

# Between Religious Controversy and Commodification: A Study of *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia*

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## Trie Yunita Sari

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

[trie.yunita@uinjkt.ac.id](mailto:trie.yunita@uinjkt.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

While polygamy is the consensus of *ulama* (Islamic clerics) and is allowed by marriage law 1974, polygamy is still a highly controversial religious-based practice that continuously triggered pros and cons in Indonesian society. Polygamy is considered a form of gender inequality and violence against women. Many movements aspire to eliminate all forms of gender inequality and violence against women, including the campaign of 16- Days Anti Violence against Women initiated by Komnas Perempuan and feminist collectives. However, during the campaign in 2017, a recent pro-polygamous organization named *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* came to the public to promote polygamy seminars. The emergence of *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* is much criticized on account of commercialization and gender violence. Against this backdrop, this article seeks to understand the emergence of pro-polygamy collectives like *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia*. To fill the gap in the discourse about polygamy, this article shall present credible voices of women's pro-polygamous marriage. Why are there women still supporting polygamy, despite concerns about sexual, psychic, and economic violence to women affected by polygamy. This qualitative study employed extensive observation of pro-polygamous movement's narratives both on social media and private *Whatsapp* group, interviews, and participative observation from late 2017 to July 2022. By drawing on the commodification and self-autonomy framework, this study finds that the emergence of *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* is not solely to gain profit using religious-based practice but also to contest Islamic ideology among Islamic denominations and liberal women rights defenders in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Polygamy; Dauroh Poligami Indonesia; Commodification; Controversy*

## 1. Introduction

The debate over polygamous marriage has been a constant discussion among religious communities including moslem all over the world. The disputes towards the legalization of polygamy feature not only religious but also state jurisprudence. Western countries such as Canada, United Kingdom, and France have formally outlawed the practice, as it perceives as a violation of gender equality and imposes costs on society at large (Bala, 2009; Sona, 2005). Meanwhile, Moslems who are for the practice mostly legitimize their belief based on Quranic verse An- Nisa 4, which they consider polygamy *mubah* or *permissible* (Haganta, Arrasy, & Masruroh, 2022)

“And if you fear that you will not be fair in dealing with the orphans, then marry of women as may be agreeable to you, two, or three, or four; and if you fear you will not deal justly,

Corresponding Author

Name : Trie Yunita Sari

Email : [trie.yunita@uinjkt.ac.id](mailto:trie.yunita@uinjkt.ac.id)

then marry only one or what your right hands possess. That is the nearest way for you to avoid injustice”.

Narrowing down the context to the most populous moslem people, Indonesia, the discourse of polygamy raises contentious and open debates among society. Indonesian legal standing on polygamous marriage has been so dynamic over time. During the new order, those who have dissent perspectives on the prohibition of polygamy tend to stand secretive. However, democratization welcomes pro-polygamous groups to raise their voice in the public sphere. One instance, amidst the campaign of 16- Days Anti Violence against Women which was initiated by women activists and National Commission for Women (Komnas Perempuan) from 25 November to 10 December 2017, the public was struck by the advertisement of polygamy seminar offered by *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* (DPI). The promotion of polygamy seminar was initially published on the website of DPI [www.daurohpoligami.com](http://www.daurohpoligami.com). The provocative ad with the title of “Polygamy Seminar - Fast Way to Have 4 Wives” widespread fast on the internet and was commented sarcastically by the public most of all pro-gender equality.

The emergence of this ad is viewed as propaganda to legitimize gender inequality and a form of violence against women. While others assume this seminar is solely to gain material benefit by using religion. This accusation came from Komnas Perempuan. The official statement conveyed by a commissioner of Komnas Perempuan, Masruchah who unequivocally mentioned this seminar is made by the people who sell religion to gain money (see interview with Newsdetik in 2017). In line with her statement, the vice chairman of MUI, Zainut Tauhid stated that the polygamy seminar is suspiciously motivated by economic interest. He adds, that this seminar will affect negative stigma on Islam. Tauhid adds that Polygamy is basically allowed in Islam, but by making the seminar with a pricy registration fee, it is susceptible to fraud in using the religion’s name (see interview with CNN in 2017).

However, in response to all negative allegations, the organizer as well as the director of DPI, objected to perceiving this seminar as commercialization. In spite of the pricy entry ticket, his team and himself are throughout this seminar going to foster the right understanding of polygamy to the public. He argues that this polygamous practice should be done rightly and proportionally, therefore they offer comprehensive education to those who want to implement this sunnah (optional pious deed).

Play Store since October 2017. In 2009, a book author as well as polygamy activist, Dr. Gina Puspita launched her book with the title of “Ayo Taat Suami” or Let us devote to our Husband, in which she campaigned that polygamy marriage is congenial. I also find many channels in Telegram app in which people get educated and discuss polygamy-related matters and have thousands of users. Two of the most followed channels are Indonesian Polygamy Dauroh by DPI and *Kajian Mengenai Poligami* or Education about Polygamy. The existence of promotions toward polygamy has always triggered condemnation from the opponents. By virtue of disadvantages that may victimize women and children. However, significant numbers of platforms that promoted polygamy cannot be overlooked as an innumerable demand for polygamy marriage in Indonesia.

From this backdrop, this article seeks to examine the meaning of the polygamy promotion, focusing on pro-polygamy movement such as *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* and women who endorsed polygamy in their marriage. Many critiques that stress solely on economic aspect of this polygamy promotion, only simplify the phenomenon. Therefore, to capture complexity of the discourse, this article constitutes of views from the proponent that claims the promotion is a form of educational cultivation of polygamy. The fact that the debate over polygamy is always split Moslem society into two different wings including women themselves, that were primarily characterized by discordances between Islamist groups on the one side and secular-socialist ones on the other (Schröter, 2014), this article shall present worldviews of women pro-polygamous marriage who are often perceived as victim. By presenting credible voices from women as polygamy proponents, this article will contribute to complexity of polygamy reasoning, that supposedly reflects not only religious commodification but contestation among Islamic streams in Indonesia.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The promotion of polygamy is overshadowed by complex factors not necessarily economic aspects. The concept of commodification, which is often misunderstood as commercialization, will be explained in this part to understand the meaning of polygamy promotion. Commodification can be understood as process to make goods or services becoming

commodities. Ornella (2013) as cited in Roose, defined commodification of religion as religious symbols which are becoming commodities, objects of consumption readily available in the “supermarket of religion,” in economic life, and the media landscape. Commodification is a process of re-contextualization of religious symbols, language, and ideas from their original religious context to the media and consumer culture (Roose, 2020).

The commodification of religion can be found on several levels, but Ornella, in particular, divides it into two major levels. First, is the level when religious things such as blessings, prayers, etc. are offered to the consumer, in form of artifacts, books, figures, etc. The second level is when the attachment of religious values through a religious aesthetic to consumer products. The commodities in the form of consultation and education based on sharia (Islamic law) are examples to describe this level. Eventually, she comes to term that the commodification of religion is often reflected in a loss of power to shape religious practices. It means that commodification of any religious products curbs the sacredness of religion per se.

On a similar token, Hasan explained that the commodification of religion has reduced religious beliefs, symbols, and values into free-floating signifiers to be consumed like anything else (Hasan, 2009). From their original contexts and throws them into a cultural marketplace where they can be embraced in a shallow fashion but not put into practice. Both scholars denote that the public consumption of religion which has been commodified in the marketplace indicates the loss of power to shape religious practices. Religious practice becomes impure because it is viewed as things that can be sold or things that can be exchanged with money. Religious beliefs, symbols, and values are much consumed just because afforded by the broader public.

It is slightly different from the previous statement, (Hasan, 2009) mentions that the commodification of religion is not solely to gain money. Religious commodification should not be confused with commercialization. He further asserts that besides gaining worldly interest, religious commodification is undergone to spread the ideology of religion. He names it ideologization. It reaffirms Lukens-Bull’s notion of the ideologization of the commodities (Kitiarsa, 2007) that the commodification of religion is not only selling the products but also selling the ideology. Hasan further gives the reader a specific example of the phenomenon of a new style of the da’wa program in Indonesia. A new form of Da’wah on Television is packaged and offered to a broader audience to extend a framework of moral order in society. This is undergone through the objectification and systematization of Islamic values and practices as a normative model.

Speaking of through which commodification is successfully created, Hasan mentioned that between commodification and consumption, we need a mediator to bridge the process. In the globalization era, electronic media can be much beneficial to reaching the target. Radio, television, and platform-based internet are strategic media to communicate and interlock the interest of both producers and consumers. Most important, in order to reach the target, the commodity is also required to be promoted through an advertisement. The producer usually takes the effectiveness of advertisement into account in strategy. Therefore, it is not surprising when we see many advertisements on various platforms with a creative imagination. It should be noted, that the advertisement is a marketing tool to introduce one product to a broad market. It says that an advertisement should devise deliberately in order to raise awareness, stimulate interest, and leads the customer to desire and eventually action or abbreviated as AIDA (Hackley, 2014).

To bring the concept of how advertisements should contain appetizing into reality, Hasan argues in his research on the increase of piety in the public, that it has certainly involved a certain kind of agency. He finds the best example in the new format of *da’wa* in Indonesia, where new *da’wa* agents who translate and package Islamic messages use innovative models in order to show the novel face of Islam as tolerant, inclusive, modern, and progressive as well (Hasan, 2009). In other words, innovation is in conjunction with novelty to present something different to the public.

To conclude this part, term commodification of religion can be understood as objectification of religion. Religion becomes a commodity but it does not primarily mean commercialization of religion. It is also an attempt to offer and package religion as a way of life so that it can be accepted by a broader market by using a creative advertisement. Then, it is published in the marketplace like radio, television, or platform-based internet, etc. to draw the target’s attention. The theory of commodification from Ornella (2013) is useful to understand to what extent polygamy as a religious practice has been manufactured as a commodity, namely by analyzing the level and form of the commodity. In regards to this, this article shall

analyze forms of promotion made by *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia*. Meanwhile, ideologization as a key term in religious commodification as mentioned by Hasan (2009) becomes a cornerstone to investigate further cognitive aspects which have driven the proponents especially women in supporting polygamy. The explanation about this will be focusing on women's autonomy, who support polygamy despite concerns about sexual, psychic, and economic violence, especially to women affected by polygamy.

### 3. Method

This type of research is qualitative-interpretative. A qualitative research is primarily characterized by its thick description of the phenomenon (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Furthermore, qualitative research requires methods to commit to viewing social world, social actions, and events from the point of view of the people being studied. By drawing on this definition, this article attempts to describe the phenomenon by investigating how individuals think, feel or behave in related to the theme.

Speaking of data collection, this phenomenological research employed combined methods such as interviews, observation, and documentation. Data were gathered from extensive observation of *DPI* narratives both on social media and private *WhatsApp* group, interviews, and participative observation from late 2017 to July 2022. As this movement utilizes digital platforms to widespread narratives on polygamy and the promotion of their activities, content analysis method is carried on to understand the presence and meaning of any kind of polygamy promotions made on social media such as e-posters, social media broadcast messages, and material websites. Besides that, this research employed field research for instance in-depth interviews with the founder of *DPI* and women polygamy agents and participatory observation in a private event held by *DPI* in Jakarta.

## 4. Results & Discussion

### 4.1. About *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia*

To understand the meaning of polygamy promotion by *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* or abbreviated as *DPI*, which has been driving controversy, this part begins with the introduction about *DPI*. On the *DPI* website ([daurohpoligami.com](http://daurohpoligami.com)), specifically in the about us section, it explains *DPI* as a non-formal institution that was established on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 by several Islamic activists and Polygamy Practitioners among them are Vicky Abu Syamil and Abu Khalif. The founder argued that the foundation of their organization's values is based on the Koran and Islamic Jurisprudence with the understanding of *Salafus Salihus Ahlussunnah Waljama'ah* or Sunni Islam- The largest denomination of Islam in the world.

In the section of *Layanan dan Event* or service and event, there is written information that answers "why we organize this seminar?". It is mentioned that the seminar is addressed to the male moslem who desires to do polygamy or *ta'addud*, but lacks proper knowledge about polygamy based on Islamic law such as what requirements should be accomplished, how the Islamic view of polygamy, and how to manage the family in order to achieve *sakinah, mawaddah* and *warohmah* or peace, restfulness, and happiness. They claim this as an attempt to share knowledge and invite people to follow polygamy since it is lawful. This kind of attempt is called *da'wah* in Islam.

In an interview published in the online news portal, Vicky Abu Syamil explained that what *DPI* is doing, is a form of *da'wa*. He claims that *DPI* is the only institution that wants to educate Moslems regarding polygamy proportionally and wants to remind anyone that polygamy is something uneasy therefore they need guidance. In order to provide guidance, *DPI* features some services that can be accessed by everyone, both through membership or non-membership ways. On *DPI* website, it is stated that *DPI* does not only provide service in the form of an offline seminar but also actively educates as well as disseminates promotions on social media like *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Whatsapp*, and *Telegram*. To date, *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* has expanded their services into different types, such as offline seminar (training), audio booklet, coaching, consultation, and matchmaking. Interestingly, even though they claimed not as an agent of dating, nonetheless they explicitly mention there is *Ta'aruf* program or matchmaking for registered members.

*Ta'aruf* is an Islamic term to describe knowing each other between men and women (acquaintance in Islamic way). In the Quran, Surah Al-Hujarat verse 13 captures the concept of *Ta'aruf* as an initial stage to get to know each other in terms of personality, family background, education, and so on but notably piety or religious knowledge (Hamdi, 2017). Some Islamic scholars also find that *ta'aruf* can be used in a larger context as symbol of

tolerance and pluralism in the context of Muslim society. This *ta'aruf* thing for a man-woman relationship is ruled by several conditions and terms applied, for instance, no physical touch like *salaman* or handshake, the couple must be accompanied by a third person and the couple commits to know each other in a certain period. In several conditions, the people who want to know each other can exchange curriculum vitae comprised of self-personal information.

Speaking of membership program, there are two types of membership offered by the DPI namely regular and VIP members. The price for regular membership is around three hundred thousand rupiah. The regular membership includes free access to study circles, discounts to purchase DPI products, and knowledgeable contents on polygamous marriage. Meanwhile, VIP membership have similar facilities with an extra to get an intensive companion program. This companion program is an assistance to the member to find the couple under DPI practitioner's guidance until how register polygamy marriage in a formal legal way or under Indonesian marriage laws.

Above all explanation about *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia*, it is important to see the motivation of why this organization was established in 2017. Since its emergence in the public sphere, DPI has been using similar narrative that said its presence strives in extending Islamic sharia (law) and sunnah (optional pious deed) specifically in Polygamy matters, because many Moslems neglect or even reject this sunnah practice, including among sunni moslems. During the offline seminar, the executive director of DPI resonated same narratives that this organization strives to revive sunnah as part of moslem lifestyle, including practicing polygamy. In order to do that, they provide seminars, counselings, and e-book to give male moslem better understanding about polygamy. DPI is actually quite adjustable in designing the programs. For instance, in 2017-2019 DPI constantly conducted offline seminars, 3-4 times in a year. Meanwhile, during Covid 19 pandemic, they adjust the format to online seminars and even more frequent than before.

Figure 1. Electronic Poster of Polygamy Seminar Batch 3



Speaking further of the conception of polygamy promotion by *Daurah Poligami Indonesia*, it can be understood through their public presence on social media such as electronic posters of polygamy seminars (see image 1). Following the logic of content analysis by Krippendorff in *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*, it can be seen that promotion media that they have widespread on multiplatform have function to deliver standpoint and meanings.

Krippendorff mentioned that research draws on the content analysis method should put attention not only on texts but also symbols, contents, and intents (Krippendorff, 2018). By drawing the logic, this article tried to collect and code various public posters of DPI aims to acquire an understanding about their message to people, for instance Image 1. The bold printed title of “Fast Way to Have 4 Wives” is designed to trigger awareness or known as

clickbait. Clickbait is a communication strategy that is deceptive and leads people to follow, read, view, and or listen to the full content of the publicity (Zheng et al., 2018). The use of 4 (four) *hijabi* women avatars and 1 (one) man shown in the poster also strongly signifies the promotion of polygamous marriage for Muslim families. Below part which displays list of practitioners their pictures and short bio attempts to convince the readers, that this seminar will have been carried out by knowledgeable and experienced moslem men. Based on the reading on this sample, it can be concluded that this poster aims to attract intention, both from those who might be interested in partaking in this event and the public at large by using catchy titles, words, and visuals. This trend is in contradiction to the common attitude that activists of polygamous marriage so far opted to not publicly promote polygamy like DPI. This publicity came definitely as a shock and sparked an emotional reaction for many people, especially feminist groups.

Another intense public disagreement against this movement is due to costly charges for accessing their services. *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* is considered problematic mainly due to the expensive registration fee. Based on archives that have been documented in this research from 2017 (batch 1) to 2022 (batch 22), *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* at least charges members around 3.500.000 IDR in 2017 (See image 1) and as of 2023 the cost is increasing to 5.000.000 IDR for the online training for polygamy preparation. For this reason, many perceive DPI religious practice as an object of consumption to earn profit. In a way, they only open access to those who afford the registration fee.

Based on the description of *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia*, it comes to terms that the underlying reason why they organize the seminar is to share the right understanding of polygamy in accordance with Sharia (Islamic law). The activists found that nowadays polygamy has been wrongly perceived and practiced as people have little understanding and only a few Islamic organizations or authorities focus to educate male Muslims about this matter.

While their position is clear in promoting polygamy as an Islamic way of life, we cannot neglect the context that gives opportunities to the promotion of polygamy in the Indonesian contemporary era. As mentioned earlier that DPI is widely recognized in 2017 when their publicity on polygamous seminars emerged in conjunction with the campaign 16- Days Anti Violence against Women (See image 1). The promotion of polygamy is head-to-head with a feminist campaign to protect women from any kind of domestic violence, many reported and criticized this movement on social media. Despite public sentiment against this organization, DPI founder found this momentum as an opportunity to get larger exposure from the public. DPI has ridden the wave of freedom of expression to get famous, and so other liberal secular movements. Other than that, the trend of polygamous marriage promoted on online media is also predicted as a result of the increasing number of middle-class Muslims in big cities, as well as the emergence of popular Islam that embraces Islam in everyday lives (Ahmadi, Rofiqoh, & Hefni, 2022).

#### **4.2. Contentious Debates on Polygamy in Indonesia**

The emergence of *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* reflects the ongoing contentious debate about polygamy in Indonesia. Debates on polygamy cannot be detached from the context of the different interpretations about polygamy but also the social and political landscape in Indonesia. This part shall examine the debate on the polygamy issue in the public sphere is problematic not only in religious contestation but also politically.

Polygamy actually has been practiced in Indonesia, long before Islam arrived in the archipelago. Scholars argue that polygamy practice is rooted in patriarchal culture (Ahmadi et al., 2022). Polygamy marriage was even off-limits before Islam came and in context of pre-nation state. As quoted by Janti (2019) from Cora Vreede de Stuers in *Sejarah Perempuan Indonesia*, polygamy was being practiced uncontrollably. The reading shows a fantastic number of polygamous marriages all over Indonesian archipelago during colonial era. In 1939 the total number of polygamous marriages in Sumatra reached 69.790, and Sulawesi reached 22.378, whereas Java was at the top rank with more than 70.000 polygamous marriages. According to a study conducted by Tarigan, et.al in *Taming Islam's Polygyny Law: Revealing Male Sexual Desire in Indonesia's Polygyny Practices*, it is found that those who commit polygamous marriages are driven by numerous motives, not necessarily based on religious interpretation but mainly on recreation or sexual pleasure (Tarigan, Nurhayati, & Marpaung, 2021). The prevalence of male sexual impulses through polygamy seemed like a root of contradiction.

While polygamy has been part of social and cultural practices ever since, there is no official record of when the discourse on polygamy became controversial in Indonesia. However, Brenner's work on *Democracy, Polygamy, and Women in Post "Reformasi" in Indonesia* (Brenner, 2006) is worth considering when looking at the polygamy controversy in Indonesia framed in a certain period. She collected data from Susan Blackburn, whose work pointed out that the polygamy practice is being opposed by women's rights activists since the colonial era. Hence, when Soeharto seized power from Soekarno – the Indonesian first president who is an unapologetic polygamist- the activists urged polygamy prohibition (Blackburn, 2004).

The fact that polygamy's incidence in Indonesia has always been relatively low has not stopped women from despising it. They consider that many women feel anxious or resentful due to polygamous practice (Brenner, 2006: 165). Eventually, in 1974 Soeharto's era fulfilled the demand through the law enactment on polygamy restriction - which is known as marriage law 1974. The law comprises the mandatory requirement for polygamists to obtain permission from the first wife before marrying again and declared that monogamy should be the foundation of Indonesian marriages.

Furthermore, in 1983, the government required that all employees of the Indonesian civil service, including high-ranking officials, must obtain the permission of their superiors as well as their wives (2006: 166) before marrying second, third, or fourth wives. As known under the authoritarian regime all the disapproval was considered as resistance to the government and deserve punishment. In effect, the media was also reluctant to report any news related to polygamy. In short, the law enactment of marriage in Indonesia affects public opinion about polygamy.

The formation of public opinion that is driven by elite interests is perceived as social control as a concept proposed by Habermas. Habermas (1991) argues that the emergence of welfare state capitalism becomes a factor that transforms the public sphere from the common space which prioritizes the consensus and the rational debate to the arena of the political elite, the media, and the economic system to govern public opinion (Duelund, 2010). To make it clear, the enactment of the 1974 marriage law and PP or Presidential Decree No.10 of 1983 was made due to personal exhortation from Mrs. Tien Soeharto- Soeharto's wife who was at the moment the president of Indonesia. The exhortation is presumably motivated by jealousy and inheritance. It describes how the laws are motivated by certain personal interests. But most importantly, the emergence of these rules is a form of state intervention against the private sphere of society so that the public sphere becomes suppressed. The state began to play a more fundamental role in daily life and private activity, thereby eroding differences between state and civil society, as well as between public and private spheres.

State regulation in intervening in family building in Indonesia has reflected what Habermas called "refeudalization". Habermas's account of "refeudalization" refers to a paradigm shift by the public due to state intervention. While polygamy has been part of a sociocultural phenomenon in the archipelago and has been practiced by other religious communities such as Hindus, Mormons, and other cultural communities for a long period of time prior to Islam, the discourse of polygamy is evolving. This is inseparable from the emergence of welfare state capitalism in the Indonesian context, especially since the new order era particularly. In welfare state capitalism, public opinion is administered by political, economic, and media elites who manage public opinion as part of systems management and social control. Therefore, in the contemporary public sphere, there is no longer a rational consensus among individuals and groups in the interests of articulation of common goods as the norm. Instead, the struggle among groups to advance their own private interests characterizes the scene of contemporary politics (Kitiarsa, 2007).

From that point of view, this research sees the connection of how studies and public sentiment on polygamy mostly departs from the side of those who reject the practice. Polygamy is seen as taboo and potentially result to violence against women. However, there is little explanation and exploration of why women can support polygamy. Studies on polygamy are failed to understand rational arguments behind polygamous support groups, from women side especially. Without intending to stand with the group, the purpose of exploring the group is to see their motivation as a fringe movement in the public sphere, although they are often given a negative stigma and state intervention through the establishment of the marriage law.

To understand the rationales of those who support polygamy, this research employed various data from some sources like online news articles, conversations on the channel Telegram, video interviews published on YouTube, and interview with women polygamy supporters.

### 4.3. Why are There Women Standing for Polygamy?

This part will reveal why the pro-polygamous movement still endures despite criticism and government regulation on polygamy. To answer this, this part shall present a few arguments from women who support polygamy. The voice of women is critical since polygamist opponents see that this practice brings disadvantages to women. Polygamy is psychologically and economically harmful. However, this article features converse information from women who are with consent to be polygamized. There are even some who encourage polygamy in their marriage, even though their husbands are reluctant.

By seeing the following arguments, it can be concluded that those women attempt to show the advantages of polygamy. In this sense, this study employed the term Positive Ethics inspired by Michel Foucault. Foucault underlines ethics are founded upon specific sets of procedures, techniques, and exercises, through which highly specific ethical-moral subjects come to be formed. In his opinion, ethics is a form of freedom, a discursive practice, that takes when someone is reflectively informed and he/she is doing the act even if that is risky. Here positive ethics refers to a particular form that moral reasoning on the basis of faith or religion that takes in perceiving polygamy practice.

By drawing on the framework, this study argues that DPI and other kinds of polygamy movements are not superficial. There are moral ethics that overshadow their action. First, their support for polygamy is part of the battle against the feminist movement or liberal women's rights defenders that perceive women are always the victim of polygamy practice. To them, it is a mistake when women in polygamy marriages are underrated since they have no modality of action against the patriarchal system in the family or gender inequality.

Rejection against the notion of “pro-polygamous women are weak or oppressed women” is demonstrated by the following informants. The first woman was interviewed is Erika Suryani Dewi or Ustadzah Erika. Erika is an Islamic cleric and lecturer at Al-Hikmah University Jakarta. During a *kajian* or public lecture in the mosque in Jakarta, she clearly said that she is a woman who truly agrees with Polygamy. Moreover, she insisted on her husband doing polygamy and she sought wives for her husband by herself. In her view, polygamy has core purposes such as to fulfill biological needs in a halal way (lawful in Islamic teaching) and carrying on the family tree. By referring to the unclear statistic, she says that the gap between males and females in the population is the logical reason why polygamy is needed in Indonesia.

Similar behavior was also demonstrated by Masruhatin. She was the one, who persuaded her husband to do polygamy, but her husband once rejected her demand. In her opinion, society would be ideal if they can accept the polygamy consensus. “There would be no adultery – the community would be also healthier”. According to Masruhatin, polygamy has other benefits too. She believes that there are more women than men in Indonesia and that polygamy is necessary to ensure that every woman has the opportunity to get married. There will be continued social service if polygamy is done like what Prophet Muhammad has done, for instance by marrying poor widows. Like Ustadzah Erika who believes that polygamy is a matter of carrying on the family tree, Masruhatin also argues that more wives also means more babies, which will impact the increasing number of Moslem communities in the world.

Given all these arguments by Ustadzah Erika and Masruhatin, it can be understood that their attitude toward polygamous marriage is part of religious expression that seemingly brings moral conduct to social life. They have a vision that Islamic sunnah like polygamous marriage to some extent can influence moral order in society. Like giving opportunities to single ladies, preventing *zinah* or adultery, and increasing the number of moslems in the world. Notwithstanding, the opponents argue that their legitimation is invalid, their interpretation of biblical sources is also improper because neglecting the current context.

Years before the establishment of *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia*, there had been a women established pro-polygamy community named *Klub Istri Taat*. The founder was Dr. Gina Puspita Dewi one of the wives of polygamy practitioner, Abdurrahman Riesdam Efendi. Differently from the common image of oppressed women, who have often lack of education and decent job, Dr. Gina instead reflects a figure of well literate, as she graduated her Ph.D program from Ecole National Superieure de l'Aeronautique et de l'Escape, France in 1993. According to her, the main purpose of establishing this organization is to reduce the number of domestic violence and minimize the number of divorces in polygamous marriage. Besides to counter the prevalence of prostitution.



It is clearly seen from the narratives of Dr. Gina in promoting polygamy has a close relation to the conservative Moslem, which struggle to defeat liberalism and feminism. Liberalism and feminism are considered a threat to religious virtue like in polygamy.

Such standing points against westernization are repeatedly over *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* account and other *Poligami support community* such as *Khusus Membahas Poligami* (KMP). It is written on KMP channel explicitly that liberals strongly criticize the practice of polygamy, but on the other hand, they are perceived to perpetuate adultery. The narrative below is used by pro-polygamy groups as a legitimacy of resistance to liberals.

Asy-Shaykh Usama bin Su'ud al-'Amry hafizhahullah said:

"May Allah annihilate the liberals, they forbid polygamy (marry up to 4 women legally), but they prefer to have many concubines: the Muslims, who follow their call (liberalist) will throw along with him into Jahannam- infernal hell"

Similar to the form of hostility towards liberalism, pro-polygamy also calls for hostility towards feminists. One of the narrations expressed by Dr. Gina in an interview with Hidayatullah (2009). She rejected feminist accusations that said polygamy is vulnerable to domestic violence, religious misconduct, and potential conflict. Based on her experience, she and the other three wives of his husband live very harmoniously and happily. They even stay under the same roof. Unlike feminist accusations that say the perpetrators of polygamy are driven by economic factors. Dewi presents a counterargument by showing she is an educated woman who obtained a doctorate degree. Economically, Dewi is well established and her family's finance is not getting disrupted by having to share with the other 3 wives of her husband. She said feminism with all its demands against nature or *fitrah* drag themselves into a state of torment.

In this case, the behavior demonstrated by Dr. Gina indicates the existence of individual autonomy to decide and pursue whatever for herself based on beliefs, virtues, or norms she believes in. Conceptually, individual autonomy refers to humanist desires and expressions that are driven by their own volition despite conflicting norms in society. On the account of Mahmood's work in *Politics of Piety* (Mahmood, 2005), this self-autonomy identically to the concept of agency. Agency is understood as the capacity to realize one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective). Thus, the humanist desire for autonomy and self-expression constitutes the substrate, the slumbering ember that can spark the flame in the form of an act of resistance when conditions permit (Mahmood, 2005: 11).

Referring to the concept of agency, we can see that such agency demonstrated by Dr. Gina, Masruhatin, and Ustadzah Erika. Amongst the strong rejection coming from women's movement against polygamy, these women somehow break the stigma attached by society to women who agree with polygamy. Women who are being polygamized are commonly seen as victims of patriarchal systems and gender inequality, but their devotion to polygamy marriage is not superficial. They are driven by rational arguments on religious and social-moral conduct. To some extent, their support for polygamous marriage is also a form of resistance against collective norms prevailing in society, which mostly see women are weak and not decision maker in their families when it comes to polygamy.

## 5. Conclusion

Thus, based on the above-presented explanation, this part shall focus on two conclusions. First, there is no single meaning invested in the emergence of polygamy support in the public. It is admittedly that technology is turning religious practice into a commodity. *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* is managed to repack and disseminate its ideology into social media broadcasts, audio recordings, and electronic books through technology so that it is readily consumed. The member with capital can buy the commodity; knowledge, network, as well as wife candidates with cash. Intriguingly, in spite of their rejection against liberalism and other western ideologies like capitalism, I find the way they commodify polygamy shares the system of capitalist trade. The polygamy practitioners behind *Dauroh Poligami Indonesia* sees the opportunity to gain revenue by setting costly prices for seminars, consultations, e-books and other services.

Second, besides the aspect of commodification, we can't overlook the context of the discourse taking place. The emergence of DPI and other similar polygamy support are counter-discourse against predominated liberalism and feminism in Indonesia. Based on exploration of worldviews of pro-polygamous marriages, they tend to narrate that polygamy

has been wrongly perceived and practiced. The stigma attached to those who opt to practice polygamy is much influenced by public discourse from the liberal perspective. To date, the discussion on polygamy weighs on the destructive impact of polygamy on women. Yet, this study has presented on how women, even in a very small number, can present their rationale in supporting polygamy. Not only, countering the dissent concept of polygamy from secular approach, but the emergence of pro-polygamous movements also criticizes the marriage laws that impose polygamy from a legal secular approach. By exploring the cognitive aspect of women who promotes polygamy, it can be drawn that these women are not always passive actors. They have the agency to decide and pursue an ideal world, despite the negative stigma attached to them. Their voices are probably minor the discourse of polygamy polemic, but still worth considering in the academic debates of why the promotion of polygamy still endures.

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## 7. Conflicts of Interest

The author explicitly states that there is no conflict of interest in writing this article.

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