

The Practice of Polygyny among Contemporary Yoruba Muslims in South-Western Nigeria: Its Implications for Societal Peace

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Abstract. Polygyny had been in practice among the Yoruba people from time immemorial due to many reasons, among which are, inability of the wife to procreate, health challenges, the need for more hands to assist in agricultural works, and a mark of status. However, in the recent time, many of the Yoruba Muslim men practise polygyny lustfully to marry more than one wife and abandon them to fend for themselves. This practice which is common among the Yoruba Muslims has given rise to a lot of problems in marriages which result in increase in dysfunctional families thereby posing a great threat to societal peace. This paper therefore, examines the practice of polygyny among the contemporary Yoruba Muslims in South-western Nigeria with the view to proffer practical solutions for curbing syncretic practices in Yoruba Muslim polygynous marriages. The study adopts the descriptive research design of a survey type. The target population for the study consists of the Yoruba Muslims living in the South-Western part of Nigeria - Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun and Lagos States. A total of 600 Muslim men constituted the sample for the study. Also, the researcher made use of two focus group discussions with 15 (fifteen) children and 15 (fifteen) women from Muslim polygynous families. As shown in the findings, majority of contemporary Yoruba Muslims do not comply with Islamic principles on polygyny despite their understanding of those principles. The study then recommends that Muslim clerics and Islamic organisations should intensify efforts in educating Muslim couples on why polygyny is acceptable and the conditions attached to its practice.

Keywords: Polygyny, Yoruba Muslims, South-western Nigeria, Societal Peace

1. Introduction

“Polygamy” an umbrella term for the words ‘polygyny’ and ‘polyandry’ is defined as marriage in which a spouse of either sex may have more than one mate at the same time. Polygyny is the state or practice of having more than one wife or female mate at a time while polyandry on the other hands is the state or practice of having more than one husband or male mate at one time (Ambali, 1998: 160). In this paper, the focus is to study the practice of the restricted form of polygyny introduced by Islam among the contemporary Yoruba Muslims of South-Western Nigeria and its implications for societal peace. For the sake of clarity, the word ‘polygyny’ is used in this paper as a term that conveys plurality of wives.

1.1 Polygyny among the Yoruba People

Polygyny is not a new phenomenon among the Yoruba in South-West Nigeria. It has been part of the Yoruba culture prior to the advent of Islam into the region. Being an agrarian community, multiplicity of wives and children was the surviving mechanism for their agricultural enterprise. Besides, polygyny was also seen as a status marker for it was prerogative of the affluent people (Johnson, 2009). Therefore, in the ancient Yoruba society, the number of wives a man had and the number of children he gave birth to determined his social status in the society and his financial security at old age (Johnson, 2009). This was the situation when Islam came, and as a religion that permits multiple marriage system though in a restricted form, the Islamic system of polygyny easily fitted into the agrarian economy of the Yoruba Society. However, with the advent of colonialism which resulted in the introduction of western civilisation, the Yoruba economy, like those of other African countries, changed (Akintoye, 2010). This led to change in taste, attitude and even sources of

income. Many left the agrarian life of the village for urban cities and the demand for material wealth became high (Oni, 1991). The new status however, did not change the polygynous life of the people, particularly the Yoruba Muslims whose religion sanctions it. Today, the injunctions of Allah on polygyny are grossly abused as the condition of necessity for marrying up to four wives and the maintenance of justice as well as equality among wives being conditions for practising it are being undermined. What is rampant among Yoruba Muslims today is multiplicity of wives and children without the corresponding financial wherewithal to sustain it. Many of them ceded their matrimonial responsibilities such as feeding, sheltering, clothing and settling medical and educational bills of both wives and children to their wives. There are stories of such husbands asking their wives for food when they did not provide the means by which the meals can be prepared. The implication is that such wives and children are driven to unpleasant behaviours. There are also situations in which two or more women and their children are kept in a single room where the husband mate with them while the children pretend to be asleep. This is indeed total abuse of Allah's injunction on polygyny which stipulates that husbands are maintainers of wives and children (Qur'an 4:34). There are also cases of co-wives fighting one another on account of the husband inclining towards one and neglecting others in terms of finance and sexual satisfaction. Such cases often lead to chaos, and even murder within the family all of which disrupt the peace of the society in one way or another. Hence, the Yoruba say:

'Ile Olorogun, Ile Ariwo,' meaning 'a polygynous house is prone to uproars/ hostility'

However, this could not happen in Muslim families if the Islamic injunctions of fair play and equity among wives are embedded by the husband.

This paper therefore, examines the practice of polygyny among the contemporary Yoruba Muslims in South-western Nigeria with the view to proffer practical solutions for curbing syncretic practices in Yoruba Muslim polygynous marriages. It adopts the descriptive research design of a survey type. The target population for the study consists of the Yoruba Muslims living in the South-Western part of Nigeria - Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun and Lagos States. A total of 600 Muslim men constituted the sample for the study. Also, the researcher made use of two focus group discussions with 15 (fifteen) children and 15 (fifteen) women from Muslim polygynous families. As shown in the findings, majority of contemporary Yoruba Muslims do not comply with Islamic

principles on polygyny despite their understanding of those principles. The study then recommends that Muslim clerics and Islamic organisations should intensify efforts in educating Muslim couples on why polygyny is acceptable and the conditions attached to its practice.

1.2 Polygyny in Religion

The issue of polygyny is not restricted to Islam alone. There are also some Biblical records that indicate the practice of polygyny by many Prophets of God who were embodiment of virtues for their followers and even in the present generation. Among the many Prophets of Allah who entered into plural marriages were Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) who had two wives; Prophet Jacob (Ya'kub) with four wives and Prophet David (Daud) with ninety-nine wives. Prophet Solomon (Sulaiman) had seven hundred free noble women as wives and three hundred other wives who were slave women (Polygamy in Judaism and Christianity, 2019). Below are the Biblical passages that attest to these facts:

Genesis 16:3, 1 king 11: 3, 2 Samuel 12 verses 7 and 8, Gen. 29:23, 28; 30:4, 9).

1.3 The Position of *Shariah* on Polygyny

Islam allows a Muslim to marry up to four wives but with the condition that he will be able to deal justly among them. The Muslim Jurists also agree on the permissibility of a man marrying up to four wives at the same time (Ibn Rushd, 2005). This agreement is based on three verses in the Glorious Qur'an which are central in the discussion on multiplicity of wives. These are; Suratun- *Nisa'* Qur'an 4 verses 3, 20 and 129. The first verse reads:

If you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry the women of your choice, two, or three, or four. But if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one or (the captives) that your right hands possess. That will be nearer to prevent you from doing injustice (Quran 4:3).

In the above Quranic verse, Almighty Allah recommends marrying up to four wives at a time with proviso that the husband will be able to deal justly between them. However, Allah (SWT) explains further in verse 5 the possibility of replacing a wife with another if there is reason for such which include death of a wife or a wife being divorced but the number must not exceed four wives at a time. This in Islamic term is called *Istibdāl Zawj* (wife

replacement). On this Almighty Allah says: "But if ye decide to take a wife in place of another, even if ye had given the latter a whole treasure for a dower, take not the least bit of it back. Would ye take it by slander and a manifest wrong?" In the third verse Allah says:

"Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women even if it is your ardent desire. But turn not away (from a woman) altogether so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air). If ye come to a friendly understanding, and practice self-restraint, Allah is oft-forgiving and Merciful (Qur'an4:129).

From the above Quranic verses, one can deduce that the first one permits taking up to four wives while 4:129 cautions against hazards of multiplicity of wives.

Doi (1994) looks at the issue of polygyny from a historical perspective and traces the cause of revelation of the two verses to the post *Uhud* war period when many Muslim men were killed, leaving widows and orphans. It is in view of this that many scholars argue that these verses were revealed because of God's concern for the welfare of women and orphans who were left without husbands and fathers who died fighting for Islam. They are verses about compassion towards women and their children, not about men or their sexuality.

Another interpretation given to Qur'an 4:3 is contained in the commentary credited to 'Aisha the wife of Holy Prophet (SAAS) who said:

O my nephew! (This Verse has been revealed in connection with) an orphan girl under the guardianship of her guardian who is attracted by her wealth and beauty and intends to marry her with a *Mahr* less than what other women of her standard deserve. So they (such guardians) have been forbidden to marry them unless they do justice to them and give them their full *Mahr*, and they are ordered to marry other women instead of them (Khan, 835).

Also, Habib (2010 :39-40) attests to another interpretation of the Quranic verse thus:

Sa'id bn Jubayr, Qatadah and some other commentators are of the view that the verse was revealed to safe guard the interest of the wives. They opine that even before the advent of Islam, injustice to orphans was looked upon with disdain but with regard to wives, it was different. They would marry as many as they liked and treat them cruelly and unjustly. Therefore, Allah warned them that they

should refrain from doing injustice to their wives as they did in case of the orphans. They were restricted to marry not more than four wives, if only they would do justice to them.

Another view on the interpretation of these Quranic verses is that of Hadrat Ibn Abbas and his disciple, Ikrima who contend that:

It was revealed to eradicate injustice prevalent at the time. They opine that the pre-Islamic Arabs used to marry a large number of wives, and when they could not meet the increasing expenses, they used to grab the property of their orphans, nephew and other helpless relatives. Thus, Allah (SWT) restricted the maximum number of wives to four and conditioned that they should do justice to all of them (Habib, 2010:39-40).

It is obligatory for a polygynous husband to treat his wives equally and to appropriate the time he spends with them justly. Qur'an 4:29 says '...So do not incline completely (towards one) and leave another hanging...' Abandoning one wife and inclining to other(s) is an act of *Al-Adrār* (domestic abuse). Whoever does that is inviting the wrath of Allah not only in this world but also in the hereafter. The generality of Muslim Jurists (i.e four Islamic schools of thought) agree that the husband must deal equitably among his wives in terms of feeding, clothing and sheltering, according to his means. They equally have consensus opinion on the fact that the background of each wife would determine what they need.

Furthermore, scholars agree that it is not humanly possible to have equal love and equal sexual performance among wives (Al-Juzaery, 1998). This agreement is based on the Qur'anic recognition of this human weakness as stated in Qur'an 4:129 and also the submission of the Prophet (S.A.A.S) when he declared his incapability in sharing equal love among his wives and then supplicated to the Almighty Allah to pardon him for that. However, the husband should not allow his emotional feelings for one wife to lead to the neglect of another. The Holy Prophet (S.A.A.S) demonstrated the principle of justice among his wives. Despite his love for Aisha (R.A) because of her beauty, intelligence and the fact that she was the daughter of his bosom friend, Abubakar, he did not portray other wives to be of low intellect or lineage and neither did he differentiate between them with regard to financing and bed sharing. An example of his acts of justice among wives is that whenever he (S.A.A.S) wanted to travel, he would draw lots among his wives and travel with the winner

(Hadith recorded by al-Bukhari cited in Al-Jibaly,nd).

Islam stipulates regulations which guide both husbands and wives in discharging their individual matrimonial responsibilities. The husband is to be the head of the family and he is to see to the feeding, sheltering, clothing, medical care of his wives and children (Quran 4:34) & (Quran 2: 233). Also, Islam requests payment of dowry (*Sadugah*) by the husband as a demonstration of his financial commitment to the marriage contract. All these are meant to ensure the workability of the marriage. It has been said that women outnumber men and that provides the opportunity for men to have access to many women. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.A.S) is reported to have predicted it:

From among the portents of the Hour are the following: Religious knowledge will be taken away: General ignorance (in religious matters) will increase; illegal sexual intercourse will prevail; *men will decrease in number and women will increase in number so much that fifty women will be looked after by one man* (Khan, 1996).

In his justification of the practice of polygyny, Ahmad, (1997) is of the opinion that one cannot blame the excessive number of women left without husbands for attempting to entice and seduce married men particularly in societies which are not deeply religious, alluding to the fact that after all, women are humans too. As a result, they have their own emotions and unfulfilled desires. He concludes that:

If such women are not lawfully accommodated and assimilated on the principle of give and take, it can play havoc with the peace of the society. They will, anyhow, illegally share the husbands of married

women. The outcome is bound to be preposterous. Loyalties will be spilt. Married women will begin to lose faith in their husbands. Suspicions will grow. The increasing lack of mutual trust between husband and wife will rock the foundations of many homes...

However, it is necessary to note that this prediction which had become a reality from the time immemorial till the contemporary time is not a genuine reason for indiscriminate multiplicity of wives without corresponding emotional and material care for them. Furthermore, when the husband finds out that the woman is of bad character, or he feels that he cannot do without having a second wife in order to satisfy his natural desire, polygyny becomes the solution (Doi, 1994). Ambali (1998) in his comments makes a brilliant analogy on the issue of polygyny when he likens monogamy to food which is a basic necessity of life and describes restricted polygyny as drugs which are taken as and when the need arises.

Notwithstanding the position of Islam on polygyny as discussed above, it is necessary to react to the views of some critics of Islam who always make ample reference to the number of wives of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) and allege him to have contracted his marriages for sexual gratification. A general look at the Prophet's marital life shows that he did not marry these widows for the sake of sexual enjoyment but for socio-political reasons. In other words, the Prophet (S.A.A.S) did that to unite the quarrelling tribal and clannish factions into the Muslim community and to strengthen the bond between his companions (Abdal'ati, 1997). At that age, coupled with his tight schedules as a head of State, a judge, a teacher and a war commander, among others; how would he have got the strength to sexually satisfy them all?.

2. Results of Data Analysis

Table 1: The Description of Respondents by Profession

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farmers	127	22
Artisans	139	24
Civil servants	124	22
Business men	181	32
Total	571	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by profession. Out of a total of 571 respondents, 127 (22%) are farmers, 139 (24%) are artisans, 124 (22%) are civil servants and 181 (32%) are business men. The fact that majority of the respondents are business men could be a reason why the practice of polygyny is common among contemporary Yoruba Muslims, especially because those wives could assist their husbands in their businesses. The adequate care of the wives would therefore not be a burden to the husband if such businesses are profitable.

Research Question 1: What is the perception of contemporary Yoruba Muslims on the practice of polygyny in relation to Yoruba Culture?

Table 2: Distribution of Yoruba Muslims’ Perceptions on the Practice of Polygyny in Relation to the Yoruba Culture

S/N	Items	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Decision
1	Polygyny is an acceptable practice in the Yoruba culture.	476 (83%)	95 (17%)	High
2	Polygyny was widely practised in ancient Yoruba societies.	452(79%)	119 (21%)	High
3	The Yoruba culture allows unlimited polygyny	369(64%)	202 (36%)	High
4	Economic benefit was a factor for the practice of polygyny in the ancient Yoruba societies.	520 (91%)	51 (9%)	High
5	Sexual satisfaction was a reason for the practice of polygyny in the ancient Yoruba societies.	535 (97%)	36 (3%)	High
6	The agrarian nature of the ancient Yoruba societies was a reason for the practice of polygyny.	439(77%)	132(23%)	High
7	Polygyny was practised as a status maker in ancient Yoruba societies.	399 (70%)	172 (30%)	High
8	Domestic abuse between or among wives was not common in the ancient Yoruba polygamous families.	252 (44%)	319 (66%)	Low
9	Unhealthy rivalry between wives was not common in the ancient Yoruba polygamous families.	221 (39%)	350 (61)	Low
10	Polygamists in the ancient Yoruba societies showed love and compassion to their wives.	332 (58%)	239 (32%)	High
11	Polygamists in the ancient Yoruba societies took good care of their children.	349 (61%)	222 (39%)	High

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

This Table 2 shows Yoruba Muslims’ perceptions on polygyny in relation to the Yoruba culture. It reveals that out of the 11 items raised to measure perception, majority (9 items) have higher decision above those who disagree implying 82 % level of agreement. This implies that majority of the Yoruba Muslims perceived polygyny as being largely influenced by the Yoruba culture. The overwhelming responses confirm the fact that Yoruba culturally practise unlimited polygyny for various reasons among which are economic benefits, sexual satisfaction, the agrarian nature of the Yoruba people, and for social prestige because polygyny then was a prerogative of the rich and affluent ones. However, majority of the respondents disagreed on the questions that incidences of domestic abuse and unhealthy rivalry were not common among wives in the ancient Yoruba society. The reason for this level of disagreement could be linked to the fact that rivalry between wives is natural practice that cuts across ages and periods. The history of Islam also reveals that even the wives of the Prophets (S.A.A.S) at one time or another rivaled among themselves and that sometimes led to his boycotting them for a month. Allah (SWT) attests to this in (Quran 66: 1-5). A case of unhealthy rivalry among the wives of Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.A.S) is also recorded in his traditions. The Prophet (S.A.A.S) was in Aisha’s house with some of his companions. Umm Salamah sent to him a plate of food. When Aishah (R.T.A) saw it, she took a piece of stone and hit the plate with it, breaking it into two pieces. The prophet (S.A.A.S) gathered the plate’s parts and told his companions “eat, your mother was overcome with jealousy: eat, your mother was overcome with jealousy!” so they ate. The Prophet then kept the broken plate in Aisha’s house, sent a good plate of Aisha to Umm Salmah and said. “A comparable plate for a (damaged) plate, and a comparable food for a (damaged) food” (Al-Jibaly, n.d:105-107).

Also, majority of the respondents agreed that men in ancient Yoruba society showed love, compassion and care for their wives and children. This is correct according to tales and stories often told by many ancient Yoruba people on how well they cherished their wives and children and as a result, did everything possible within their means to make them comfortable socially, financially, medically and intellectually. The ancient Yoruba men mostly engaged in farming and spent the proceeds from it for themselves and for the up-keep of their family. Therefore, hunger and poverty was not rampant among them as these could only be noticed among lazy families.

Research Question 2: What is the Attitude of Contemporary Yoruba Muslims to the Practice of Polygyny?

Table 3: Yoruba Muslims’ Attitude to the Practice of Polygyny

S/N	Items	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Decision
1	Polygyny is a good thing because both Yoruba and Islamic cultures approve it.	545 (95%)	26 (5%)	Positive
2	Polygyny can be practised to satisfy one’s lust.	496 (87%)	75 (13%)	Positive
3	Financial capability may not be a consideration for the practice of polygyny.	348(61%)	223 (39%)	Positive
4	The high population of women compare to men may be a good reason for the practice of polygyny.	456 (80%)	115 (20%)	Positive

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 3 shows the attitude of Yoruba Muslims to the practice of polygyny. The responses reveal that polygyny is commonly practised among them. The reason is that both the Yoruba and the Islamic cultures approved it even though Islam approves it with certain restrictions such as a maximum of four wives at a time for example, while Yoruba culture allows unlimited polygyny also for other reasons earlier mentioned. However, the responses also reveal that there is an imbalance in its practice by many contemporary Yoruba Muslims as this reflects in their non-consideration of financial capability before marrying additional wives, whereas consideration is given to sexual gratification. This attitude runs contrary to both Islamic principles and the Yoruba culture on marriage in the sense that in Islam, consideration of financial capability is very germane to a successful marital life either in a monogamous or polygynous system of marriage (Quran 4: 34). Also, the Yoruba believe that abject poverty could mar one’s marital life be it a monogamous or polygynous type of marriage. In fact, the Yoruba emphasise the importance of financial capability to a successful marital life as they, in their adage, say that *àti gbéyàwó kò léjò, owó òbè òun ló sòro* meaning getting married to a woman is not as challenging as discharging one’s financial responsibilities towards her).

Research Question 3: What is the level of understanding of Contemporary Yoruba Muslims on Islamic principles and the practice of polygyny?

Table 4: The level of Understanding of Contemporary Yoruba Muslims on Islamic Principles and the Practice of Polygyny

S/N	Items	High	Low	Decision
1	Islam permits limited polygyny with restriction to a maximum of four wives at a time.	522(91%)	49 (9%)	High
2	The ability to deal justly among wives is a fundamental principle in the practice of polygyny in Islam.	400(70%)	171(30%)	High
3	The provision of comfortable and separate shelter for each wife is one of the principles of the practice of polygyny in Islam.	399 (70%)	172 (30%)	High
4	Sharing bed equally among wives is a fundamental principle of the practice of polygyny in Islam.	415 (73%)	156 (27%)	High
5	Equitable treatment of wives is fundamental in the practice of polygyny in Islam.	195 (34%)	376 (66%)	Low
6	Adequate provision for wives and children by the husband is enjoined by Islam.	439 (76%)	132 (24%)	High

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 4 shows the level of understanding of contemporary Yoruba Muslims of the Islamic principles on the practice of polygyny. The table shows that five of the six items to measure contemporary Yoruba Muslims’ understanding of the Islamic principles on the practice of polygyny were positively responded to. This implies 83% level of understanding. The high level of understanding of Islamic principles by the contemporary Yoruba Muslims could be linked to the fact that these principles are often discussed by some Muslim clerics on Islamic occasions, especially during *Nikkah* (Wedding) ceremony. However, one would want to know here whether there is a level of compliance with these principles (based on the high level of understanding of Yoruba Muslims on the Islamic principles on marriage) in their practice of polygyny or not. Responses to Research Question Four will provide explanation to this. Research Question 4: What is the Level of Compliance of Contemporary Yoruba Muslims of South-Western Nigeria with the Islamic principles on polygyny?

Table 5: Distribution of the Level of Compliance of Contemporary Yoruba Muslims of South- Western Nigeria with Islamic Principles on Polygyny

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree	Decision
1	I can marry more than four wives at a time.	375(66%)	196 (34%)	High
2	I do not consider financial capability before practising polygyny.	443(76%)	128(24%)	High
3	I practice polygyny in a room and parlour apartment.	515 (90%)	56 (10%)	High
4	Wives/Women in the contemporary Yoruba polygamous homes are left by their husbands to fend for themselves.	524(91%)	47 (9%)	High
5	I multiply wives to satisfy my sexual lust.	233(40%)	338(60%)	Low

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 5 shows the level of compliance of contemporary Yoruba Muslims of South-Western Nigeria with Islamic principles on marriage. It indicates 80% level of non-compliance. Responses to Research Question Four show that majority of contemporary Yoruba Muslims do not comply with Islamic principles on polygyny despite their understanding of those principles. The reasons for this could be as a result of their flagrant disregard for Allah’s injunctions which could be attributed to the handiwork of *Shaytan* (devil), the poor economic situation of the nation

which renders many husbands financially irresponsible and morally bankrupt, the effects of various social media platforms such as face book, twitter, youtube, imo etc. which have lured many Muslim couples into extra-marital affairs culminating into indiscriminate practice of polygyny. In addition to these, many Muslims take advantage of large number of single women- widows, divorcees, spinsters as an excuse to satisfy their sexual desires, and once pregnancy is involved, marriage takes place. This eventually leads to indiscriminate practice of polygyny.

Research Question 5: What are the implications of the level of compliance of contemporary Yoruba Muslims with Islamic principles on the practice of polygyny on the Yoruba Muslim families and the society?

Table 6: The Implications of the Level of Compliance of Contemporary Yoruba Muslims with Islamic Principles on the Practice of Polygyny on the Yoruba Muslim Families and the Society

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree	Decision
1	Non-compliance of Yoruba Muslims with Islamic principles on the practice of polygyny will result into dysfunctional family.	384(67%)	187 (33%)	High
2	An indiscriminate practice of polygyny in Islam would result into divorce.	439(78%)	132(22%)	High
3	Non-compliance of Yoruba Muslims with Islamic principles on the practice of polygyny could lead to sexual anarchy in the family.	515 (90%)	56 (10%)	High
4	Non-compliance of Yoruba Muslims with Islamic principles on the practice of polygyny could cause domestic abuse among wives and children.	525(91%)	46 (9%)	Low
5	Children of such family could become miscreants in the society.	325(60%)	246(43%)	High
6	When a society constitutes of many dysfunctional families, it could lead to threat to societal peace.	416(73%)	155(27%)	High

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

The responses on the implications of level of compliance of contemporary Yoruba Muslims with Islamic principles on polygyny on the Yoruba Muslim families and society show that of six items raised, five were highly rated indicating 80% agreement by the respondents on the high rate of negative implications which the non-compliance with the Islamic principles on polygyny has on Yoruba Muslim families and society. Majority of the respondents- 384 (67%) agreed that non-compliance with the Islamic principles of polygyny results in dysfunctional family. This is true in the sense that a critical look at happenings in many Yoruba Muslim homes reveal that many Muslims only multiply wives without corresponding love and care for them and their children. Improper feeding and inadequate sheltering of wives and children have been the order of the day. The results of this, as observed by the respondents, include sexual anarchy, most especially among grown up children of opposite sex living in a choked apartment, children becoming miscreants due to failure of the parents to empower them economically. In fact, it is disheartening to note that most of the out-of-school children in the contemporary Yoruba society are children from Muslim homes and products of dysfunctional polygynous Muslim marriages. This invalidates the excuse often given by many Muslims who claim that they practice polygyny in order to take care of the surplus ladies and women who are yet to be married or remarried. But the reality is that many wives in polygynous homes are sexually starved and financially neglected, the consequence being that, many of such wives either engage in extra-marital affairs or seek divorce.

Research Question 6: What are the ways towards achieving peaceful Polygynous homes among Yoruba Muslims in the contemporary time?

Table 6: The Ways towards Achieving Peaceful Polygynous Homes among Yoruba Muslims of South-West Nigeria

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree	Decision
1	Muslim clerics should intensify efforts in educating Muslim couples on why polygyny is acceptable and the conditions attached to it.	524(91%)	47(9%)	High
2	The establishment of marital counselling units for Muslim couples at various Islamic gatherings must be ensured to address the problems caused by indiscriminate practice of polygyny.	515 (90%)	56(10%)	High
3	Muslim Jurists (<i>Muftis</i>) should deduce laws to regulate the practice of polygyny among contemporary Muslims in south-western Nigeria.	375(66%)	196 (34%)	Low
4	The empowerment of Muslim couples is necessary to enable them discharge their financial responsibilities well	443 (76%)	128 (24%)	High

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The rating of responses on practical solutions towards having peaceful a polygynous homes among Yoruba Muslims in South-West Nigeria shows that item (1) which reads: "Muslim clerics should intensify efforts in educating Muslim couples on why polygyny is acceptable and the conditions attached to it" was rated the highest- 524 (91%) followed by item (2) which states that the "establishment of marital counselling units for Muslim couples at various Islamic gatherings must be ensured to address the problems caused by indiscriminate practice of polygyny- 515 (90%)." A total of 443 (76%) respondents agreed to item (4) which reads "Empowerment of Muslim couples is necessary to enable them discharge their financial responsibilities well". The item (3) which states that "Muslim Jurists (*Muftis*) should deduce laws to regulate the practice of polygyny among contemporary Muslims of South-western Nigeria" was rated low with 375(66%). Therefore, a clarion call on Muslim clerics to intensify efforts in educating Muslim couples on why polygyny is acceptable and the conditions attached to it in Islam is recommended as the best practical solution towards a balanced practice of polygyny by Yoruba Muslims who have exposure to both the Yoruba culture and the Islamic principles on polygyny. Also, the decision of the respondents as stated in item 4 might have arisen from the fact that there was no much problem with the practice of polygyny among the Yoruba of ancient times because there was food security as the society then, solely relied on agricultural production. Farmers then produced food and cash crops. No matter how lazy a farmer may be, he would be able to cultivate land for subsistence purpose. This informed the Yoruba adage that reads: "*bí ebi bá kúrò nínú ìṣẹ́, ìṣẹ́ kú fẹ́érẹ́*" meaning (when the problem of hunger is solved, then poverty becomes reduced). However, the poverty level among many contemporary Yoruba Muslims is very high and quite alarming. This is as a result of the high rate of unemployment in the country occasioned by people's preference for white collar jobs (Yoruba Muslims inclusive).

Focus Group Discussion for Contemporary Yoruba Muslim Wives in Polygynous Families

A significant amount of time was spent on focus group discussion with wives from polygamous families. Most of the participants claimed that their husbands married other wives on mutual agreement, while others said their husbands married them without their consent but they had no choice than to accept them (i.e other wives). "On what condition did your husband marry you and your co-wife (wives)?"

One participant stated that he just felt like marrying more than one wife "We had no quarrel," he said. (Participant 2)

On how well does the husband discharge his responsibilities (feeding, shelter, sexual satisfaction, showing love and compassion, and medical attention), the following were recorded:

Everyone cares for her children since our husband doesn't have money that can go round we wives (participant 4)

Especially during festive periods, there is always internal struggle as each wife wants to make her children look better than others (Participant 9)

No, there is no way he can satisfy me because in most cases, it is not my turn when I feel like having him around (Participant 6)

Description of Relationship among Wives

There seems to be ethical relationship among wives from polygynous family. This is as a result of the firmness of the husbands' decision to make their family remain united. Some of the participants revealed that:

We have good relationship. Even if anyone has contrary opinion, she dares not show it (Participant 12)

Our husband must not hear we quarrel at any point in time unless such wife wants to leave. I remember he sent away the last wife when she became disrespectful to the first wife (Participant 3).

There is good relationship among us since he sought my consent before marrying other wives (Participant 7).

Experiences in Polygamous Homes

Discussion on experience in polygamous homes showed mixed results. While some were positive, others reported negative experiences. The report on negative experiences was not peculiar to status of wife (either as first, second or third wife).

I think I'm enjoying our home since we maintain different apartments (participant 12)

I won't advise anybody to marry more than one wife. The experience is nothing to write home about. We are just pretending as if all is fine (Participant 15).

... the festive period is when you experience the beauty of a polygamous home, where all the children dress in the same attire... (Participant, 14)

... nobody can say truly she is enjoying the polygamous home. What my husband is supposed to give me alone is shared among three of us" (Participant 8)

Implications of Non-Compliance with Islamic Principles on Polygyny

Majority concluded that non-compliance with Islamic principles has led to broken homes and mockery of the system. For instance, participant 5 said

... the idea is fine if only men can follow the conditionality attached to it. It is because they have not been following it that we mostly have broken home.

... it has led to serious fights among wives and in some cases, domestic violence... (Participant 2).

...lack of respect and cooperation among the wives and husbands... (Participant 4).

Focus Group Discussion with Children from Yoruba Polygynous homes

Number of fathers' wives

Majority of the respondents came from homes where their fathers have more than two wives

Describe the relationship between your mother and your father

It can be deduced from the discussion that mothers and fathers of the children used in this group have cordial relationship. Although, some agreed that their parents do quarrel but not to the extent that the children have an idea of what prompts the quarrel.

... they don't use to fight... (Participant 3)

... i don't always see them eat together, they eat separately... (Participant 5)

... they talk for a long time when Alhaji comes back from work before Alhaji goes to sleep in his room... (Participant 7)

What is the relationship between your mother and other wives?

There appears to be a poor relationship between and among the wives in some cases. The relationship between the husband and wives seems to be more cordial than the relationship among the wives.

"...they can fight any time..." (participant 6)

"...my mummy said we should not eat from them (other wives)"(participant 4)

"...yes, mama use to greet her but she won't answer..." (participant 3)

"The last wife is the only one always looking for my mummy's trouble" (Participant 13)

In which type of house do you live?

Conclusion arising from the discussion shows that most of the children live with their parents in apartments that are less conducive considering the number of wives their fathers have

... we are not living in a fine house, because we all have to manage to find where to sleep" (Participant 4)

...we have to queue to use the toilet in the morning. It's first come first served" (Participant 9)

"...room and palour, Mum and Dad sleep in the room we sleep in the palour". (Participant 1)

"Seven of us sleep inside a room and only my brothers and sister sleep on the mattress, I sleep on the floor" (Participant 13)

...three bedroom flat, with two toilets....(Participant 5)

Who is financing the family?

Financial role is played by the father and the mother, meaning that they share responsibilities on financial roles. The children attested to it that their fathers only cater for financial responsibilities like payment of house rent and payment of school fees.

"...anyone of them gives me money when I need money..." (Participant 9)

"...Sometimes, when I ask Alhaji for money, he will ask me to go and meet my mummy..." (Participant 8)

"Daddy always buy everything we need at home since mummy is not working" (Participant 6)

"Daddy pays for my school fees but mummy will always buy me cloths during festive periods" (Participant 1)

"I get everything from my mummy. She is the one taking care of us. She always complains that Daddy said he didn't have money" (Participant 4)

"I don't know how they share it, but either of them pay for things we use at home" (Participant 7)

"...My Daddy always comes to my school to pay my school fees..." (Participant 9)

Describe the nature of relationship with step brothers and Sisters?

From the discussions, there appears to be good relationship among step brothers and step sisters

"... we talk and play together..." (Participant 8)

"...We attend the same school; it is my step brother that takes me to school..." (Participant 4)

"...we always fight, already mummy don't want me to play with them..." (Participant 3)

"...Daddy always say we should do things together, so that's what I am always doing..." (participant 2)

"...i don't usually have any problem with them, we have good relationship..." (Participant 5)

3. Discussion of Findings

At this juncture, the summary of the responses from the focus group discussions with wives from polygynous family is that many contemporary Yoruba Muslim polygamists do not consult the first wife before marrying a new wife. This act in anyway does not run contrary to Shariah regulations on marriage and neither does it against Yoruba culture. However, many husbands would have loved to

consult the senior wives before marrying new wives but the practical experiences show that such proposal would be turned down by the senior wives. The Yoruba culture explains this attitude in its adage that says : *Òrìṣà jẹ n pé mèjì obirin kò dènú* meaning (No woman would sincerely consent to her husband marrying a new wife).

Also, the respondents complained about the inadequate discharge of matrimonial responsibilities by their husbands. They lamented they suffer in terms of feeding, sheltering, love and even sexual satisfaction. This is the attitude of many contemporary Yoruba Muslim polygynists. Many of them take delight in multiplying wives without corresponding discharge of their matrimonial responsibilities. Consequently, they put their families in untold hardship such as hunger and begging. In fact, some women in this situation result into having extra-marital affairs to earn a living. The descriptions of relationship among wives in polygynous marriages varied as some wives are united while some are disunited. However, the role played by the husband also determines the level of unity among the wives. The experience in the contemporary Yoruba Muslim polygynous families is that many husbands fail to relate equitably among their wives in so many ways such as feeding, sheltering, and sharing of their beds etc., an attitude which is totally against the Islamic principles on justice and equity among wives and children.

Similarly, the responses of children in the focus group discussion show that majority of the children in polygynous marriages are suffer morally, financially, and intellectually. Many of them complained that their fathers do not discharge their fatherly responsibilities, and claimed that it is their mothers who struggling to feed them and get them educated. These acts of irresponsibility from many fathers create disunity in many Yoruba Muslim families. Many children who do not enjoy fatherly care and affection would also not give due honour and respect to such fathers because respect, they say is 'reciprocal'. This bad phenomenon is not peculiar to polygynous marriages alone. It also happens in monogamous homes. When men fail in providing responsive fatherhood to their children, the tendency is that such children will not care for them nor will they obey them if eventually they become successful in life except a few who are God-fearing and have better understanding of the responsibilities of children towards their parents in Islam.

4. Conclusion

Without mincing words, it is crystal clear that polygyny is a global phenomenon. It is also widely practised by contemporary Yoruba Muslims of South-western Nigeria. However, results show that there is an imbalance in its practice by many Yoruba Muslims in relation to Yoruba culture and Islamic regulations on polygyny. This is evident in the indiscriminate multiplicity of wives by many contemporary Yoruba Muslims without corresponding emotional, sexual and financial wherewithal to take care of them. The cumulative effects of this are that many wives in such relations suffer in silence. While some wives endure the hardships in terms of sexual starvation, emotional stigmatisation and financial neglect, many others cannot endure and as a result, they opt for extramarital affairs or divorce. In addition, many children of such relationship grow up in the society as miscreants, hoodlums, thugs, armed robbers etc. as they are more often than not denied the right to qualitative education by their warring parents. They therefore become liabilities to the society.

The practice of polygyny among the contemporary Yoruba Muslims of South-western Nigeria, rather than helping to reduce the population of unmarried women in the society, renders many Yoruba Muslim families dysfunctional and thereby posing a great threat to societal peace. Therefore, Muslim clerics, Islamic organisations and Muslim human rights activists must brace up to these challenges by organising seminars, workshops etc. for Muslim couples on Islamic regulations on polygyny. Also, it is high time the Yoruba people, especially the Muslims invested in agriculture of different types (e.g. farming, poultry, fishery, animal husbandry etc.) to combat unpleasant conditions of hunger, poverty, financial difficulty etc. which cripple many Muslim homes in Nigeria today.

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