates the leading ideology in general but opposes its application in specific cases." The audience will accept the ideology in general but will refuse to apply it if there are differences in their culture.
3. Oppositional position In this opposition position, the audience rejects the meaning given by the media and replaces it with the meaning of their thoughts following their thoughts on the content of the media.



Fig. 1. Screenshot of Poligami Syar'ie account.

Thus, this Reception analysis will determine at which position the acceptance or response of polygamous opinion by the audience (audience) in Facebook media tends to be in the category of dominant hegemonic position, negotiated position, or not both, namely oppositional position.

3 Discussion

There are relatively many communities that encourage the practice of polygamy and spread throughout Indonesia. The community does not only exist in the offline realm, but also launches its movement through online media particularly Facebook pages. There are several popular Facebook accounts campaigning for polygamy such as the Forum Poligami Indonesia [9], Komunitas Poligami Syar'I [10], and Poligami Syar'ie [11]. Among the three groups, only the Poligami Syar'ie group has dynamic interactions with 4.8 thousand members and friendships (see Fig. 1). In addition, this group seems to be the most active in discussing issues related to polygamy and is active in making posters for polygamy campaigns that members can easily share with others.

This polygamy campaign on Facebook believes that polygamy is a good choice in Islam. They are based on injunctions and teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith as well as life experiences. In addition, they also believe that talk of polygamy actually attracts a lot of attention online. Compared to talking offline, they think that many people prefer and openly talk about polygamy online, especially on Facebook (See Fig. 2). This official statement is particularly for men rather than women.

Based on these assumptions, this community views that forming a polygamous community is important for people who agree with them. For this reason, the online community on Facebook social media is an excuse for them to disseminate teachings about polygamy. Another reason for them is around the higher number of women compare to men. In this reason, the group believe that the nature of men is polygamy due to the number of women are higher. The admin of this group states as below.

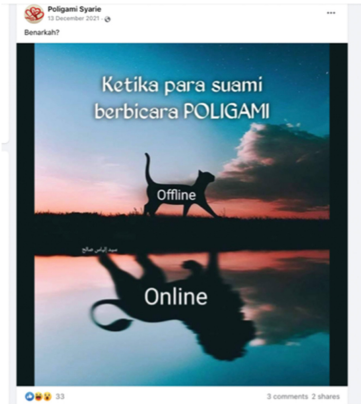


Fig. 2. Screenshot of community statement on polygamy comparing online and offline media.

“Allah has destined the number of women to be more on this earth than men, so that men can have more than one wife, a maximum of 4. And this is a gift of God that we should be grateful for. Can you imagine how the condition of this earth? If there is no polygamy law? How miserable and empty it is for women who live alone without a partner, while their numbers are more dominant than men” [12].

Not much different from the official statement above, another commentator explained in a commentary that his motive for participating in the polygamy campaign was to save women’s faith in the midst of the swift currents of globalization and the digital era, which spread slander viruses very easily. “Actually the biggest slander is women.” This commentary stated: “This polygamy is a form of Shari’a that positions women as valuable creatures, not just “used” and then just abandoned. If you love a woman, respect and honor this woman by marrying her, then on the other hand, why are infidelity, prostitution and localization practices by feminists not considered a form of oppression and condescension to the dignity and status of women?”

According to other commentators, women may say that polygamy is not something that is despicable, women can very easily get rewards just by willingly and graciously allowing their husbands to marry more than one. The figure of a woman who is polygamous by her husband expresses the opinion that: “God ordains jealousy for women and that is their nature, whoever is patient because he hopes to please Allah SWT will get a martyr’s reward (heaven), women so easily get a martyr’s reward just for holding jealousy, but men to get the reward of martyrdom must fight first”.

This woman told that many of her female friends complained that her husband was having an affair, often eating snacks, etcetera. So that it will have a negative impact, one of which is the transmission of HIV/AIDS. If we follow the path set by Allah SWT (polygamy), then household damage and other bad cases will not occur because we do things for the pleasure of Allah SWT.

A conclusion can be drawn that the underlying thing for the formation of a Poligami Syar’ie is that it originates from the personal awareness of its members who think that polygamy is a practice recommended by Islam in order to obtain the title of kaffah

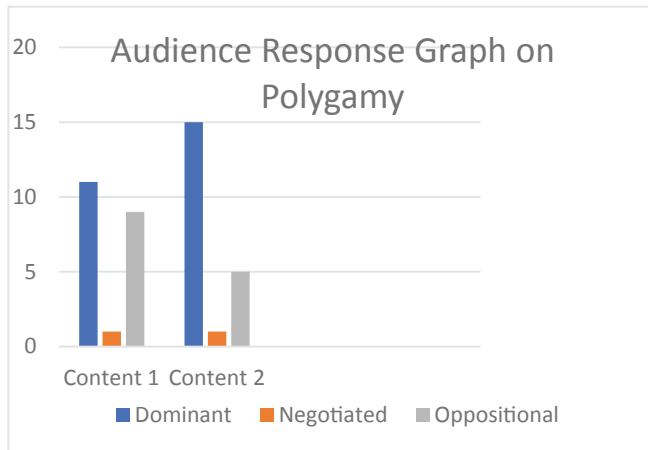


Fig. 3. Audience Response Graph on Polygamy

(perfect/complete) Muslim. And will get a bonus reward for anyone who gracefully dedicates himself to undergoing the practice of polygamous marriage. The motives expressed by the discussion forum participants above illustrate that their support for the practice of polygamy is based on religious interests, improving the quality of vertical relations between servants and their gods, and also for the benefit of Muslims so that Muslim generations are sustainable on this earth.

The dissemination of opinions on social media is no different from a campaign with a large audience. It also applies to the “polygamy” campaign for the “Poligami Syar’i” group’s followers on Facebook, with a total of 4871 followers. Of course, the number of followers is quite large and fast, considering that the founder established the group in 2018. The following is a graph of the audience response to opinions in the “Poligami Syar’i” group (Fig. 3).

The first content with the title “ukhti, marry the husband of the person” is quite interesting because it reaps many pros from the audience. Of course, a pro audience with an opinion of this content is the men. However, few women agree with the opinion of this content. In general, the audience who agreed with the content distinguished two meanings between the word “mistress” and “second wife,” namely, the first meaning is master, while the second meaning is sharing affection and love without snatching. As for the choice of oppositional more in the service offer advertisement to marry sirri and the other is video sharing with the title, does polygamy have to be permitted with the wife? Furthermore, an offer to find a partner.

Interestingly, the image shown in this content also draws on feminism, which subtly attacks polygamy. Previously, one of the followers also wrote, “lawfully loving the husband is fitrah, not a mistress.”

Content 2 is with the title “Lying: Asking permission for your wife or family IS NOT MANDATORY,” more pro opinions than those who do not. In general, the audience agrees with this opinion. What is less attractive, however, is that, in addition to approving opinions, it does not forget to slip the contents of the polygamous confession and dilemma

between the first and second wives. So, it depicts that most of the audience are men. In addition, there is a difference of opinion between “asking permission” and “telling.” Like the response quotation of one of the audiences, “a lot...if asking for permission first, it is clear that it is forbidden...the possible one is remarried first, and telling the first wife after.” As for the oppositional option, they still question children’s inheritance if their husbands are left behind when they grow up.

For the third content is title “man polygamy must rich”. In this content said that “kaya” becomes absolute condition or requirement for man for polygamy. In the description, the meaning word “rich” in this content have 4 meaning, namely rich in love, rich in treasure, rich in words and rich in throne. First, the symbol of love is spending the night. That is how a husband share night for his wives to get same rights. So, love is not quite enough as heart tendencies.

For symbol treasure is a living, a living that must be shared to the wives. In this requirement is fully demanding in Fulfilling needs and also others. While rich in the word in is knowledge. Knowledge demanded for owned a husband to know his obligations to wife, how to do good and weak gentle to wife. However, the rich in throne is an authority. the meaning from authority this is how a husband respected by his wives including his in-laws.

Interestingly in this content, there is an emphasis that polygamy is not sharing husband, however the husband shared himself to the women who become his wife. This content has many attention with there are 325 times sharing. However, for the pro comments is more than the cons. This show that the followers agrees with the content from this title.

4 Conclusion

Arguing two opinions related to polygamy in the “Poligami Syar’i” group, the conclusion shows that the audience’s expected opinion response has spread within the group in the form of hegemonic dominance. That is, there is an understanding between the opinions and the audience’s content. Although often, new questions arise from them. The oppositional position is more on young wife search ads or YouTube that are still related to content.

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