

## Authority, Culture, and Sexuality in the Polygamy of Madurese Ulama

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### Abstract

Generally, polygamy among Madurese Ulama is carried out arbitrarily and secretly, resulting in suffering and significant discrimination against women. However, in specific instances, certain Madurese Ulama exhibit unique behaviors in constructing polygamous families, fostering comfort and harmony within their households. This research investigates the practice of polygamy among the ulama of Madurese and the influencing factors behind such practices. Employing a qualitative method, primary data sources comprise three polygamous families led by Madurese Ulama, each demonstrating distinctiveness in managing their polygamous households. The findings of this study conclude the existence of two models of polygamy practiced by Madurese Ulama, including polygamy initiated by the husband's desire with consent from the wives and initiated by the wives with consent from the husband. The practice of polygamy among Madurese Ulama is influenced by factors such as sexual needs, the authority held by these Ulama, and the devout religious culture of Madurese society, which tends to venerate Madurese Ulama excessively.

### Abstrak

Pada umumnya poligami ulama Madura dilakukan secara sewenang-wenang dan siri (tidak dicatat oleh negara), yang mendatangkan penderitaan dan diskriminasi yang sangat merugikan perempuan. Sebaliknya dalam fenomena tertentu, terdapat ulama Madura yang memiliki perilaku unik dalam membangun keluarga poligami sehingga mendatangkan kenyamanan dan keharmonisan dalam rumah tangga. Penelitian ini menelaah praktik poligami yang dilakukan oleh ulama Madura dan faktor yang mempengaruhi poligami tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan sumber data primernya adalah tiga keluarga ulama Madura yang memiliki keunikan dalam membangun rumah tangga poligamis. Hasil penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa terdapat dua model poligami yang dilakukan oleh ulama Madura, yaitu poligami yang dilakukan atas kehendak suami dengan persetujuan para istri dan poligami yang dilakukan atas inisiatif para istri dengan mendapatkan persetujuan suami. Poligami ulama Madura dipengaruhi oleh faktor kebutuhan seksual dan otoritas ulama Madura, serta budaya hidup masyarakat Madura yang taat beragama dan cenderung berlebihan dalam mengkultus ulamanya.

### Keyword:

polygamy; Madurese ulama; sexuality; authority; culture

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## Introduction

Polygamy is positioned as a source of discrimination against women (Nurmila, 2016). This statement is based on the argument that many cases of domestic violence are experienced by women affected by polygamy. Similarly, numerous husbands practicing polygamy tend to neglect their responsibilities and abandon their first families (Munti, 2018). Another impact experienced by women in polygamous families is the psychological pressure resulting from societal perceptions of their status in social life, whether as the first wife, especially as the second wife, and so forth (Mubakirah, 2017).

Madura, an island in Indonesia, holds a unique cultural perspective regarding polygamy. Although there are no reliable statistics, experts agree that the practice of polygamy in Madura is often done without the consent or knowledge of the first wife (Rismawati & Bakar, 2014). This practice frequently occurs through individual procedures or secret marriages, further enhancing the secretive nature of polygamy.

The prevalence of polygamy in Madura contributes to the growing complexity of polygamy-related issues, leading to significant debates on gender equality, women's rights, and the potential negative impacts on families (Shepard, 2013). Controversies arise due to personal subjectivity, differing interpretations of religious texts, and culturally specific practices based on local wisdom (Kurniasih & Raya, 2022).

The portrayal of Madurese Ulama is intriguing to explore in this research topic because Madurese Ulama has been identified as a figure who tends to practice polygamy (Farid & Hidayat, 2021: 993). Having multiple wives is considered a common occurrence among Madurese Ulama. Typically, the second, third, and subsequent wives are often their students, younger than the previous wives, and possess attractive facial features (Sa'dan, 2015).

Despite all this, ulama in Madura are figures with a higher level of religious understanding than the general Madurese population. Madurese Ulama have a deeper comprehension of the holy texts of the Quran and Hadith and bear a social obligation and responsibility to disseminate religious teachings to the Madurese society based on their interpretations.

Frequently, disseminating doctrine is conveyed for individual interests to fortify their positions as central figures within Madurese society. Consequently, the Madurese populace holds the belief that the ulama are representatives of God on Earth. Following the directives of the ulama and fulfilling all their desires is believed to bring blessings. This extends to matters concerning polygamy.

Hence, ulama in Madura is often viewed as having constructed a social framework by institutionalizing the doctrine of polygamy through preaching platforms that venerate them (A'la et al., 2017). It is not uncommon for misogynistic Hadiths to be employed as doctrinal tools to reinforce their arguments (Marhumah, 2015). Verses of Quran, like Surah al-Nisā' verse 3, are frequently used to legitimize the permissibility of polygamy and the ability to fulfill the requirement of fairness (Bakar, 2018). However, although QS. al-Nisā' (3) permits polygamy implicitly, within that verse, there is a warning for those who cannot act justly in practicing polygamy (Hasbi Hasan, 2012).

The demand for fairness in polygamy aims to protect the rights of women (wives) and their children, who tend to be disadvantaged by the practice of polygamy. Additionally, this demand for fairness has positive implications for instilling noble moral values in both men and women (Aziz et al., 2023).

Conversely, Madurese women consent to be in a polygamous relationship with Madurese Ulama because they are considered victims of doctrines imposed upon them (Sumardi, 2015). However, the fact remains that not all ulama in Madura practice polygamy. Similarly, not all ulama who practice polygamy discriminate against their wives (Sa'dan, 2015).

In Madura, three models of polygamous families exist among Madurese Ulama that lead peaceful and harmonious lives. They are the families of KH. Jakfar, KH. Shadiq, and KH. Muhammad. KH. Shadiq has three wives, while KH. Jakfar and KH. Muhammad lives with two wives each. Based on the empirical facts above, this paper aims to provide methodological clarification to unveil two aspects: the practice of polygamy among Madurese Ulama and the efforts made by Madurese Ulama to bring about harmony within polygamous family life.

## Method

This research employs a qualitative method (Strauss & Corbn, 2003) with a sociological approach (Khoiruddin, 2014). The primary data in this study are obtained directly from the informants involved in polygamous relationships. They consisted of ten people with the pseudonym KH. Shadiq, Mrs. Siti Zainab, Mrs. Nur Hasanah, Mrs. Zulaikha, KH. Jakfar, Mrs. Robi'ah, Mrs. Adawiyah, KH. Muhammad, Mrs. Saidah and Mrs. Masodah.

In selecting informants, the researcher categorized the ulama based on four characteristics—genealogical, charismatic, ideological, and their roles as leaders in Islamic boarding schools. This is crucial to ensure that the selected informants possess the capabilities to be recognized as Madurese Ulama.

Data in this study are gathered through unstructured interviews reinforced by documentary evidence and direct field observations (Creswell, 1994). To ensure data validity, the researcher checks the authenticity of data using the triangulation technique, examining the consistency across multiple data sources (Sugiyono, 2017) This approach is applied to validate the statements of all informants based on their diverse perspectives (data source triangulation) and the methods used (data collection method triangulation) (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

## The Character of Madurese Ulama

Ulama in Madura are recognized and distinguished from ulama elsewhere due to their distinct characteristics. These characteristics are traced in genealogy's dimensions, leadership patterns, ideologies, and leadership roles within Islamic boarding schools. These four elements are inherent and form the identity of Ulama in Madura.

Genealogically, ulama in Madura are recognized as ulama with a lineage connection, meaning they belong to the same lineage and maintain kinship ties. In Madura, intermarriage among relatives is a local wisdom that has evolved and become a societal perspective. The principle established is "*mapolong tolang*," which signifies reuniting relatives by binding them through endogamous marriage ties. Endogamous marriage refers to restricting partner choices within the same group (Newman & Grauerholz, 2002).

However, the endogamous marriage model prevalent among the elite (Ulama families) differs from the marriage pattern in the general Madurese society. In general society, endogamous marriage is not absolute or widespread. Conversely, this pattern is highly binding within Ulama families and is a norm prevalent in most of them. This pattern within Ulama families is carefully maintained from generation to generation to uphold the privilege and charisma solely to propagate religious teachings within the community. Hence, the term nobles in Madura is strongly associated with Ulama families occupying the highest social stratum. This pattern has bound nearly all ulama in Madura and the eastern part of East Java.

The noble status is often used as an idiom to describe someone from a royal family (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2008). At this stage, Madurese Ulama families are positioned as noble-like due to their lineage connection with the sultanate families in Madura (Ihsani, 2021).

Ulama in Madura established an extraordinary endogamous network, creating a barrier that prevents any social strata below them from penetrating the defense ring of Madurese Ulama families. Even if there are instances, these exceptions occur within a few ulama families.

Such occurrences do not significantly impact the robustly established genealogical structure over time.

Moreover, the leadership pattern practiced by Madurese Ulama are characterized by charismatic leadership. Charismatic leadership is based on an individual's extraordinary qualities. The term charisma refers to a quality that sets an individual apart. They are believed to possess supernatural powers as exceptional beings. The presence of someone with such qualities is seen as a leader capable of creating and maintaining an image that describes their strength without the assistance of others (Susanto, 2007).

Followers of charismatic leaders often exhibit fluctuating behavior. To a certain extent, they display immense loyalty, disregarding their interests and willingly sacrificing everything to follow their leader's directives. Thus, the relationship between the leader and followers resembles that of a master and devoted servant (Susanto, 2007).

This relationship pattern forms a moral bond where, through the sacrifices made by followers, the leader is obligated to guide and provide solutions to every issue their followers face. In this context, the leader's motivation and advice are perceived as reflections of extraordinary personality traits, to some extent believed to be sourced from God. Hence, the followers' trust in the leader strengthens, as they are seen to possess the ability to know what happens within their followers, referred to as *ma'rifah* among followers of specific orders (Wahid, 1983).

In the lives of Madurese people, ulama holds a central position, not just in religious aspects but in nearly all facets of life. The influence of Madurese Ulama within the community surpasses the influence of other leadership institutions (Kuntowijoyo, 2002). In various matters concerning the community, the ulama serves as a place of recourse. Whether it's religious affairs, healthcare, sustenance, marriage, home building, agriculture, social conflicts, careers, politics, or other life issues, seeking advice and blessings from ulama is deemed essential. Ulama attends to the community's needs with patience and compassion, and in return, the community demonstrates obedience, submission, and readiness to serve the ulama.

The relationship between ulama and their community is known for its pattern of *paternalism* (Hasbullah & Wahyono, 2020), where the relationship between leaders and followers resembles that of a father and child (Billah, 1998). Beyond that, in Madura, there's a known tradition called *ngabuleh*, which involves devotion to the teacher (ulama). This tradition shapes the relationship pattern between ulama and students akin to that of a master and devoted servant. This pattern emerges due to the high charisma of a Madurese Ulama, leading the community to vie for blessings by providing the best service to their revered teacher (Mu'in & Hefni, 2016).

Madurese Ulama upholds traditional Islam. This is evident in their cultural and structural alignment with the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization. A defining aspect of traditional Islam is its strong adherence to previous ulama who lived between the 7th and 13th centuries, encompassing aspects of Sufism, hadith, jurisprudence, interpretation, and theology (Dhofier, 2000). This reservoir provides an exceptional cultural and intellectual foundation for traditionalists to engage with modernity. The outcome is an understanding of Islam that engages with local traditions and culture.

The stronghold of the robust traditionalist Islamic ideology envelops the cognitive structure and mentality of Madurese society, stemming from the thoughts of Madurese Ulama following the patterns of Muslim thinkers in the early 19th century after intensive interactions between the Muslim world and the West. These thought patterns are scripturalist and substantive (Jazuli, 2015). Scripturalist thinking tends to regard orthodoxy as the ultimate goal. Reality should align with the teachings. If there's a conflict between reality and the teachings, religious figures have to promptly bring reality in line with the teachings (Thaha, 1997).

Meanwhile, substantive thinking is a realistic pattern that accommodates and accepts reality, considering the substance of the teachings, even if it means questioning or modifying the teachings within the texts (Thaha, 1997). This typology of thinking uses rationality to bring revelation into the realm of reality, allowing human reason to legitimize observations in the real world without contradicting revelation (Thaha, 1997). This thought emphasizes the essence or substance of a text by contextualizing it with evolving realities. Thus, the survival of textual teachings always aligns with temporal and spatial developments.

Furthermore, the ulama figure in Madura is closely tied to their ownership of Islamic boarding schools, known as pondok pesantren. Where there is an ulama in an Islamic boarding school (pondok pesantren) exists as the central religious social authority. Hence, the authority discussed in this study is the jurisdiction that emerges due to Madurese Ulama's influence, position, and power through their pondok pesantren (Jannah, 2019). This is a manifestation of societal belief and the community's need for the roles held by these Islamic boarding schools. Such authority is persuasive, as it is built upon the foundation of influence and trust from the community, thereby maintaining long-term effectiveness (Fadl, 2001).

The growth and development of pondok pesantren in Madura serve as evidence of how the Madurese comprehend these sites as the primary bases for Madurese Ulama to propagate Islam. The Madurese community is notably strict regarding religious education, placing pondok pesantren at the center of educating their sons and daughters.

This illustrates the significant influence Madurese Ulama wield in the lives of the Madurese community. The sturdy foundation of characteristics inherent in Madurese Ulama indicates that their social strata stand at the highest and most accomplished level. Leveraging the privileges they possess, Madurese Ulama builds their authority. Consequently, the mindset of the Madurese community gives rise to a culture of reverence and admiration for the ulama in Madura.

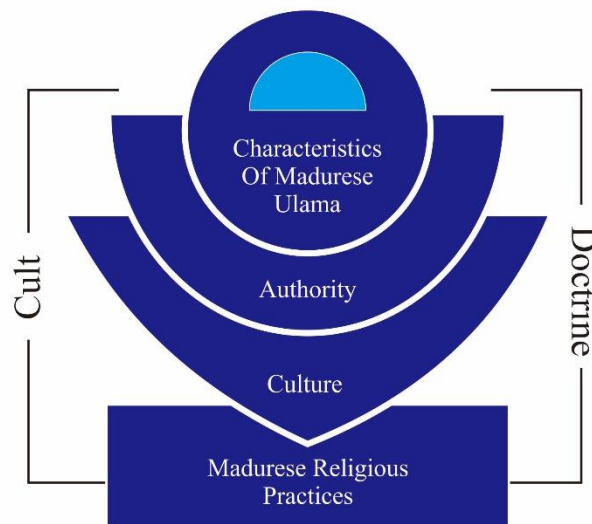


Figure 1. Paradigm Model of Religious Society in Madura

The diagram above explains how the inherent characteristics of Madurese Ulama work subsequently result in the construction of authority and culture. Specifically, the formation of unique and distinctive religious practices characterizing the Madurese way of life manifests the cultural design crafted by Madurese Ulama.

The paradigm of the community regarding the polygamy of Madurese Ulama is built upon this foundation. As long as this foundational structure remains robust, the practice of polygamous doctrine cannot be easily dismantled, even with the introduction of more

progressive ways of thinking. Instead, reconstructing an established paradigm will inherently face opposition unless it is formed through similar mechanisms.

### **Polygamy among Madurese Ulama**

Polygamy among ulama is prevalent in Madura. However, it's not necessary to generalize, leading to the adage that all ulama in Madura practice polygamy. Upon more profound research into polygamous behavior, it is noted that polygamy in Madura is not exclusive to ulama or merchants. Surprisingly, unique instances of polygamy are found among lower to middle-class communities, such as among rickshaw drivers' families. However, this data doesn't imply rampant polygamy in Madura, as similar cases are found in other areas outside Madura (Rostiawati & Khadijah, 2013).

KH. Amin, a charismatic ulama in Sampang, explains that polygamy holds specific urgency within social classes. He says:

When discussing polygamy, it must be examined from various aspects and perspectives. Legally speaking, it reverts to the original marriage law, which is Sunnah. But, with varying urgency, polygamy could be obligatory or even considered prohibited. When considering needs, it differs. Polygamy is a biological need and also a material need, not just for men but also for women. Clearly, in different social classes, polygamy holds different meanings and legal consequences. These factors need to be comprehensively examined for a clear legal status. For example, for ordinary people, polygamy might be limited to a biological need, but for Ulama with high mobility, polygamy could be related to preaching. It's unsurprising to find a preacher with more than one wife (Amin, 2022).

For KH. Amin, polygamy holds different meanings in certain societal strata. For ordinary people, it's a common biological need. But for ulama, polygamy might be a need related to preaching. He implies that polygamy is part of preaching with dual meanings. Firstly, high-mobility ulama inevitably interact intensely with various societal facets during preaching. Various temptations, including sexual temptations, arise while preaching. For ulama like this, having more than one spouse could support their preaching because they require a higher frequency of sexual relationships. KH. Amin added, "It's not uncommon for ulama working as preachers to demand extra service from their wives" (Amin, 2022). *Secondly*, for ulama in specific capacities, at times, practicing polygamy becomes a necessary means for their success in preaching. For instance, an ulama might need to marry a prostitute to deter her from practicing prostitution. Similarly, an ulama might sometimes need to marry a woman in a specific area to expand their preaching there. The purpose of polygamy in such instances was often practiced by Madurese Ulama in the past when preaching in Madura (Amin, 2022).

KH. Jakfar, a polygamous individual, states:

I have two wives. I married twice out of necessity, not out of pride. If not, my first wife might have scattered everywhere, especially in rural Bangkalan, where remnants of an old tradition persist, where people ask for blessings for offspring when I attend gatherings. Both my wives know each other well. Our marriages are valid according to religious and state law. However, they don't live together in one house as they wish. Before I remarried, I often argued with my first wife as she couldn't meet my sexual needs. Alhamdulillah, it's normal now. My relationship with my first wife has improved since I remarried. The second wife is the same, and they get along. Regarding material needs, Alhamdulillah, everyone can accept what Allah provides for them (Jakfar, 2022).

KH. Jakfar admitted that having more than one wife due to biological needs. According to him, this is influenced by two factors. First, it's to fulfill the biological needs that one wife cannot meet alone. This reasoning holds argumentative weight, as forcing excessive biological needs onto one wife beyond her capacity tends to lead to sexual violence (Fu'ady, 2011). Forced or intimidated sexual relations fall under crimes resulting in suffering, which can be prosecuted under domestic violence laws (Alfitri, 2020). KH. Jakfar demonstrates this by stating that after his second marriage, his relationship with his first wife became harmonious before practicing polygamy, KH. Jakfar frequently argued with his first wife due to sexual relationship issues. The same applied to his relationship with the second wife. KH. Jakfar succeeded in being a husband who could reconcile the interests of both wives, making them a cohesive family. Secondly, to avoid irresponsible behavior, because in his area, a tradition persists where people seek blessings from ulama for offspring. The number of his wives could increase once immersed in the gratification of these blessings. Therefore, KH. Jakfar chose to have two wives rather than succumb to society's demands for blessings for offspring.

According to KH. Jakfar, blessings for offspring involve a behavior where the community asks an ulama to marry their daughter. This practice is often suddenly requested while the ulama attends preaching invitations in certain areas. The purpose of seeking blessings for offspring is solely for the ulama's daughter to bear the offspring of the ulama. The community believes that the Ulama are pure. Thus, their offspring are considered pure. This behavior is also believed to elevate a family's social status if one of its members has offspring from an ulama (Jakfar, 2022).

If looked at in form and purpose, marriages are rooted in seeking blessings for offspring, according to KH. Jakfar does not last long. Once the daughter is pregnant, the ulama is not blamed if he no longer visits his new wife and leaves her abruptly, according to KH. Jakfar, an ulama with high preaching mobility, might receive numerous requests for blessings for offspring in various regions (Jakfar, 2022).

What KH. Jakfar conveyed this, which is affirmed by his wife, Robi'ah. She was overwhelmed by serving her husband to have intense intercourse. However, after her husband did polygamy, she felt that the burden of being a wife could be shared with other wives. Therefore, she can avoid committing sins by refusing her husband to have intense intercourse (Robi'ah, 2022).

According to Adawiyah, a second wife of KH Jakfar, his marriage was acknowledged. His first wife witnessed the entire process, from start to finish. Adawiyah narrated:

My marriage to Aba was not hidden from *Mbak* (first wife). *Mbak* was very supportive of us, and she said she was pleased. I don't consider her my rival, but I see her as my sister. *Mbak* told me anything related to Aba. Conversely, if I didn't understand something about Aba, I confided in her. I work in the city, and we don't live under the same roof. We used to stay together on vacation at her house (Adawiyah, 2022).

Similar to KH. Jakfar, KH. Shadiq had three wives and stayed under one roof. He claimed that his choice to practice polygamy did not arise from his initiative but from the desire of his first wife. He stated:

I have three wives, not because I'm hypersexual or wealthy. My wife always wanted me to remarry. As a result, I surrendered. So, she found a second wife for me. The process for the second and third wives was the same. Both my wives cooperated in finding me another wife. I live in deprivation, so my family have to accept each other

and avoid any arguments solely based on sustenance and intercourse relationships. Despite our modest lives, Alhamdulillah, we are delighted (Shadiq, 2022).

In the statement above, KH. Shadiq admits that despite having three wives, he is not an ideal or perfect man. Moreover, his decision to practice polygamy wasn't of his initiative but stemmed from the desire of his wives. To maintain the harmony of his family, KH. Shadiq acknowledges each other's shortcomings and accepts each person's limitations in the family. For him, neither he nor his family is perfect. He understands that his wives have limitations, but he still develops the attitude of acknowledging and accepting these limitations. He commits to growing his family life well to attain happiness.

For KH. Shadiq, the key to marital happiness is fulfilling material and biological needs. In this polygamous marriage, he could not fulfil those needs. Therefore, he emphasized these conditions when his wives forced him to remarry. He was concerned that the condition might cause arguments among others. In other words, as a mere caretaker at his Islamic boarding school, KH. Shadiq wanted to instill an attitude of mutual acknowledgment and acceptance of each other's shortcomings among his family members.

According to KH. Shadiq, the views on material and biological needs will never be fulfilled because the inherent nature of humans regarding these two needs will always be deficient, even if they seem more than sufficient. If this cannot be controlled, regardless of a husband's wealth or sexual ability, his family life will never achieve the predicate of tranquillity, love, and mercy. Hence, striving to fulfill these needs and building awareness to control excessive desires collectively is crucial in fostering family life.

Siti Zainab affirmed what her husband, KH. Shadiq expressed. As the first wife, she was the one who repeatedly forced KH. Shadiq to remarry. Her efforts to persuade KH. Shadiq was not smooth, as it was only granted after several pleases but with specific conditions. Siti Zainab said:

Yes, it's true. I repeatedly pressured Abah to remarry. But it was tough. Alhamdulillah, he agreed with some conditions. (Zainab, 2022).

Nur Hasanah, KH. Shadiq's second wife echoed the same statement and added:

Before the marriage contract, I was seated by Aba with Mbak (Siti Zainab) and then given the condition not to argue over sustenance and intercourse. If I agreed to these conditions, the marriage would proceed, but if not, the marriage wouldn't happen (Hasanah, 2022).

The third wife, Zulaikha, provided the same response. Apart from giving a similar answer, this graduate from one of the universities in Bangkalan added:

Before that, Aba presented his shortcomings and then explained the conditions. And indeed, what Aba conveyed is true. Until now, we do not live in luxury. We eat whatever is available. What we use is very simple. Aba's intercourse life is also ordinary. But alhamdulillah, we're harmonious and pleased (Zulaikha, 2022).

The statements of Zulaikha and Siti Zainab presented KH. Shadiq's shortcomings before the marriage took place. This was intended to foster mutual awareness, openness, and acceptance of anything that may happen within their married life. His attitude was not just accepted but embraced by his wives. The wives accepted it and successfully integrated the attitude instilled by the husband into their value system.



Furthermore, KH Muhammad committed polygamy after knowing that Mrs. Mas'odah was a poor widow with three children. His motive for marrying his second wife was to provide economic support to her, who worked as a caretaker at an Islamic boarding school. He could financially assist her and her family, and

Mrs. Mas'odah admitted that she no longer struggles to provide for her needs and the Pesantren after marrying KH. Muhammad. She says marriage has been quite happy and comfortable despite not living together in the same house as KH. Muhammad. There were no disturbances from the first wife because of her marriage to KH. Muhammad was done with permission from his first wife, Ny. Saidah and is legally recognized (Mas'odah, 2022).

When confirmed, Mrs. Saidah affirmed Mrs. Mas'odah's statement. According to her, KH. Muhammad had long intended to remarry. However, because he was not given permission, he chose not to pursue his intention until he finally proposed to marry Mrs. Mas'odah. Mrs. Saidah believed her husband deserved a remarriage due to his capability. Yet, she did not immediately grant permission to gauge the firmness of her husband's intention. Additionally, she chose a prospective wife who she believed could strengthen family ties and not create turmoil. According to Mrs. Saidah's, Mrs. Mas'odah fit those criteria, so her husband was allowed to marry her (Saidah, 2022).

A distinctive aspect of KH. Muhammad's polygamous marriage is that he would remarry until his first wife approved. Similarly, his first wife postponed her permission until she found a suitable second wife, someone she believed would enhance family ties rather than disrupt them. They were considered legal as they fulfilled all the conditions and pillars of Islamic marriage. They were also legally registered according to the prevailing regulations and recorded in the state's records. A valid and legally recognized marriage is crucial as it ensures legal certainty in marriage status, child status, and marital property (Ma'u, 2023).

Highlighting the validity and legality of these marriages is crucial, especially in rural areas in Madura, where marriages often occur without considering the legality of such unions (Syawqi et al., 2023). This is particularly pertinent in cases of polygamous marriages. Besides economic factors, secret marriages persist due to their alignment with the spirit of Madurese people who marry at a young age and practice polygamy. Government-set procedures are cumbersome and can hinder such marriages (Masduki & Zaini, 2022).

The economic factor in question is closely related to a person's ability to meet the demands of local culture, which requires marriages to be announced. Madurese society perceives that the walimah recommended by the Prophet is not as simple as just slaughtering a goat. In the *ghabay* tradition, the marriage ceremony is conducted by inviting relatives, neighbors, and even Ulama. Traditional dishes are obligatory offerings (Almanuri & Khalilullah, 2021). This process does not occur with secret marriages, thus avoiding expenses beyond their means. To attain the legitimacy of marriage, they must marry before an ulama without going to the Office of Religious Affairs (Abd Aziz, 2012).

In this context, Madurese Ulama conduct polygamous marriages that are valid and legal. They register their marriages at the Office of Religious Affairs and perform the entire *ghabay* ceremony as per the tradition of marriages in Madura. This phenomenon is scarce. Therefore, it can be said that this model of polygamy has opened a new chapter in the history of polygamous marriages in Madura.

The current findings indicated that the polygamous model of Madurese Ulama can be identified as follows:

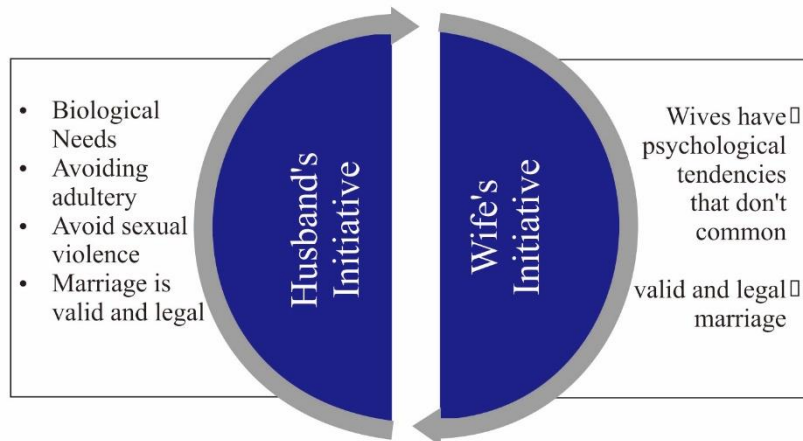


Figure 2. Factors of Polygamy among Madurese Ulama

The first polygamy type occurs at the request of the Madurese cleric. In this case, the Madurese cleric has high biological needs. Polygamy is done to avoid the possibility of adultery and fornication, as well as to protect oneself from sexual violence directed at his wife.

The second polygamy type happens due to the desire of the Madurese cleric's wife. In this case, the Madurese cleric does not desire polygamy, but due to the insistence of his wife, polygamy is reluctantly carried out. This problem is specific and does not apply to most Madurese cleric's wives. Wives who force their husbands to remarry have different psychological tendencies compared to most women. To anticipate problems in polygamous marriages, the Madurese Ulama, in this context, propose conditions before agreeing to their husbands' requests. These conditions include avoiding financial and emotional support arguments, as they know their limitations.

### Among Sexuality, Authority, and Culture

The harmonious married life described in the polygamous marriages of KH Shadiq, KH Jakfar, and KH Muhammad can be observed from a sociological concept. In KH Jakfar's practice of polygamous marriage, the motive to remarry is to avoid sexual violence against the first wife, who is unable to fulfill biological desires. This motive tends to highlight the authority of men in meeting biological needs. Despite being a cliché and portraying male arrogance in satisfying libidinal greed and demeaning women, KH Jakfar's polygamous marriage persists. It is undeniable that fulfilling sexual needs can bring happiness between spouses. However, if it caused one party (especially the wife) trauma and suffering, KH Jakfar and Mrs. Robiah agreed that polygamy is the best option.

The authority of the Madurese cleric to remarry is also reflected in KH Muhammad case. When he decided to do polygamy, his wife could not refuse unless she chose the candidate of his second wife. KH Muhammad followed his wife's guidance in approving the woman he could marry. This was done because they had high hopes that the second wife would strengthen the family they built together rather than cause it to collapse, as often happens in polygamous families.

In the two models mentioned earlier of polygamous families, it's evident that Madurese Ulama wields significant influence in Madurese society, especially in the context of their desire to engage in polygamy. It's not just the first wife who lacks the power to refuse the Madurese cleric's desire to remarry; even prospective second wives find themselves powerless when a Madurese cleric expresses interest in marrying them. Sociologically, the presence of men with high social and economic status becomes one of the reasons why women consent to polygamy, even in secret marital status (Sam'ani et al., 2023). In Madurese culture, being a cleric's wife is

a matter of pride. Being part of the more prominent family of Madurese Ulama is believed to elevate one's social status and influence within the community. Similarly, having offspring from a Madurese cleric legitimizes a new generation to provide blessings (Sabri et al., 2020).

The same influence is observed in the polygamous model in the life of KH Shadiq. Although he did not initiate the second and third marriages, it is evident that the culture and beliefs of the Madurese, which idolize ulama, significantly facilitated his first wife in finding the second and third wives for KH Shadiq. It did not take long for Mrs. Siti Zainab to persuade Mrs. Nur Hasanah and Mrs. Zulaikha to become KH Shadiq's wives.

The cultural factor that has become a way of life in Madurese society is the main magnet that attracts Madurese women to become the wives of ulama. Another factor was influenced by heredity, where KH. Shadiq's first wife was born into a polygamous family who lived harmoniously in one house. This phenomenon became a source of inspiration for Mrs Zainab, who yearned to build a polygamous family like her parents.

Economically, KH Shadiq is not a wealthy cleric like KH Jakfar and KH Muhammad. Therefore, saying that economics is the sole attraction for Madurese women to marry Madurese Ulama seems less appropriate. The doctrine of the purity of Madurese Ulama generates tremendous cult-like adoration to the extent that individuals willingly sacrifice their wealth and lives for the happiness of the cleric who proposes to them. In this context, Madurese women willingly set aside their egos for the happiness of the proposing cleric.

From an economic perspective, KH. Shadiq is not a wealthy ulama like KH. Jakfar and KH. Muhammad. Therefore, asserting that economic factors are the sole attraction for Madurese women to become wives of Madurese Ulama seems rather inadequate. The doctrine of the sanctity of Madurese Ulama generates extraordinary cultish devotion and affection to the extent that individuals often sacrifice their material wealth and even their lives for the sake of Madurese Ulama (A'la et al., 2017: 459). In this context, Madurese women willingly set aside their egos for the happiness of the Madurese Ulama who proposes to them.

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However, to ensure there are no disputes among the wives in the future, KH. Shadiq sets conditions that his deficiencies, particularly in terms of sexual capacity (spiritual sustenance) and financial capability (material sustenance), should not be questioned. Therefore, the key to harmony in a polygamous family led by a Madurese Ulama lies in consistency and openness, providing a comfortable space for husbands and wives to engage in dialogue and mutually support each other consistently.

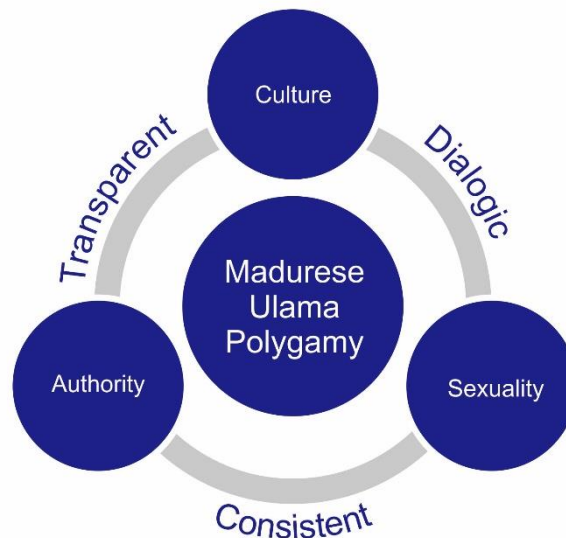


Figure 3. Factors of Polygamy among Madurese Ulama

The scheme above illustrates that polygamy practiced by Madurese Ulama is influenced by three factors: sexuality, authority, and culture. The utilization of non-authoritarian authority, a cultish culture that fosters love for the ulama, and the control of sexuality drive the Madurese Ulama to bring harmony into their polygamous married lives. This is supported by an open, dialogic, and consistent approach established between the Madurese Ulama and their wives.

### Conclusion

From the discussion above, two models of polygamous practices conducted by Madurese Ulama can be identified. First, polygamy is initiated by the husband and approved by the wives. The motive behind this polygamy is the ulama's high biological need to avoid adultery, infidelity, and sexual violence against his wife. The ulama in this model of polygamy can provide both material and spiritual sustenance. Second, polygamy is initiated by the wives and approved by the husband. The ulama in this model acknowledges the lack of sexual or financial capabilities. In this model, an agreement not to dispute the provision of material and spiritual sustenance acts as a bond between the wives to build harmony.

Madurese Ulama, as the highest authority, have a strong influence in shaping the attitude of Madurese society. Through religious doctrine, Madurese Ulama can construct a cult culture that creates extraordinary love and obedience to Madurese Ulama. This then gives its colour to the fulfilment of Madurese Ulama's sexual desires through polygamy.

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