Happiness Permissibility: Negotiating Hadith on Polygamy as Perfection of Worship in Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim Women

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Abstract:
The practice of polygamy, which is debated among women, is accepted by Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women as an embodiment of religious teachings enshrined in the hadith. This acceptance does not negate the complexities and contradictions inherent in the hadith that discuss the practice. This study explores the reading position of Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim

women in understanding and practicing the hadith of polygamy. Using qualitative methods, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 12 persons consisting of 5 first wives, 5 second wives, 1 *da'iyah* (preacher), and 1 head of the Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women. In-depth observations were also made of key informant activities. The data were analyzed using a *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) analysis model combined with the framework of Stuart Hall's reception theory. The findings of this study reveal three different reading positions: 1) The hegemonic reading model using the argument of belief in an authoritative text. 2) the negotiated reading model emphasizing the fulfillment of the husband's needs driven by concerns about the husband's compliance with the principles of justice. 3) the oppositional reading model rooted in the vulnerability of wives who challenge of ensuring fair treatment. These three positions emerge from the structure of the hadith discourse where the textual affirmation of polygamy serves as the basis for its resolution. The incorporation of settlement in an interpretive and counterintuitive perspective in the development of *fiqh* signifies a full acceptance of the law while also considering the goals of responsible individuals (*maqāṣid al-mukallafīn*).

Keywords:
Women's Reception; Hadith of Polygamy; Muslim Women; Wahdah Islamiyah

Introduction

Despite its widespread rejection among women due to its perceived association with violence and a violation of women's and gender rights,[1] polygamy finds nuanced acceptance among Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women, exhibiting a range of interpretations that may appear paradoxical. These women embrace the interpretation of

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[1] Jonathan Brown, "Scripture, Legal Interpretation and Social Praxis in the Islamic Tradition: The Cases of Polygamy and Slavery," *Religious Minorities In Christian, Jewish and Muslim Law (5th–15th Centuries)* 43 (2017): 99–113, https://doi.org/10.1484/m.relmin-eb.5.111594; Wely Dozan, "Fakta Poligami Sebagai Bentuk Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan: Kajian Lintasan Tafsir dan Isu Gender," *Marwah: Jurnal Perempuan, Agama dan Jender* 19, no. 2 (2021): 131, https://doi.org/10.24014/marwah.v19i2.11287.

the hadith on polygamy through a transformative pedagogical journey encompassing *ta'rīfiyah* (introduction), *takwīnīyah* (formation), and *tanfīẓīyah* (application).[2] This interpretation is hegemonically accepted by a majority of Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women, primarily due to their deep-rooted belief in the authority of the hadith text. Variations in the interpretation of the hadith on polygamy stem from differing perspectives on the associated terms and conditions. Concerns about a husband's impartiality serve as the primary argument employed to negotiate the meaning of the hadith on polygamy. Expressions of doubt regarding a husband's ability to uphold fairness resonate with the vulnerabilities experienced by Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women in polygamous households giving rise to oppositional stances towards the interpretation of the hadith. The articulation of arguments rooted in concern and vulnerability underscores the negotiated and oppositional positions adopted by Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women towards the hadith on polygamy, which their organization wholeheartedly embraces as a fundamental teaching (*tarbiyah*).

Existing research on polygamy typically delves into religious texts, examining the debate surrounding the permissibility and prohibition of this practice from a doctrinal standpoint.[3] Studies advocating for the prohibition of polygamy argue that it undermines women's dignity and self-worth, contravening fundamental human rights. On the other hand, studies supporting the legalization of polygamy within religious frameworks draw upon the Prophet's practices which hold devotional value as embodiments of the

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[2] Marhaeni Saleh M, "Eksistensi Gerakan Wahdah Islamiyah Sebagai Gerakan Puritanisme Islam di Kota Makassar," *Aqidah-Ta : Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah* 4, no. 1 (2018): 73–94, https://doi.org/10.24252/aqidahta.v4i1.5174; Rohmansyah, "Polygamy in the Text of the Qur an, Hadith and Bible: Theory Systems Approach of Jasser Auda," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial* 14, no. 2 (2019): 320–41, https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v14i2.2529.

[3] Erwanda Safitri, "Pemahaman Hadis tentang Poligami (Sebuah Kajian Teologis Terhadap Hadis-Hadis Sosial tentang Poligami)," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 17, no. 2 (2018): 187, https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2016.1702-02; Ahmad Muzaki, Sayful Islam Ali, and Moh Toriquddin, "Kajian dan Analisis Hadis tentang Poligami," *El-Sunnah: Jurnal Kajian Hadis dan Integrasi Ilmu* 1, no. 2 (2021): 162–75, https://doi.org/10.19109/elsunnah.v1i2.8937; Erwanda Safitri, "Pemahaman Hadis tentang Poligami (Sebuah Kajian Teologis Terhadap Hadis-Hadis Sosial tentang Poligami)," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 17, no. 2 (2018): 187, https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2016.1702-02.

Sunnah.[4] The ramifications of implementing religious doctrine through polygamy have also been a central focus of research. Adenike explored the impact of polygamy on academic cognition, concluding that children from polygamous families outperformed those from monogamous families.[5] However, the prevailing research model on polygamy, which revolves around the debate surrounding its permissibility, often overlooks the internal struggles of women within organizations that endorse polygamy's provisions.

This research deviates from the assertion that acceptance of hadith texts as an embodiment of religious obedience is subject to a process of negotiation and rejection shaped by cultural responses to these texts. The experiences and practices embedded within society's culture regarding polygamy play a role in fostering new associations of meaning. In this context, culture paves the way for questioning established truths and advocating for a renewed understanding of the value inherent in those truths.[6] Cultural significance acts as a dialectical force propelling the Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women community who embrace these texts as authoritative towards diverse interpretations of hadith. Interpretation is framed based on the implications or meanings (*dilālāt*) suggested by the text's linguistic form.[7] This reality underscores the dynamic nature of hadith interpretation, a process of meaning negotiation shaped by the

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[4] Zunita Santiwi, "Sunnah Sebagai Alasan Permohonan Poligami (Studi Kasus Nomor 1142/Pdt. G/2019/PA. Po)" (Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ponorogo, 2020), 1–154.

[5] Adesehinwa Olayinka Adenike, "Effects of Family Type (Monogamy or Polygamy) on Students' Academic Achievement in Nigeria," *International Journal of Psychology and Counselling* 5, no. 7 (2013): 153–56, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5897/IJPC10.012.

[6] Vicky Ball and Christine Gledhill, "Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices," in *Genre and Gender: The Case of Soap Opera*, ed. Barry Hall (London: Culture, Media and Identities series, 2012), 347–48, http://sure.sunderland.ac.uk/id/eprint/2611.

[7] Jasser Auda, *Maqāṣid asy-Syarī'ah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2007), 93; Hotnidah Nasution and Ahmad Rifqi Muchtar, "Negotiating Islamic Law: The Practice of Inheritance Distribution in Polygamous Marriages in Indonesian Islamic Courts," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 18, no. 1 (2024): 125–44, https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v18i1.10921.

evolving cultural landscape and complexities of human experience,[8] involving a re-examination of its implied meanings (*dilālah al-ma'nā*). The dialectical nature of this process allows for shifts in reading positions within communities that accept texts governing polygamy as integral components of religious teachings.

This paper seeks to identify seemingly contradictory reading positions among Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women, an organization that wholeheartedly embraces polygamy based on religious texts, particularly hadiths, as a means to address shortcomings of previous research. The diverse interpretations of hadith texts pertaining to polygamy reveal that acceptance among Muslim women extends beyond religious doctrine and encompasses social constructions manifested in social realities. To uncover the factual basis of Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women's response to polygamy, this research presents three pieces of evidence. The first evidence highlights the hegemonic stance adopted by Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women towards hadiths related to polygamy. This evidence reveals a dominant interpretation of meaning embedded within the hadiths. The second piece of evidence pertains to readings that seek to introduce specific conditions in the interpretation of polygamy-related hadiths. Meanwhile, the third piece of evidence showcases a reading position that contradicts the textual construction of the hadiths. These three pieces of evidence collectively represent the Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women's reading model which generally approves of the practice of polygamy considering it an integral part of religious provisions.

Methods

This study delves into diverse reading positions of groups who uphold the validity of polygamy towards relevant hadiths. Qualitative methods were employed in this study, leveraging their ability to schematize data and uncover meaning from a variety of experiences.[9] To harmonize the responses of Wahdah Islamiyah

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[8] Ernest Gellner, "Universities as Vectors of Cultural Diplomacy: The Case of Mexico," in *The Politics of Culture: An Interrogation of Popular Culture*, ed. Elena Colombo and Robyn Muir Ibtisam Ahmed (London: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 21–40.

[9] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: SAGE Publications, 1994).

Muslim women, this study narrows its focus on specific themes found in the hadiths related to polygamy which consist of 49 hadith-reports, namely 5 hadith-reports about limiting the number of wives, 22 hadith-reports about dividing time between wives, 8 on emphasize justice towards wives, and 13 hadith-reports about casting lots to choose a wife to travel with. The four criteria, which this research focuses on, consider the conditions that make polygamy permissible for Muslims as stated in the Qur'an, specifically QS. an-Nisā [4]: 3.[10] These criteria also form the basis for the polygamy practice of the Prophet, including limitations on the number of wives, fair treatment in terms of time-sharing, companionship, and the consequences of failing to meet these conditions.[11] These polygamy hadith-reports can be classified as in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of Hadith on Polygamy in the Nine Books of Hadiths (*kutub al-tis'ah*)

No	Hadiths on Polygamy	Source	Description
1.	عَنْ قَيْسِ بْنِ الْحَارِثِ، قَالَ: أَسْلَمْتُ وَعِنْدِي ثَمَانِ نِسْوَةٍ، فَأَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقُلْتُ ذَلِكَ لَهُ، فَقَالَ: اخْتَرْ مِنْهُنَّ أَرْبَعًا It was narrated that Qais bin Harith said: "I became Muslim and I had eight wives. I went to the Prophet pbuh and told him about that. He said: 'Choose four of them'"	Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal No. 4609, 4631; Sunan Ibnu Majah No. 1952, 1953; Sunan Abu Dawud No. 2241	Maximum number of wives

10 Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips and Jameelah Jones, *Polygamy in Islam* (Buraydah: Tawheed Publications, 1999); Sukring Syamsuddin, "A Legal Debate on Polygamy: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives," *Esensia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 19, no. 2 (2018): 35, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/esensia.v19i2.1735; Suprijati Sarib et al., "Polygamy among Muallaf in Manado: Islamic Legal Perspectives and Social Challenges," *Juris: Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah* 23, no. 2 (2024): 241–52, https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v23i2.12307.

11 Philips and Jones, *Polygamy in Islam*.

2. عَنْ قَتَادَةَ، أَنَّ أَنَسَ بْنَ مَالِك، حَدَّثَهُمْ أَنَّ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم كَانَ يَطُوفُ عَلَى نِسَائِهِ فِي اللَّيْلَةِ الْوَاحِدَةِ، وَلَهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ تِسْعُ نِسْوَةٍ Narrated from Qatadah that Anas bin Malik narrated that the Prophet pbuh used to go around to his wives in a single night, and at that time he had nine wives.	Sahih Bukhari No. 284, 5068, 5215; Sahih Muslim No. 309; Sunan al-Turmudzi No. 140; Sunan al Nasai No.263, 264, 3198; Sunan Abu Daud No. 218; Sunan Ibnu Majah No. 588; Sunan al-Darimy No.780, 781; Musnad Ahmad Ibnu Hanbal No. 11946, 12632, 12640, 12701, 12925, 12926, 12967, 13355, 13505, 13648	Sharing time with multiple wives
3 عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ امْرَأَتَانِ فَمَالَ إِلَى إِحْدَاهُمَا، جَاءَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَشِقُّهُ مَائِلٌ Narrated from Abu Hurairah: The Prophet pbuh said: "Anyone who has two wives and inclines to one of them will come on the Day of Resurrection with a side (of his body) inclining."	Sunan al-Nasa'i No. 3942; Sunan al-Turmudzi No. 1141; Sunan Ibnu Majah No. 1969; Sunan Abu Daud No. 2133; Sunan al-Darimy No. 2252; Musnad Ahmad Ibnu Hanbal No. 7936, 8568, 10.090.	Upholding justice in polygamous marriages

| 4. | عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، قَالَتْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّه صلى الله عليه وسلم إِذَا أَرَادَ سَفَرًا أَقْرَعَ بَيْنَ نِسَائِهِ، فَأَيَّتُهُنَّ خَرَجَ سَهْمُهَا خَرَجَ بِهَا مَعَهُ، وَكَانَ يَقْسِمُ لِكُلِّ امْرَأَةٍ مِنْهُنَّ يَوْمَهَا وَلَيْلَتَهَا، غَيْرَ أَنَّ سَوْدَةَ بِنْتَ زَمْعَةَ وَهَبَتْ يَوْمَهَا وَلَيْلَتَهَا، لِعَائِشَةَ زَوْجِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم تَبْتَغِي بِذَلِكَ رِضَا رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم

Narrated from Aisha that the whenever prophet pbuh wanted to go on a journey, he would draw lots as to which of his wives would accompany him. He would take one whose name came out. He used to fix for each of them a day and a night. But Sauda bint Zam`a gave up her (turn) day and night to 'Aisha, a wife of the Prophet pbuh in order to seek the pleasure of Allah's Messenger (by that action). | Sahih Bukahri No. 2593, 2688, 2879; Sunan al-Nasa'i No. 8874, 8880, 8881; Sunan Ibnu Majah No.1970, 2347; Sunan Abu Daud No. 2138; Sunan al-Darimi No. 2254. | Drawing lots to select a traveling companion in polygamous marriages |

This research utilizes two data types, namely primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source for this study is Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women in Gorontalo, an Islamic mass organization that adheres to the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah

as interpreted by *as-salaf aṣ-ṣāliḥ* (*manhāj ahl as-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*).[12] The selection of this organization stems from its acceptance of polygamy as an integral component of Islamic Shariah implementation.

In addition, this study collected data from 40 Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women conducted through closed interviews using Google form and open interviews with 12 Muslim women, consisting of five Muslim women as first wives, five Muslim women as second wives, one Muslim woman leader of Wahdah Islamiyah, and one Muslim woman of *da'īyah* Wahdah Islamiyah Gorontalo. Likewise, in-depth observations were also made of informants' activities in this study. In general, the informants are considered worthy to represent the Wahdah Islamiyah Muslimah community which has 432 people.[13] The overall data collected is studied and analyzed as a mutually influential whole using Stuart Hall's concept of reception.

Result and Discussion
Hegemonic Reading of the Hadith

Hadith, as a meaningful discourse, is expressed through a series of linguistic codes that convey a complex structure of meanings with various potential connotations. The selection of a particular connotative meaning, referencing a preferred interpretation, reflects a determination to follow its discursive structure.[14] The extent of these discursive domains, shaped by the social experience of a discourse, forms part of a hegemonic reading pattern. This pattern is closely linked to culture, knowledge, and daily social actions that influence linguistic and semantic systems to produce the desired meaning.[15]

Engaged in the practice of polygamy, Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women align their beliefs with the interpretations presented in hadith texts. The acquired data suggests their endorsement of the hadith narrative that advocates for hegemonic polygamy. This

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[12] Editors, "Profil Lembaga Muslimah," wahdah.or.id, 2024, https://wahdah.or.id/profil-lembaga-muslimah/.

[13] R6, Interview, 25 September 2022.

[14] Stuart Hall, "Encoding-Decoding (1980)," in *Crime and Media*, ed. Chris Greer, 1st Editio (London: Routledge, 2019), 44–55, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367809195.

[15] Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," *Communications* 4, no. 1 (1964): 40–51, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3406/comm.1964.1027.

acceptance is evident in three primary inclinations. The first aspect is the ideological system. The presence of a hadith outlining the restrictions on the number of wives is perceived as an integral component of a divine command demanding absolute compliance.

> In accordance with Islamic teachings, I have granted my husband permission to remarry (other women), adhering to the prescribed limit of four wives.[16]
> Despite having two wives currently, I wholeheartedly embrace the possibility of him taking another, as our faith permits up to four wives. Embracing polygamy aligns with the Prophet Muhammad's example and reinforces Islamic values as a guiding principle in our lives. By accepting polygamy, Muslim women demonstrate a deep understanding of our faith.[17]
> As a Muslim woman, I strive to accept polygamy as a divine provision from Allah and approach it with kindness and understanding.[18]

The widespread acceptance of polygamy is motivated by a desire to interpret the text in a way that aligns with the belief in its inherent wisdom. This belief is asserted to stem from Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women's profound understanding of religious teachings.

The second aspect is the resonance of meaning it creates. The implementation of hadith teachings reinforces the perception of its veracity by aligning practical experiences with its directives. In the context of polygamy, the hadith's emphasis on upholding justice is corroborated by the experiences of husbands who practice it. Respondent R1, a first wife, shared her experience, affirming that her husband's ability to fulfill the hadith's requirement of fairness is evident in his equal love and support for all his wives.[19] She described how her husband consistently demonstrates his commitment to

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[16] R1, Interview, 7 December 2022.
[17] R2, Interview, 27 September 2022.
[18] R3, Interview, 6 December 2022.
[19] R1, Interview, 7 December 2022.

treating all his wives with respect, compassion, and consideration, ensuring that their needs are met and their feelings are valued.

> Despite being the second wife, I receive the same love and respect from my husband as his first wife does with her full approval.[20]

> I am thankful for my husband's fairness. We support each other with household chores, especially during my pregnancy.[21]

It is obvious here that the concept of fairness embraced by Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women is confined to tangible actions that positively influence harmony within polygamous families.

The third aspect is implementing the hadith values. The underlying message of the hadith suggests that the husband's decision is sufficient to determine which wife should accompany him without resorting to the lottery method mentioned by the hadith commentators. The deliberation method was chosen as an alternative to drawing lots, as it achieves the same outcome of ensuring fairness and equity.

> In practice, my husband has never resorted to drawing lots to determine which wife should accompany him on a trip. Instead, a mutually agreed-upon decision is reached through deliberation.[22]
> Whenever my husband travels, I accept his decision regarding his traveling companion, as I trust that he has discussed it with the other wives.[23]

Different from what the prophet Pbuh practiced, it turns out that the concept of willingness serves as the foundation of justice for Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women, rendering the hadith's method of drawing lots unnecessary since alternative approaches can achieve the same objective.

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[20] R4, Interview, 16 October 2022.

[21] R3, Interview, 6 December 2022.

[22] R2, Interview, 27 September 2022.

[23] R1, Interview, 7 December 2022.

Those all show that acceptance of the hadith on polygamy among Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women stems from their firm belief in the truth of authoritative texts. According to Jasser Auda, this belief is based on the understanding that texts are constructed with clear expressions that do not require specification or interpretation, have never been abrogated, and are not context-dependent.[24] Maliki scholars, on the other hand, hold that belief in the benefit of the law can arise from general wording of permissibility,[25] such as in the hadith on polygamy. The belief in the textual meaning is reinforced by actual experience through precise synergy (*al-munāsib al-mulā'im*) in practicing fairness which influences the dominant reading of the polygamy hadith. This hegemonic mode of reading focuses on the clear structure of the text (*sāriḥ*),[26] and overlooks the implications (*mafhūm*) that many scholars have identified within the hadith on polygamy.[27]

The hadith on the permissibility of having four wives, based on its clear linguistic structure, suggests that the dominant interpretation among Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women leads to a transparent form of communication aligned closely with practical purposes. In this context, the obedience, willingness, and submission of the wife—elements that become normative—are technical factors that determine the application of the dominant meaning in interpreting the hadith.[28] This interpretation focuses on the linguistic structure with a pragmatic approach to what is apparent in the textual construction. This approach emphasizes that the legislative process in legal understanding is shaped by the agreement of words rather than

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[24] Auda, *Maqāṣid asy-Syarī'ah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach*; Khoirul Amru Harahap, "Kebijakan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia dan Hukum Islam Mengenai Poligami: Sebuah Kajian Perbandingan," *Volksgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum dan Konstitusi* 2, no. 1 (2019): 89–105, https://doi.org/10.24090/volksgeist.v2i1.2684.

[25] Abdul Aziz bin Sattam, *Sharia and the Concept of Benefit: The Use and Function of Maslaha in Islamic Jurisprudence* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 22; Ibnu Elmi A.S. Pelu et al., "Polygamy Law Reform Through the Development of the Aceh Qanun: A New Approach to Protecting the Rights of Women and Children in Indonesia," *El-Mashlahah* 14, no. 1 (2024): 149–68, https://doi.org/10.23971/el-mashlahah.v14i1.7864.

[26] Ali Hasaballah, *Uṣūl Al-Tasyrī' Al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 283.

[27] Ibn al-Qayyīm Al-Jauzīyah, *Tahżīb Sunan Abī Dāwud Wa Iḍāḥ 'Illalih Wa Musykilātih, Vol. 1* (Bairut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2019), 552.

[28] Hall, "Encoding-Decoding (1980)."

intentions or purposes.[29] The primary focus on the textual construction of hadith, driven by a hegemonic reading, does not imply that Wahdah Islamiyah Muslims' reading aligns with the *żahirī* model of legal legislation. Unlike the *żahirī* known for its literalism and emphasis on context and history as crucial elements of meaning formation, the Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim hegemonic reading model tends to ignore these aspects.[30] Ignoring the elements of history and context leads to overlooking the fact that polygamy was initially an effort to curtail the unjust practices of Arab society, which placed no limits on the number of wives, and was established in response to specific circumstances. Therefore, its permissibility was confined to the boundaries of urgent need (*al-ḥājah al-mulḥah*).

Negotiated Reading of the Hadith

The ability to interpret the meaning of hadith through its textual narrative, aligning with general situations, is limited for some Wahdah Islamiah Muslims due to individual considerations. These considerations lead to various exceptions in accepting hadiths on polygamy. In this context, some Wahdah Islamiyah women engage in a negotiated reading. As described by Stuart Hall,[31] it means that they reject hadith texts that permit polygamy while adopting those emphasizing fairness. This adaptive and oppositional approach involves bargaining with dominant definitions in the textual hadith by introducing contradictions based on their local experiences. This local context, termed particular logic or situational logic,[32] tends to have different and unequal relationships with the broader discourse and power dynamics.

Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women uphold the authority of the meaning in hadiths related to polygamy while negotiating its practical application through adherence to the conditions stipulated in

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[29] Amr Osman, *The Ẓāhirī Madhhab (3rd/9th–10th/16th Century): A Textualist Theory of Islamic Law* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 176.

[30] ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām Fī Uṣūl Al-Aḥkām, Vol. 1* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Imām, n.d.), 141.

[31] Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: University of Birmingham, 2005), 1972–1979.

[32] Stuart Hall, "CCCS Selected Working Papers: Volume 2," in *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, ed. Ann Gray et Al (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), 1–19.

other hadiths. The data reveals two tendencies among Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women in interpreting hadith texts concerning polygamy instructions. The first tendency favors the dominant interpretation of the hadith's meaning. Acceptance of the polygamy directive is fully embraced through the preferred interpretive approach which links it to the fulfillment of conditions specified in other hadiths. Respondent R6 emphasized fair and just requirements as the cornerstone of implementing the hadith's meaning in practice.

> While Islam permits polygamous marriages, it is subject to stringent conditions, particularly the husband's obligation to treat all wives with fairness and equity, preventing any favoritism.[33]
> Polygamy is restricted to a maximum of four wives, and adherence to strict conditions, such as ensuring fairness among wives, is paramount.[34]
> Although religion allows for marriages with up to four wives, prioritizing the prevention of harm is of utmost importance.[35]

The excerpts indicate how the concept of justice as a main prerequisite for polygamous marriages stands as another interpretive framework guiding its implementation. The hadith's stern warning to husbands to uphold fairness (*ja'a yaum al-qiyāmah wasiquh mā'ilun*) empowers Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women to establish additional conditions. Respondent R5 emphasized the gravity of this warning:

> The threat to husbands who fail to act justly in this hadith is not a mere scare tactic. On the Day of Judgment, they will appear with tilted shoulders, bearing the weight of their injustice. Husbands should fear their inability to treat their wives fairly, for this is the cornerstone of successful polygamy.[36]

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[33] R6, Interview, 25 September 2022

[34] R12, Interview, 29 October 2022.

[35] R6, Interview, 27 October 2022.

[36] R5, Interview, 12 December 2022.

Similarly, Respondent R11 underscores the consequences of neglecting fairness in polygamous relationships:

> The hadith of the Prophet Pbuh cautions polygamous husbands who fail to treat their wives with equity that they will face the Day of Judgment with sloping shoulders, symbolizing the burden of their unjust actions.[37]

Similarly, it is also said that attaining justice in polygamy demands an individual with deep religious understanding and the wisdom to navigate polygamous life in accordance with religious teachings.[38] Religious knowledge, a novel requirement not explicitly mentioned in textual hadiths, serves as a means for Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women to introduce novel interpretations, reflecting their personal preferences. This emphasis on religious knowledge stems from the commitment to uphold equal treatment and preserve religious values as described in the following two excerpts.

> For a man considering polygamy, a thorough understanding of religious principles is paramount. Polygamy should not be undertaken merely to fulfill carnal desires or to exploit and oppress women.[39]
> Polygamous husbands must possess a comprehensive understanding of sharia law, particularly the provisions governing polygamous relationships.[40]

Wahdah Islamiyah Muslimah women's acceptance of polygamy is restricted to men who possess a profound understanding of religion, ensuring that polygamy is not used for sexual exploitation. They believe that such misuse would be harmful to women.

The second tendency is the incorporation of personal context and experience shaping the interpretation of the polygamy hadith. Reflective experiences from families who have practiced polygamy serve to negotiate the application of the hadith's meaning in action,

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[37] R11, Interview, 27 October 2022.
[38] R12, Interview, 29 October 2022.
[39] R6, Interview, 27 October 2022.
[40] R5, Interview, 12 December 2022.

establishing limitations on its implementation. Respondent R5's statement mentioned that uneven allocation of time spent with each wife and the availability of housing are identified as common practices that deviate from the principles of fairness. She acknowledges that the practice of placing multiple wives in the same household is prevalent, contravening sharia principles.[41] Her statement aligns with respondent R11's observation that successful polygamy hinges on the husband's financial, physical, and psychological capacity to treat each wife with equity and fulfill their housing, physical, and spiritual needs.[42] Similarly, fairness in the rotation of overnight stays is deemed not merely confined to sexual fulfillment but also extends to providing a sense of security. Fulfilling these requirements serves as the cornerstone for implementing the hadith's meaning in practice.[43]

Furthermore, negotiation of meaning among Wahdah Islamiyah Muslims involves a dominant reading of the hadith on the number of wives which is simultaneously tempered by emphasizing the requirement of fairness derived from hadiths that threaten those who are not fair. The clear stipulation (*manṭūq*) in hadith limiting polygamy to four wives is challenged by another hadith warning against unfairness, supported by experiences of families practicing polygamy who often struggle to treat their wives fairly. In this context, the hadith specifying the permissibility of four wives is interpreted through the mechanism of implication (*mafhūm*) with indirect implication (*isyārah*) rather than implicit implication (*īmā'*) that focuses on an appropriate cause (*'illah*).[44] The reflection of experience as the basis for understanding the hadith about the threat of being unjust aligns with the *isyārah* (indirect implication) mechanism in *fiqh* which emphasizes linguistic analysis.[45] This shift in interpreting the hadith about the threat of unfairness to limit (*taqyīd*) the permissibility of having up to four wives, by involving actual experience, represents the Wahdah Islamiyah Muslims' negotiated reading mechanism.

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[41] R5, Interview, 12 December 2022.

[42] R11, Interview, 27 October 2022.

[43] R6, Interview, 27 October 2022.

[44] Ali bin ʾAbd al-Kāfī Al-Subkī, *Al-Ibhāj Fī Syarḥ Al-Manhāj, Vol. 6* (Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūś li al-Dirāsah al-Islāmiyah wa Iḥyāʾ al-Turāś, 2004), 2301.

[45] Auda, *Maqāṣid asy-Syarīʿah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach.*

The responses to the meaning of hadith on polygamy, reflected through shifting interpretations of the text, reveal contradictions in the acceptance of the hadith among Wahdah Islamiyah Muslims in both public and private spheres. The public stance, which emphasizes the permissibility of polygamy based on clearly stated (*manṭūq*) text reflects adherence to the dominant ideology and ideals.[46] However, in private, there is often less visible loyalty to these ideals with a tendency to limit the permissibility of having four wives through restrictions based on husband's ability of fairness. This indicates a model of limiting the cause within the same theme (*ittiḥad al-mauḍū' wa dukhūl al-iṭlāq wa al-taqyīd 'ala al-sabab*).[47] The interpretation that prioritizes personal experience over textual authority differentiates the Wahdah Islamiyah Muslims' conception of meaning from general *fiqh* interpretation mechanism. This divergence arises from a commitment to reconcile meaning with specific circumstances, contrasting with universal morals and ideals presented by the hadith texts. Hall notes that the morals and ideals of dominant consciousness (text and ideology), when faced with new situations, can lead emergence of new consciousness.[48] The dialectic between the text's moral values and evolving circumstances fosters a negotiated reading model, reflecting a fatalistic attitude towards the hegemonic meanings of texts and addressing personal anxieties based on differing factual experiences.

Oppositional Reading of the Hadith

The dominant reading of hadith on the permissibility of polygamy, as reflected in its textual narrative, is sometimes fully understood by certain Wahdah Islamiyah Muslims to create an oppositive meaning. This resistance identity plays a crucial role in oppositional reading, manifested through the use of alternative codes that translate the discourse in a globally contrary manner.[49] This translation involves the politics of signification, representing a

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[46] John Clarke and Tony Jefferson, "CCCS Selected Working Papers," in *Working Class Youth Cultures*, ed. Ann Gray et Al., Volume 2 (London: Routledge, 2007), 207.

[47] Hasaballah, *Uṣūl Al-Tasyrī' Al-Islāmī*.

[48] Stuart Hall, "Representation," in *Introduction* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 9–10.

[49] Hall, "Encoding/Decoding."

struggle against the hegemonic discourse. Resistance in this oppositional reading is not merely contingent but represents a fundamental stance that rejects the legitimacy of prevailing social norms and seeks to transform them.[50]

Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women uphold the meaning of the hadith permitting polygamy while emphasizing the associated challenges and potential negative impacts on women, effectively limiting the practice. Their pursuit of alternative interpretations manifests in three primary tendencies. The first tendency is historical interpretation. The realities of the Prophet Muhammad's polygamous life are juxtaposed with contemporary considerations for implementing polygamy, highlighting the inherent difficulties of practicing it justly and responsibly.

> While polygamy is permitted, it is not a simple undertaking. Even the Prophet Muhammad, a man of exemplary character and divine guidance, struggled to maintain absolute fairness among his wives. Examining the Prophet's household life reveals that he entered into polygamy only two years after the passing of his beloved wife, Siti Khadijah. Moreover, the duration of his polygamous relationships was shorter than his monogamous ones, indicating a greater inclination towards monogamy.[51]
>
> The inherent emotional complexities of polygamous relationships extend to women's reluctance to enter such marriages. Even Siti Aisyah, the Prophet Muhammad's wife, experienced jealousy upon hearing him reminisce about his time with his first wife, Siti Khadijah, despite her passing. This emotional sensitivity is further underscored in another hadith, where the Prophet advised Ali against polygamous marriage to safeguard Fatimah from the potential emotional distress it could cause.[52]

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[50] Clarke and Jefferson, "CCCS Selected Working Papers."

[51] R7, Interview, 17 November 2022.

[52] R9, Interview, 20 October 2022.

Both show how the complexities of the Prophet's polygamous life serve as the cornerstone for presenting a nuanced interpretation of the hadith on polygamy, challenging the simplistic notion of its permissibility.

The second tendency is the use of a factual interpretation approach. To provide an alternative meaning to the hadith that authorizes polygamy, the reality of families that have practiced polygamy is examined. R8 proposed that the reality of polygamous family life is often short-lived due to the unfulfilled requirement of justice. This argument, according to her, suggests that the practice of polygamy is far more challenging than it may seem, with demanding conditions for its successful implementation.[53] Accordingly, it is mentioned that the stringent conditions outlined in the hadith are linked to the concept of justice, which encompasses love and affection, elements that cannot be easily measured or distributed in practical way.[54] The respondents make it clear that standards of justice observed in polygamous families that fail to endure serve as an opposing mechanism in interpreting hadiths on polygamy.

The third tendency is women's empowerment. As one of its consequences, acceptance of polygamy's permissibility is reinterpreted to ensure that its application considers the emotional well-being of polygamous women.

> Polygamy often causes emotional distress to women, disrupting the harmony of the household. The initially happy marriage turns into a source of turmoil due to the coming of a third party, even if it is religiously permitted. However, emotional pain cannot be feigned. Husbands should be more empathetic towards their wives' feelings. Polygamy can be considered haram if it causes emotional anguish to the wife, and there is no such thing as polygamy that does not cause the wife broken-hearted.[55]

The notion implies how the interpretation of polygamy hadiths necessitates consideration of the wife's inner state. Moreover,

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[53] R8, Interview, 12 November 2022.
[54] R9, Interview, 20 October 2022.
[55] R8, Interview, 12 November 2022.

in reality, the practice of polygamy often stems from the consequences of infidelity rather than adherence to religious directives, resulting in more women becoming victims.[56] It seems that respondents believe that acknowledging the inner turmoil experienced by women serves as the foundation for discovering alternative and nuanced interpretations of the polygamy hadith.

The expression of alternative meanings to counter the dominant interpretation of polygamy as allowing up to four wives does not represent a direct rejection of the hadith's content but rather a rejection of its total application. Historical arguments and actual experiences are grounded in the hadith about the threat of failing to do justice. The redaction of the hadith, which does not explicitly mention the requirement, is interpreted through a contrary implication (*mafhūm al-mukhalafah*) that refutes the opposite by establishing a fact.[57] The phrase *famāla ilā aḥādihimā* (and inclines to one of them) becomes a basis for establishing justice as a "condition" for implementing polygamy, thereby prohibiting men who cannot be fair from practicing it. The attribute (*al-waṣf*) limits the full implementation of polygamy despite acknowledging the permissibility in the hadith(es). This approach, which maintains the permissibility of four wives while enforcing the condition of fairness, exemplifies a model of contrary implication focused on the *lafad*. Al-Zarkasyi refers to this as *itsbāt naqīḍ al-manṭūq bih li al-maskūt ʿanhu* (the existence of a fact implies the absence of the contrary), which restricts the wording rather than the meaning,[58] ensuring that the permissibility of having four wives remains upheld.

Considering practical benefits for women, Wahdah Islamiyah Muslims build their oppositional stance through a comprehensive rejection of implementing polygamy. The concept of *maṣlaḥah* they refer to is based on analogies between the Prophet's time and current

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[56] R9, Interview, 20 October 2022.

[57] Abd al-Karīm bin ʾAlī Al-Namlah, *Al-Jāmiʾ Li Masāʾil Uṣūl Al-Fiqh wa Taṭbīqāihā ʾalā al-Madhhab al-Rājiḥ* (Al-Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-Rusyd, 2000); Syaiful Bahri, "Paradigma Fikih Baru Jamal al-Banna dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pembaruan Peran Perempuan dalam Hukum Keluarga Islam (*Fiqh al-Munākahāt*)," *Ijtihad : Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan* 19, no. 1 (2019): 1–26, https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v1i1.1-26.

[58] Badr al-Dīn Al-Zarkasyī, *Salāsil Aż-Żahb* (Madinah: Al-Muḥaqqqaq, 2002), 283–84.

realities rather than relying on embellishments and aversions like the Mu'tazilah or on textual arguments (al-Qur'an, hadith, *ijmā'*, and *qiyās*) as seen in the Mālikī and Hanbalī schools.[59] Meaningful opposition is likely be constructed by using hadiths that prohibit polygamy, such as those concerning 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib,[60] as part of a conclusive argumentation model that synthesizes conflicting hadiths to generate new interpretations.[61] The Wahdah Islamiyah Muslims' rejection of the hadith on polygamy does not incorporate experience as a basis for forming oppositional meanings which contrasts with typical contextualist approach that uses experience to challenge textual hegemony and develop a more beneficial interpretation.[62] Their rejection of the hadith text is rooted solely in the belief that men are incapable of true justice and in the fear of enduring the emotional pain of jealousy. This difference highlights that oppositional reading is employed to counteract the comprehensive practical meanings imposed by the dominant text.

The hegemony of hadith on the permissibility of having four wives within the Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim community is deeply ingrained in their religious consciousness overshadowing responses to its interpretation and application. The negotiation process, which incorporates personal anxieties, fails to foster a broader interpretive awareness that would involve other hadiths and produce a necessary oppositional consciousness. This lack of critical consciousness results in opposition only during the implementation phase rather than challenging the text itself. Negotiation and opposition are confined to

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[59] Auda, *Maqāṣid asy-Syarī'ah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach.*

[60] Ahmad Muzakki, "Sosiologi Gender: Poligami Perspektif Hukum Islam," *Lisan al-Hal: Jurnal Pengembangan Pemikiran dan Kebudayaan* 10, no. 2 (December 2016): 353–72, https://doi.org/10.35316/lisanalhal.v10i2.128.

[61] Muhammad Tayyeb Nadeem, "*Al-Jāddah al-Qawīmah fi al-Fiqh*: Analyzing the Juristic (Re) Interpretation of *Shāh Walī Allāh* for Reconciliation among *Fiqhī* Polemics," *Majallah-e-Talim o Tahqiq* 3, no. 2 (2021): 172–82, https://ojs.cer.edu.pk/index.php/mtt/article/view/154; Rina Abidin Bahren, "Resolving The Contradictory Hadiths on Cupping," *Proceedings of the 5th International Graduate Conference in Islam and Interdisciplinary Studies, IGCIIS* 5 (2023): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.19-10-2022.2329071; Kamarudin Kamarudin and Sabil Mokodenseho, "A Debate on the Islamic Practice of Pilgrimage to the Grave: Study of the Hadīth on Grave Pilgrimage for Women," *Al-Quds: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 6, no. 2 (2022): 495, https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v6i2.4390.

[62] Ziauddin Sardar, *Reading the Qur'an: The Contemporary Relevance of the Sacred Text of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33.

private practice with the majority accepting and doctrinally endorsing hadith on the permissibility of polygamy,[63] even when it is perceived as harmful to women.[64] The dialogical awareness that informs negotiation and oppositional readings sets Wahdah Islamiyah Muslims apart from other communities in terms of reasoning.[65]

Conclusion

This study suggests the perception that Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women hold divergent views on polygamy by revealing a nuanced stance that encompasses both negotiation and opposition. Their negotiation, expressed through arguments of vulnerability and concern for their husbands, ultimately reflects their acceptance of polygamy's permissibility. This mechanism fills the void left by ambiguous discourses on polygamy hadith, complementing the meaning that Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah derives from these hadiths with an emphasis on justice and protection. This dynamic illustrates that Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah's engagement with polygamy hadith is limited to its permissibility, leading to interpretations that reinforce the traditional provisions of polygamy in Islamic texts.

By employing Stuart Hall's representation model within the framework of reception theory, this study unveils the complementation of meaning through negotiation and oppositional readings among Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah. This theoretical underpinning allows for a deeper understanding of the structure indicated by readers' responses to the discourse on hadith's meaning. However, the study acknowledges limitations in its focus on the decoding process, potentially overlooking the influence of meaning production on the decoding process. To address this, further research is warranted to explore how preachers and religious figures within

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[63] Muzakki, "Sosiologi Gender: Poligami Perspektif Hukum Islam."

[64] Santiwi, "Sunnah Sebagai Alasan Permohonan Poligami (Studi Kasus Nomor 1142/Pdt. G/2019/PA. Po)"; Masthuriyah Sa'dan, "Poligami Atas Nama Agama: Studi Kasus Kiai Madura," *Esensia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 16, no. 1 (2015): 89–100, https://doi.org/10.14421/esensia.v16i1.989; Moh Afandi et al., "Authority, Culture, and Sexuality in the Polygamy of Madurese Ulamas," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 24, no. 1 (2024): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v24i1.36237.

[65] Adenike, "Effects of Family Type (Monogamy or Polygamy) on Students' Academic Achievement in Nigeria."

the Wahdah Islamiyah community receive and interpret complex discourses presented to the congregation.

Acknowledgment

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