

# The Prevalence & Determinants of Polygamy Among Men in Pakistan: Findings Based on the Demographic & Health Survey 2017-2018

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Polygamy stays one of the key themes in a different social order. It is through social practices, convictions and the people's decisions that individuals choose to be focused on polygamy ways of life.

**Objective:** To highlight the prevalence and associated factors of polygamous marriages among men in Pakistan.

**Methods:** The current study analyzes the secondary data of PDHS (Pakistan Demographic & Health Survey). This survey was done in Pakistan from November-2017 to April-2018. The study selected cases of 3145 men, which were married once or more than once and other factors from obtained data to find association. Statistical software SPSS version 22 was used for data analysis.

**Results:** Data were retrieved from 3145 men but a complete analysis was done on 3070 men (remaining were excluded due to missing data issues). The average age among men was  $32 \pm 8.6$  years. Majority belonged to rural area (55.5%), with high standard education (55.4%), high wealth status (55.6%), and desire for more children (53.3%), had child mortality issue (52.2%) and had their workplace away from not close to home (52.2%). Out of 3070 men, 51.8% were polygamous. On multivariate analysis, age, residence, education, wealth, desire for more children, child mortality issue and work status were found to be independent predictors of polygamy.

**Conclusion:** Using the PDHS data, we have found that the prevalence of polygamy was 51.8%. However, different socio-demographic factors affecting it showed significance like wealth index, husband work away & husband desire for more children positively contributing polygamous marriages in Pakistani society.

**Keywords:** Polygamous, prevalence, demographic health survey, International Coach Federation, the National Institute of Pakistan studies.

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is defined as the approved social pattern in which two or more persons come together to establish a family. Traditional religious societies, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians view marriage as an important aspect that leads to the development of humankind. All assume that marriage only takes place in such an instance when a love relationship exists between two different people [1]. The term polygamy is a Greek word meaning "the practice of multiple marriages" and is used in other ways in social-cultural, socio-biology, and sociology. Polygamy can be defined as any "form of marriage in which a person has more than one wife".

There is no definite law in Pakistan, although polygamy is permissible in the Islamic state of Pakistan but restricted. According to Islamic sharia, a male is legally allowed to enter a polygamous union, with a maximum of four wives at one time. They are required to take legal consent from their wives that they are capable of taking good care (Muslim Family Law Ordinance, 1961).

Omariba and Boyle (2007); Strassmann (1997), describe particularly relationship among different people in polygamy and factors for it. The researcher in the current study also discussed that different factors leading to polygamy in society. Thus, in particular, this study has achieved blended results concerning why and how polygamy accomplices with various other factors [2].

Case and Deaton (2003), explore their concerns regarding the importance of male-born children over females. Specifically, Deaton and his co-creators investigate for such separation by utilizing the statistic distinguishableness of certain utilization classes to decide how many guardians sacrifice their utilization to oblige the expansion to the family unit of a child *versus* a girl in the country family unit in South Asia and Africa [3].

The determinants of polygamy are various like ethnicity, husband age, and education, increase the probability of children, particularly when a wife is infertile or gives birth to female children only or husband's desire of more children, male profession, male workplace (away from home) and child death. The problem of surplus women, expand the range of man's alliance so he can maintain, perhaps provide sexual satisfaction particularly in societies with lengthy post-partum sexual taboos [4]. Polygamy also has negative aspects like husband

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partiality, competition and opposition, lack of trust, jealousy and other psychological disorders. In families with polygamous marriages, children become the victims of circumstances over which they can't control. This problematic and conflicting family issue instills trauma in children which affects their studies and the social approach to life [5]. The prevalence of polygamy is most common in Muslim countries, African and Arab countries. In parts of sub-Saharan Africa, as many as 35% of married men are polygynous [6]. In Pakistan, around 4% of men are in polygamy (PDHS 2010-13).

The decrease in polygamy has been identified with changing social conditions, the increment in vote based system, the decrease in masterminded relationships, the increment in a companionate marriage, and the improvement in the training of and common liberties insurances for ladies. Polygamy may offer momentary advantages to ladies in social orders where ladies have commonly low training levels and few monetary chances and where their status is connected to marriage and labor. Notwithstanding, the agreement is that polygamy can thrive just with regard to sex disparity. It is not necessarily the case that all ladies experience polygamy as manipulative or bothersome [7]. In recent years, polygamy has become more normalized in Pakistan's marital trend & is presented as a solution to a variety of social ills.

The main objective is to determine the prevalence and factors related to polygamous marriages in Pakistan.

## METHODS

### Study Design

The current study is a cross-sectional observational study in nature which included data from a survey conducted by Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) during 2017 and 2018.

### Data Set

The current study analyzed the secondary data of PDHS 2017-2018. The PDHS survey was done in Pakistan in

all four provinces from November-2017 to April- 2018 in collaboration with USAID (United State Agency for International Development), ICF (International Coach Federation), and NIPS (National the Institute of Population Studies). PDHS data is available freely on the world bank website which can be downloaded from: (<https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/3411>).

### Ethical Permission

No formal ethical approval is needed for the current study as this study has only analyzed the available PDHS data which is publically available. However, ethical permission was granted to perform this study from the University of Punjab, Lahore.

### Study Variables

Polygamy was defined as polygamous men married more than once which was considered as a dependent variable. Independent variables were included in the analysis as age, residence, education, work away from home, the desire for more children, wealth status and child mortality. The coding used for study variables is presented in Table 1. Samples containing missing values were excluded from the study.

### Data Analysis

Statistical package for the social science (SPSS) 22 (IBM Corp, NY, USA) was used for analyzing data. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were computed as categorical variables and mean  $\pm$  standard deviation was computed as continuous variables. Binary logistic regression was run to determine the factors associated with polygamy. Univariate odds ratios and their 95% confidence interval were computed. All the significant variables with  $p < 0.05$  were used to build multivariable logistic regression and adjusted odds ratios and their 95% confidence intervals were calculated.  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$  was considered as statistically significant for the final effect model. The following table represents the description of the coding of selected variables.

**Table 1:** Description of coding of selected variables.

Variables	Coding Done by PDHS	Recoding for Analysis
Age (Years)	Quantitative	1=25-45 years 2 = >45 years
Education	00 = Less than Class 1 Completed 01 - 10 = class 1 - class 10 (matric) 11 - 12 = Class 11 – 12 13 -15 = Bachelor's Degree 16 = Master's Degree or MBBS, PHD, MPHIL, BSC (4 YEARS)	1 = Low Standard (Less than Matric) 2 = High Standard (Above Matric)

Variables	Coding Done by PDHS	Recoding for Analysis
Do You Have Other Wives	1 = Yes (More than One Wife) 2 = No (Only One Wife)	1 = Polygamy 2 = Monogamy
Residence	1 = Rural 2 = Urban	Used Same Coding for Analysis
Desire Children	1 = Want more 2 = None	1 = Desire for More Children 2 = No Desire
Child Mortality	1 = Yes 2 = No	1 = Child Mortality Issue 2 = No Issue
Work	1 = At Home 2 = Away from Home	1 = Work away from Home 2 = Work near Home

## RESULTS

Out of a total of 3145 ever-married men eligible, 3070 (97.6%) fulfilled inclusion criteria with a mean age of 32+8.6 years. Majority of the participants belonged to rural area (n=55.5%), had high standard education (n=55.4%), had high wealth status (n=55.6%), had desire for more children (n=1636, 53.3%), faced child mortality issue (n=1602, 52.2%) and working near home (n=1656, 53.9%).

Out of 3070, 1590 (51.8%) men were polygamous. In univariate analysis, the likelihood of being polygamous was significantly higher among men of age 25-45 years, belonging to rural area, those with low standard education, lower wealth status, having desire for more children and working near home (Table 2). On multivariable analysis, all of the study variables including age, residence, education, wealth status, desire for more children and incident of child mortality were identified as independent predictors of polygamy (Table 3).

**Table 2:** Association of Variables with study groups (n=3070).

Study Variables	Polygamy n (%)	Monogamy n (%)	OR (95% CI)	p-value
Knowledge				
25-45	1,158 (54.9)	950 (45.1)	1.50 (1.28-1.74)	<0.001
45-above	432 (44.9)	530 (55.1)		
Residence				
Rural	1020 (59.9)	684 (40.1)	2.08 (1.80-2.41)	<0.001
Urban	570 (41.7)	796 (58.3)		
Education				
Low standard	957 (70)	411 (30)	3.93 (3.38-4.6)	<0.001
High standard	633 (37.2)	1069 (62.8)		
Wealth				
Lower status	1022 (74.9)	342 (25.1)	5.99 (5.11-7.02)	<0.001
Higher status	568 (33.3)	1,138 (66.7)		
Desire for More Children				
Yes	1,046 (63.9)	590 (36.1)	2.90 (2.5-3.36)	<0.001
No	544 (37.9)	890 (62.1)		
Child Mortality Issue				
Yes	1,050 (65.5)	552 (34.5)	3.27 (2.82-3.79)	<0.001
No	540 (36.8)	928 (63.2)		
Work Status				
Work away from home	980 (69.3)	434 (30.7)	3.87 (3.33-4.50)	<0.001
Work near home	610 (36.8)	1046 (63.2)		

CI: Confidence interval, OR: Odd ratio

**Table 3:** Logistic Regression within Study Groups (n=3070).

Study Variables	Adjusted OR	95% CI	p-value
Age (in years)			
25-45	1.70	1.37-2.10	<0.001
>45	Ref		
Residence			
Rural	1.92	1.57-2.36	<0.001
Urban	Ref		
Education			
High Standard	4.4	3.6-5.39	<0.001
Low Standard	Ref		
Wealth			
Higher Status	7.51	6.08-9.28	<0.001
Lower Status	Ref		
Desire for More Children			
No	2.10	1.72-2.58	<0.001
Yes	Ref		
Child Mortality			
No	7.22	5.83-8.94	<0.001
Yes	Ref		
Work Status			
Near Home	5.18	4.24-6.33	<0.001
Away from Home	Ref		

CI: Confidence interval, OR: Odd ratio, Ref: Reference category

## DISCUSSION

Our study demonstrates the determinants of polygamy according to PDHS 2017-18. This study aimed at determinants of polygamy in Pakistan. Similar DHS survey studies were done regarding the polygamous trend in various other parts of the world.

Hammadi (2015) depicted polygamy with some additional aspects including more negative viewpoints like spouse inclination, rivalry and restriction, an absence of trust, enviously and other mental issues which were not included in the present study [5].

Polygamy generally fashionably adopted in Muslim countries, generally typical in African and Arab countries. In pieces of sub-Saharan Africa, a similarly wide variety as 35% of married men are polygamous. Depending upon various circumstances few of which coincide with our studies highlighted factors [8].

Omariba and Boyle (2007) studied the connection between polygamy and child mortality. In our study, we found significant co-relation to child mortality as described by Omariba & boyle *et al.* This study specifies that the big size of polygamous family units may likewise

a result in the issue of physical swarming. Congestion has been found and poor clean conditions, result in an assortment of unfriendly results including lower statures, higher rates of irresistible ailment and child mortality, and more unfortunate scholastic execution [9].

Sellen (1999) finds clear proof of undernourished kids among families of Tanzanian polygamists. Where there is less of a spouse's assets among various wives. So, kids and wives usually less have to eat, wear and other facilities [10].

Gage (1997) also describes similar studies among polygamists. Those families in polygamy may confront nourishing a detriment, they do experience the ill effects of lower dimensions of interest in social insurance since these consumptions/expenditures are normally handled by their dads but now they are affected by the loss of interest of their fathers. Ages and early marriages/relational unions are progressively pervasive in country regions of south Asia & Sub-Saharan Africa (West Central Africa specific) [11].

From the Islamic viewpoint, there are a few guidelines that should be trailed by men who decide to go for polygamy relationships. The Quran says "Wed ladies of your decision two, or three, or four; yet on the off chance that you dread that you will not have the option to treat legitimately with them, at that point just one. That will be more appropriate to keep you from evil" (Quran, 4:3). Assuming a man can't treat every one of his spouses similarly, he should just marry once. Another section says "You won't ever have the option to bargain legitimately between spouses whatever amount of you want (to do as such). In any case, (in the event that you have more than one spouse) don't dismiss inside and out (from one) leaving her in anticipation" (Quran, 4:129). A new Turkish investigation discovered that the members from polygamous families, particularly senior spouses, revealed more mental distress [12-14].

Abdu Salaam called attention to 71% of Kuwaiti lady's respondents revealing that men couldn't do equity or be reasonable between their spouses [15]. The absence of trust is regularly seen among ladies in a polygamous marriage where the couple doesn't confide in one another. At many points when one spouse sees the husband with the other wife, she begins thinking that they are discussing about her. These jealousies are talked about by Altonji *et al.* (2005) proportions & Oster (2016). Occasionally spouse favors a specific wife and youngsters. This causes clashes inside the family, among spouses, and among youngsters and their dads. At times there is rivalry and resistance among spouses to go after affection and force. This makes them adversaries and not companions which generally,



straightforwardly influences their marriage and in a roundabout way, influences their youngsters. African men like to be polygamous with their end goal to find a way into the social classes. Spouse legacy is likewise another social trademark that permits men to acquire the wife when her husband dies [9, 16].

An investigation led in Egypt tracked down that after their spouses' subsequent marriage, senior wives in polygamous families experience a significant mental emergency, which shows itself in physical grievances just as in mental indications like tension, melancholy and peevishness. Following this finding, the researcher recommends the age of another social explicit mental conclusion, the "First Wife Syndrome". Moreover, in polygamous spousal connections, it is regularly announced that the male-centric nature of polygamy leads not exclusively to ladies' subordination, but also their sexual, physical and psychological mistreatment because of their husband [17-19]. The financial matters of polygamy are especially hazardous. Studies showed that in such specific settings, the desire between co-spouses can heighten to unbearable levels, bringing about actual wounds supported by the ladies, and self-destruction endeavors among the ladies. Families living respectively in packed and stuffed conditions can establish a climate that bothers pressure between wives [18, 20].

It's astounding to see increasingly polygamous association among the upper white-collar class. Likely they may be associated with illicit undertakings or hidden marriages/secret relations not formally reported so it incorporates loads of debatable research as information is inaccessible for that so there are numerous restrictions in this examination. Numerous Demographic Surveys incorporate men's educational factors in their studies as it is the most impacting element and a change maker in social standards. So still new zones for study for various scientists/experts in this field.

## CONCLUSION

Utilizing PDHS information, we came to know that the predominance of polygamy is present in our general public. Many socio-demographic factors affect it. We also see through our results that gender discrimination in Pakistan's society as a child death (especially son's death) provoking husbands to marry again. As the whole polygamy creates a negative impact on women's life, especially in underdeveloped countries, creates an unequal power relation between husbands & wives and this situation creates disagreement, refusal not desirable impact on women's lives and ultimately affecting the whole family and society. Time of need is to

find the importance of ladies schooling in lessening polygamous propensity increment with society's degree of modernization. Thus women's empowerment and awareness of their basic rights is a must in order to nullify the ill impacts of polygamy relationships.

## ETHICS APPROVAL

No formal ethical approval was taken for the current study as the study analyzed the secondary available data which is publically available. However, ethical permission was granted from the University of Punjab, by the head of the Department of Public Health, Prof. Dr. Rubina Zakir.

## CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

Not applicable.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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