

POLYGAMY SEMINARS: BUILDING MASCULINITY VIA LIBIDINAL ECONOMICS

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Abstract: *This paper discusses polygamy seminars with three critical perspectives: religious commodification, hegemonic masculinity, and libidinal economics. In terms of religious commodification, polygamy seminars as a religious activity held in many places in Indonesia with quite expensive costs are economically beneficial. Regarding Raewyn W. Connell's masculinity theory, polygamy seminars can be read as activities closely related to masculinity and femininity. The libidinal economic perspective of Jean Francois Lyotard helps see the relationship between religious commodification, desire, and capital in polygamy seminars. This article is an analytical descriptive study with quite extensive empirical data.*

Keywords: *Polygamy Seminars; Religious commodification; Libidinal Economics.*

Abstrak: *Artikel ini mendiskusikan tentang seminar poligami dengan tiga perspektif kritis: komodifikasi agama, maskulinitas hegemonik, dan ekonomi libidinal. Dilihat dari sisi komodifikasi agama, seminar poligami sebagai kegiatan keagamaan yang dilakukan di banyak tempat di Indonesia dengan biaya cukup mahal jelas menguntungkan secara ekonomi. Dilihat dari sisi teori maskulinitas Raewyn W. Connell, seminar poligami dapat dibaca sebagai kegiatan yang erat hubungannya dengan maskulinitas dan femininitas. Perspektif ekonomi libidinal dari Jean Francois Lyotard membantu untuk melihat hubungan komodifikasi agama, hasrat, dan kapital dalam seminar poligami. Artikel ini adalah studi deskriptif analitis dengan data-data empiris yang cukup luas.*

Kata Kunci: *Seminar Poligami; Komodifikasi Agama; Ekonomi Libidinal.*

Introduction

Marriage in Islam is a serious discussion since it is deemed something sacred and many people, especially in Indonesia, make marriage a hope. The hope of most people to have one permanent partner during their life is deemed a symbol of devotion in marriage. On the other hand, there is a form of marriage in which a person has more than one partner. A marriage held by a woman who has two husbands is called polyandry while a marriage held by a man who has two or more wives is called polygamy. In Indonesia, the term polygamy is more popular than polyandry because more men are married to more than one partner. This phenomenon has become controversial since the emergence of teachings about polygamy, especially in the Muslim community itself. Some support polygamy and many others strongly oppose it. Supporters and opponents are now divided into two extreme poles.

Sources of information on polygamy usually take quotes from QS. al-Nisa/4: 3.

“If you fear you might fail to give orphan women their due rights if you were to marry them, then marry other women of your choice: two, three, or four. But if you are afraid you will fail to maintain justice, then content yourselves with one or those bondwomen in your possession. This way you are less likely to commit injustice.”

The verse above is generally an inspiration for polygamous supporters to legitimize their opinions to be considered *mubāḥ* (permissible). However, for those who oppose polygamy, the context of the verse is still debatable when viewed from the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the reasons for the revelation of a verse). Some people criticize polygamists who use the verse as a tool to legitimize their opinion because it is considered only exploiting women by exploiting the verse first massively. Imam Nakha'i, the Commissioner of Komnas Perempuan (National Committee of Woman), in the Discussion on Women and Politics in Jakarta, on December 15, 2018, stated that polygamy was not a teaching of Islam and the verse regarding polygamy as above was not a recommendation for polygamy but for regulating polygamy strictly with difficult restrictions and provisions.¹ In al-Nisa/4 verse 3, polygamy is arranged based on historical background starting from marriages in unlimited numbers in pre-Islamic Arab society into 1:4, then 1:3, then 1:2, and then to 1:1 which implies polygamy.² The eminent Muslim scholar Muhammad Abduh even absolutely prohibited polygamy because of its negative implications for women.³ In the New Order era, polygamy was prohibited in Indonesia and tended more to monogamous families. Even so, Suryakusuma⁴ noted that there was an increase in

unregistered marriages and polygamy among civil servants.

Today, there are lots of polygamy-supporting groups that spread their ideas on social media massively and hold meetings in a forum by holding seminars on polygamy. The seminars contain tips, practices, and arguments for polygamy. The seminars are charged a fairly expensive price. Again, several parties who oppose polygamy criticize these polygamy seminars with the argument that these seminars not only seek to exploit women but also have economic implications with a very large profit value by using religious arguments as a shield. This was considered by Komnas Perempuan as a “business project”. A polygamous community called Dauroh Poligami Indonesia once held a Polygamy Seminar attended by “polygamous practitioners” on December 3, 2017, entitled “*Cara Kilat Dapat Istri 4* (The Quick Way to Get 4 Wives)” at an undisclosed location and stated a price as a form of mode to participants who wanted to attend the seminar at three million five hundred thousand Rupiah (IDR 3,500,000,000.00) to five million Rupiah (IDR 5,000,000.00)⁵. At the polygamy seminar on July 29, 2018, held by the Forum Poligami Indonesia entitled “*Kelas Poligami Nasional* (National Polygamy Class)” which was also the continuation of the program “*Cara Kilat Dapat Istri 4*” by using the same mode plus getting some facilities, one of which was a t-shirt that read “*2019tambahistri*”⁶. Komnas Perempuan called such seminars a form of violence against women, including polygamy itself.

This article uses three theories: religious commodification, hegemonic masculinity, and libidinal economics. Kitiarsa⁷ defined religious commodification as a multifaceted and multidimensional process of converting beliefs and traditions of religion into consumable and marketable products. The word commodification itself when referring to *The Oxford Dictionary of English*⁸ means to commercialize something or treat something like a commodity. In other words, commodification shows something that is not naturally commercialized. A similar definition was also explained by Karl Marx that commodification means the process of applying a market value to an item or service that is actually outside the market⁹. Religious commodification causes controversy because religion is treated like a commodity. On the other hand, religious commodification opens a new dimension of the religion itself. The relationship between religion and the market is not contradictory but religion adopts market logic. The adoption of market logic in religion creates a new form of piety that can keep religion alive in this globalization era.¹⁰

We tried to analyze polygamy seminars not only by reading religious texts but also by the phenomena of masculinity and femininity as their

attractiveness. In polygamy seminars, the dimension of masculinity is visible. Masculinity is an ideal image of society towards men. In contrast to masculinity, which is generally considered natural or biological, masculinity is a social construction formed by historical processes. Connell used the hegemonic masculinity concept, namely “a concept based on practices that allow continuous collective dominance of men over women. Hegemonic masculinity plays a role in men’s toxic practices—including physical violence—that ensure a certain form of gender dominance”¹¹. However, masculinity itself is diverse and hegemonic masculinity also subordinates other masculinities¹². In its subordination to other masculinities and women, hegemonic masculinity creates standards. Del Aguila¹³ said masculinity was formed from their performance, for example, by showing a nature that is cold, aggressive, manly, strong, and desire to win. The desire to conquer is also a part of masculinity, such as the analysis of Saraswati¹⁴ referring to colonial and post-colonial masculinity in Pramoedya Ananta Toer’s work, both in the conquest of territory or women. This conquest of women manifests as a feminization that imposes feminine attributes on women, including submission feeling. Connell and Messerschmidt¹⁵ called hegemonic masculinity coupled with emphasized femininity because of the relational nature of gender. The concept of Lyotard¹⁶ on libidinal economics is appropriate to view polygamy seminars because the channeling of desire in libidinal economics is the same as in political economics.¹⁷ Libido becomes a commodity in libidinal economics¹⁸.

Our search so far had not found any academic articles that discuss critically, especially in terms of religious commodification, hegemonic masculinity, and libidinal economics regarding polygamy seminars. Many studies on religious commodification itself have been carried out and various forms of religious commodification have been observed. Fealy¹⁹ analyzed the commodification of Islam in Indonesia in various sectors, ranging from financial services, marketing, publishing, retail, *dakwah*, and education. An interesting argument was expressed by Fealy²⁰ that this commodification of Islam is also a means of forming upper middle-class Muslim identity or showing the social mobility itself. Elanda²¹ and Umam²² saw the religious commodification in the form of sharia housing. Sharia labels for housing can be the attractiveness, for example, as a non-usury²³ ownership process. Sharia housing marketing even uses portraits of Islamic-looking people in their brochures²⁴. Religious commodification as identity reinforcement is also explained in the two studies. However, sharia housing consumption is not only based on the sharia label but also on other values such as utility and availability of facilities²⁵, or what Fealy²⁶

calls a rational consumption pattern, not only emotional.

The three studies above²⁷ also show the religious commodification that tends to target upper-middle-class society. A similar conclusion was reached by Pribadi and Ghufro²⁸ in their analysis of urban Muslims in the Serang and Cilegon Cities. The urban Muslim consumption in the two cities shows a tendency towards Islamic commodification products such as Muslim clothing for *Umrah* as religious tourism. It is indeed that urban Muslims from the middle class have a consumptive lifestyle that ultimately leads to religious commodification²⁹.

Other studies, such as Purnama³⁰, discuss the display of the Quran on social media in various forms, including commodified forms such as in product sales and promotions or commonly called endorsements. The use of media and its relation to religious commodification was also analyzed by Pamungkas³¹ who observed *dakwah* on media platforms as a form of religious commodification in the neoliberalism era. *Dakwah* platforms in the media manifest, for example, in Islamic magazines that in turn help shape public morality.

The study above has highlighted the relationship between religious commodification, consumption pattern, and confirmation of class identity; however, it has not shown that religious commodification confirms gender identity as shown in the case of polygamy seminars. In fact, in polygamy seminars, the commodification is not only in the area of religion but also gender because it promises a devout wife or pious man marked by polygamy. Several studies have discussed the relationship between religion and gender dimensions, such as the intersection of religious practices and gender³²; the masculinity of religion³³; religious perspective regarding gender equality or roles³⁴; religious control over the body based on gender³⁵; gender in religious organizations or movements³⁶; gender politics between country and religion³⁷; or religion and gender in a cultural product, such as a film³⁸.

Polygamy has also attracted various studies to review it from various perspectives. Nina Nurmila³⁹ divided the study on polygamy into three groups. The first group is against the abuse of polygamy and states that Islam tends to be monogamous. The arguments of this group often refute the assumption of polygamy as sharia or the argument that “polygamy is better than adultery”. The second group takes a neutral position. The third group allows polygamy and opposes the arguments of the first group. Most studies focus on legal issues and interpretations of the Qur’an on polygamy. Nurmila’s study is unique because it takes an approach from the experiences of those involved in the practice of polygamy. Nurmila used an anthropological approach. Nurmila, and also Bennett⁴⁰, used

an anthropological approach by observing negotiations in polygamous husband-wife relationships. An interesting finding is that women have the power to determine the time for sexual intercourse. This is different from the assumption that women living in polygamy are completely powerless. Even so, jealousy remains to occur, thus, the condition of justice among wives often used to support polygamy is being refuted.

Polygamy Seminar: A Form of Religious Commodification

A polygamy seminar often referred to as a polygamy workshop, is an event that involves some interrelated components and is not only limited in terms of participants, organizers, place, and “doctrine of faith” but also involves aspects of money (economics) and goals. The doctrine of faith is the raw material that manifests at the level of the idea that polygamy is an Islamic teaching with a very large reward. The doctrine of faith is then processed into an economic practice because attending a seminar has to pay a very expensive cost. People who want to be polygamous, especially men, are willing to pay some money to attend the event to get tips, methods, and doctrinal religious lectures to strengthen the practice of polygamy.

In this Covid-19 pandemic era, seminars are still held online. Promotion of this activity is done openly through social media. Even though it often invites controversy and even ridicule, the promotion of polygamy seminars continues. The topics discussed can be wide-ranging. Although there are some expensive polygamy seminars, online studies are held free of charge. Dauroh Poligami through his Instagram account @daurohpoligamiofficial holds various online studies on polygamy free of charge via Zoom. Prospective participants only need to register by contacting the event contact via WhatsApp.

To find out about this polygamy seminar, we observed the activities of several accounts on social media that focus on promoting polygamy seminars. Firstly, @daurohpoligamiofficial on Instagram. Dauroh Poligami Indonesia (DPI) has activities and long experience organizing polygamy seminars. Along with the development of information technology in Indonesia, they use this technology to spread the idea of polygamy, the argument of polygamy, and polygamy seminars. Based on the photo uploaded to the Facebook account of Dauroh Poligami Indonesia, it is found that this community was founded on August 17, 2017. This forum was led by Vicky Abu Syamil the Executive Director of Dauroh Poligami Indonesia in 2017 (now by Abu Khalif) and consists of several members. As it is mentioned in the account, *dauroh* is specifically designed for male Muslims who want to practice polygamy in a way justified by Islamic law⁴¹.

Based on searches from various news sources, this community actively organizes polygamy seminars with resource persons from the community itself. Their track record is from 2017 entitled “*Cara Kilat Dapat Istri 4* (The Quick Way to Get 4 Wives)” organized by DPI (Ramdhani, 2017). In 2018 and 2019, FPI also held polygamy seminars with almost the same topic entitled “*Kelas Poligami Nasional* (National Polygamy Class)” with the sub-theme “*Cara Cepat Dapat Istri Empat Dalam Perspektif Islam* (The Quick Way to Get Four Wives in an Islamic Perspective)” initiated by Vicky Abu Syamil (a member of DPI) as a “4 wife practitioner”⁴². Since the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020 in Indonesia, the polygamy seminar organized by DPI has shifted from offline to online via digital platforms until now. This can be seen from the Instagram account @daurohpoligamiofficial dated October 6, 2021, that held a polygamy seminar via Zoom on October 8, 2020, entitled “*Poligami vs Monogami: Manakah Lebih Baik Pernikahan Monogami atau Poligami* (Polygamy vs Monogamy: Which is Better Monogamous or Polygamous Marriage?)” filled by the speaker Abu Khalif.

Several Instagram accounts act in the name of DPI. However, we chose the @daurohpoligamiofficial account because this account is still active now compared to other accounts. We also continued to see uploads of other accounts, namely @daurohpoligamiindonesia and @daurohpoligami to find out the DPI agenda not listed in the @daurohpoligamiofficial account. The first upload of this account is dated January 25, 2021. This account was followed by 604 people by stating the description as “Polygamy Family Education and Consultation Center” accompanied by various hashtags showing their support for polygamy, for example, #poligamisyari, #poligamishatsertasyariat, #poligamisamara, #poligambahagia, and #suksespoligami. In addition to promoting studies regarding polygamy, this account also uploads pictures in the form of motivational sentences, hadith quotes, and quotes from religious figures who support polygamy.

All studies were conducted online because this account was active during the pandemic. This is a common trend amid the pandemic marked by the rise of webinars (web seminars) on various platforms, such as Zoom. Similar to other events, various webinars are held free of charge, although this account also promotes paid online studies, generally at a low price of IDR 100,000. Although there is also member recruitment for IDR 4,999,000 and a promotional price of IDR 499,000 for the first 10 registrants. The special event includes various facilities such as free of charge for consultation for life, guidance, and biodata of *akhwat* (female Muslim) who are ready for polygamy (DPI calls this *Ta’adud* which means

more than one, meaning ready to marry a man with two or more wives or being doubled), and become a member of Dauroh Poligami Indonesia. The first three facilities are free of charge, while membership must pay IDR 1,497,000. DPI calls polygamy *Ta'addud* which means more than one, meaning ready to ready to marry a man with two or more wives or being doubled.

There is no particular difference between paid and free studies. The only difference is in the topic of the study. The study is held on Tuesday night and based on the uploaded caption, "it will discuss themes around marriage, family, and healthy polygamy according to Sharia. Together with competent resource persons and also practitioners of sharia polygamy, they explore and review the theme of the study simply and effectively, *insya Allah* (God willing)." Uniquely, the entire study programs use the same resource person, namely Abu Khalif, the Executive Director of DPI. Abu Khalif's full name is Arif Abu Khalif he has aspired to have polygamous marriage since the second grade of high school (Saumi, 2018). We did not find any other explanation regarding Abu Khalif's profession other than a polygamist practitioner.

We classified study topics into several groups. Firstly, the topic on women's attitudes towards polygamy (a wife's morals when her husband wants polygamy; pious wife vs. polygamy; wives who hate polygamy; polygamy & wife's loyalty; "O *ukhti* (sisters), don't be afraid of polygamy"). Secondly, tips and assets for men who want to have polygamy (strong leadership; beware of marrying widows; 3 keys to successful polygamy; a sign that husband is ready for having polygamy; polygamous mate; independent husband; polygamous communication; husband's asset for polygamy; wife's heart password; don't force the wife to accept polygamy). Thirdly, polygamy has problems (cowardly husbands are prohibited from having polygamy; inland crocodile polygamy; "my husband is not fair"). Fourthly, barriers to polygamy, including clashes with monogamy and anti-polygamy (I refuse polygamy law; high dowry for polygamy; polygamy vs monogamy). Fifthly, the basis and ideal for polygamy (one wife is not enough; polygamy without lust). There is one topic said to be unique because it is very different from most permissive topics on polygamy, namely the topic on "five methods to prevent husbands from being polygamous".

Generally, only three topics are charged, namely polygamous communication, polygamous marriage, and three keys to successful polygamy, all of which cost IDR 100,000. The three charged topics are included in the group of topics on tips for men who are going to have

polygamy. From various topics, it can be seen that this community does not state that all men are ready for polygamy. Some topics, although minimal, reveal problems with men that make these men inappropriate for polygamy. However, this cannot be immediately concluded as siding with women or anti-polygamy tendencies. The explanation of the weaknesses of men emphasizes that men need guidance for them to be worthy of polygamy. This guidance is the commodity of this community.

In addition, special studies consisting of several batches (special Ramadan, batches 35, 37, and 38) are charged a fairly high cost (IDR 4,999,000 - IDR 5,999,000, promotional prices for the first 10 registrants range from IDR 499,000 - IDR 997,000) include various similar materials. These materials include (1) Three Important Secrets of Successful Polygamy Never Discussed in Polygamous Groups; (2) Five Main Characters You Must Have to be Successful in Polygamy, (3) Five Methods to Educate Your Wife to Accept and Support Your Intention to Have Polygamy, (4) Five Most Basic Mistakes Your Husband Makes When He Wants to Have Polygamy, (5) Dare to Do These Five Things, God Willing, You Will Succeed in Polygamy Next Year. In addition, other benefits include biodata of *akhwāt* (female Muslim) who are ready for polygamy. The commodification carried out by this community tends to target men. This community also holds “Live Polygamy *Ta’āruḥ*” for women on August 20, 2021 free of charge. This event will also be attended by DPI *ikhwān* (male Muslims) Members. The terms and conditions for women who want to take part in this event are (1) girl and with single status; (2) submitting complete and correct biodata; (3) being ready to get married shortly; (4) already having permission from guardian or family. This event is said to be an advantage for DPI members. Exchanges occur between *ta’āruḥ* live participants who follow for free with DPI members who have paid. In other words, DPI is just a matchmaking facilitator.

Another account that promotes polygamy seminars is @robbanianfamily on Instagram. This account was created on April 26, 2020, and the first upload was on May 15, 2020. The upload pattern for this account is almost the same as @daurohpiligamiofficial, namely motivational sentences and polygamy workshops they hold. The striking difference is the dominance of Coach Hafidin, often followed by a caption “25 years of polygamy, 4 wives 25 children”. Like DPI, there is a very dominant figure in the Robbanian Family. However, Coach Hafidin’s figure who is shown classier through his various portraits in many uploads of this account. In contrast to Abu Khalif whose portrait has never been shown at all in the uploads of @daurohpiligamiofficial and other accounts in

the name of the polygamous *daurob*. There are also several uploads in the form of questions and answers, tips on polygamy, and rebuttals to various accusations directed at polygamists. Another difference compared to DPI is that the Robbanian Family discusses true polygamy or often referred to as the “Polygamous Husband’s Successful Mindset” which means relying on the husband’s figure. Women are not given a place at all in the studies held by the Robbanian Family.

In terms of organization and commercialization, the Robbanian Family seems more established than DPI even though DPI claims to be the largest and first polygamous organization in Indonesia. In one of its event posters, the Robbanian Family held a private coaching *ta’adud* mindset which included various facilities such as a full AC hotel, two coffee breaks and lunch, the handbook of “How to Succeed *Ta’addud*” and free merchandise. The event was held in Serang, Banten, on July 5, 2020, for Batch 1 for IDR 4,749,000 for 30 participants, all of whom must be male Muslims. Now, this event reached Batch 8 on October 23-24, 2021, and was held in Serang, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta. The price range is from IDR 3,749,000 - IDR 4,749,000. There is still another seminar in Bandung for IDR 249,000 with the theme “45 Days of Successful Polygamy Seminar” with free facilities for the book of the same title. There is also a webinar of IDR 339,000 with the theme “Easy Ways to Successful Polygamy”. Several other studies were conducted for free via Zoom and YouTube.

The Robbanian Family also has a YouTube page and account. The website includes a self-introduction of Coach Hafidin, an explanation about the workshops held, book promotions, and an online course of IDR 199,000. The book already published is entitled *45 Days of Successful Polygamy* and *19 Provisions for Husbands Turning Wife’s Anger into Smiles*. In the explanation about the workshop, the information on the page describes the series of events. The first day was themed “Easy Polygamy” which contained an introduction to Coach Hafidin as a trainer, the history of polygamy, the easy foundation of polygamy, straightening intentions and organizing polygamy orientation, the art of managing jealousy, the foundation of Muslim *aqidah* relevant to polygamy. The second day with the theme “Successful Polygamy” discussed installing the *Qawwām* mindset, giving birth to a blessed family ready for polygamy, accurate tricks to turn hate into love, tips for successful polygamy, 9 pillars of building a happy big family, discussion, and problem-solving.

The Robbanian Family YouTube account is also still active. The uploaded video contains a lecture from Coach Hafidin or the form of a talk show interviewing Coach Hafidin who appeared with his wife. In

video lectures, Hafidin rarely quotes verses from the Quran but claims something as Islamic law without a clear argument. The video view of the lecture shows Hafidin sitting on a chair, and in front of him lays an open book, but he did not touch it throughout the video. For talk show videos, the atmosphere is fairly relaxed. Hafidin often uses his personal experience as a polygamist to emphasize the points of successful polygamy. On several occasions, he invited his wives to give their respective testimonies. Compared to using verses from the Quran, Hafidin often uses more persuasive words and stories of his life experiences.

The two institutions clearly show a form of religious commodification. From the explanations above, we can see how the religious commodification in this polygamy seminar was formed. Kitiarsa⁴³ informed that the formation of religious commodification can be seen in five things, namely (1) religious commodities are explicitly close to the biographies of the founders of religions considered sacred; (2) religious commodities are usually produced, controlled, and manipulated by certain organizations; (3) religious commodities contain symbolic meanings, sacred qualities, and charismatic values; (4) In particular, religious commodities are promoted through public events, either in rituals, celebrations, festivals, or religious recreation; and (5) religious commodities are connected through mass media.

Polygamy seminars do not only commodify religion through the seminar activity itself but also various other products, especially provided facilities. In the context of polygamy seminars, the history of the Prophet Muhammad's polygamy is used as the main idea for the practice of polygamy, which is full of religious commodification. Religious commodification is organized in a very well, luxurious, and elegant manner.

In this context, the Robbanian Family is more open to religious commodification by providing a hotel and all its luxurious facilities. In their YouTube account, the Robbanian Family even discusses accusations of trading sharia in a video entitled "Polygamy Seminar, Why Is Sharia Traded?". Hafidin said that the polygamy seminars he held were merely to seek the will of Allah and not the will of humans. The high cost of attending a polygamy seminar is to make participants listen to the seminar seriously. The high rates show further that this polygamy seminar is an exclusive event. Pribadi and Ghufro⁴⁴ stated that the formation of exclusive communities containing consumptive middle-class Muslims was a form of religious commodification. One of the important characteristics of this middle-class Muslim is their lack of religious knowledge. This condition can be exploited through religious commodification that not

only promises products in a physical form but also services and knowledge such as lectures and workshops.

Religious commodification does not only turn religion into a commodity for profit but also changes the religion itself to fit market logic. Various strategies, from changing names, writing books, adopting virtual media, and providing convenient facilities, are in line with market service logic. During the pandemic, the study was conducted online, more openly, and free of charge. Although it is free of charge, this action can be seen as a marketing strategy. This free study only conveys a general theme.

The polygamy campaign can also be called new piety because the practice of polygamy is sharia and keeps a male Muslim from committing adultery. Kitiarsa⁴⁵ saw that religious commodification could not be seen as limited to a decline in the religiousness of religion but rather various configurations of the relationship between religion and the market. Even though they are seen as a commodity, religious values themselves are still transmitted to a wider audience. In other words, the goal of spreading religion is also achieved. In the secularization era, the consumed religion is better accepted, especially by middle-class Muslims than the spread carried out by traditional religious organizations. “The sacred one can defend itself outside of religious organizations, amid a consumer society”⁴⁶.

Consuming Femininity, Forming Masculinity

One of the most striking aspects of a polygamy seminar activity, which is different from other forms of religious commodification, is the male domination of the husband-wife relationship. Husbands, in their polygamous activities, receive full support from religion (sharia). The polygamy seminar makes gender roles as its sales point and directs it to a more extreme form, namely the encouragement of full masculinity and femininity. Husbands achieve perfect masculinity if they can have polygamy properly. On the other hand, wives are emphasized on their femininity that must submit to the wishes of their polygamous husbands. Permission for polygamy from a wife, rather than being seen as a condition for a husband, is more shown as proof of a wife’s piety. A wife can be said to be pious only if she allows her husband to be polygamous. One of DPI’s online studies is entitled “Pious Wife versus Polygamy” with the subtitle: “Pious wife MUST FACILITATE her Husband to practice polygamy”. In another online study, DPI raised a topic: “Wives Hating Polygamy: Wives’ Attitudes and Tricks to Ruin their Polygamous Husbands” that clearly shows a bad label on wives who refuse polygamy who are not only ungodly but also dare to deceive their husbands.

Negative labels are also imposed on wives who are disobedient and oppose polygamy in various uploads of the Robbanian Family. One of the characteristics of “free husbands” mentioned by the Robbanian Family is the freedom to have four wives and also the freedom to enjoy wives. Hafidin said explicitly in a video entitled “Polygamy, Ask Permission or Apologize?” that a husband like him does not need to ask his wife for permission to practice polygamy because the husband is the head of the household and the wife is under her husband.

Hafidin also shows the bad image of women who refuse polygamy in a video entitled “No Woman Wants to have a Polygamous Husband”. In the video, he admitted that no woman wanted to have a polygamous husband because of her jealousy. However, he questioned in strange tone women who refuse polygamy because it is considered contrary to the nature of women as female Muslims. For him, a good female Muslim must be obedient and submissive to all the Sharia that Allah (Islam) has taught. This is what makes Hafidin question the Islam of a woman who refuses polygamy.

Women who refuse polygamy are not only labeled as bad but also judged in a discriminatory manner. DPI held an online study with the topic “Beware of Marrying Widows” and the subtitle “Characteristics of Widows that Must Be Avoided and Never Married”. There is a bad stigma attached to widows for men who want to be polygamous. Of course, selectivity in marriage is natural, but embedding caution only against widows is discriminatory.

A similar narrative is also shown by the Robbanian Family. The category of women being polygamous is mentioned by Hafidin in a video entitled “Choosing a Prospective Wife for Polygamy”. Hafidin calls it *thoba*, a term that comes from the Qoran. *Thoba* is completely defined according to male taste. *Thoba*, according to Hafidin, means to be loved and liked, have good chemistry and a good atmosphere, and increase men’s desire. Thus, it is men’s pleasures that must be prioritized in polygamous activities. *Thoba* is the entry point for the selection of prospective wives to be polygamous, especially regarding widows or virgins.

This *thoba* analogy shows that men’s pleasures are prioritized based on their virginity, although according to Hafidin none required choosing a virgin or a widow. In his opinion, a woman who is still a virgin and classified as a young woman will be more potential to get love from her husband even though she is made a second wife. This is different if the first wife is younger and more beautiful while the second wife is widowed and old. In his opinion, this condition will only create inner injustice to

the second wife because the husband's love for the first wife has run out. Therefore, Hafidin recommended choosing a young and virgin woman. This classification further emphasizes that polygamy is based on men's interests and tends to be one-sided because a man chooses a woman according to his will, even a wife who chooses a polygamous partner for her husband must be based on the *thoba* of her husband, and does not need to ask permission from his old wife.

Hafidin reminded a husband not to be negligent in "educating" his wife to be a pious wife. According to Hafidin, the criteria for an ideal partner based on gender were divided into two, namely, *Qawwam* for men (husbands) and *Sholihat* (obedience) for women. In the video channel of the Robbanian Family entitled "Three Ways Husbands Must Do for Wives to be Obedient", Hafidin taught husbands to do three ways to grow the husband's *qawwam* and create wife's obedience, namely, (1) Surrender to Allah in all matters, (2) Take full "responsibility" for problems in the family, and (3) Male, defined as good performance and resilience in terms of sexual relationship with the wife. Hafidin stated that if these three things were done well then, the wife's obedience was considered the husband's honor, "the more obedient the wife to her husband the manlier the husband" said Hafidin smiling with his two students in the video.

The explanation above shows that in justifying gender roles as Connell⁴⁷ said, religious doctrines conform to ideologies that use the male body to fill masculine male roles. If men are required to be masculine, then women are required to be feminine. In the context of polygamy, the two become intertwined, because masculinity is built through polygamy by requiring the feminization of the wife. Masculinity will not exist without femininity⁴⁸. Polygamy seminars utilize this masculinity-femininity relationship as their sales power. The two institutions: DPI and the Robbanian Family, promised to teach the correct way of polygamy while stating that men should have polygamy.

The relationship between a business that enables the circulation of capital, religious commodification and the formation of masculinity can be seen as a form of libidinal economics. Lyotard⁴⁹ saw that political economy cannot be separated from libidinal interests. In polygamy seminars, the relationship between capital and libido becomes explicit when libido becomes a commodity. Libido here is a desire, a desire to build masculinity. By utilizing the desire for masculinity, polygamy seminars are held to teach true polygamy as a means to become a real man who obeys the sharia. On the other hand, the desire for capital is also achieved through the determination of tariffs for the seminar. Even the desire to be a religious

service is also involved in this libidinal economic activity. This desire does not only target men but also women. In an online study held by DPI on October 12, 2021, we participated in, some female participants were not only passive but also actively discussed. This woman could not only be seen as a woman who has been indoctrinated by a pro-polygamy doctrine but also a subject who has the desire to become a devout servant. Libidinal economics can see polygamy seminars as a linking complexity of various desires that lead to commodities.

Polygamy Seminars as Masculinity Transformation

Polygamy seminars that are often opposed as a form of channeling men's desires or manifestations of patriarchy are not a single form of masculinity. According to Connell⁵⁰, masculinity did not appear in a vacuum room but it is born from a certain socio-historical context. By tracing the polemic of polygamy in Indonesia, we see that the discourse on polygamy develops along with the discourse on masculinity in Indonesia. The polygamy seminars show one form of contemporary masculinity in Indonesia that was born from a certain historical context.

Polygamy, or marriage in general, has never been a private discourse in Indonesia. From the colonial period, marriage has invited debates, concepts, husband-wife relationships, family and religious relationships, and others. Religion is the most dominant element in the discourse. Regarding polygamy, there are already pros and cons discourses among Indonesians. Not only that, the colonial government had proposed the "Ordinance Project for the Regulation of Marriage Law for Muslim Residents" or the "Ordinance Project on Marriage" in the Dutch East Indies that applied Western morality and monogamous marriage politics. The discourse of monogamy was introduced through a blend of Western sexual morality models and colonial politics⁵¹. The application of different laws and the intervention of the Dutch East Indies colonial government showed the intervention of power on marriage and family issues that had implications on the concept of masculinity.

Polygamy has also become the debate focus. The incoming modern ideas encourage the rejection of polygamy. Among Muslims some groups oppose polygamy. During the colonial period, Soepinah Isti Kasiati in *El Fadjar*, the magazine of the Young Muslim Association, rejected and even accused polygamy as disguised prostitution. This opinion was argued by Aisjijah, a Muhammadiyah women's organization, that supported polygamy. Aisjijah's opinion was opposed by *Istri Sedar* (Sedar wife) and *Sarekat Kaum Ibu Sumatra* (the Sumatran Mothers Association). Jusuf Wibisono, the

organ editor of the Islamic student group, responded to this protest. This comment form Wibisono explicitly shows the ideas of masculinity and femininity that appear along with polygamy. Firstly, monogamy is ideal, but the essence of man is polygamy. Secondly, Wibisono stated that women should not have the right to divorce because they are often controlled by feelings rather than reason. This polemic became more and more crowded after the discourse on the “Marriage Ordinance Project” emerged. Maria Ulfah Santoso summarized two arguments that often arise in defense of polygamy. Firstly, the number of women is excessive. Secondly, men feel pity for women. Both were firmly rejected by Mrs. Santoso.

After Indonesia’s independence, marriage and polygamy remained controversial. One striking phenomenon was Sukarno’s polygamy. Masculinity in the colonial period and Sukarno experienced a shift. In both periods, masculinity models emerged. However, the colonial government tended to strongly reject polygamy. This is different from Sukarno in the Old Order era. However, opposition to polygamy was also strong in the Sukarno era, because data were showing that polygamy was one of the causes of divorce and many polygamy practices were secret. Based on data from 1955 compiled by *Biro Penasehat Perkawinan dan Penjelesaian Pertjeraian* (BP4) (the Bureau of Marriage Advisory and Divorce Settlement (BP4)) in Bandung and *Panitya Penasehat Perkawinan dan Penjelesaian Pertjeraian Kota Pradja Djakarta* (P5 KPD) (the Committee for Marriage Advisory and Divorce Settlement in Jakarta City (P5 KPD)), polygamy was the second biggest cause of divorce, only losing to reasons of incompatibility⁵².

Major changes occurred in the New Order era. Masculinity became weak before the state. The New Order governed families in an authoritarian way and made a monogamous family the ideal. One form of the New Order’s power in family and marital affairs was the birth of Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage. On December 22, 1973, the Minister of Religion representing the Government brought the draft of the Marriage Bill approved by the House of Representatives into a Marriage Law. Thus, on January 2, 1974, the President ratified the Law and promulgated it in the State Gazette No. 1 of 1974 dated January 2, 1974. Marriage according to the Law is defined as an inner and outer bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife to establish a happy and eternal family (household) based on Belief in the Almighty God. In Article 3 paragraph (1) reading in principle in a marriage, a man can only have a wife, and a woman can only have a husband⁵³.

Even though it took a side on monogamy, the New Order could not be seen as taking the side of women, instead, it created a new masculinity.

Suryakusuma⁵⁴ explained that the New Order rested on “State Motherism”, namely the feminization of women as mothers to play a role in development that was the obsession of the New Order government. The enactment of a law prohibiting polygamy became an important instrument to emphasize the New Order’s new masculinity. The New Order’s view of the state is a legacy of the state’s view as a family or family state from the Japanese⁵⁵ government. Compared to the two previous eras, the New Order was able to repress forms of masculinity, including Islamic masculinity.

The fall of the New Order in 1998 and the emergence of the Reformation era brought changes in the form of masculinity in Indonesia. One of the Reformation impacts that also affected masculinity was the religious resurgence. The religious resurgence in the Reformation era, according to Hefner⁵⁶, was not only freedom from long-standing repression, but also because of the rise of neoliberalism which in turn was adopted by religion. This form of neoliberalism adoption manifested in various new religious patterns that conformed to market logic. Hefner identified the existence of ordinary believers who wanted to achieve new piety, piety measured by consumption because of the inclusion of market logic in religious expression. This consumption also encouraged the birth of various forms of religious commodification, including in this context polygamy seminars.

The masculinity of the New Order that centered on the state and the Father figure and often called Fatherism underwent a shift. Now the idea of masculinity does not only come from the state but also from a religion experiencing resurgence and adjustment to neoliberalism. Nilan⁵⁷, who analyzed the masculinity of young people in the Reformation era, saw that masculinity appeared in various forms, influenced by popular culture, the rise of the middle class, the development of feminist thought, *Wahhabism* in Islamic boarding schools and mosques, and even the circulation of pornography⁵⁸. Polygamy seminars were born from the Womb of freedom in the Reformation era that demanded the formation of identity, both masculinity, and piety. This is what also made polygamy seminars a unique phenomenon that emerged in the Reformation era that had never appeared in previous periods.

Conclusion

This paper has explained the phenomenon of polygamy seminar as one of the most interesting phenomena in the post-reformation stage of Indonesia’s Islam. The phenomenon of the polygamy seminar can be read as a religious conservatism resurgence in the sense of strengthening the reading of Islam literally. The enthusiasm for polygamy in some Indonesian

male Muslims does not show a substantive understanding of Islam. Various arguments already presented in this article show critically that the spirit of polygamy as a literal understanding of Islam and the rise of polygamy seminars explains three main things: as a phenomenon of religious commodification, hegemonic masculinity, and libidinal economics. By conducting studies on religion, gender, and Marxism analysis, this article has enriched Islamic and religious studies in reading the phenomenon of polygamy seminars.

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