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**Effect of Polygamy on Family Solidarity in Khana Local Government Area,
Rivers State**

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of polygamy on family solidarity in Khana local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study included examination of the relationship between polygamy and family peace, and determination of the relationship between polygamy and family solidarity in Khana Local Government Area. The study employed correlational research design. Data for the study were collected through the use of a structured questionnaire. A sample size of 500 respondents was used for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used for this study. Data were presented in frequency distribution tables and analysed through the use of percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient set at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that polygamy did not promote family peace in Khana Local Government Area. Polygamy brought about keeping of malice and sometimes quarreling among family members. One thing that was responsible for this problem as identified by the study was the failure on the part of polygamous husbands to be fair in the distribution of the basic things of life to their family members. The study also discovered significant relationship between polygamy and family peace with r-value of 0.998. The study also showed significant relationship between polygamy and solidarity in Khana Local Government Area with an r-value of 0.998. The study recommended that despite the cultural approval of polygamy in the area of study that only men that are financially well to do should go into it; husbands of polygamous families should endeavour to be as fair as possible in the distribution of the common goods to their wives and children. Communities, churches and mosques should endeavour to have family peace committee made up of men and women of good track record to handle family matters when they arise.

Keywords: polygamy, solidarity effect, family solidarity, family peace.

Introduction

According to Ohwovoriola (2022) polygamy is a type of relationship that typically involves a person marrying more than one partner. Similarly, Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2005) said polygamy is the custom of having more than one wife at the same time. In polygamous setting, the wives may live under the same roof or different roof. It should be pointed out that there is no marriage bond between or among the wives. In most cases the marriages are gone into by the husbands without seeking the consent and approval of their older wives who ordinarily would not have said "Yes" to their husbands marrying more wives because of their interests, which of course they stand to protect. Traditionally, most African societies have practiced a custom of polygamy. The customs, pwesigye (2012) said allows a man to have as many wives as he can support. These wives were married according to local customs and traditions. In the understanding of the Local World View the marriages were all legal. The practice of polygamy as noted by Twesigye, was considered normal. There was also the war theory that was attached to this practice. The theory has it that only men fought wars in the past and many of them died in those wars, leaving fewer men to a lot of women. People practice polygamy for several reasons. These reasons according to Arangua (2022) include religious or societal purposes, stability, security, companionship, economic resource, production and

love. Globally 29% of the population practice polygamy. Polygamy is technically illegal in the United States, although it is decriminalized in many states such as Utah, Arangua posited. Polygamy is not legal in most countries or at least not officially recognized. Pew Research study stated that polygamy is legal in some other countries. For instance, in sub-saharan Africa, 11% of the population live in polygamous homes. In Burkina Faso, 24% of Christians live in polygamous households (Arangua, 2022). While the Christian religion tends to be against polygamy, the Islamic religion encourages its practice.

In Nigerian when viewing polygamy under civil law, the law does not recognize polygamous unions (Itoro, Akpan, 2011). However, 12 out of the 36 states in Nigeria recognize polygamous marriages as being equivalent to monogamous marriages (Wikipedia, undated). All 12 states are governed by sharia law, Wikipedia stated. The states that have thrown their doors open to polygamy are found in the northern part of the country, and they include; Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara (Nigeria Faimly code, 2014). In some Nigerian traditions such as the one practiced in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State, the size of a man's family shows the size of his wealth. Therefore, marrying more than one wife equals having more children which translates to having more hands to work on farmlands and more monetary return. However, the situation of polygamy as practiced in Khana Local Government today appears to be on a downward slide probably because of the harsh economic reality or the impact of Christianity on the populace who are predominantly Christians. Even if the number of people that are going into polygamy now seems to be on the decline, the truth remains that there are so many polygamous families today in Khana Local Government Area with their members struggling for survival like members of monogamous families.

Family solidarity is a form of social solidarity which according to Douwes, Stuttaford & London (2018) emphasizes the interdependence between individuals in a society, which allows individuals to feel that they can enhance the lives of others. It can be said to be a core principle of collective action and is anchored on shared values and beliefs among different groups in society. Solidarity in sociology, is defined as the willingness of individuals to serve and promote the collective interests of a group or of society (Meulen, 2017).

This willingness can be based on various motives, for example, because individuals have an interest to do or because they feel a certain responsibility for the fate of others (Meulen, 2017) family solidarity promotes social cohesion in the family. Family solidarity enhances responsibility on the part of the "strong" to the "weak" to enhance his welfare and progress in life, instead of using his strength to dehumanize the weak. Impagliazzo (undated) while responding to an online question, "is the family solidarity important?", said the dictionary definition of solidarity is, "unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group". Continuing, Impagliazzo said:

Mutual support within the family group is essential to being a real family. You need to be able to count on each other, especially when times are tough. You do not need to be completely in unity of agreement at all times, and I do not believe it is even possible for a family to always be in agreement.

What is family solidarity all about? There is no better way to explain family solidarity than what has been said above by Impagliazzo Russell who works at university of California, San Diego.

One important ingredient for family solidarity is family peace. There cannot be family solidarity without family peace which serves as a binding force that unites members of the family. Before we consider family peace, what is peace? Peace can be seen as freedom from disturbance tranquility. According to vocabulary.com (undated), Peace is a stress-free state of security and calmness that comes when there is no fighting or war, everything co-existing in perfect harmony and freedom. Family peace is a condition where there is no conflict and disputes (Lopez, undated). Peace creates a state where there is no violence but tranquility and quietness, Lopez added. Similarly, family harmony is a situation where individuals trust and support each other which enables dispute and conflicts to be resolved constructively without looking beyond the self (Lopez, undated). Family

peace creates the basis for survival and development of each family member. It is the promoter of strong bonds among family members that drives solidarity.

In a research done by Essien (2018) on, “The interplay between conflict and solidarity in co-wife family relationship; Experience from Africa” which was a qualitative study discovered that polygamous family system is as sexually and emotionally satisfying as a monogamous one, however, co-wife conflicts especially in the early years of marriage is pervasive, and often marked by outbursts of verbal or physical violence. Continuing, the research said nevertheless, material, social and emotional factors possess ambivalent characteristics to undermine or strengthen co-wife solidarity and bonds, as well as pave way for jealousy and conflict. In another study by panda (2021) which was on, “Sibling solidarity in a Essay”, it was stated that. “Full siblings will be closer to each other and this closeness will be manifested even more in blended families. However, citing the work of Jankowiak and Diderich (2000 in Pande, 2021), it was stated that there is a rivalry between full siblings as well as between half-siblings; however, this rivalry happens between full and half-siblings. This is an indication that the level of rivalry in polygamous family is higher than a monogamous one, and this can adversely affect peaceful co-existence as well as solidarity. Polygamy is faced with the problem of acceptance from the older wife or wives right from when the husband introduces the idea to the hearing of the wife or wives that have been on ground say “Yes” to their husband, their “Yes” ends up in pretence probably because of the fear of the consequence of saying “No”. It is in recognition of this, that Muchene (2022) said even in cultures where the man is allowed to have multiple wives, it is common to hear women rejecting the idea of bringing another woman into the mix. Muchene added that if you are the first wife (in polygamy), it feels like you did all the work for strangers to enjoy especially if you built your wealth all the way up together from nothing. The unhappiness of the older wife with polygamy will always make the older wife to hate the younger wife it’s with resultant effects which are marital dissatisfaction, problematic family functioning and low self-esteem. Rediy and Teferar (undated) posited that family communication is important to maintain family relationship and family cohesion as the extend of the connectedness and solidarity among members in a family functioning.

Also, Al-Krenawi (2014) statement to counter polygamy requires longitudinal planning – a continual commitment rather than a simple fix. Such plan should be done in the context of the culture and her children; The husband may not even be excluded from this. Similarly, Hamzah (2016), who did a large scale study across Malaysia on, “Stress, quarrel and neglect; the “normal” polygamous family” discovered proof that polygamy warms everyone involved from emotionally scarred children, to wives who think they would be better off as single-parent households, and even husbands who admit “I would not recommend it for my son; it is quite stressful”. Peace undoubtedly is the foundation for family solidarity. If the situation of peace is as bleak as presented by Hamzah above then we do not need a prophet to know that solidarity is in trouble in polygamous homes. Also, Shepherd (undated) discovered that polygamy can affect significantly the mental health of women that are involved in it as it leads to a high prevalence of somatization, depression, anxiety, hostility, psychoticism, and psychiatric disorder including reduced life.

In a study carried out by Farooq Malik and Naseer (2021) on causes and consequences of polygamy: An understanding of coping strategies by co-wives in polygamous marriage in Pakistan, using exploratory qualitative design, interviewed 11 women who were in polygamous marriage to gather data for the study. Findings revealed reasons for the practice of polygamy which included infertility or having only female children, Husband love marriage, and in-laws family pressure because they wanted to secure their marriage instead of divorce. The study also revealed that polygamy promotes jealousy, unhappiness, and loneliness due to injustice. The advantages of polygamy as revealed by the study include sharing in-house responsibilities and child-rearing. The study also revealed coping strategies for polygamy which included faith in religion, faith role, and compromise with co-wives. The study concluded that since divorce is not an option for women that are involved in polygamy, the study recommends that policymakers and law enforcement agencies should pass laws for the welfare of polygamous women. Again, the study concluded that seminars and programmes should be organized for polygamous women on how to cope with the stress associated with polygamy and manage other consequences of polygamy. Finally the study was not against the practice of polygamy, rather went for improvement of the family structure of polygamous families.

Statement of the problem

Observation of the practice of polygamy in Khana Local Government Area has shown that some men married the number of wives and have children they cannot adequately take care of only for them to give attention to their younger wives and their children. This situation has led to so much ill-feeling and hatred between or among the wives and the children. This is detrimental to peaceful co-existence of the family members. Consequently, ill-feelings, bitter quarrel, fighting, and even plots to terminate the lives of fellow family members have been reported in the area. There have been situations whereby some children of some polygamous families have been left to the care of their mothers because their fathers are too busy with their younger wives and their children. Sometimes, the assistance, which these children get from their mothers and other concerned relatives, is grossly inadequate to see them through schools and other vocations. Some of the children even end up as school dropouts.

Cases of juvenile delinquency are common among children of polygamous families who did not receive proper parental upbringing. Also, there is the problem of overcrowding especially when fathers cannot provide separate accommodations for their wives and children. This gives rise to the situation whereby some of the children, especially the grown up ones, sleep outside their homes with friends. As a result of this, some of the children have ended up becoming pregnant out of wedlock, thereby creating more serious problems for themselves and their families.

Again fighting over farmlands and other properties is common among some members of polygamous families in the Local Government Area. There exists situations where some members of polygamous families, especially half-siblings have taken one another to court and other places over family lands and other properties. It is a common practice among polygamous family members especially among half-siblings not to give assistance to one another. Even when children of the older wives appear to have what it takes to give helping hand to their younger half-siblings, they simply turn to the other way probably because of the injustice they suffered in terms of unfair distribution of the common good by their father when they were growing up. This, they always attribute to the influence of the younger wives of their fathers. To some of them, now that they are grown up, it is time for pay back. The half-siblings are most of the times at the receiving end of all this, especially when the fathers are not or no longer economically viable to give the needed assistance to their younger children. It was based on the foregoing development that this study was put in place to determine the effect of polygamy on family solidarity in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives were developed to guide the study.

1. To examine the relationship between polygamy and family peace in Khana Local Government Area.
2. To determine the relationship between polygamy and family solidarity.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between polygamy and family peace in Khana Local Government Area?
2. What is the relationship between Polygamy and family solidarity in Khana Local Government Area?

Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between polygamy and family peace in Khana Local Government Area.
2. There is no significant relationship between polygamy and family solidarity in Khana Local Government Area.

Population of the study

The population of the study consisted of all members of polygamous families who were 18 years and above in Khana Local Government Area.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive and correlational research designs. The population for this study consisted of all members of polygamous families who were 18 years and above in Khana Local Government Area. The population of this target group was not available as at the time for this study. However, a sample size of 500 respondents was chosen through Non-probability sample in purposive, quota and convenience sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire was raised to gather data for the study. It had 11 items with a response pattern of “Yes” or “No” except the part that concerned personal data.

The research instrument had a reliability index of 0.892 which was determined through test-retest and analyzed with the aid of Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient. A total of 500 copies of the research instrument was produced to reflect the sample size. The copies of the instrument were served to the respondents through personal contact. The Districts that made up Khana Local Government had copies of the questionnaire in the following order.

- Nyo-khana District got 167 copies
- Babbe District got 167 copies
- Ken khana District got 166 copies

All 500 copies of the questionnaire were properly filled out, and were therefore used for data analysis. Data analysis was done through the employment of percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient. For clarity, data were arranged in frequency distribution tables. The testing of hypothesis was set at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Personal data of the respondents showed that 50 (10%) respondents were within the age range of 18-28 years, 120 (25%) were within the age range of 28-39 years, 180 (36%) were within 40-50 years, 100(20%) were within 51-61 years, and 62 and above years. For educational status of respondents. 50 (10%) respondents had First School Leaving Certificate, 200 (40%) respondents had WASC/GCE/NACO, 40(8%) had Diploma and 200 (40%) respondents got University Degrees. The Marital status of the respondents showed that 125 (25%) respondent were single, 350 (70%) respondents were married, No respondent was divorced and for widow/widower, 25(5%) respondents were involved. Occupational status of respondents revealed that 120 (24%) were farmers, 125 (25%) were traders, 85 (17%) were Civil Servants and 45 (9%) respondents were of other occupations.

Table I: Polygamy and family peace (N = 500)

Item		N	Yes	No
Do you think polygamy promotes family peace?	500	72(14.6%)	428(85.6%)	

Table I above shows that majority of the respondents, 428(85.6%) of them said they do not think that polygamy promotes family peace in Khana Local Government Area, while 72(14.4%) respondents said “Yes” to the question asked that polygamy promotes family peace in Khana Local Government Area.

Table 2(a) Polygamy and family peace (N = 500)

Item		N	Yes	No
Is it correct to say that the keeping of malice and sometimes quarreling are found among members of polygamous families in Khana Local Government Area?	500	450(90%)	50(10%)	

Table 2(a) above indicated that majority of the respondents, 450(90%) said “Yes” that it is correct to say that the keeping of malice and sometimes quarreling are found among members of polygamous families in Khana Local Government Area, while 50 (10%) respondents said “No” to the question.

Research hypothesis I: There is no significant relationship between polygamy and family peace?

Table 2n Relationship between polygamy and family peace.

Response	No of respondent	(r)	Cal-value	Table-value	Comment
Yes	450	0.998	352.14	23.34	There is significant relationship
No	50				

At 0.05 level of significance

Table 2a above tells us that “that there is significant relationship between polygamy and family peace in Khana Local Government Area”. Since the r-value was 0.998 while the calculated value was 352.14 and the table value was 23.34, the null hypothesis which says, “there is no significant relationship between polygamy and family peace in Khana Local Government Area” is rejected for the alternate hypothesis as the calculated value was greater than the table value.

Table 3 : Polygamy and family peace (N=500)

Item		N	Yes	No
Do you think the apparent lack of fairness on the part of a reasonable percentage of husbands in the provision of the basic necessities of life is a major cause of break down of family peace in Khana Local Government Area?	500	480(96%)	20(4%)	

According to Table 3 above, majority of the respondents, 480 (96%) of them said “yes” that they think that the apparent lack of fairness on the part of a reasonable percentage of husbands in the provision of the basic necessities of life is a major cause of break down in family peace in Khana Local Government Area; while 20 (4%) respondents said “No” to that.

Table 4a: Polygamy and family solidarity

Item		N	Yes	No
Do you think polygamy is responsible for some members of polygamous families in Khana Local Government Area not to receive appropriate financial support from their families?	500	474(94%)	26(5.2%)	

Table 4a above disclosed that majority of the respondents, 474(94%) of them, said “Yes” to the above question that they think that polygamy is responsible for some members of polygamous families in Khana Local Government Area not to receive appropriate financial supports from their families; while 26(5.2%) of the respondents said “No” to the question.

Research hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between polygamy and family solidarity?

Table 4b: Relationship between polygamy and family solidarity.

Response	No of respondent	(r)	Cal-value	Table-value	Comment
Yes	474	0.998	352.14	23.34	There is significant relationship
No	26				

At 0.05 level of significance

Table 4b above has made it clear that the correlation co-efficient R was 0.998, while the calculated value was 352.14 and the Table value was 23.34 at a level of significance of 0.05. So, since the calculated value is greater than the table value, research hypothesis 2 which states, “There is no significant relationship between polygamy and family solidarity in Khana Local Government Area” is therefore rejected for the alternative hypothesis that says, “There is significant relationship between polygamy and family solidarity in Khana Local Government Area”.

Table 5: Polygamy and family solidarity

Item	N	Yes	No
Can you say that over half of polygamous families in Khana Local Government Area do not have adequate means of livelihood to provide the basic things of life like food, shelter and clothing to their family members?	500	420(84%)	80(16%)

The Table 5 above has it that 420 (84%) respondents said that over half of polygamous families in Khana Local Government Area do not have adequate means of income to provide the basic things of life like food, shelter and clothing to their family members; while 80 (16%) respondents said “No” to the question.

Table 6: Polygamy and family solidarity

Item	N	Yes	No
Do you agree with the claim that some Polygamous husbands in Khana Local Government Area abandoned their senior wives and their children because of their younger wives?	500	380(76%)	120(24%)

The Table 6 above indicated that 380 (76%) respondents said “Yes” that they agreed with the claim that some husbands in Khana Local Government Area abandoned their senior wives and children because of their younger wives; while 120(24%) said “No” to the question.

Table 7: Polygamy and family solidarity

Item	N	Yes	No
Do you think that lack of adequate support from husbands of Polygamous families in Khana Local Government Area to their family members is a major cause of misunderstanding among the family members?	500	410(81%)	90(18%)

Table 7 above states that majority of the respondents, 410(82%) of them had the view that lack of adequate support from husbands of polygamous families in Khana Local Government Area to their

family members is a major cause of misunderstanding among the family members; 90(18%) respondents said “No” to the question.

DISCUSSION

Personal data of the respondents showed that the age range of 29-39 (36%) constituted the major age of the studied population. For educational status of the respondents, 200(40%) respondents and another 200 had WASC/GCE/SSCE/NECO and University Degrees respectively. Marital status of the respondents showed that 350 (70%) out of the total number of 500 respondents were married which implied that people that were really experienced in polygamy took part in the study. Most of the respondents (25% each) were both traders and civil servants respectively.

The result of the study proper revealed that majority of the respondents, 85.6% of them did not think that polygamy promotes family peace in Khana Local Government Area. Remember that family peace constitutes the foundation upon which solidarity thrives in any family including polygamous one. It may be difficult for solidarity to take place effectively in polygamous families in Khana Local Government Area as available statistics said polygamy does not promote family peace. Continuing, the study also revealed that keeping of malice and quarreling are sometimes found among members of polygamous families in the area as 450(90%) respondents said so. As discovered by the study, the keeping of malice and quarreling sometimes found among members of polygamous families are attributed to the apparent lack of fairness on the part of a reasonable number of husbands in the local Government Area to provide the basic necessities of life to their family members. As 96% of the respondents agreed with this position.

When research hypothesis I that states; “There is no significant relationship between polygamy and family peace” was tested, the r value was 0.998 which indicated very high relationship between polygamy and family peace. This finding is in line with the views of Farouq, Malik and Nosor (20121) who posited that polygamy promotes jealousy, unhappiness and loneliness due to injustice. Injustice here is coming from no other persons than the husbands who in course of tribution of the common good choose to be unfair for reasons best known to them. It is in relation to this that Muchene (2022) discovered in his study that even in cultures where the man is allowed to have multiple wives, it is common to hear women rejecting the idea of bringing in another woman into the mix. Muchene added that if you are the first wife (in polygamy), it feels like you did all the work for strangers to enjoy especially if you built your wealth all the way up together from nothing. Multiple wives breeds ill-feeling especially in the older wives to the extend that it affects adversely the atmosphere of peace in polygamous families.

For polygamy and family solidarity, finding of this study showed that 84%(420) of the respondents said that over half if polygamous families in Khana Local Government Area did not have adequate means of income to provide the basic things of life like food, shelter and clothing to their family members. This situation, no doubt, affects negatively the way solidarity is handled in the families after all, you cannot give what you do not have.

Finding also indicated that some polygamous husbands in the area abandoned their senior wives and their children because of their younger wives. 76%(380) of the entire respondents said so. There is no way solidarity can be promoted and maintained when the wives and there are children abandonment by the bread winners of polygamous families. In fact, children and wives affected by this development are left to their fate which often results in suffering and denial of the basic things of life.

When null hypothesis 2 which stated, “There is no significant relationship between polygamy and family solidarity” was tested, the r -value was 0.988 which was very high. The null hypothesis was therefore dropped for the alternative one which said, “There is significant relationship between polygamy and family solidarity”. This finding is in line with the position of Hazah (2010) who stated that polygamy harms everyone involved from emotionally scarred children, to wives who think they would be better off as single-parents’ house holds, and even husbands who admit, “I would not recommend it for my son; it is quite stressful”. Peace no doubt, is the foundation for family solidarity. If the situation of pence is as bleak as the one presented by Hamzah above, then we do not need a prophet to know that solidarity is in trouble in polygamous homes. Similarly, Shepherd (undated) discovered that polygamy can affect significantly the mental health of women that are involved in it

as it leads to a high prevalence of somatization, depression, anxiety, hostility, psychoticism and psychiatric disorder including reduced life. The picture presented to us through the finding of shepherd is a direct expression of the fact that solidarity that oils the wheel of polygamy does not seem to survive easily in polygamous setting.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the follow recommendations were made:

1. In as much as polygamy has the approval of culture, men that want to go into it should be sincere with themselves by considering the cost of polygamy. People without the right economic do not have any business going into polygamy as it tends to be more expensive than monogamy.
2. Husbands of polygamous families should endeavor to be as fair as possible in the distribution of the common good.
3. Having multiple wives under the same roof tends to promote misunderstanding and quarreling among the wives and their children, therefore, having separate accommodations for the wives and their children is the best way to go as it promotes peaceful co-existence.
4. Churches, mosques and communities should endeavor to have family peace committee made up of men and women of good track record who will handle family matters when they arise free of charge.
5. Communities, churches and mosques should have professional counselors that will provide professional services to their members without any charge.
6. Seminars and talks on family should take place at worship centers and community levels from time to time.
7. Husbands of polygamous families solidarity and peaceful co-existence should endeavor to evenly relate to their wives and children as fair as possible in all spheres of life without discrimination.
8. Having a monthly meeting by members of polygamous family can help promote family solidarity and peace.

Conclusion

Man's culture has made the practice of polygamy possible. However, the way polygamy is practiced by some persons especially husbands has left much to be desired as almost everything about it is not rosy as has been disclosed by this study. The relationship between polygamy and family peace and family solidarity is indeed very high as shown by the study. Since those persons that are involved in polygamy can hardly get out of it through divorce or other means because of the implication of doing so, solutions must be proffered so as to bring down the stress associated with it, which, of course, have been provided by this study.

This study, therefore, concludes that polygamists should be fair in the distribution of the common good to members of their families without given preference to their younger wives at the expense of their older wives and their children. Again, men who do not have the economic muscle to go into polygamy should stay away from it as polygamy tends to require large sum of money to ensure family solidarity.

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