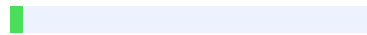




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Research Article

POLYGAMY IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES:  
AN ANALYSIS OF AMINA WADUD'S FEMINIST THEORY

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Polygamy remains a controversial issue in Indonesian Islamic family law, where Q.s. An-Nisa:3 is often interpreted literally as conditional permission, despite contradicting modern gender equality principles such as those in Marriage Law No. 16/2019 and CEDAW. This study examines the impact of multidisciplinary studies (law, biology, sociology, psychology, economics) on the practice of polygamy in Indonesia, which tends to demean women through emotional trauma, financial injustice, and family conflict, and examines Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics, which interprets the verse as a socio-historical response after the Battle of Uhud to protect orphans, rather than an absolute imperative reinforced by the impossibility of perfect justice (Q.s. An-Nisa: 129). Using a literature study method with primary sources from Wadud's work (*Qur'an and Woman, A Jihad for Justice*) and secondary sources, this study analyses Wadud's contextual approach based on tauhid, Fazlur Rahman's double movement, and maqasid syariah to dismantle patriarchy. The result confirm polygamy as a form of structural discrimination that must be replaced by monogamy for the sake of family harmony and reform of KHI Article 57. The conclusion recommends inclusive ijtihad for substantive equality.

Introduction:-

Polygamy remains a controversial issue in contemporary Islamic family law. The legal basis for polygamy is derived from Q.s. An-Nisa:3, which grants conditional permission as a form of social relief in the context of protecting women and family interests, especially in certain social situations such as the existence of orphans. However, polygamy is not an obligation but an option that must be exercised with full moral and social responsibility. In Law No. 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage harmonizes the minimum age of marriage for men and women at 19 years old. This construction is based on considerations of the principle of equality before the law for men and women, the existence of legal protection for women and the guarantee of constitutional rights for women (Yudhanto, 2020). The compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) establishes very strict regulations regarding polygamy through Article requires permission from the Religious Court, the consent of the first wife either verbally or in writing, as well as proof of the ability to provide financial support and material justice. The husband is required to submit an application to the Religious Court in the area where the first wife resides, along with the wife's consent, a list of assets, and a written guarantee of responsibility for the children of all wives (Sumaelan, 2024).

From an international law perspective, polygamy is viewed as a practice that is inherently contrary to the principles of gender equality and human dignity, particularly through the lens of <sup>2</sup> the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which Indonesia ratified in 1984, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 2005 (Nurhidayatulloh, 2018). The CEDAW Committee, in its General Comment No. 21 of 1994, clearly stated that polygamy violates Article 16 of CEDAW, which guarantees equal rights <sup>1</sup> for men and women in marriage, as it creates an inferior hierarchy for additional wives, ranging from uncertainty regarding inheritance

rights, alimony, and child custody, to burdening women with emotional, psychological, and financial risks that are often unavoidable. Therefore, States Parties such as Indonesia are obliged to take concrete steps to gradually permits, strengthening sanctions against unregistered marriages, and reforming national laws to protect the vulnerability **1 of women and children** (Ainiyah, 2017).

#### Literature Review:-

As in previous research conducted by Pitrotussaadah and Sayehu, entitled 'Multidisciplinary Interpretation of Q.s. An-Nisa:3 (Polygamy) **in the Context of** Marriage Law in Indonesia' Vol. 3, No. 1, 2026, Scientific Research Journal. It explains that the interpretation of Q.s. An-Nisa:3 does not require the practice of polygamy, but only allows it under strict conditions of fairness. Buya Hamka emphasizes monogamy as the primary sharia recommendation, while Quraish Shihab emphasizes the social context in Indonesia. Feminist views demand the protection of women's dignity **1 so that they are** not subordinate, and Muhammad Syahrur limits the maximum number of wives to four based on asbabun nuzul and the quality of justice (Sayehu, 2026).

A similar study was conducted by Aulia Fitriani, Ardiansyah, and Nayla Hidayatuzzahra, entitled 'Amina Wadud's Method of Interpreting the Qur'an **in the Context of** Polygamy' Vol. 2 No. 1, 2025, Al-Mabahits Journal (Journal of Qur'an, Hadith, and Tafsir Studies). It explains that Amina Wadud, through a feminist hermeneutic approach, understands Q.s. An-Nisa:3 as a humanitarian response to post-war social conditions aimed at protecting orphans and widows, and that it is not an absolute command. Although there are conditions of justice that must be met if one wishes to practice polygamy, these conditions are in fact impossible to achieve, as explained in Q.s. An-Nisa: 129. These essence of the teachings of the Qur'an is justice and benefit, so the practice of polygamy that ignores gender equality is contrary to the noble spirit of Islam (Aulia Fitriani, 2025).

Similar research was conducted by Aji Febriansyah, Aldi Armansyah Prayoga, and Siti

Maysaroh, entitled 'Gender Equality According to Amina Wadud: Contextual Interpretation in the Qur'an', Vol. 2, No. 1, 2025, *Al-Mustofa Journal: Journal of Islamic Studies and Research*. It explains that gender equality reflects the spirit of justice described in the Qur'an, namely in Q.s. Ali-Imran: 195 and Q.s. At-Taubah: 71, which upholds the spiritual and social dignity of women, not patriarchal cultural inequality. Amina Wadud re-reads the sacred text from a female perspective through historical, linguistic, and moral contexts so that the verses become a source of collective liberation for human justice for all people (Aji Febriansyah, 2025).

Research that is consistent with several of these studies was also conducted by Haikal Fadhil Anam, entitled 'Polygamy in Amina Wadud's Feminist Hermeneutics', Vol. 19, No. 1, 2020, *Musawa Journal (Journal of Gender and Islamic Studies)*. It explains that Amina Wadud, a modern Islamic feminist figure, advocates egalitarianism through feminist hermeneutics that excavates the spirit of liberation in the Qur'an from the perspective of a female scholar who uses polygamy as a reason to perpetuate patriarchy. She emphasizes that Islam actually only advocates monogamy, while polygamy was only permitted in ancient times due to emergency circumstances, namely to protect orphans after war (Anam, 2020).

Thus, the research question in this study is: how does multidisciplinary study of polygamy in Indonesia affect women's dignity and family harmony, and how does Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics interpret Q.s. An-Nisa:3 in a socio-historical context as a post-war response rather than an absolute imperative for polygamy? Thus, this research is urgently needed given the prolonged controversy in Indonesia between traditional Sharia norms and modern gender equality demands, where the Marriage Law still triggers structural **discrimination against women and** children. Its novelty lies in Amina Wadud's innovative synthesis of feminist hermeneutics, which understands the verse as a post-war social response rather than an absolute imperative, with a multidisciplinary analysis of law,

psychology, economics, and health, filling the polarization gap between conservative and secular interpretations. Thus, the research aims to produce a fair contextual reinterpretation, encourage inclusive Sharia-based legal reform, and protect **1 the dignity of the** family for the sake of humane social harmony.

#### Research Method:-

This study utilizes the library research method, which is an approach that prioritizes the examination of various relevant literature to discuss the topic being researched. This method is highly appropriate given the analytical nature of the research, which requires a deep understanding of the thinking of an intellectual figure, namely Amina Wadud, who has written various works on tafsir, gender, and interpretation of the Qur'an. Thus, the library research approach allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of Amina Wadud's views on gender equality in Islam (Yasin, 2025).

The data used in this study consists of two types of sources. The first is primary sources, which come from Amina Wadud's original works, including Qur'an and Woman and A Jihad for Justice, which have different depths of analysis and focus, but both are related to Wadud's efforts to reform the interpretation of Qur'anic texts with an in-depth perspective. Second, secondary sources, which include writings by other people discussing Amina Wadud's thoughts and critical reviews of some of her other books, such as her work entitled Inside the Gender. These secondary sources are indirect but very helpful in providing an overview of the social and intellectual context behind Amina Wadud's thinking and the responses of various groups to her views (Firda, 2024).

**5** Once the data has been collected, the next stage is a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of all the information obtained. The analysis focuses on Amina Wadud's thoughts on gender equality through her works. The analysis of Amina Wadud's thoughts needs to consider the socio-historical dimensions that shape her theory, combining textual

interpretation with social context through a contextual-historical approach to transform traditional interpretations towards Islamic gender justice. Through a literature study, this research aims to enrich the discourse on interpretative renewal and gender equality for a more inclusive Islamic discussion (Reni Dian Anggraini, 2022).

## Research Results and Discussion

### Getting to Know the Biography of Amina Wadud

Amina Wadud was born Mary Teasley on 25 September 1952 in Bethesda, Montgomery, Maryland, United States. Her father was a Methodist minister and a devout clergyman, while her mother was a black slave descended from Arab, berber and African slaves.

Amina Wadud converted to Islam in 1972, which means she embraced Islam at that time. Two years later, her name was officially changed to Amina Wadud, signifying her religious affiliation (Wadud, 1999).

The label of feminist has been attached to Amina Wadud, who has been active and productive through her works focusing on the interpretation of the Qur'an, which has earned her global recognition. She was then invited by various renowned universities, including signing a contract as a professor at <sup>3</sup> the International Islamic University of Malaysia. As the saying goes, 'The higher one's position, the more obstacles one must overcome'. One of the challenges she faced was that her book, 'The Qur'an and Women: Reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective', was published but then rejected and banned in the UAE. However, the book sold very well in Malaysia and even became a key reference for Muslim activists and academics (Kecia Ali, 2012).

The intellectual anxiety experienced by Amina Wadud led her to create many works that reflect her thoughts on injustice in society. With great enthusiasm, Wadud sought to redefine the interpretation of the Qur'an and hoped to produce a new interpretation that was more sensitive to issues of gender and justice. She seeks to challenge patriarchal

views that prioritise male dominance, thereby hindering the development of feminist thought. The narrow space for interpretation for women is caused by gender bias and the dominance of male interpreters, so that the views that develop tend to be dominated by men. This is what underlies Amina Wadud's commitment to exposing gender-biased interpretations.

### Amina Wadud's Feminist Hermeneutic Interpretation of Q.s. An-Nisa: 3

The interpretation method developed by Amina Wadud is a hermeneutic approach that focuses on three important elements of the text. First, the background in which the text was written during the period when the Qur'an was revealed. Second, the grammatical structure of the text, and third, the text itself as a whole. These three elements are used to interpret the Qur'an, which is then organized through analysis from various perspectives, primarily based on context. Related to the context of discussing similar themes in the Qur'an, the use of the same language and syntactic structure present throughout the Qur'an, **1 a strong commitment to the principles of the** Qur'an, and the context of the Qur'an as the foundation of life's thinking (Nurhidayah, 2025).

In addition to all that, Amina Wadud also applies a method of interpreting the Qur'an called the double movement based on the thinking of Fazlur Rahman. However, the message contained in the verses is not only bound to a specific time or historical context. Therefore, readers needed to understand the meaning and expressions of the Qur'an in accordance with the time and situation in which the revelation was sent down in order to determine its true meaning. In general, Amina Wadud's criticism of classical interpretations relates to the position **1 of men and women**. Amina Wadud believes that men and women are equal. Although there are differences **2 between men and women** when the Qur'an discusses the creation of humans, Amina Wadud argues that there is no fundamental difference in the value given to women and men. Thus, there is no evidence that women have more or fewer restrictions than men. The Qur'an does not position women as a version of men in

the presentation of its main themes (M Alfatih Mubarakh, 2025).

### A Multidisciplinary Approach to Polygamy

Women are not just about biology

The biological approach to polygamy refers to arguments that use scientific facts about biological differences <sup>1</sup> between men and women to justify the practice. This approach often highlights variations in hormones, brain structure, and sexual drive, which tend to be higher in men, so that polygamy is considered a natural response to these biological needs (Nahari, 2022).

Because the main difference between women is based on their ability to give birth, this is considered their primary function. The use of the word 'primary' has negative connotations because it implies that women can only be mothers. Therefore, all women's education must be aimed at shaping them into faithful wives and ideal mothers in preparation for this function. There is no term in the Qur'an that indicates that giving birth is "primary" for a woman. There is no indication that raising children is her exclusive role. This shows that women (although certainly not all) are the only human beings capable of giving birth to children. This ability is essential for the survival of humanity. This function is primary only <sup>1</sup> in relation to the survival of the human race. In other words, because only women can give birth to children, this becomes a top priority. Although the Qur'an does not limit women to being mothers, it emphasizes the respect, sympathy and responsibility that must be given women as creators of life. 'O mankind.....fear Allah, through whom you claim rights over one another, and (fear) the wombs (that gave birth to you).' (4:1) this verse is often interpreted as a sign of respect for women in general. Amina Wadud specifies this verse as a sign of respect for the reproductive abilities required of women (Wadud, 1999).

Amina Wadud highlights this verse as a assign of respect for the reproductive abilities required of women without diminishing respect for women as a group, but highlighting it

from the perspective of the Qur'an. the importance of the function of bearing children, which is exclusively performed by women. The respect given to the fulfilment of this function helps explain how the Qur'an explicitly establishes functions for men that create balance in human relationships. No other function is exclusively given to one gender or the other (Wadud, 1999).

## 1 The Status of Women in the Social Environment

The approach to **the status of women in the social** environment in polygamy discusses how this practice affects the status, honour, and dignity of women in society. An individual or group can obtain or be given a higher status than others. The Qur'an mentions, for example, that by fighting in the way of Allah with wealth and soul or by migrating for the sake of Allah, one can obtain status. However, most degrees are obtained through undefined categories of "good" deeds. Distinguishing between individuals or groups based on "deeds" raises issues regarding the value **1 of women in society and** as individuals. Although the Qur'an distinguishes based on deeds, it does not assign value to specific deeds. This leaves each social system to determine the value of various types of deeds as it sees fit. They always do so and "every society distinguishes men's work from women's work". The problem is that men's work is usually considered more valuable than women's work, regardless of how arbitrary the division of labour is. On the one hand, it does not determine the actual value of specific deeds. This leads to the interpretation that the Qur'an supports the values of deeds determined by individual societies. In fact, the neutrality of the Qur'an allows for natural variation. However, with regard to the degree obtained through deeds, the Qur'an has established several points that should influence judgement in society. First, all deeds done with piety are more valuable. Second, "to men belongs a share of differ, but rewards are given based on what is done. It does not matter how actions are divided **1 between men and women in** a particular social context. Another implication of "a share of what is earned" is that whenever someone performs a task that is usually associated with another (Wadud, 1999).

Post-War Polygamy: Multidisciplinary Cracks in Dignity and Hermeneutics Wadud

Amina Wadud, in her work *Qur'an 3 and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (1999), develops tauhid hermeneutics as a tool for reinterpreting the Qur'an that rejects polygamy as a norm of gender equality, because the verse An-Nisa:3 was contextually revealed after the Battle of Uhud to address the crisis of orphans and widows, not as an absolute right of men. She criticizes traditional literal interpretations, dominated by male exegetes, for creating patriarchal bias: polygamy is permitted on condition of "justice" ('adl) in the distribution of financial support, time, and affection, whereas Wadud argues that this perfect justice is biologically and emotionally 'nearly impossible' men cannot divide themselves proportionally without causing harm such as psychological trauma to wives, competition among children, and family instability so the verse should be read as a strict limitation or even an effective prohibition in the modern era. Wadud's hermeneutics are based on four main principles: (1) tawhid as essential equality (Q.s. Al-Hujurat: 13; Q.s. Al-Ahzab: 35), in which men and women are equal in moral responsibility and worship, not hierarchical; (2) the historical-social context of the verse, which limits polygamy to conditions of post-war economic-reproductive emergency, not universally; (3) the ethics of substantive justice (maqasid syariah: hifz al-nasl and rahmah), which priorities the prevention of injustice over textual permission; and (4) the perspective of women as-subjects of interpretation, intergrating life experiences to dismantle patriarchy in which women are reduced to objects of reproduction (Wardana, 2023).

Wadud defines patriarchy as a 'masculine system of exploitation' that limits women to biological roles (bearing children), in which polygamy reinforces male hegemony by disregarding women's right to sexual, emotional, and economic autonomy for example, wives have no significant say in consenting to polygamy according to classical fiqh. She compares this with Q.s. An-Nisa: 129 ('It is impossible for you to be fair between

wives.....'), which affirms the impossibility of complete justice, so that polygamy contradicts the principle of tawhid which demands mutuality of rights (egalitarian human rights). Unlike reactive feminism (which only rejects without reconstruction), Wadud offers three models of interpretation: traditional (gender bias), reactive (destructive criticism), and holistic (contextual integration), which result in a progressive understanding: polygamy is not the sunnah of the Prophet (because <sup>4</sup> most of his wives were widows), but rather a temporary social response (Muhammad, 2022).

In the Indonesian context, Wadud's thinking is relevant to revising Article 57 of the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), which limits polygamy with the wife's consent, as it still allows for injustice. Wadud encourages monogamy <sup>1</sup> as a form of rahmatan lil alamin, freeing women from being 'male slaves' and building a society free from patriarchy through inclusive ijthad. Her criticism also targets domestic fiqh such as qiwamah (Q.s. An-Nisa: 34), which makes the husband the dominant leader, replacing it with shared mas'uliyah (proportional responsibility), so that polygamy is seen as a form of structural oppression that must be abolished for the sake of substantive gender equality (Eko Prasetyo Budi, 2025).

## Conclusion

Multidisciplinary studies reveal that polygamy in Indonesia undermines women's dignity through a patriarchal biological approach, the social degradation of additional wives, and psycho economic impacts such as depression and dependency, which disrupt family despite strict regulations in Articles 56-71 of the KHI. Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics offers a revolutionary reinterpretation of Q.s. An-Nisa:3 as a equality in tawhid (Q.s. Al-Hujurat: 13), historical context, substantive justice ethics, and a female perspective that dismantles masculine hegemony thus making monogamy the ideal model of rahmah. This research encourages inclusive legal reform, revision of the KHI based on modern maqasid syariah, and Islamic feminist discourse to protect women and children from structural oppression, towards an egalitarian society <sup>2</sup> in line with the spirit of the spirit of the contemporary

Qur'an.

This study has demonstrated that a multidisciplinary examination of polygamy in Indonesia reveals the fragility of this practice in term of women's dignity and family harmony, while Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics provides a contextual reinterpretation of Q.s. An-Nisa:3 as a humanitarian response after the Battle of Uhud, rather than an absolute imperative that perpetuates patriarchy. Thus, progressive legal reforms are needed, such as the revision of Article 57 of the KHI based on modern maqasid sharia to prioritise monogamy <sup>1</sup> as a form of rahmah and substantive equality. Future research is recommended to explore the implementation of inclusive ijihad among Indonesian female scholars in order to strengthen the discouse of contextual Islamic feminism and build a harmonious and just family society.

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