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## *Maghza* Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's Interpretation Concept As a Counter of Polygamy Pragmatism

Sam'ani

*sam'ani@uingusdur.ac.id*

UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia

### Abstract

*The objective of study is mainly to reveal the deep meaning of polygamous verses by using the theoretical approach of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's text study. As a critical Islamic thinker, Nasr produced many controversial views with classical thinkers, including interpreting the quranic polygamy verse. Nasr views the meaning of polygamy in quranic verse in its historical context as a limitation of the human relationship between men and women in the tradition of pre-Islamic Arabia. This initial meaning of that verse has a historical character and is only a starting point for understanding that verse. It is not the main message of the Qur'an. Nasr views the meaning of the quranic polygamy verse in the whole context of the Qur'an. The text's comprehensive context produces the original and significant meanings (magza). Then it also reveals the hidden dimension of meaning (al maskut 'anhu), the monogamy principle. By revealing this hidden meaning, it can counteract the pragmatic polygamists' statements, which are currently conducted on the pretext of religion. This study contributes to Qur'anic hermeneutics by highlighting the importance of the historical and social dimensions of religious texts in understanding verses that are often debated, such as polygamy verses.*

**Keywords:** *Qur'anic Interpretation, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Polygamy*

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### INTRODUCTION

Polygamy is a sensitive and controversial issue, particularly concerning gender equality and human rights. The practice of having more than one wife has long been a subject of debate among Muslims and adherents of other religions (Hoffman-Ladd 1987; McDonough 1987; Stowasser 1998, 2011, 2021). In the contemporary context, discussions about this issue have become increasingly relevant due to the growing body of literature and texts addressing it. For example, in 2005, Canada held a world conference on polygamy and sharia, which discussed the balance between faith and

family law. The debate over British legal policies regarding polygamy also attracted attention (Shah 2020).

In the United States, research on the negative impacts of polygamy on American Muslim women revealed abusive practices associated with polygamy. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the debate on the pros and cons of polygamy is elaborated in Nina Nurmila's work, *Women, Islam and Everyday Life: Renegotiating Polygamy in Indonesia* (Nurmila 2009).

At the beginning of 2022, the author engaged in intensive discussions with several polygamists. Based on observations, there are two approaches to practicing polygamy among Muslims: the ideal approach, which adheres to conditions such as justice, and the pragmatic approach, which seeks pleasures "believed" to be lawful without considering principles like justice and other required conditions (Basyar 2017). This fact highlights the diverse and often deviating practices of polygamy that stray from the ideal values prescribed in Islam. Although many Islamic scholars permit polygamy under certain conditions, such as the ability to practice fairness, there are also groups that reject this practice, arguing that it contradicts progressive global norms. They contend that Islam implicitly discourages polygamy, with its underlying spirit and ultimate goal being monogamy. Thinkers such as Riffat Hasan, Fatima Mernissi, Asma Barlas, Amina Wadud, and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd have emphasized the injustices that emerge from patriarchal societal structures. They aim to deconstruct and reconstruct the discourse on polygamy, which tends to exhibit patriarchal biases (Mustaqim 2002).

This condition necessitates further study on the application of polygamy verses. Through a bibliographic study, this article focuses on the interpretation of polygamy verses in the Qur'an using the interpretive theory of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (d. 2010). Abu Zayd proposes a hermeneutical approach that emphasizes the dialectical relationship between the text and reality to uncover the meaning (*dalalah*), significance (*maghza*), and hidden messages (*al-maskut 'anh*) within the text.

The polygamy verses are part of the Qur'anic text, which was revealed gradually and served as a response to the social realities of the time. The Qur'an, as the central text of Arab civilization after the Jahiliyah era, not only shaped civilization but

was also influenced by the surrounding social realities. By adopting Abu Zayd's approach, this study aims to uncover the profound messages of the polygamy verses, particularly in the context of polygamy practices that often fail to meet the justice principles required by Islam.

This study also seeks to address gaps in previous literature, which tend to discuss polygamy from a normative perspective without deeply exploring its hermeneutical and contextual dimensions. Thus, this article contributes to enriching Qur'anic studies and gender discourse in Islam, particularly in understanding the practice of polygamy in the contemporary era.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Short Biography of Naṣr Hāmid Abū Zayd

Naṣr Hāmid Abū Zayd was born in the Qahafah village, Thanta, Egypt, on July 19, 1943. According to Hilman Latief in his book *Naṣr Hāmid Abū Zayd "Criticism of Religious Texts,"* he was born on July 10 (Zayd 2003b). From a young age, he was raised in a very religious family and environment. He grew up in the land of Egypt, acknowledged by the freedom of thought. It becomes a central of Islamic treasures, so this condition dynamically affects his intellectual growth. At the age of eight, Naṣr Hāmid Abū Zayd memorized the holy Qur'an 30 juz' outside his formal education (Sucipto 2003). Naṣr Hāmid Abū Zayd studied in one of the *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* in his hometown in 1951. Then, he continued his education at the technological school in the Kafru Zayyad district, Gharbiyah province. He registered at that school to obey his father's wish to pursue his education in vocational high school, although he is fascinated to pursue his study at Al- Azhar (Anon 2022).

In 1968 Naṣr Hāmid Abū Zayd then continued his studies at the adab faculty at the University of Cairo, and he graduated in 1972 with cum laude grades. Then he continued his Master's at the University of Cairo and completed his thesis with the title "*Qadhiyat al- Majaz fi al- Qur'an 'inda Mu'tazilab*" and achieved cum laude grades in 1976. Then in 1981, he obtained a doctorate from Cairo University with his dissertation entitled "*Ta'wilu al- Qur'an 'inda Muhyiddi al- 'Arabi*" and received a very satisfactory score as well and received first-rate awards. From his intellectual result, he finally decided to

serve at his alma mater and became an assistant lecturer and later a lecturer in the fields of adab and philosophy. Then, he moved and settled in the Netherlands and became a professor of Islamic Studies at Leiden University until now. Naşr has become widely known among academics in the last ten years (Sucipto 2003).

Naşr Hāmid Abū Zayd is a very productive Muslim scientist. He wrote more than twenty-nine (29) works from 1964 to 1999, both in books and articles. Nine important works have been published, namely: *The al-Qur'an: God and Man in Communication* (Leiden, 2000), *Al-Khitab wa al-Ta'wil* (Dar el-Beida, 2000), *Dawair al- Kawf Qira'ah fi al-Khitab al-Mar'ah* (Dar el-Beidah, 1999), *AI-Nass. al-Sultab, al-Haqiqah: al-Fikr al-Diniy bayna lrradat al Ma'rifah wa lradat al-Haymanab* (Cairo, 1995), *AI-Tafkir fi Zaman al-Tafkir: Didda al-labl wa al-Zayf wa alKburafab* (Cairo, 1995), *Naqd al-Khitab al-Diniy* (Cairo, 1994), *Maḥḥum al-Nash: Dirasab fi 'Ulum Qur'an* (1994) (Cairo, 1994), *Philosophy of al-Ta'wil: Dirasab fi al-Ta' wil al-Qur'an 'ind Muhyi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi* (Beirut, 1993), *AI-lttijah al-'Aqli fi al-Tafsir: Dirasab Qaqiyyat al-Majaz fi al-Qur 'an* (Beirut, 1982).

## 2. Text Interpretation of Naşr Hāmid Ab Zayd theory

Discussion about Qur'an includes polygamy verse as a message that is inseparable from the consciousness of the Qur'anic interpreter as linguistic text with a specific character. According to Nasr, in the meaning of language, two dimensions seem contradictory but complement each other (Zayd 1992). This explanation is seen in distinguishing between the concepts of *tafsir* and *ta'wil*. *Tafsir* has the meaning of revealing something hidden or unknown. It can be known because there is a medium of interpretation (Zayd 1992). Meanwhile, *Ta'wil*'s is to return to the origin of something to reveal *ma'na* and *magza* (Zayd 1992). *Ma'na* is a meaning (*dalalah*) composed of grammatical text. So the resulting meanings are grammatical (*ma'ani al-nahwi*) (Zayd 1992). Meanwhile, *magza* refers to the meaning in a socio-historical context. In the process of interpretation, these two things are closely related, *magza* always follows *ma'na* and vice versa (Zayd 1992, 2003a).

Interpreting the Qur'an as a linguistic text cannot examine only by analyzing the language inherently. As we know, the Qur'an came to an uncivilized society. At least the existence of *asbab al-nuzul* proved that the Qur'an responded to society's

conditions at that time. Therefore, based on Naṣr the cultural context that was developing at that time was an important issue, and it cannot separate in the interpretation process (Moch 2022). The analysis and interpretation process of the Qur'anic text and Prophet PBUH tradition must consider the past context. It is because the message of Islam does not have various effects if the people who first receive it can not understand it. Meanwhile, these people can only understand the message of the Qur'an based on their socio-cultural context (Zayd 1992). This view causes different understandings of the messages of the Qur'an by the community in different socio-cultural contexts (Sumaryono 1999; Zayd 2004).

Naṣr Hamid Abu Zayd offers a reading model called *al-qiraab al-muntijab*. In this model, Naṣr re-emphasizes the discussion about the relationship between *ma'na* and *magza*, but Naṣr uses the dialectic between the terms *dalalah* and *magza*. Basically, *dalalah* and *magza* are two-term that describe one action. *Magza* is inseparable with *dalalah*, because *dalalah* brings *magza* to the most distant meanings (Zayd 1992). Meanwhile, to reveal the meaning of *dalalah*, it must go through the medium of *al-tafsirah* (denotatum/sign). Language signs to obtain textual meaning correlate with the meaning of the socio-historical context to get *magza* (Zayd 2003a, 2004).

The structure of the text and the production of the text meaning for Naṣr cannot be separated from the problem of *al-siyaq* (context). Although the word *al-siyaq* is in the form of a single sentence, it shows many numbers. It means that the word *al-siyaq* has a broad meaning in various contexts. The texts that exist in ordinary languages have various diversity. Therefore, the variety will increase if you look at cultural texts (al-nusus al-saqofiyah) or semiotic meaning texts. In this case, Naṣr views context (*al-siyaq*) as an important issue in producing meaning (Zayd 1992). Naṣr's view above shows that the Qur'an text has several context levels. Those are the socio-cultural context (*al-siyaq al-saqofi al-ijtima'i*), the external context (*al-siyaq al-khariji* or *siyaq al-takhatub*), internal context (*al-siyaq al-dakhili*), language context (*al-siyaq al-lughawi*) and the context of reading or interpretation (*siyaq al-qiroah* or *siyaq al-ta'wil*).

If *al-siyaq al-saqafi* describes the relationship of the text with something outside the text in various ways. Then, *al-siyaq al-khariji* complements each other with *al-siyaq al-saqofi*. The external context (*al-siyaq al-khariji*) represents the context of the conversation (*siyaq al-*

*takhatub*), namely the communication relationship between the speaker (*qail*) or the messenger and the recipient of the message (*al-mutalaqqi*). *Al-siyah al-khariji* al-Qur'an is thick with the historical aspects that created the text and is related to the natural changes of the text's audience (*al-mukhabatab*) (Zayd 1992). Each verse of Al-Qur'an always has a reason behind it. It is the step of the Islamic da'wah phase, either in the Mecca or Medina phases. For Nasr, *al-siyah al-khariji* is not only limited to issues of *asbab al-nuzul* and *makki-madani*, but textually the verses of the Qur'an also have their respective audiences. The Qur'an has a wide and varied structure of speech (*al-kitab al-Qur'an*). Some of these audiences include the Prophet Muhammad as the first audience (*al-mukhabatab al-awwal*). Other contexts include the audience of the Prophet's wives, women, men, and others. This view results in the opinion that *asbab al-Nuzul* can also be obtained from the text of the Qur'an, but it is not necessarily through narrations.

After the discussion of *al-siyah al-khariji* turned to the debate on internal context (*al-siyah al-dakhili*), it directly discusses the *musyqilan* of the Qur'anic text. For Nasr, the basis for *munasabah* between verses and letters is because the text of the Qur'an is a structural unity. Then, each part is interrelated according to *al-siyah al-dakhili al-Quran*. It also has substantive characteristics because its existence as a text has similar substantive parts. These characteristics can be seen from the content and stylistic aspects of the Qur'an (Zayd 1992). The problem of *al-siyah al-dakhili* is not limited to the issue of *munasabah*, which classical Qur'anic scholars have discussed. *Al-siyah al-dakhili* still has other contexts, namely the context of the discussion (*siyah al-qaul*) or conversation (*siyah al-khatib*). Some of the contexts that fall into this category include the context of the story (*siyah al-qisah*), threats (*siyah nahi wa amr, al-targhib, al-tarhib*), debate (*judal*), rivalry (*sajal*), *tabdid, inzar, aqidah, sharia, halal, haram, mubah, sunnah* and so on (Zayd 1992).

The following context is the language context (*al-siyah al-lughawi*) which directly produces grammatical meaning (*ma'ani al-nahwi*). Quoting Abdul Qahir, Nasr explained that *al-siyah al-lughawi* is an analysis of style phenomena (*al-zawahir al-uslubiyah*) at the level of numbers (*kalimah*) such as *al-taqdim, al-ta'khir, al-bazf, al-idmar*, the relationship between sentences, *balaghob*, and problems related to linguistic analysis in general (Zayd 1992). Nasr added that the analysis at the level of *al-siyah al-lughawi* is not only limited to linguistic analysis but also seeks to expand the analysis to reveal hidden meaning (*al-dalalah al-*

*maskut'anba*). It means *al-siyāq al-lughawi* analysis not only aims to explore the grammatical meaning but also must be able to reveal the hidden meaning behind the text. *Al-dalalah al-maskut'anba* means looking for the most profound meaning to show the overlapping relationship between the outside meaning of the text and the meaning in the context of language (Zayd 1992). Naṣr gives an example of the language context in surah *al-jin*. Surah *al-jin* talks about the description of the form of the jinn, which is related to cultural realities that are outside the text. It shows that the language of the text describes the cultural reality outside the text.

The last context is the reading context (*siyaq al-qiroah*). The text reading that separates the relationship between several levels of context describes the ideological-opportunistic-tendency reading type (*al-qiroah al-aidiyu lu jiyah al-nafi'iyah al-muqridah*). This reading activity involves sending messages (*al-mursil*), who always reads the text to the message recipient (*al-mutalaqqi*). In the interpretation, it is found many interpretations. It is not only due to the large number of readers but also to the factors of different backgrounds and ideologies. In interpreting the text, a reader must be aware of those things. This fact makes Naṣr think that the context of the reading is part of the structure of the text. Therefore, it can be seen that Nasr states these interpreters become important factors inseparable from revealing the text's meaning (Zayd 1992).

### 3. Interpretation Theory Application Naṣr Hāmid Abū Zayd in the Polygamy Qur'anic Verses

According to Nasr, equality between men and women is one of the things contained in the Qur'an (Zayd 1992). Based on Nasr, texts related to this matter no longer require interpretation. Abu Zayd referred to the Qur'anic explanation of the position of Adam and Eve when they were sent down to earth after eating the forbidden fruit. According to him, the Qur'an clearly explains that both Adam and Eve were responsible for these transgressions, so they deserved punishment. Regarding the equal position between men and women, Abu Zayd also refers to a verse explaining that both are created from one soul (*nafs wabidah*, QS.4:1 and 7:180), and they also have religious obligations and get a reward. and the same torment (Surah 3:195, 4:124, 7:71-72 and 16:97) (Hasan 1990; Mernissi and Hasan 1995; Zayd 1999).

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd conducted a critical study of women's discourses, as described in his book *Dawa'ir al-Khauf*. Nasr disagreed with some groups who tended to harm women, including the issue of polygamies. It is such as the opinion of Muhammad al-Lalibi and the Salafis. Al-Lalibi argues that polygamy can be tolerated for two reasons: first, the history of male dominance over women in leadership, and second, the gap between male sexual libido (which is high) and female libido naturally from a biological aspect. He also said that although polygamy is strange, polygamy is better than adultery. In response to this, Nasr Abu Zayd stated that this kind of opinion is more of a justification than an interpretation because the interpretation of the historical dominance of men over women must start from developmental anthropology rather than from biological sciences. According to him, the second approach ignores the nature of human existence as a cultural entity. That opinion only narrows human existence in terms of mere biological entities, which have no history except natural history and have an independent culture. The opinion state that men's sexual libido is higher than women's because women are more preoccupied with reproductive matters (pregnancy and fertilization of the ovary). According to Abu Zayd, this opinion is not supported by scientific evidence (Zayd 1999, 2000; Zulkifli 2022).

Nasr Abu Zayd also criticized literalists who disagreed with the policies contained in the Tunisian Family Law. The essence of the literalists' and Salafis' rejection of the law is related to the prohibition of polygamy and the granting of legal divorce authority to courts, not to husbands. They reject these two things for the reason "forbid what Allah has made lawful (*yuharrimu ma'aballallah*), namely the permissibility of polygamy based on the QS. Al-Nisa: 3. It can be considered a form of opposition to Allah's explanation.

Nasr Abu Zayd's criticism was also directed at the Salafis, who saw polygamy as an issue of faith close to the *sunnah* that must be followed. Some see polygamy as part of the *sunnah* that is feared to disappear, and an essential Muslim has to preserve it. Some even exaggeratedly idea state that polygamy is a test to assess the faith of a woman/wife and her steadfastness by accepting and sharing with the second (perhaps third and fourth) woman whom her husband marries (Zayd 2000a).

Regarding the principle of "no *ijtihad* in matters of which there is a text," held

by the Salafis, Nasr Abu Zayd criticized by pointing out historical evidence. The 'Umar ibn Khammâb ignored the textual law in a famine year and did not cut off the hands of two slaves who stole the Master's goods. However, Umar punished the Master by cutting off his hand if they both stole again. 'Umar did it based on the verse (*nas*) with a firm meaning (*qat'i al-dalalah*) (Surahman 2018; Zayd 1999).

Related to QS. Al-Nisa: 3 which the Salafis and other groups rely on for the permissibility of polygamy:

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَنِّي وَتِلْكَ وَرُبَّعٌ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةٌ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذَلِكَ بَدَأْتُ لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْدِلُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

"If you fear that you might not treat the orphans justly, then marry the women that seem good to you: two, or three, or four. If you fear that you will not be able to treat them justly, then marry (only) one, or marry from among those your right hands possess. It will make it more likely that you will avoid injustice."

Nasr Abu Zayd understood and criticized him for several things. First, Abu Zayd questioned why the Salafis adhered to the meaning of the text by ignoring the meaning: "or the female slaves you have." Why is the permissibility of having intercourse with the "owned female slave" ignored even though the text determines it with the same clarity and firmness? Abu Zayd's underlined the context that the Salafis do not see the "absence" of the law of having sex with female slaves. It is necessitated by the journey of life and the development of human reality through human struggles to restore their freedom which others have dominated in the context of the ancient social and economic system. For Nasr Abu Zayd, in this case, the Salafis reject the journey and development of humans and choose to live outside of history (Zayd 1999). In this context, Nasr Abu Zayd also underlined that there is an element of historicity in religious texts, which are linguistic texts. Meanwhile, according to him, language is a human social product and a locus for a common culture. It also included the Qur'an, which according to him, is a historical act, namely an event that is manifested in history and conditioned by the mind of the object of discussion and the character of the social and cultural realities embodied in it (Surahman 2018; Syahridawaty 2020; Zayd 1999).

Nasr Abu Zayd also sees the polygamy verse in its historical context (externally). In this case, Nasr Abu Zayd said that the permissibility of polygamy of up to four wives

must be understood in the context of the character of human relations (male and female) in Arab society. In this context, the verse of polygamy can be understood as a limitation and historically a transition (*naqlah*) in women's liberation from dependence on men. According to Abu Zayd, the restriction of marriage to only one woman after a span of fifteen centuries of human development is considered a natural transition according to the path that has been initiated by Islam (Zayd 1999). Regarding the social context when this verse was revealed, Nasr Abu Zayd also said that the verse was revealed in Medina after the battle of Uhud, in which many Muslim men died. The Qur'an allows polygamy to respond to undesirable things where there are many orphans and widows (Zayd 1999). He also saw that in pre-Islamic times, polygamy was a common practice among Arab society, even to an unlimited number. The Qur'an came to limit that tradition to only four wives and with several strict provisions. Among these provisions are conditions that allow; second, a polygamous husband must be fair between his wives (Nursinggih, Faisal, and Pongoliu 2021; Zayd 2000a, 2000b).

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd also considers that verse in the context of the Qur'an. He believes placing the text in its wider context can reveal a significant meaning: the hidden dimension (*al maskut 'anhu*) in discourse. For Nasr, there is a continuation that reads: "if you are worried that you will not be able to do justice, then (marry) only one...". It indicates that the command to practice polygamy is not intended as a permanent legal rule of the Qur'an but rather something permissible regarding certain conditions. There must be fair behavior from the polygamous husband. According to Nasr, according to the context of the language, the text is a form of the condition (*sighat al-syarat*) related to permissibility and fear of not being fair to orphans. Thus, it is not a *syara'* command, but it will be adjustable based on certain conditions (Syahridawaty 2020; Zayd 1999).

However, there is another verse, namely QS. Al-Nisa: 129, which reads:

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٢٩﴾

"You will never be able to maintain 'emotional' justice between your wives—no matter how keen you are..." (Surah Al-Nisa: 129).

According to Nasr Abu Zayd, it shows the certainty of attitude and the refusal of polygamy that Salafis understand. Based on linguistic analysis, where the sentence

structure is a conditional sentence (*bina>' al-jumlah al-syarti*) and uses the conditional instrument (*adat al-syart*) "*lan*." Nasr Abu Zayd said that it means preventing the occurrence of consequences (*jawâb*) due to the obstruction of conditions (*syart*). This structure (*takrib*) implies that the desire to be fair will never be realized, thus preventing the occurrence of "acting fairly" as a whole. The most important thing, *adat nafy "lan"* at the beginning of the sentence, means affirmation. The affirmation occurs if it happens simultaneously in the present and future. In addition, there is a negative *jawab-al-syart (al-manfi)*, which precedes *fi'il al-syart* (a negative conditional verb (*al-manfi*)) which also uses *adat "lan"*. Then the double negative condition at this level of meaning means the eternal negation of the possibility of being fair to wives, even though they want it (Surahman 2018; Zayd 1999).

For Nasr Abu Zayd, "fairness" is one of the essential principles in Islam. So if there is a conflict between "principle" and law (permissibility), a law cannot replace the principle because the law is a relative partial event conditioned by a certain requirement due to an urgent need. Therefore, if a law contradicts the "principle," then it must eliminate the law. Then, due to that case, the Qur'an—based on the development of the internal context of the text—almost potentially forbids polygamy (implicit / *maskut 'anhu*) (Zayd 1999). Likewise, based on the verse which states that a person cannot be fair even if he wants to be, and following Muhammad Abduh, who based his opinion on the principle of "preferring to refuse danger than taking benefit" (*dar al-mafasid Muqaddam ala jalb almasalih*). Nasr Abu Zayd believes that polygamy can be strictly forbidden (*muharram qat'i*) if there is a fear of doing injustice (Zayd 1999). Through this analysis, Abu Zayd finds the meaning (*ma'na*), the direction of the text (*dalalah al-nas*), and the significance (*maghza*) of the text. By considering these things, it seems that Nasr has concluded that the ultimate goal of revelation (which is not stated [*maskut 'anhu*]) from polygamous verses as stated in the Qur'an is monogamy (Faiz 2007; Ichwan 1999). More emphatically, it can be said that the law on the practice of polygamy, in Abû's Zayd view, can be haram when there is a fear of doing injustice. More firmly, it can be said that the law on the practice of polygamy, in Abû Zayd's view, can be forbidden when there is a fear of doing injustice or, from the start, only thinking of pleasure in doing polygamy.

In the current context, the hidden meaning (*maskut 'anhu*) generated by Abû Zayd's theory is very significant in countering the development of polygamy practices in

Muslim societies. It tends to be pragmatic, namely only to get biological pleasure on the grounds of religious legality through *siri* marriages (unregistered married by the state). In the author's intense discussion with several polygamists this year (2022), it is known that two things motivate polygamy. Some practice polygamy "ideally" by following the terms and procedures of polygamy, while others practice polygamy "pragmatically," which only seeks pleasure on the grounds of religious legality. Understanding the Qur'anic polygamy verse offered by Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid can be a strong baseline to decline pragmatic polygamy.

## CONCLUSION

Differen context and methods in studying texts, including polygamy verses, can lead to various understandings or interpretations over time. The first generation of Muslims' understanding of the message of the text cannot be considered final and absolute. The language of the Qur'an, like any other language, evolves dynamically through an ongoing coding process. This means that the text has a meaning (*dalalah*) developing into significance (*maghza*), resulting in a continuous production of meaning. This dynamic allows the text to be continuously interpreted in various contexts over time.

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's theory of text studies on polygamy verses produces an understanding different from classical interpretations. The main conclusion of this approach is an awareness of the historicity of religious texts as social and cultural products. Firstly, the permissibility of polygamy up to four wives must be understood in the context of human relations during the pre-Islamic era, particularly the relationship between men and women. In this context, the permissibility of polygamy represents a narrowing (*tadyiq*) of ownership and treatment of women in pre-Islamic Arab society, especially women from lower social classes. Secondly, this approach places the polygamy verse within the context of the Qur'an as a whole. Polygamy in this text reflects the concept of justice, needing to be examined through its meaning (*dalalah*), significance (*maghza*), and hidden dimension (*al-maskut 'an*).

Through Abu Zayd's theory, the meaning (*dalalah*) of the polygamy verse encompasses three main points: (1) the practice of unlimited polygamy in the pre-

Islamic era, (2) Islam limits the number of wives to four under the condition of justice, and (3) fairness in polygamy is nearly impossible to achieve, thus emphasizing monogamy as the solution. The significance (*maghza*) of the polygamy verse indicates that the ultimate goal of Islamic legislation is monogamy. The hidden dimension (*al-maskut 'anh*) of this verse suggests a prohibition of polygamy. This hidden dimension can serve as an argument to counter the pragmatic practices of polygamy among the Muslim community.

This study contributes to Qur'anic hermeneutics by highlighting the importance of the historical and social dimensions of religious texts in understanding verses that are often debated, such as polygamy verses. Abu Zayd's approach provides a framework for interpreting texts dynamically in accordance with modern contexts while offering a new perspective on gender discourse in Islam.

However, this study has limitations as it is solely based on bibliographic research without incorporating empirical data to strengthen the analysis. Furthermore, the focus on Abu Zayd's theory limits the exploration of other interpretive theories that could provide additional perspectives. Future research is recommended to: (1) apply this theory to other issues in gender and Qur'anic studies, (2) develop empirical studies to examine how this interpretation is applied to contemporary Muslim life, and (3) compare Abu Zayd's approach with other hermeneutical approaches to enrich academic discourse.

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